

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA (ESCWA)

**GUIDE ON THE APPLICATION OF THE
SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH
IN THE ESCWA REGION**

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Foreword

Improving the well-being of the population and particularly the livelihoods of rural dwellers is a major challenge in the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), especially in the face of the current crises – financial, political, agricultural and environmental, including climate change. If new well-targeted policies and programmes are not adopted, a greater share of the population of the region will fall into poverty. Already, it is estimated that more than 30 per cent of the population in some of the poorest countries of the Arab region live on less than two dollars a day. And even if appropriate actions are taken, there already exist such daunting challenges as the rising water scarcity, the new uncharted political environment, the growing global warming and associated climate change, the soaring commodity prices, particularly oil and food, and others, all of which will continue, in the short term, to put unbearable pressure on the already stressed social and economic environments of countries in the region, particularly the less endowed ones. It is thus a priority to urgently seek to adopt and implement more resilient measures that could better induce broad-based development.

It is within this context that ESCWA is promoting the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA), which has demonstrated a great ability to support development and improve well-being in an integrated manner, particularly in rural areas and poorest communities. It does so by encouraging the consideration of the livelihood assets (human, social, natural, physical and financial) held by the population or communities while taking into account the prevailing livelihood context (risks and vulnerabilities, institutions and processes and opportunities) in order to design and implement strategies that will lead to the optimal path to achieve the desired livelihood outcome. In addition to supporting rural development, SLA has also proved to be able to support the achievement of other such objectives as adapting to and mitigating climate change, promoting the advent of a green economy, and alleviating forest degradation. The guide highlights the potential role that SLA could play here and reviews and analyses certain associated achievements.

In order to promote the adoption and integration of SLA, the guide outlines a four-step approach (analysis of the situation, design and selection of relevant strategies, implementation, and follow-up of adjustment, either as required or upgraded) that could be followed by governments and stakeholders concerned, including the donor community. It also shows that those steps can be applied at various levels, from the level of the community over the sector and/or project level to the national level, and that this will entail close coordination across levels and among stakeholders. Those are dissected in the guide and illustrated by means of pertinent case studies that were provided by experts from member countries or regional organizations. Furthermore, the guide highlights the need to build appropriate capacity in order to facilitate the adoption and integration of SLA into policies and programmes and to analyse existing policies and programmes in order to assess their long-term impacts on livelihoods and whether or not they might benefit from the adoption of SLA.

The guide was developed by the Sustainable Development and Productivity Division (SDPD) of ESCWA in collaboration with various national and regional experts who both provided case studies and participated in debates aimed at developing or improving the guide. We hope that the guide will serve as a major source for national and regional development and improvement of the well-being of the population in the ESCWA region and that countries will adopt it and consistently and continuously rely on it in the design and implementation of development-oriented policies and programmes.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AOAD	Arab Organization for Agricultural Development
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FSC	Farmer service centre
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross domestic production
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GIS	Geographic information system
HASAD	Hilly areas sustainable agricultural development
ICARDA	International Centre for Agriculture Research in Dry Areas
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IRD	Integrated rural development
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Programme
KAUST	King Abdullah University of Science and Technology Building
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Governorate
MCM	Million cubic metres
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NGO	Non-governmental organization
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIPs	Policies, institutions and processes
PSS	Productive Sectors Section (ESCWA)
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
SDPD	Sustainable Development and Productivity Division (ESCWA)
SLA	Sustainable livelihoods approach
SMEs	Small and medium-scale enterprises
SPFS	Special Programme for Food Security
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UN-DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WTO	World Trade Organization

PART I

THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD CONCEPT AND APPROACH

I. INTRODUCTION

A. HISTORY OF THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH

The thinking behind sustainable livelihoods approaches (SLAs) in their contemporary form emerged after the Second World War. The early period was characterized by a sentiment not well disposed to agricultural intervention as it was assumed that the agricultural sector (closely linked to the rural sector) was a consumptive sector rather than an investment or a productive sector. It was felt that growth and development in agriculture would not have a significant effect on other such sectors as the urban or the industrial sectors. However, it was soon apparent that progress was disappointing and as such new development paradigms were sought. The subsequent shift was towards the three issues of community development, agricultural extension, and industrialization and capital formation, as they had played an important role in the development of post-war Europe and Japan. The community development approach focused too heavily on consumption and the provision of social services while giving little attention to the production side and, as a result, did not yield as much success as was anticipated, which led to its demise.¹

The mid-1950s saw the emergence of the national planning approach, which, similarly to the previous approaches, also put special emphasis on industrial development in addition to public sector-oriented investment. This led to the advent of the sectoral approach, where interrelations among various sectors in the development process were the main focus. Special emphasis was put on the issue of such social overhead capital as investments in health care, education, and communications, among others. The 1960s to early 1970s saw the emergence of the “green revolution” in an environment of high population growth as a result of achievements made on the social side. The period witnessed the success of the green revolution technology, which led to a gradual shift towards the adoption of agricultural development as the underlying factor of the development process. This resulted in the dominance of such international organizations as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the creation and development of a network of international agricultural research centres.

After the realization that increased crop yields would help avoid hunger but not solve other rural problems, the 1970s saw the emergence of the integrated rural development (IRD) approach. IRD led to a gradual shift from hunger to poverty alleviation and, as a result, new donor projects started to combine agricultural development, social services provision and infrastructure development.² However, as the economic conditions of rural people were still characterized by poverty, it was increasingly realized that rural life was much more complex and that other such parameters needed to be taken into consideration as the degradation of natural resources as a result of population growth and expansion of economic activities. Hence, the 1980s became the decade of the environment, which also underscored the issues of sustainable development and participatory approach as development concepts moved away from a top-down to a bottom-up approach.³

The 1990s emphasized the issues of conservation and valorization of biodiversity and food security, complemented by appropriate macropolicies and liberalization, issues which had already emerged in the late 1980s. In this sense, several countries and development agencies started to advocate pro-poor growth, based on a thorough poverty analysis and the design and implementation of appropriate programmes. This led to the advent of SLA, which provides a way to improve the identification, appraisal, implementation and evaluation of development programmes so that they can better address the priorities and concerns of poor people, both directly and at a policy level. In this way, SLA is an important tool to eliminate poverty while ensuring broad-based development.

¹ Voth, 2004.

² Voth, 2004; and Carney, 1999.

³ Carney, 1999.

B. INTRODUCTION TO SLA

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living.⁴ It becomes sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both in the present and future, while not undermining the natural resource base. SLA is still evolving as a methodology, but it is also steadily becoming part of the mainstream of development planning and, as such, many international development agencies and organizations have adopted it in project appraisal, review and implementation.

For example, since 1993, Oxfam⁵ has promoted the issue of SLA when formulating its overall aims to improve project strategies and staff training.⁶ In 1994, CARE International, one of the world's leading international humanitarian agencies fighting global poverty, adopted the concept of "household livelihoods security" in its relief and development work. In 1995, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) adopted the sustainable livelihoods thinking as part of its overall mandate for sustainable human development following the World Summit for Social Development.⁷ In 1997, the Department for International Development (DFID) of the United Kingdom worked extensively on the issue and generated some guidance sheets,⁸ while in 2002, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) started to adopt the sustainable livelihoods thinking and offered related training and workshops.

Most of those entities adopting the use of SLA stressed on the need for effective micro- and macropolicy and practice links though they differed in their understanding of sustainability, empowerment and the role of technology.⁹ In recognizing the complexity of rural life, those organizations were advocating a move away from operating and allocating resources along sectoral lines and towards an integrated but more flexible and focused approach.¹⁰ However, there is no unified way of using SLA even though it always leads to poverty alleviation.¹¹ Thus, depending on the user, SLA can be applied as a tool, an analytical framework, or a method for planning, assessing and implementing a programme.¹²

C. IMPORTANCE OF SLA IN THE REGION AND ITS RELATION TO THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The concept of sustainable livelihoods as a development approach can seem daunting compared to other approaches which have been used before in the alleviation of poverty, improvement of health care or promotion of economic development. Yet, the ability to successfully address the above issues could be greatly enhanced if SLA was to be adopted. Parts of SLA are already being applied in various development approaches being used globally and throughout the region.¹³ However, SLA has yet to be applied as a

⁴ ESCWA, 2009a (citing Kollmair and Gamper, 2002).

⁵ Oxfam International is a confederation of 15 like-minded organizations working together to find lasting solutions to poverty and injustice (<http://www.oxfam.org/>).

⁶ Neefjes, 2000.

⁷ Helmore and Singh, 2001.

⁸ Carney, 1998 and 2003; Scoones, 1998; Farrington, 1999; and Solesbury, 2003.

⁹ Solesbury, 2003.

¹⁰ Carney, 1999.

¹¹ ESCWA, 2009a.

¹² Further background information on SLA can be found in various documents presented at the ESCWA Expert Group Meeting on Adopting the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach for Promoting Rural Development in the ESCWA Region, Beirut, Lebanon, 21-22 December 2009.

¹³ The ESCWA region is made up of 14 countries (Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen) and is a subset of the Arab region which, in addition to the above, includes Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Somalia and Tunisia. However, throughout this report, the use of the two regions will be inter-exchanged noting that it will be referring to the more homogeneous region of Northern Africa and Western Asia only.

development tool in its own right and more so in this region since its full-fledged adoption would more effectively impact the livelihood of the people, namely access to the various capital assets, which are: income, water and sanitation, means of production, health, and a better environment.

The positive impact of applying SLA could extend well beyond its initially intended objective. In fact, the benefits could continue to accrue over the years and decades as SLA is constantly and consistently mainstreamed in development programmes and activities. Always taking into consideration the range of such issues as reducing poverty, improving nutrition, education and environmental management and promoting well-being would favour the mainstreaming of SLA into programmes, thereby improving its overall benefits to society. On one hand, a healthier, better educated population with improved access to various resources and services will be in a better position to continue to apply and integrate SLA in all its programmes and endeavours. On the other hand, the development choices made and pathways followed will influence the vulnerability of people concerned to such threats as food crises, climate change or even financial crises.¹⁴

The causes of rural poverty in the Arab region are many, varied and complex in nature. Limited and mismanaged natural resources (land and water) combined with unstable climatic conditions may be considered the main economic and physical causes. Furthermore, deficient physical infrastructures and financial services contribute to the perpetuation of poverty while, at the same time, the lack of adequate agricultural growth continues to hamper poverty reduction efforts in rural areas. All those factors are forcing communities in the region to make their living decisions in a less than sustainable way in order to support themselves and their families.¹⁵

There is a need to place SLA into the mainstream of economic policies, development planning and implementation, and international assistance efforts as it is based on a set of principles that contribute directly or indirectly to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This makes SLA consistent with other approaches to poverty reduction as it enables the rural poor to overcome poverty. Table 1 below provides an overview of the linkage between SLA and the achievement of the MDGs.

TABLE 1. LINKAGE BETWEEN SLA AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Millennium development goal	Examples of links with SLA
Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (Goal 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SLA addresses such needs of poor people as health, education, access to water, homes, financial means and infrastructure; - SLA could alter the path and rate of economic growth with changes in capital assets. New opportunities might help improve living conditions; - Improved livelihoods are dependent, among others, on food production and food security;
Promote gender equality and empower women (Goal 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women are usually involved in natural resource-dependent activities, which are highly responsive to SLA; - The roles of women in households and farming mean that their livelihoods are usually precarious and thus women could benefit from SLA;
Health-related goals: Reduce child mortality (Goal 4), improve maternal health (Goal 5) and combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (Goal 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SLA could improve access to health services and education, particularly with improved income and well-being; - SLA will likely influence the quantity and quality of available drinking water, which is a prerequisite for good health;

¹⁴ OECD, 2006a.

¹⁵ ESCWA, 2009a; and Christensen, 2007.

TABLE 1 (*continued*)

Millennium development goal	Examples of links with SLA
Ensure environmental sustainability (Goal 7)	- SLA could improve the quality and productivity of natural resources and ecosystems which would affect biological diversity (positively or negatively);
Develop a global partnership for development (Goal 8)	- SLA is an important tool and its benefits could be harnessed for a long time, particularly when donors are involved.

Sources: ESCWA, 2009a; and OECD, 2006a.

SLA is thus a framework that promotes grassroots development and allows the analysis of the aspirations and needs of stakeholders who are at the centre of a web of interrelated issues that affect the way they obtain a livelihood for themselves, their families, their communities and ultimately their countries. With its efforts to help the region achieve sustainable development, ESCWA is supporting countries of the region to adopt innovative tools and measures that could enhance their performance to improve the well-being of their populations: SLA is one such tool which could make a substantial difference. ESCWA is therefore promoting the issue of SLA and among the various activities to be undertaken is the development of a guide that could allow its member countries to better take advantage of SLA as a tool to achieve sustainable development.

D. AIM OF THE PRESENT GUIDE

The purpose of the present guide is thus to help countries integrate SLA into development planning and implementation at national, sector/project and local levels through the following means:

(a) Promoting the general understanding of integrating SLA within programmes and activities for rural development;

(b) Identifying and using appropriate entry points to integrate SLA into development activities, including development plans, sector policy frameworks, poverty reduction strategies, long-term investment plans, technical consultations and sector reviews, as well as strategic and project-level environmental impact assessments, to name a few;

(c) Assisting countries in their efforts to reduce the impact of various risks and vulnerabilities they face, to assess policies, institutions and processes and to identify and prioritize development strategies and outcomes, and to implement those strategies.

The guide is intended to assist policymakers, development planners, practitioners and stakeholders to better adopt and integrate SLA in all development plans and activities. As much as possible, the guide attempts to promote ownership, support and strengthen processes, harmonize approaches and tools, manage results through monitoring, and promote accountability and build on linkages with other such dimensions of sustainable development as equitability, sustainability, livability, and eco-efficiency.

The guide builds on previous work that has been accomplished in the area of sustainable livelihoods analysis and used for development purposes, poverty reduction strategies, and economic development. As such, the guide is inspired by other related work in this area, including, among others: the DFID Guidance Sheets (1999), the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) Working with a Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (2007), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) SLA background documents, and guides and documents from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).¹⁶

¹⁶ OECD, 2001; OECD, 2006a; OECD, 2006b; and OECD, 2007.

II. THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD CONCEPT AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR THE REGION

A. THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD CONCEPT AND APPROACH

1. *Concept*

The people least likely to be able to take advantage of the benefits of development, and thus to suffer from the lack of development, are often those who are marginalized, especially when coupled with natural disasters, in other words, those who face the following challenges:

- (a) No adequate human capital: lack of adequate education or skills, among others;
- (b) Little natural capital: live in such hazardous places as informal settlements or remote locations or have no access to such productive assets as land;
- (c) Limited financial capital: low-income or resource dependant populations, among others;
- (d) Limited physical capital: lack of appropriate tools or equipment to produce efficiently, among others; or limited social capital: lack of social protection or other social services, for instance;
- (e) To this could be added the lack of political capital: for instance, not being adequately represented in the political process and thus unable to influence the policy and decision-making processes.

The above are non-hazard-dependent constraints, which reduce the capacity of the affected populations to respond and adapt to the effects of hazards and to take advantage of development alternatives offered. Alongside the above is the overall context within which the population is evolving, which applies its own pressure in the form of vulnerabilities (for instance, constraints: shocks and trends), structures and processes (policies, institutions, and culture, among others) and opportunities, namely potential. All of the above constitute a framework which helps to put in perspective the aspects of vulnerability and adaptive capacity, thereby providing a holistic understanding of the various interacting components of livelihood systems.

The livelihoods approach considers resources and policies from the perspective of people in their struggle to make a living, and highlights the need for specific interventions that target the identified needs of the people. Thus, SLA places people, particularly poor people, at the centre of a web of interrelated influences that affect how people obtain a livelihood. A livelihood becomes sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the resource base. The section below has been adapted from various sources, including IFAD,¹⁷ SDC,¹⁸ and DFID.¹⁹

In the centre of the approach is the Livelihood Asset Pentagon (see figure I below), which identifies appropriate entry points and tracks changes in the accumulation and loss of five core livelihood building blocks. Those resources and assets that people can easily access and use, but which are not necessarily readily available, include:

- (a) Human capital: constitutes a basic requirement to gaining access to other livelihood building blocks. It includes health, knowledge and skills (college or vocational education and others), all of which can

¹⁷ <http://www.ifad.org/>.

¹⁸ SDC, 2007.

¹⁹ DFID, 1999.

ease the way to entering the labour market. It is the sum of all personal resources that can be utilized to combat poverty;

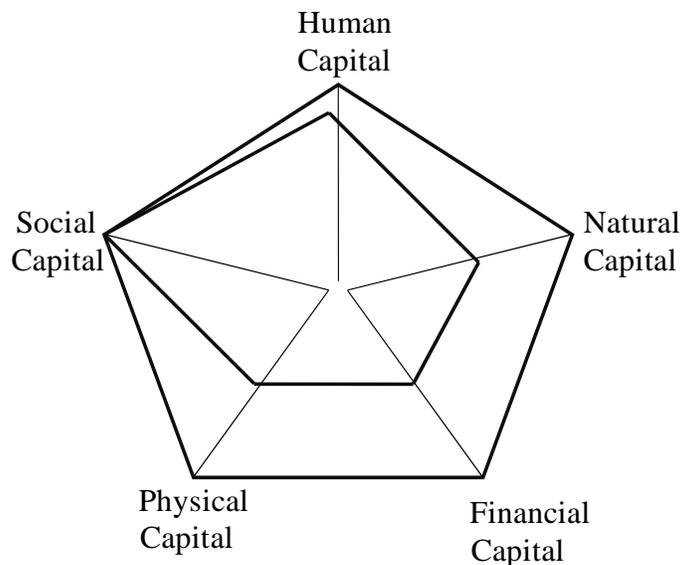
(b) Natural capital: consists of natural resources from which livelihoods are derived (land, water, livestock, trees, and other key environmental services);

(c) Financial capital: comprises such economic and financial assets as income, property, and access to credits, all of which can be used for productive investments;

(d) Physical capital: comprises such basic infrastructure and producer goods as tools and equipment needed to support livelihoods (transport, secure shelter, water supply and sanitation, clean and affordable energy, machinery, inputs, and others);

(e) Social capital: includes all the resources that can be drawn from social networks, memberships and relationships of trust and reciprocity that can support the creation of safety nets. High levels of social capital add significantly to human capital and positive livelihoods outcomes.

Figure I. The Livelihood Asset Pentagon



The centre of the Livelihood Asset Pentagon represents “no access”, while the outer part represents “full access”. Maximum access to a single livelihood building block (shown at the outer perimeter), for instance, maximization of human capital, is insufficient to achieve a good life and well-being without the remaining other four capitals, in this scenario social, physical, financial and natural, which attests to the interdependence of all components of the pentagon.

The extent of people accessing or using those assets is both positively and negatively affected by various factors which form the context of the livelihood (see also table 2 below). Those factors include:

(a) Risks and vulnerabilities (constraints): Understanding the nature of risks and vulnerabilities is a key step in analysing sustainable livelihoods and identifying key factors that have a direct impact on the assets of people and the options available for them to pursue positive livelihood outcomes. Vulnerability decreases as people learn to positively influence their immediate and external environment, including environmental and land degradation, climate change, biodiversity loss, epidemics, natural disasters, civil strife, such crises as the prevailing financial and food crisis, low prices, too low or too much rainfall, low employment opportunities, increasing salinity and water shortage, to name a few;

(b) Structures and processes (policies, institutions, culture, civil society, among others): They determine the access of people to capital, the terms of trade, and the return to any given livelihood strategy. They also include the ability of people to feel socially and politically included and help gain a better understanding of the relationships between the personal and impersonal spheres, and highlight potential opportunities and/or constraints in governance. Structures include levels of government, private sector and civil society institutions, while processes include policies (macro and micropolicies, for instance), laws (environmental legislations and others), culture and other social institutions and related entities;

(c) Opportunities (potentials) and services: They include factors that enable people to access opportunities they can build upon, including potential income sources, markets, credits, and seasonal labour. They also include factors that determine access to services that support or constrain livelihood, including people’s rights, capacity-building institutions, outreach, and such business associations as cooperatives.

TABLE 2. THE LIVELIHOOD CONTEXT

Risks and vulnerabilities	Policies, institutions and processes (PIPs)	Opportunities and services
<u><i>Trends and changes</i></u> Market trends Economic conditions Technological changes Environmental changes	<u><i>Policies</i></u> Macro (i.e. trade, tax, population) Micro (i.e. finance, technology and competitiveness, agriculture production, etc.)	<u><i>Opportunities</i></u> Human (i.e. vocational education) Social (i.e. democratization, strong communities) Natural (i.e. abundant resources: petrol/gas) Financial (i.e. high potential for investment, sovereign funds) Physical (i.e. transport network)
<u><i>Shocks</i></u> Socio-political unrest Natural disasters Economic depression	<u><i>Institutions</i></u> Socio-political Technological Level of government Private sector/civil society	<u><i>Services</i></u> User associations Outreach Capacity-building Social safety nets
<u><i>Seasonality</i></u> Prices Weather	<u><i>Processes</i></u> Laws (i.e. environmental) Religious and cultural (i.e. gender, Sharia law) Rights (i.e. property)	
<u><i>Vulnerabilities</i></u> Human (i.e. diseases, illiteracy) Social (i.e. conflicts) Natural (i.e. drought) Financial (i.e. markets, lack of funds) Physical (i.e. isolation)	<u>PIPs determine</u> Access to capital Terms of trade Return to investment Social and political inclusion Institutional conduct and performance	These enhance performance in most cases.

Sources: DFID, 1999; IFAD website; and ESCWA, 2009a.

A number of already existing tools can be used to conduct the various livelihood analyses identified above. Some of the major tools²⁰ include the following:

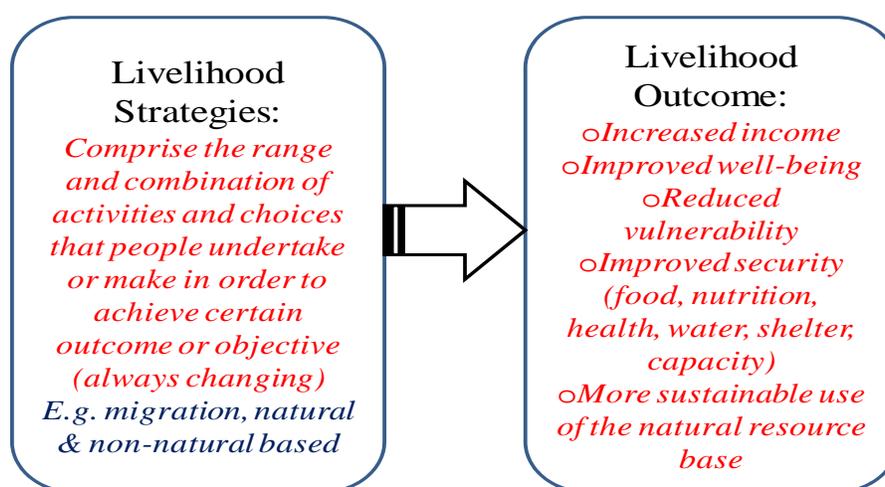
- (a) Environmental checklists: to gain a better understanding of the relationship between the livelihoods of the poor and their environment;
- (b) Gender analysis: to uncover the dynamics of gender differences across a variety of issues;
- (c) Governance assessment: to assess the quality of national governance systems;
- (d) Institutional appraisal: to understand the nature of the external environment and the impact of different factors within it;
- (e) Economic analysis: to understand the impact of policies on livelihoods;
- (f) Market analysis: to assess the private sector and markets;

²⁰ DFID, 1999.

- (g) Participatory assessments: to understand and involve stakeholders;
- (h) Risk assessment: to understand and assess vulnerability;
- (i) Social analysis: to identify the characteristics of stakeholders;
- (j) Strategic assessments: to assess conflicts and their resolution and negotiations;
- (k) Environmental assessments: to appraise environmental issues and mitigate their impact.

Once the livelihood assets and livelihood context have been assessed or identified, the design of appropriate livelihood strategies would be undertaken so as to determine the expected livelihood outcome (see figure II). Livelihood strategies reflect the range and combinations of activities and choices that people make in order to achieve livelihood outcomes and goals. Livelihood strategies evolve from implicit and/or explicit decision-making, which is informed by inner and outer realities of livelihood. Livelihood strategies are diverse and in a constant process of change and adaptation. Livelihood outcomes denote the achievements of livelihood strategies and include more income, increased well-being, reduced vulnerability, improved food security and more sustainable use of the natural resource base.²¹

Figure II. Sustainable livelihood strategies and outcome



Sources: DFID, 1999; and SDC, 2007.

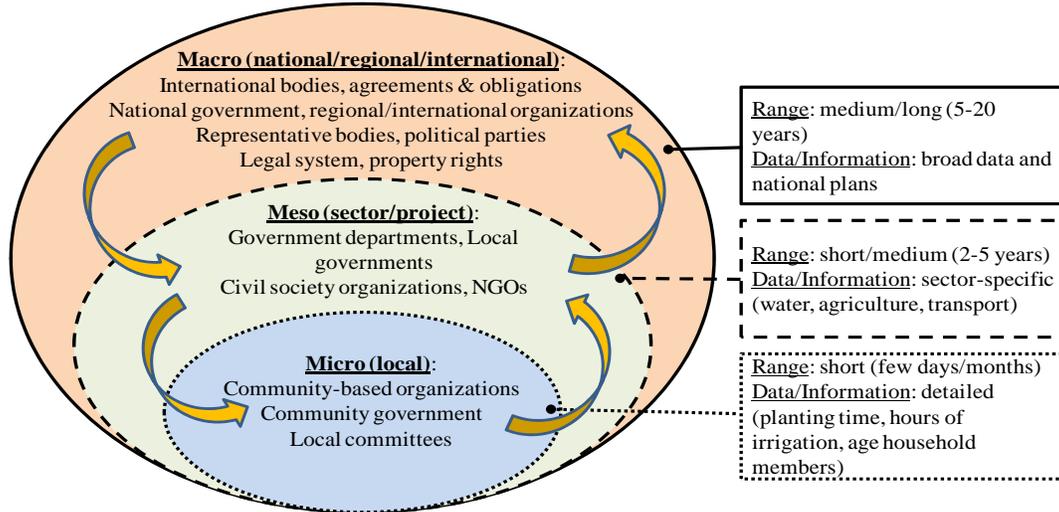
To integrate SLA into the development process, SLA could be applied at various decision-making levels (see figure III below). This could be at the national level (macro), which could also include the regional and/or international levels, the sector or project level (meso) and the local level (micro). Mainstreaming SLA in a long-term policy or strategy is quite different from applying it in a sector or project and again different when considered at the local level. The lower the decision-making level, the better or more accurate the key parameters (geographical location, scale, and technology choice, among others) and thus the better or more targeted the interventions and the greater the impact or outcome.

By putting all the above together (see figure IV), it becomes apparent that SLA consists of the combination of available livelihood assets taking also into consideration the prevailing livelihood context (risks and vulnerabilities, structures and processes, and potentials). They are combined to design appropriate livelihood strategies so as to achieve a determined livelihood outcome. SLA can be used at both policy and programme levels to initiate, analyse and/or implement development activities; or to modify and reorient existing activities in order to add focus to give them greater impact. At implementation level, SLA thinking can be applied at the identification and appraisal stages of a project. This will help identify priorities and plan new activities. Furthermore, it can be used to review project activities (in the case of projects which

²¹ SDC, 2007; IFAD; and DFID, 1999.

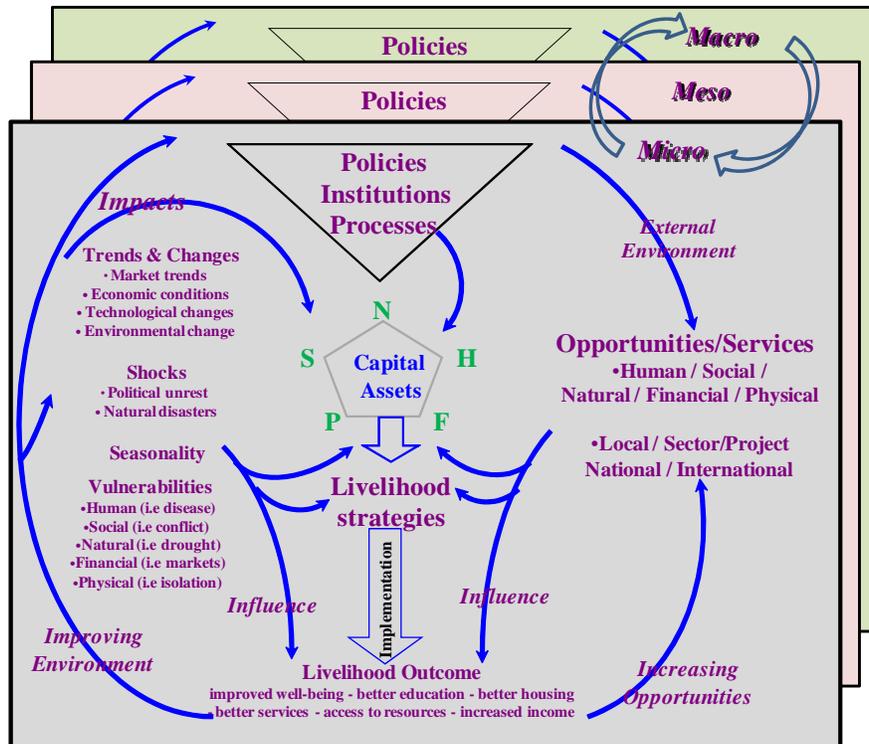
might have been originally designed without having SLA in mind) and to improve monitoring and evaluation. SLA can also be utilized or applied at micro (household), meso (community) and macrolevels (nation or region). Each of these levels can have its own boundary and thus be analysed as a separate system. The boundaries are usually porous with, for example, institutions or assets created at national level having an impact on community and household levels and, conversely, a livelihood strategy or outcome having a spillover effect to other communities.

Figure III. Governance levels



Sources: DFID, 1999; IFAD; SDC, 2007; and ESCWA, 2009a.

Figure IV. The SLA framework



Source: Adapted from IFAD.

2. Relationship with other development approaches

Understanding the differences and linkages between the various development approaches is essential, both to avoid confusion and to improve the scope for collaboration, and to highlight the importance of SLA as a development approach that can be suitable for the ESCWA region. Here, comparisons are made between SLA and three main broad approaches to development: participatory development/community-based development, the sector approach, and the IRD approach.²²

(a) Participatory development/community-based development: These approaches incorporate and build upon existing participatory and/or community-based methodologies in order to achieve livelihood objectives and to understand the effects of policies on livelihoods. They promote the inclusion of stakeholders and/or communities in all decision-making and implementation processes. Their major drawback is that they do not take into account the influence of macropolicies. SLA builds on those participatory and/or community-based approaches in that it closely involves all those concerned in the analysis of the situation, identification of appropriate strategies and their implementation in addition to taking into account the evolving situation at various levels (local, sectoral, national, among others). Thus, SLA and participatory/community-based approaches are complementary;

(b) Sector approaches: These approaches relate to the overall effectiveness of the sectors concerned. Livelihoods and sector approaches are also broadly complementary and each can gain from recognizing the strengths of the other. SLA lays a heavy emphasis on understanding the structures and processes that condition the access of people to assets and their choice of livelihood strategies. Sector approaches are more appropriate in cases where the major constraint is poor performance by public or shared institutions. This is especially true for such government-dominated areas as health and education. Livelihoods approaches can gain from lessons learned and objectives pursued in sector approaches;

(c) IRD approach: The IRD approach consists in improving the well-being of a community in social, economic and environmental terms. One of the early criticisms that have been leveled at the livelihoods approach is that it is too similar to the failed approach of IRD. It is easy to understand where this reflection comes from, as the two approaches have much in common. SLA endeavours to build upon the strengths of IRD (especially the recognition of the need for broad-based support in rural areas) without falling into the traps that caused the downfall of IRD. In particular, SLA does not aim to establish top-down integrated programmes in rural areas but instead recognizes the importance of a wide range of factors and then targets just a few core areas through a thorough analysis of existing livelihoods and a bottom-up planning process so that activities remain manageable. The livelihoods approach will also address macrolevel and institutional factors where they constitute major constraints while in the case of IRD, by contrast, operators were forced to work in a hostile macroeconomic and institutional environment, dominated and often heavily distorted by government.

Other development approaches do exist and include decentralization, structural adjustments, public sector reform, rights-based approaches or globalization, to name a few. It is felt, however, that these approaches will not add much more relevance, particularly in the context of rural and broad-based development. Yet, it is worth noting that SLA came into being at a moment when development agencies started to recognize the limited impact of previous development strategies, particularly the large-scale project approach that had existed until then. Focus was increasingly being put on alleviating poverty and on adopting a more comprehensive and nuanced approach to development, which takes a holistic approach to development and seeks a better balance in policymaking by highlighting the interdependence of all elements of development – social, structural, human, governance, environmental, economic, and financial. The new approach emphasizes partnerships between governments, donors, civil society, the private sector, and other development actors, with the lead being taken by local actors including the government, communities and individuals.²³

²² ESCWA, 2009a.

²³ Voth, 2004.

B. KEY DEVELOPMENT ISSUES FOR THE ESCWA REGION

1. *Challenges facing the region*

Poverty in most countries of the region is principally a rural phenomenon, although it is recognized that significant levels of urban poverty exist as well, as is the case in Egypt for example. Overall, about 25 per cent of the population of the region is considered poor and about 58 per cent of the poor are located in rural areas.²⁴ According to the same reference, poverty in countries of the region is driven by a combination of constraints related to natural resources, socio-economic considerations, and policy and institutional framework. The region is one of the driest in the world and is characterized by limited arable land and severe water scarcity; it is also characterized by high fertility rates, substantial gender inequity, low education rates (especially among women) and high rates of unemployment (especially among young people). Compounding these constraints is the unavailability of adequate rural microfinance services, the weakness of rural marketing institutions, and insufficient public investment in physical and such social infrastructure as rural roads, rural water supply, and health and educational facilities. In some countries, the rural sector is also affected by policy and institutional weaknesses, which include, among others, limited grassroots organizations; weak civil society and private sector in rural areas; poor performance of public institutions; distorted agricultural price and trade policies; and poor management of such resources as water and rangelands.²⁵

2. *Impact of global agendas*

Rural development policies in the ESCWA region have evolved over the past 50 years, following to a large extent a worldwide development path that was advocated mainly by the United Nations and other international development organizations. As such, in the 1970s, ESCWA member countries embraced integrated rural development policies, which were, by design, top-down, wide-ranging and often complex. In addition to the fact that ambitious often meant expensive, the implementation of those policies faced numerous limitations in the region, which included viewing rural development as a public-sector responsibility with minimal private-sector involvement; and the limited consultation or participation of local governments, civil society, and communities.

In the 1990s, most countries started to implement and follow up on internationally agreed upon action plans and goals that were put forward by United Nations agencies. They adopted the concept of sustainable rural development, which was introduced following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992, and which adopted Agenda 21.²⁶ During this period, emphasis was being put on achieving sustainable agriculture and rural development by closely linking rural development to agricultural development. The concept of sustainable development was further reinforced during the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 with the adoption of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of Agenda 21, which, among others, placed rural development within the wider context of poverty eradication and the protection and management of the natural resource base.²⁷

With the year 2000, countries began to implement and follow up on the United Nations MDGs, which provided a framework of action for rural development policies in the ESCWA region since it is typically in rural areas that larger shares of poverty, hunger, lack of health and education services, and loss of environmental resources are found. As such, commitments to follow up on the MDGs led to new development gains in rural areas on all the aforementioned fronts, a trend which is expected to continue in

²⁴ Kherallah, 2008.

²⁵ Kherallah, 2008.

²⁶ UN-DESA, 1992.

²⁷ UN-DESA, 2002.

the near future,²⁸ as it is expected that the outcome of the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which will take place in 2012 (Rio+20) will also leave its mark on rural development policies globally and in the region through more investments in and prominence given to achieving a green economy in such areas as agriculture development (organic agriculture and fair-trade, among others), land and water management (such as water reclamation, water efficiency, biodiversity protection, and reforestation) and rural electrification using renewable energy.

3. Features of rural development policies in the ESCWA region

Although some countries in the region have developed fully-fledged rural development policy documents, rural development programmes in the ESCWA member countries are typically governed by a collection of policies, the most noteworthy being policies targeting agricultural development, poverty reduction, food security and environmental protection. Indeed, rural development is seen to be linked to advancements made on the aforementioned fronts. As such, understanding rural development policies in the ESCWA region requires an examination of a number of related social and economic policies. The following is an attempt to provide an overview of the main features of these policies, based on a comprehensive study published in 2010 by the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) on Arab agricultural policies applied during the period:²⁹

(a) *Agricultural development policies:* Over the years, ESCWA countries strived to improve agricultural productivity, notably through the adoption of modern agricultural technologies. Both horizontal and vertical expansion schemes were used to increase crop production, through intensification programmes, inter-cropping, use of improved species (including the use of biotechnology), improved irrigation techniques, but also through the integration of production chains. With regard to animal production, vertical expansion was followed in most ESCWA countries based on raising unit productivity through improved strains, vaccination and veterinary services, feed, and others. Fisheries also received attention with policies in selected member countries oriented towards research, legislation, capacity-building, and infrastructure. Private investments in agriculture and agro-processing were promoted through fiscal and other incentives, and by improving the operation of agricultural banks, both public and private. However, public investment in agriculture maintained its high share of total investments in this sector. Other complementary policies aiming to develop the agricultural sector included policies of trade liberalization of agricultural products (import and export, although some countries restrained exports of primary agricultural products and animal feed due to food security considerations), decreasing direct government intervention in agricultural trade, and promoting export, for instance by improving quality standards, facilitating access to information on export markets and developing trade infrastructure. Finally, it is worth mentioning that, since the 1980s, governmental subsidies have decreased mostly as a result of the need to conform to commitments installed by the World Trade Organization (WTO). Remaining government support is mainly geared towards agricultural extension services, vaccination and pest control, research programmes and investment promotion incentives. However, some unsustainable forms of subsidies still persist for example, subsidizing such agricultural inputs as water, animal feed, and improved seeds, and price fixing for such selected agricultural products as tobacco or cotton;

(b) *Poverty reduction policies:* Historically, ESCWA member countries have devoted more attention to the development of urban areas due to a number of socio-economic and political considerations. As a result, poverty has become more pervasive in rural areas, leading to much higher rural poverty rates as compared to urban areas in many ESCWA countries. Rural poverty is the main determinant of rural exodus, especially among the young, as can be seen through the decrease in rural population witnessed by all ESCWA member countries over the last 20 years. The rate of decrease has been especially pronounced in middle and high-income countries of the region. In response to these challenges, ESCWA member countries have tried to put in place social protection measures, diversify productive activities in rural areas and

²⁸ United Nations, 2010.

²⁹ AOAD, 2010.

empower women to have a more important say in the economy. In addition, infrastructure, basic health and education services received special attention in poverty reduction policies in a number of countries. Financing, notably microfinancing, schemes for rural small and medium enterprises were improved and capacity-building programmes were increasingly adopted in many countries as part of poverty reduction strategies;

(c) Environmental protection and natural resource management policies: As ESCWA countries continue to face environmental degradation characterized by increased rates of desertification, land degradation, loss of biodiversity, water scarcity and pollution, they have developed legislative frameworks governing the protection of the environment and have raised public awareness on the sustainable use of natural resources. For example, a number of surveys, maps and studies have been prepared using a geographic information system (GIS), notably on land, water and biodiversity resources, to identify and mitigate associated risks. With reference to water use, the application of water-efficient irrigation systems received the attention of many ESCWA countries, while a few resorted to progressive water-pricing policies. In addition, water-harvesting projects have been implemented in several countries while, in relation to land use policies, measures have been taken to avoid overgrazing, including legislations governing land use and ownership and protecting grazing fields. Environmental tourism has also been encouraged through the development of natural reserves, among others;

(d) Food security policies: ESCWA member countries are net food importers, a reality which was further exacerbated by the wave of drought that hit a number of Arab countries. Food security is a multidimensional issue that is seen to be intrinsically tied to improved rural livelihoods and agricultural productivity. As such, much of the elements of food security policies are interlinked with agricultural development and poverty reduction policies as highlighted above, in addition to natural resource management policies. Specific food security measures adopted by a number of ESCWA countries include developing strategic reserves of primary foods, notably cereals. Depending on their resource endowments (water and land), fiscal position and risk tolerance, member countries have, to a certain extent, reoriented their policy framework from absolute food self-sufficiency to relative food self-sufficiency and food security. In this context, some member countries, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries for instance, invested in agricultural projects outside their borders both within this region and outside.

The above reviews of major development policies in the ESCWA region succinctly describe the “business-as-usual” path that has been followed so far. SLA brings forth a new challenge though it overlaps with the above development strategies in large areas. Thus, some activities undertaken to achieve development objectives can benefit or fit into the implementation of SLA. These include, for example, decisions or measures that have considerable bearing on such factors affecting the well-being of populations as food security, environmental degradation, drought and others. Development activities oriented towards reduced poverty and improved nutrition, education, infrastructure and health would be synergistic with SLA implementation. However, not all areas of the above policies overlap with SLA and, if this is the case, activities with an explicit focus on SLA will be required. These include situations where the well-being of the population would be significantly affected by such unintended negative impacts of development activities as pollution, and depletion of resources, or where development activities are designed for a broad level and have no or minimal impact at the local level. In such case, explicit SLA activities will be required, for instance, special skills to fight a certain local form of degradation or addressing a special health or labour issue at the local level. Most of these specific SLA activities would be topical, meaning geographical, and require direct measures to impact a certain identified constraint. The issue, however, is how to go about mainstreaming SLA thinking into policymaking as well as development planning and implementation. Below, a generic approach is outlined that could be used to integrate SLA in policies, plans and programmes, as advocated in this technical paper.

C. SLA FROM THEORY TO ACTION

Existing development programmes may help improve the livelihoods of the poorest. However, in the face of recent crises in such areas as food, finance, energy, environmental degradation and climate change,

most programmes will require a substantial overhaul in order to take into account rapidly changing situations. Such overhauls will particularly be aimed at those policies, plans or programmes which were not designed with a flexibility mechanism that would allow them to quickly adapt to changing conditions and situations. In the end, they may slow down project execution or lead to adverse results, thereby hampering the achievement of other broader objectives. Well-planned development activities are essential if governments are endeavouring to achieve targets set out in the MDGs as well as related national poverty eradication efforts and other broad-based sustainable development programmes. Thus, it will be essential to actively seek how to integrate SLA into the various policies, plans and programmes so that they can lead to a maximum positive outcome.³⁰

1. *Steps to applying SLA*

The application of SLA is a continuous process which requires regular revisiting of policies, plans and projects as the overall natural and socio-economic conditions evolve. Below, a four-step approach is proposed for consideration when trying to apply SLA, ranging from the conduct of appropriate assessments and planning to implementation and monitoring. However, since policies and strategies are not generally applicable, these steps are only indicative and, as such, need to be modified or adapted according to the prevailing circumstances. It should be noted that, with all four steps, the active participation of stakeholders in all processes needs to be sought.³¹

(a) *Step 1: Analysis of the livelihood context and livelihood assets*

The first step consists of a thorough assessment of the prevailing conditions with regard to the livelihood context, livelihood assets and the setting of appropriate objectives. In analysing the context of a livelihood system, emphasis would be placed on identifying the risks and vulnerabilities faced by people, the policies, processes and institutions that support or constrain their livelihoods, the opportunities available to them and the services that support or constrain them. An assessment of assets (human, natural, financial, physical and social) available to the people would also be conducted. Those assessments would help provide a better idea of the prevailing situation so as to identify strengths and weaknesses and thus the poverty status.

Those assessments, which would be both quantitative and qualitative, would identify baseline information and changes in socio-economic and environmental conditions, biophysical and socio-economic impacts, and the capacity of systems to react to change. Special attention needs to be devoted to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. An assessment of the expected future context and assets would also be conducted in order to anticipate possible future actions or strategies to be undertaken, to better understand the drivers of change and to assess opportunities that may arise and potential ways to take advantage of them. Those assessments and analyses also have to take into consideration other such factors of change as population, migration, income, institutions, and technology, as changes in those factors could substantially impact the outcome of the adopted strategy.

(b) *Step 2: Planning livelihood strategies and livelihood outcomes*

This second step involves the identification of a list of strategies or measures to be considered. In order not to constrain the outcome, a review of all possible options would be conducted. The options would be first generated without giving much attention to feasibility, cost, or other limiting factors so as to obtain the most extensive list of potential ideas. To this end, a broad group of experts could be brought on board in order to generate as many creative ideas as possible. General selection criteria would include: (i) the need for flexibility; (ii) increased benefits under various conditions; (iii) reduced impact of various such stresses

³⁰ OECD, 2007.

³¹ Those four steps were inspired from various documents, including: SDC, 2007; Moreddu, 2007; OECD, 2006b; OECD, 2001; Twigg, 2006; and DFID, 1999.

on people and communities as drought, land degradation and others; (iv) relying on markets to reduce failures while improving competitiveness and increasing alternative sources of income; and (v) designing systems and strategies that could be easily adapted to fit changing circumstances.

Once all possible strategies and outcomes have been catalogued, they would be evaluated in order to select the most potent ones for implementation. The strategies to be implemented would be those that have shown great potential regarding the following aspects:

- (i) Effectiveness: the extent to which the strategy improves the conditions of stakeholders and provides other benefits;
- (ii) Cost reduction: the extent to which the strategy would allow short- and long-term savings including non-economic and non-quantifiable ones;
- (iii) Feasibility: the extent to which the programme would be implemented in a reasonable amount of time.

(c) *Step 3: Programme implementation and monitoring*

The implementation of the chosen strategy or strategies would lead to increased opportunities for, and distribution of, resources to the people and/or communities concerned. The following list enumerates some of the guiding principles to be considered during implementation:

- (i) Ensure local ownership of the programme and strategy and rely on and utilize local networks and resources to the highest extent possible;
- (ii) Ensure participation and empowerment of individuals, families, communities and local leadership each with a clear and well-defined role;
- (iii) Take into account the gender dimension and other prevailing local social issues;
- (iv) Ensure long-term commitment within a clear and well-defined framework;
- (v) Set up clear coordination mechanisms, a timetable for implementation and roles;
- (vi) Share information and data with stakeholders and other participating partners;
- (vii) Simplify and rationalize administrative and financial rules and strengthen and empower local institutional set-up;
- (viii) Facilitate local mobilization, participation, monitoring and assessment, particularly of performance, so as to be able a quick re-orientation of the programme as needed;
- (ix) Build capacities to strengthen local institutions and to enable civil society to engage in the implementation process.

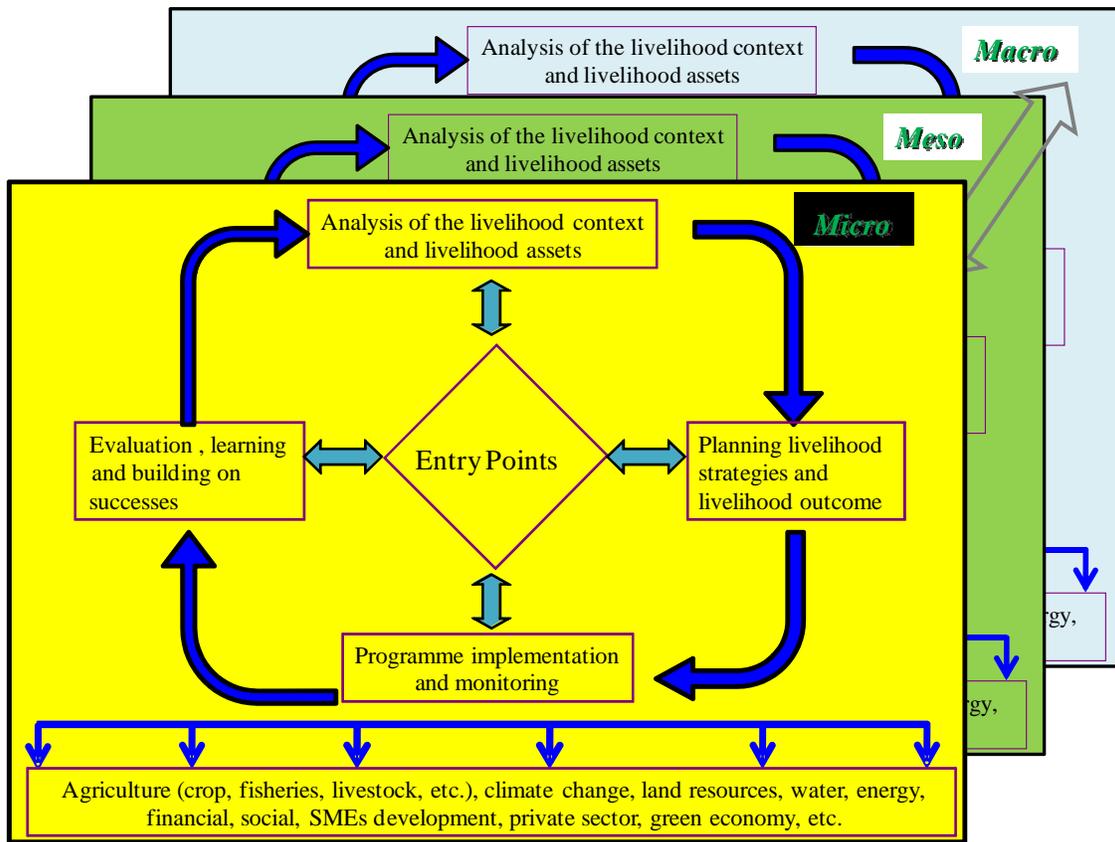
(d) *Step 4: Evaluation and building on success*

The final step is to monitor and evaluate the success of the implemented strategy. Evaluating the success of a strategy or programme would require the measurement of benefits against policy objectives as advocated in the effectiveness analysis, based to the extent possible on quantitative measures of success and objective, and an independent review. By doing so, it would become easier to inform the decision-making process and stakeholders on developments achieved. This would allow, in return, the reassessment of the overall strategy and accord the opportunity to reorient implementation and/or to reallocate resources. However, it is worth noting that evaluating the success of a programme is not a straightforward, but rather lengthy mechanism since the benefits of some measures may not be noted until development has actually

occurred. The evaluation of strategies and programmes that provide immediate benefits (water and sanitation connection, access to food, and/or provision of adequate health care and other safety nets) would be relatively easy as the benefits would accrue immediately. However, measures that are designed to respond to an imminent or upcoming crisis (occurrence of such a future hazard as flooding or drought and food price increase) will be evaluated while those events actually occur and even later. Thus, if such events do not occur, it may be difficult to evaluate the success of the strategy that has been put in place. The evaluation of the overall success or impact of strategies initiated through longer-term development planning would have to wait until several years or even decades have passed.

Figure V is a schematic representation of the process involved during the application of the steps to integrate SLA in policy and programme planning and implementation. It should be noted that each step constitutes a potential entry point and that the steps could be applied to assess, plan or implement development activities for a wide number of issues ranging from agriculture to rural development.

Figure V. Steps to applying SLA



Sources: Adapted from OECD, 2007; OECD, 2006a; OECD, 2006b; OECD, 2001; and IFAD.

2. Implementing and mainstreaming SLA in programme planning

Applying SLA will involve both stand-alone SLA policies and the integration of appropriate SLA components into existing development plans and activities. The steps provided above can either be implemented as part of stand-alone strategies or integrated within development plans. While, in certain situations, stand-alone strategies will be required, for example to alleviate the impact of such a short-term shock as a drought or floods or sudden price increase, in most cases, SLA measures will need to be

implemented as part of a broader suite of policies and strategies within existing development plans. This is known as mainstreaming. For example, strategies to improve livelihoods in a certain village might need to be incorporated into existing agricultural policies and plans, within water-use and community development plans and projects, as part of sector-wide policies for food security or self-sufficiency, within assistance strategies for donors as well as within national development and poverty alleviation strategies.

The specific decision-making setting would vary depending upon whether the context is that of an individual, a community, a region, a sector ministry, the central government, or an international donor. At the lower level, individual and community actions would be limited to short-term decisions related, for example, to the choice of crops or inputs or individual well-being. The higher up in levels, decisions and time horizons would differ and would involve short- to medium-term strategies and policies at sector/project level and medium- to longer-term strategies at national level, including such complex and strategic policy decisions as opting for food self-sufficiency or food security, both of which would carry major budgetary implications and new programmatic choices and could impact regional trade relations. Thus, three levels of decision-making should be recognized and examined: the national level; the sector/project level; and the local level. Discussions in subsequent parts of this report on each level will highlight the importance of that particular level and will elaborate on key actors as well as the core decision process. Then, specific interventions needed would be identified together with the inputs required from donors.

PART II

INTEGRATING SLA INTO PROGRAMMES

SLA interventions will occur at various stages of the policy and/or planning cycle and will generally take different forms at different points in the cycle since they will be applied to very different processes and at different authority/jurisdiction levels. Thus, part two of the present guide provides a review of the importance of each level together with its key characteristics and interventions needed; and the role of potential donors in the integration of SLA.³²

I. INTEGRATING SLA INTO PROGRAMMES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The national level encompasses such bodies with policy and planning authority as higher offices (offices of kings, presidents or prime ministers, parliaments, and political parties, to name a few) and other such bodies with functions at the scale of an entire country and cutting across sector boundaries as the ministries of finance, planning and the interior, and environmental agencies, among others, but also such regional and/or international organizations as the League of Arab States, GCC and others. Decisions taken at this level affect all sectors and all parts of the country. Policies and legislations with a national reach include fiscal and trade policies and regulations governing private-sector investment, protection and use of natural resources and large-scale spatial planning. Institutions at this level include such governmental bodies as ministries, civil society and private-sector organizations with nationwide influence. Such sectors as transport, agriculture and water, while having a nationwide coverage, are nonetheless limited in scope and reach and, for this reason, are considered as part of the sector/project level.

Box 1. National level key highlights

Importance:

- Sets country-wide policies (plans, environmental laws, etc.);
- Motivates (rule of law, taxes, etc.);
- Provides incentives (subsidies, services, etc.);
- Manages international relations and cooperation (agreements, etc.).

Key issues:

- Need to mainstream SLA into all policies and programmes;
- Management of interlinkages among sectors.

Key players:

- Higher political offices (president, prime minister);
- Key ministries and agencies (finance, planning, administration);
- Parliaments, political parties, donors, etc.

Data and information:

- Broad data and plans (national income, development plans, etc.).

Sources: Adapted from OECD, 2007; OECD, 2006a; OECD, 2006b; OECD, 2001; and IFAD.

³² This section was inspired by various documents, including SDC, 2007; Moreddu, 2007; OECD, 2007; OECD, 2006b; OECD, 2001; and DFID, 1999.

A. IMPORTANCE OF THE NATIONAL LEVEL

The national level is where overall political responsibility is located. It sets such country-wide policies, legislations, regulations and strategies as development plans, natural resources management regulations, and others, several of which directly or indirectly address the various development challenges facing the country (national development plans, tax laws and their application, and others). As such, the national level creates the appropriate climate and provides the necessary incentives to encourage development and investment opportunities. It also provides the overall guiding framework within which lower levels operate. National government priorities are defined and implemented through budget allocations and can, therefore, facilitate programme implementation across different levels. Box 2 below provides an assessment of what could happen if there is neglect on the part of national institutions.

This is particularly true under unstable conditions as is the case in some such ESCWA member countries as Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine or the Sudan. Box 2 discusses the case of marshes in Iraq as an example of an ecosystem suffering from both deliberate bad policies and political instability. It also discusses recovering needs and planned efforts after decades of neglect and mismanagement.

Box 2. Iraq: Effect of national policies on development and the environment

Livelihood context and assets/formulation: Rural areas in Iraq have suffered from neglect for decades, which lead to widespread degradation. Farmers have suffered from neglect and lack of support, which has forbidden them to sustainably increase and improve their production systems. The absence of special programmes for training and capacity-building, particularly for women and youth, the lack of adapted and adequate legislations and the growing scarcity of water coupled with its poor management are leading to serious deterioration of the agricultural sector, an increase in soil salinity and encroachment of desert and desertification. In particular, the marsh ecosystem, which experienced sustained man-made water shortages, recorded a serious degradation of its environment due to an increase in soil salinity. As a result, crop production and fishing have both declined substantially and the population has migrated in search for alternative sources of income. The main damages include the drying up of large marsh areas and the disappearance of biodiversity, notably the arundo cane and papyrus, a reduction of fish production, a deterioration of date quality and reduction of animal production, the extinction of rare birds, an increase in wind erosion, a deterioration of the water quality, the appearance of animal health issues and pollution by the use of chemicals which is negatively affecting the biodiversity.

Livelihood strategy and outcome/planning: Given the above serious threats facing the marshes of Iraq, it was felt necessary to devise a holistic plan for the renaissance of marshes. The strategy aimed at re-watering the dried marshes and improving the management of water including those of the Tigris and Euphrates, which feed the marshes. It also included capacity-building elements, facing and dealing with various international water treaties for water sharing, good water management and promotion of touristic activities. Close collaboration with national and international partners has been emphasized in order to encourage collaboration and benefit-sharing in environmental knowledge and management.

Implementation and monitoring/resource allocation: The operation of reviving the marshes started in 2003 but the drought waves of the last few years limited the positive results between 2008 and 2010. Considering the impact on women and youth, special programmes were implemented in order to improve their capacity in agriculture production and water management, among others, as it was felt that this could lead to a substantial increase in productivity and diversification of income through the implementation of small agricultural projects for women in both animal and plant production at the household level and the development of small agro-food industries using local agricultural raw material. Concomitantly, capacity-building exercises were conducted for young women on best agronomic practices, the education system was improved in order to reduce illiteracy, improvements of cultural, health and environmental awareness were achieved and a better and well-targeted extension service programme was established with a view to improve livelihoods and well-being in rural communities and thus achieve sustainable development. Other initiatives that could help improve rural livelihoods included improving post-harvest technology and marketing channels, promoting agricultural financing and improving land tenure and agricultural legislation on land rental and land use.

Under more stable conditions, interventions at the national level in rural areas try at a global level to improve education, health and service sectors beside the empowerment of productive sectors. In Oman, in order to empower women and younger generations, the government is promoting a credit system respectful of cultural and religious values in order to promote the development of remunerative activities. However, too much focus on marginalized and rural groups can take the form of direct support, namely periodic provision of aids (for orphans and marginal groups). This, of course, would be contrary to the whole idea of sustainability, while SLA emphasizes on limited aid accompanied by appropriate measures to allow the community or group concerned to become self-reliant.

The National level coordinates sector policies and branches of the government and, as such, contains many cross-cutting responsibilities and functions related to the coordination of lower-level authorities, notably those responsible for specific sectors. It is at this level that international relations and development cooperation are managed. The national level also ensures the successful implementation and management of international treaties and commitments and manages international migration and conflict resolution, which could affect the management and allocation of resources. Finally, international donors negotiate primarily with institutions at national level as wide-reaching policy dialogues occur at that level, and as donors tend to support countries based on identified national development objectives or overall budgets. Thus, the national level is important for setting the right conditions to enable the integration and implementation of SLA at all other levels. In order for SLA to be effectively integrated at the lower level, it needs to be integrated or considered in all functions at the national level (see Box 3). This type of commitment is usually long-term, and in most cases requires stability and a long-term vision of what kind of development is required and what path to be taken.

Box 3. Oman: National commitment to development and poverty alleviation

Context: Unlike many other developing countries, poverty has never been a problem in Oman. This is due to the oil revenues and a favourable cultural and social system. However, the system could further be improved in order to promote livelihood even more, especially that the existing social security programme, which is based on direct intervention, is proving unsustainable in the long run and thus could jeopardize the living conditions of marginalized groups. People at the threshold of poverty (mostly orphans, single women and elderly people) receive payments in the form of a monthly stipend and provision of aid, cash or in kind, in cases of disaster or emergency. The central government has different initiatives for different areas in order to improve living conditions and to increase opportunities, mainly for youth and marginalized groups.

Strategy and planning: The Omani economic vision for 2020 (“Vision 2020”) is (a) to have economic and financial stability; (b) to reshape the role of the government in the economy and to broaden its private sector; (c) to use a participatory approach; (d) to diversify the economic base and sources of national income; (e) to globalize the Omani economy; and (f) to upgrade the skills of the Omani workforce together with developing its labour force. The Vision also aims to provide an ongoing and comprehensive framework for the Omani economy that will enable the diversification of sources of national income by increasing the economic role of natural gas, industry, tourism, shipping, trade and exploitation of such mineral resources as copper, chromites, nickel, iron, gold and silver. Several programmes are being implemented in order to improve income generation and traditional crafts projects, to create earning opportunities for individuals, to raise their living standard, to upgrade skills and capacities and to review the status of those on welfare with a view to helping them acquire the necessary skills to start their own businesses. Furthermore, different types of youth projects aimed at improving their standard of living are being implemented. Examples of such projects are the Fund for the Development of Youth projects, the Sanad project, Intilaaqah programme, and Sufon al Shabab.

Outcome: Education: This sector evolved tremendously from three schools, 35 teachers and 350 male students before 1970 to more than 1,046 schools with 586,074 students, with a little more than one third being women. The country also has one governmental university, five private universities, and 40 governmental and private colleges.

Health services: This sector has also witnessed a great improvement from only four hospitals, five health centres, 13 doctors and 150 nurses in 1970 to 71 hospitals, 127 health centres, 3,150 doctors and 8,500 nurses, both male and female.

The case of Oman illustrates the type of commitment that could be required for national level actors to achieve development. This type of commitment is usually long-term, which, in most cases, requires stability and a long-term vision of what kind of development is required and what path should be taken.

1. Key issues

As a broad development tool, SLA needs to be mainstreamed into national governance structures and processes. This could be achieved through appropriate policies issued by such national-level institutions as the office of the prime minister or other higher offices. In most ESCWA countries, the adoption and integration of SLA at the national level will require some adjustments in the overall governance structure, policy formulation process, systems and procedures. The overall aim would be to put in place more flexible and forward-looking processes, whereby policies and decisions would take into account the prevailing livelihood context and assets and the envisioned livelihood strategies and/or outcome. This will entail a fundamental shift in approach in order to consider SLA as the overarching guiding principle in rural development. The case of Oman illustrates the type of commitment that could be required from national-level actors to achieve development.

2. Key players

Key national-level players would include such higher executive offices as the offices of the president or the prime minister, such key departments as those of finance, planning and development or public administration, and central-level bodies that coordinate other government agencies (for instance for disaster risk management, cross-sector coordination, environment, and technology adoption). Other important players would include parliaments, political parties, and donors as well as private-sector organizations, labour unions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with a national reach. All actors would have a role to play to facilitate the adoption and integration of SLA at the national level. This would include mainstreaming SLA into the policy-planning and policymaking processes; re-allocating public finances to support development; drafting an appropriate and supportive regulatory framework; strengthening public awareness of the need to adopt and apply SLA; and mainstreaming SLA into development cooperation.

3. Access to relevant data and information

An important prerequisite for informed decision-making on applying SLA is the need for appropriate data and information. This is especially important for data and information on the prevailing livelihood context and livelihood assets, as the availability of accurate data and information will determine the ability to devise targeted strategies and anticipate the likely outcome. Methodologies for collecting SLA-related data and information are provided in the DFID Guidance Sheets.³³

4. Appropriate regulations and incentives

At the national level, regulations and standards are also important tools to establish the enabling environment together with the provision of incentives so that development agencies and actors can be encouraged to integrate SLA within their activities. Such mechanisms can be used to ensure that SLA is considered while developing projects, delivering services and managing public assets. However, it should be ensured that these regulations, standards and incentives do not slow down the development process and that they are regularly updated in order to take into account changes observed and the evolving situation.

5. Linkages at international and regional levels

The integration of SLA will also need to be considered within the context of multilateral and regional agreements, which are usually the realm of the national level. Regional cooperation and agreements usually have consequences or implications on various development issues and might influence the choice of strategy

³³ DFID, 1999.

and thus the outcome. Such existing mechanisms under the League of Arab States as councils of ministers and joint bodies together with other major regional actors could provide added benefits.

There is a need to integrate SLA within various stages of the programme cycle at the national level. This is critical as it determines the way resources are allocated and therefore has significant downstream implications (see table 3 below).

TABLE 3. MAIN PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

Priorities	Suggested actions
Improve availability and quality of data and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve monitoring • Improve and detail data and information • Identify bottlenecks/constraints • Make a strong economic case for all investments
Incorporate SLA within national development policies	Include SLA into long-term vision and plans, notably those for poverty reduction and sustainable development
Adopt a government-wide approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve all key stakeholders and improve coordination • Review and adjust regulations to reflect SLA
Incorporate SLA into international cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage adoption through budgetary support and cooperation mechanisms • Support capacity-building efforts to better integrate SLA into programmes

Sources: Adapted from OECD, 2007; OECD, 2006a; OECD, 2006b; OECD, 2001; and IFAD.

B. THE PROGRAMME CYCLE

The programme cycle consists of the following four stages: formulation, planning, resource allocation and implementation.

(a) Formulation: This stage includes long- and short-term visions and strategies which provide the overarching frame for operational plans and resource allocation. Specific interventions call for a clear recognition of SLA within relevant national policies so that lower levels, namely sector/project and local levels, plans, policies and programmes, can also integrate it. SLA needs to be mainstreamed in policies, programmes and strategies. This means that it needs to be systematically applied; it has to be considered at the planning stage; its potential needs have to be assessed; and it has to be incorporated into existing policies and programmes;

(b) Planning: The planning stage involves the formulation and costing of plans, which translate policy objectives into operational action plans. Specific interventions consist of mainstreaming SLA into proposed sector plans and adopting proactive programmes or projects, specifically putting SLA into practice;

(c) Resource allocation: This stage corresponds to the translation of operational action plans into budgets. The national budget is the main instrument for operationalizing a policy as it provides a resource envelope with which development plans can be implemented;

(d) Programming/implementation: From the national-level perspective, programme implementation corresponds to the translation of national-level priorities and budgetary allocations into sector/project and local government-level plans and budgets.

To achieve this, not only integrated planning and implementation will be required but also great commitment on the part of all involved. Box 4 exemplifies the type of integrated planning and

implementation that could be required either at the national level or covering a large region as was the case in the development of the Farasan Islands of Saudi Arabia.

C. DONOR SUPPORT

Donors and other development partners play a significant role at the national level in some countries. They provide support to identified priorities through existing institutional setups. They support direct and indirect opportunities for fostering development and thus for improving livelihoods, but can also raise such concerns related to sustainable development as threats to the environment, rising inequalities, resource depletion and degradation and advise on the kind of strategic interventions or precautionary measures that are needed.

Well-targeted aid serves also as a vehicle for raising awareness on the importance of applying SLA for programme planning and implementation through the selection of those investments or activities that will have maximum impact at community level (acquisition of appropriate technology and techniques and provision of services, among others). However, aid should be evaluated against objectives set in development plans and other national priority-setting exercises to determine whether all considerations for an appropriate development have been integrated during the planning process.

Donor support can help introduce new ideas or techniques that are not well known. It can assure the opportunity for successful pioneer interventions that can later be adopted by governmental bodies. In such cases, the orientations of donors serve as precursors for interesting sustainable sectors. Numerous examples could be given: the introduction of *zaatar* cultivation in Lebanon; the introduction of solar energy in Yemen; the introduction of bioenergetic methane production; and water treatment units, just to name a few.³⁴

Box 4. Saudi Arabia: Development of the Farasan Islands

Context: The Farasan Islands are located in the Red Sea in the far southwestern part of Saudi Arabia. It is an archipelago consisting of 84 islands with a total area of 702 km² and 18,000 inhabitants. There are mostly rural settlements and people live on agriculture, fishing and the production of traditional artifacts. The islands show a wide diversity from rocky coasts rich in corals to shallow sandy coasts. Fishing is the main source of income on the islands as agriculture suffers from water shortage and rain scarcity despite the availability of good agricultural lands. The islands offer tourism potential because of the abundance of corals and animal diversity in addition to monuments from various historical periods. Geological prospection revealed substantial deposits of sodium chloride and potassium. In 1989, parts of the islands were turned into a marine reserve. The Saudi Government is aiming for the sustainable development of the islands with a focus on developing income-generating activities through increased tourism and improved livelihoods. Other priorities include the conservation and protection of wildlife and natural resources and the improvement of health services, education and food security.

Strategy and planning: The Farasan Islands project addresses the following strategic issues: (a) improving sustainable livelihoods to ensure easy access to all basic amenities and services; (b) reducing degradation and depletion of natural resources; (c) utilizing the diverse available capitals for socio-economic development; and (d) promoting a green economy along with the preservation of the biological diversity and the environment. It thus intends to reduce poverty through the development of fisheries, empowering local people, encouraging the sustainable exploitation of marine resources, and promotion of a good institutional environment. The aim of the project is the transformation of the islands into an attractive touristic hub and their development based on the sustainable use of their resources. Specific priorities include: (a) improving the educational level; (b) developing the internal road network that connects all promising tourist sites on the islands and linking the islands with other parts of the Jazan region and the entire kingdom; (c) improving sanitation to meet international standards; (d) developing small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs) in traditional crafts; (e) increasing private sector participation in all sectors, particularly tourism; (f) responsibly using such natural resources as corals, pearls and fisheries; (g) creating incentives to encourage the private sector investments; (h) marketing the products of the islands; (i) raising institutional capacity to promote small businesses on the islands; and (j) promoting charity organizations that support social development.

³⁴ ESCWA, 2010b; and ESCWA, 2009b.

Box 4 (continued)

Implementation and resource allocation: To this end, the project is building capacity so that the islanders can better contribute to the planning, management and implementation of local activities through a decentralized mechanism. This is being done in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector. Achievements so far include 35 schools, one hospital and three primary health centres, a water desalinization unit producing 1,500 m³ per day assuring clean water for more than 95 per cent of the population, electricity coverage up to 99 per cent of all households, establishment of good marine connections between Jazan and the islands, and provision of incentives to the private sector to invest in the least developed areas. However, additional investments and commitments are needed to go even further.

Evaluation and building on success: Evaluation and follow-up conducted in collaboration with local stakeholders suggest the following: As to agriculture, there is a need to increase water storage capacity; to enhance the reuse of waste water in agriculture; to establish research centres on fish with a training component; and to improve fishing ports. There is a need to develop SMEs for traditional artifacts and to develop the processing of fish. As concerns tourism, there is a need to build an airport; to enhance marine transport; to complete road connections between islands and with the rest of the country; and to modernize the management plan for the reserve, including its marine aspects.

II. INTEGRATING SLA AT SECTOR/PROJECT LEVEL

The sector/project level includes bodies with policy and planning authority and functions within a given sector at the level of a nation or region as well as those that are charged with the execution of a particular activity or set of activities, whose basic objectives and parameters have already been set, typically at the sector level. Policy decisions taken at this level directly affect activities within this sector, and have an indirect impact on other sectors. Examples include transport, agriculture, energy, public works, health and education. Projects have been integrated at the sector level as they share the same characteristics seen above, even though projects tend to be slightly more detailed and focused and are usually time-bound.

Box 5. Sector/project level key highlights

Importance:

- Sets policy and planning for a given sector (water, transport, energy, education, health, agriculture).

Key issues:

- Management at sectoral level;
- Coordination at local level.

Key players:

- Line ministries;
- Projects;
- User's associations;
- NGOs.

Data and information:

- Detailed (e.g. input need, prices, pest infestation, machinery use, water allocation, etc.).

Sources: Adapted from OECD, 2007; OECD, 2006a; OECD, 2006b; OECD, 2001; and IFAD.

A. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

1. Importance of the sector/project level

Policies and programmes with a sector/project-wide reach include, for example, infrastructures, pricing commodities and technology use, notably in agriculture or the environment, but also such issues as school curricula. Sector/project-level interventions are crucial for integrating SLA into development planning. Development tools and methods to be used will vary significantly between sectors/projects and, as such, important steps and decisions on how to apply SLA will have to be made at this level. Certain sectors/projects do play an especially important role in development and therefore need to be given special attention and priority in sector/project policy and planning. Key sectors/projects include, for example, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, water resource management, human health, nature conservation, energy, transport and infrastructure, while the impact of others might be less apparent in the short run. Box 6 below illustrates the development of pilot farms in Wadi Araba in Jordan, which promoted agriculture development in a defined area and thus improved livelihoods by providing stakeholders with alternative means of deriving income. The project was instrumental in promoting sustainable development in the area covered by the project.

Box 6. Jordan: Pilot farm project in Wadi Araba

Context: The establishment of pilot farms in the Wadi Araba region was executed by the Jordan River Establishment. The project focused on three villages (Al Risha, Bir Madkour and Grandal) with a total of 2,130 inhabitants. The project is based on 200 dunums* of cultivated land in Kaa el Saadiyin and comprises an animal farm, a water harvest basin, a drip irrigation system and production units of diverse vegetables and fruit trees. In addition to the rehabilitation of roads, the project also aimed to develop integrated farms. The project was selected as a priority by the local communities in the area in order to improve the productivity and social status of the population. Income-generation activities of the project are based on productive, improved and diversified agriculture.

Strategy: For project implementation, an innovative approach was adopted. It is based on an agreement (Cooperative Grant Agreement) between the ministry in charge and the executing non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which promotes the active participation of target communities so that the project objective and outcome can be widely disseminated and ensure the active contribution of communities. This contribution will be institutionalized through the establishment of local committees that can ensure efficient contribution from various stakeholder groups, including women. These committees will be made up of representatives of the local community and its responsibility will include to outline the needs of the communities and to prioritize them in collaboration and coordination with the various stakeholders. The committees will also contribute to the execution of projects and guarantee local contributions; find a suitable local framework in order to better assign ownership; and contribute to the execution of activities identified and requested by local communities, including the provision of financial support generated from auto-generated revenues.

Implementation: The projects created 15 fixed jobs and more than 4,243 part-time jobs. The local community benefited from the project since it took advantage of the introduced new and improved production systems and the restoration of animal husbandry in the area. The establishment of a cooperative for the three villages helped overcome problems between the tribes in the region. The project also improved animal production systems as it transformed the activity into an additional income source instead of remaining an unproductive or deficit-generating activity; and it encouraged the better use of water resources through the promotion of on-farm water harvest and the introduction of such adapted new farming methods as a mechanical forage system. The establishment of a reservoir of 250,000 m³ of water capacity created a sustainable source of irrigation water that could help overcome water shortage and ensure flexibility to farmers in the region so that they were able to diversify their production system and to increase their yields through complementary irrigation of rain-fed fields. The rebuilding of the trust of local communities towards governmental initiatives was a result of the transparent measures adopted during implementation and the participatory approach adopted at the various stages of the project, from the selection over the planning to the execution and training phases. The result was a sustainable functioning of the project in all its components. Another output of the project was the shift towards organic farming by the cooperative with the help of the ministry. A certificate was recently obtained from Quacerta, a Lebanese certification body for organic farming accredited by the European Union, thereby making the cooperative the first of its kind in Jordan in this field. In addition to vegetables, it produces aromatic plants, grapes and citrus fruits.

* 1 dunum = 1,000 m².

2. *Key issues*

Box 7 below overviews some key queries that can guide the identification of the key issues at the sector/project level and thus direct the design and planning process of the various programmes at this level.

Box 7. Key questions for the sector/project level

- What are the objectives, proposed mechanisms and instruments available for implementation?
- Is it a priority for development and how does it contribute to development objectives?
- What alternatives are available?
- What are the key linkages with other sectors and the local level?
- What are the areas of conflicts?
- What institutional capacity is required or needed?
- What kind of coordination mechanisms with other sectors and levels exist?

3. *Key players*

The main players at this level include sector ministries, sector-specific commissions, parliamentary committees focused on sector issues, projects, donor agencies, users associations and NGOs with a sector focus.

4. *Access to relevant data and information*

Obtaining relevant and sufficiently detailed data and information is important for policymaking as well as programme planning and implementation at this level. The availability of relevant data and information will allow the identification of appropriate actions to be taken; the identification of new opportunities; prevention of and preparedness for disasters; and the reduction of vulnerabilities and risks.

5. *Sector interactions*

Sectors cannot be viewed in isolation as there are always linkages between them. For example, the health sector has strong ties to most other sectors, including water, agriculture and energy. Thus, SLA should take explicit account of opportunities for coordination and integration with other sectors at the planning and programming stage.

B. APPLYING SLA AT THE SECTOR/PROJECT LEVEL

1. *Formulation of plans and programmes*

The formulation stage sets out the broad objectives to be pursued in the sector over a given time period, the main approaches to be employed and the associated activities to be implemented to facilitate the reaching of those objectives. Policy formulation at the sector level provides a key entry point for applying SLA by identifying actions needed, based on development priorities and an integrated approach for mainstreaming SLA in the formulation of sector/project policies and strategies, and by making the necessary adjustments. The effectiveness of a development project, whether it applies SLA or not, should be assessed as a function of the type of benefits it provides, the activities it supports, and the geographical area it covers. Benefits may be direct or immediate (productivity achieved, jobs created, access to water and sanitation, among others) or indirect or long-term (change in overall socio-economic conditions or well-being, improved skills/education). At this stage, projects should be assessed for whether they are taking SLA into account or whether they will improve the livelihood assets of the people in the long run.

2. Planning

The sector/project plan translates the strategy into a set of concrete actions by specifying in more detail the various investments and activities to be implemented over a given time period in order to reach the objectives of the sector/project-wide policy. This often includes specification of the number, type and location of activities to be implemented. In many cases, the national-level plan will be translated into more detailed plans for different parts of the country. At this stage, an in-depth assessment should be undertaken in order to have a better view of the prevailing context and the available assets so as to better identify the most appropriate result. Various techniques are available to assess and prioritize strategies, which are cost-benefit analyses, cost-effectiveness analyses, multi-criteria analyses or even expert judgment, to name a few.

Box 8 below illustrates the design and implementation of a sectoral project in Egypt promoting improved livelihoods in rural areas. Various key stakeholders were involved in planning and implementation and local ownership was emphasized throughout the project.

Box 8. Egypt: Sohag Rural Development Project

Livelihood context and assets/formulation: Sohag is one of the poorest governorates in Egypt. Its population of three million is 77 per cent rural, with about 209,000 farming and 150,000 landless households on limited land suffering from poor drainage. Livestock, wheat, sorghum, *berseem* (clover) and cotton are the main crops. About 70 per cent of the adult population is illiterate (84 per cent of women) and 30 per cent of the villages has neither potable water supply nor health facilities, and 90 per cent have no sanitation. In order to tackle the prevailing poverty, the Government of Egypt created, in 1994, the National Programme for Integrated Rural Development (Shrouk) with the long-term objective of promoting the decentralization of rural development to local communities, using village structures as the base while promoting close collaboration between ministry representatives, popularly elected local councils and members of Shrouk (government, NGOs and local volunteers). Another key feature of the project was to commit local communities to share the costs of infrastructure development.

Livelihood strategy and outcome/planning: The strategy behind the project was to support sustainable development of rural Sohag villages through a participatory approach. The focus was on improving income and life quality among rural communities, assuring equitable access to credit for rural poor, youth groups and unemployed women, conserving natural resources and improving environmental management. The project also supported community-based and private management of public local services and rural infrastructures and improved operation and maintenance by helping local communities to develop cost-recovery mechanisms. The project comprised three main components: (a) institutional strengthening (supporting local institutions and administration); (b) village infrastructure (developing local infrastructure including water supply and sanitation, irrigation, roads, and developing agriculture and social infrastructure); and (c) rural finance (developing microfinance).

Implementation and monitoring/resource allocation: The implementation of the project relied on popular participation in planning and decision-making. A village priority development plan was developed, and the Sohag Village Council decided on implementation mechanisms in collaboration with a line ministry, a local NGO and a private contractor. Training was the most important activity as it impacted institutional capacity at different levels (conception, field monitoring, supervision, coordination and reporting). A positive outcome was the enhancement of the quality of design of the various sub-project works and, notably, the improved quality of construction and the transfer of experience. In total, 438 infrastructural sub-projects were completed covering ten sectors and operating throughout the entire Governorate of Sohag, thus benefiting around 650 villages or around two million people. There was an improvement in income and quality of life for concerned rural communities though the rural credit scheme failed to induce on-farm technology improvements and to spur rural-based investments, which in turn would have helped diversify rural activities, thereby leading to the sustainable intensification of the agricultural sector.

Box 8 (continued)

Evaluation and building on success: The Sohag Rural Development Project was a pioneering project in the utilization of the participatory and gender-inclusive approach. It led to the institution of participatory frameworks with large infrastructure projects moving away from small-scale pilots. Those features were innovative precursors to the decentralization agenda. Although the implementation resources remained in the hands of the local government rather than local communities, those communities participated in decision-making, fund utilization and priority setting. The participation of women in decision-making was enhanced. By the end of the project, around 33 per cent of committee members were women, as were 27 per cent of general board members of participating NGOs. As to microcredits, around 43 per cent of loans were given to females. The project had a positive environmental and social impact, largely because of a reduced exposure to water-borne health hazards as a result of the water supply and sanitation projects. Other social benefits were derived from the improved access to such social facilities as social youth centres, schools and clinics. Environmental and health-awareness training was also provided. The project had a good impact on institutional capacity-building. However, it is necessary to stress more on building capacity in designing, managing and implementing future rural development projects. This is so because in such highly complex projects, there is a need to ensure clear and concrete synergies between the various components.

3. Resource allocation

Once all options have been considered, the next step is to integrate and implement the programme. For a better incorporation of SLA into sector/project activities, the use of the sustainable livelihood framework should be included among the range of criteria used to screen programmes and projects. Both top-down and bottom-up approaches need to be used in order to have a better view of the extent of the livelihood context and livelihood assets so as to be able to better identify all necessary measures including those that cut across jurisdictional and sector boundaries. The reason is that, for example, agriculture development may require substantial investments in water infrastructures or in the elaboration of water allocation mechanisms that could be beyond the reach of the agriculture sector budget and personnel alone but that could be easily handled within the water sector.

4. Monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation stage consists of the assessment of progress against set targets and objectives. Monitoring and evaluation instruments include an array of reporting tools, including budget execution reports and budgeting. Considerable investment is needed at the sector/project level to support monitoring and evaluation as they could help identify weaknesses and newly arising opportunities. Monitoring programmes will require the careful selection of criteria and indicators and a good collection of data and information strategy in order to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. Monitoring and evaluation should also include relevant stakeholders in order to ensure a broad consensus.

Box 9 below provides an illustration of an agriculture-oriented development project in Palestine. It describes the overall context, the strategy followed, achievements during implementation, and monitoring and identifies key players.

**Box 9. Palestine: Sustainable development in the Furush Beit Dajan village,
Jordan Valley District**

Livelihood context and assets/formulation: The village of Furush Beit Dajan is located in Jericho in the Jordan valley. It is occupied and suffers from dismembering practices, which deprive its residents of such basic necessities as water, electricity, health centres, education and safety and leads to their displacement. Although agriculture is the main source of income, most of the land in the area has been confiscated by Israel. The village has only one well, and it has been prohibited to dig others. The lack of water for irrigation and the high price of seeds and agricultural input impede further agricultural development. The target population numbers about 1,200 people, including children, women and youth.

Box 9 (continued)

Livelihood strategy and outcome/planning: The objective of the project was to strengthen livelihoods in Furush Beit Dajan and to ensure sustainable development. The project intended to improve the living conditions of 220 families through: (a) activating an agricultural cooperative that could assist agricultural development in the village, to enable farmers to reclaim and cultivate 3,000 dunums* using energy pumping, and to provide machinery and agricultural inputs at a reasonable price; (b) assisting 170 students to continue primary education; and (c) improving living conditions through such infrastructure development as building a 300 kW generator based on solar energy, improving the health-care system, and establishing a social centre. Sustainability will be ensured through the cooperative and through training and capacity-building in advanced adapted productive technologies.

Implementation and monitoring/resource allocation: The project was implemented through a participatory approach. Training programmes were conducted for members of the cooperative in management and farming. It also developed necessary infrastructure and distributed input. In order to empower farmers, the following was implemented: (a) formation of local committees, activation of a cooperative and raising contributions from beneficiaries to enable farmers to reclaim and cultivate 3,000 dunums; (b) distribution of machinery and agricultural inputs at reasonable prices; (c) installation of solar power units for the production of 300 kW; (d) establishment of storage facilities; (e) helping more than 170 students to continue primary education by improving living facilities; and (f) implementation of a summer camp for children to teach them about land exploitation. Other activities included the establishment of a library in the village and a playground for children, in addition to training on new agricultural techniques and organic planting to save water and reduce chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and training on traditional food processing for women.

Evaluation and building on success: The evaluation was conducted in stages during the implementation process by means of periodical monitoring reports. A first main report was produced three months after the project startup while the final evaluation of the project will be contained in detail in the final report. The project started with pioneering women and gradually more women joined once they were convinced about the outcome.

Key players (stakeholders, beneficiaries, etc.): Women stakeholders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the Rural Development Association (RDA) were closely involved during implementation. This ensured that the activities designed served marginalized rural areas, and the area of interest changed to include the entire population regardless of gender. Direct beneficiaries were farmers of the Furush Beit Dajan village, mainly 1,200 Bedouin inhabitants. They benefited from agricultural activities and the cooperative. Meanwhile, the whole community benefited from other infrastructures, namely the solar-based generator, improved health care and the new community centre. The indirect beneficiaries were the land owners (Bedouins) of Furush Beit Dajan, farmers, producers of vegetables and citrus fruits, neighbouring villages, traders and all rural Palestinians living in the Jordan valley, north of the West Bank and Nablus.

* 1dunum = 1,000 m².

C. DONOR SUPPORT

Development cooperation is often earmarked for specific sectors/projects. Donors typically specify the sectors/projects that will benefit from development assistance, which is often planned and implemented on the basis of the sector-specific policies or programmes of a particular donor that set the objectives and overall guidance for cooperation. SLA-based programmes and activities are usually supported by donors as part of regular development assistance, especially when aimed at the support of certain sectors (water, agriculture, and others).

Donors can play two roles to enable the integration of SLA at the sector/project level. If they provide development cooperation through project support, they can integrate the application of SLA within programmes and activities in which they are involved. They can also contribute to efforts to enhance the use of SLA at the project level by other partners through the development and sharing of relevant assessments,

frameworks, and tools that could also be of use to other partners. Box 10 below describes a food security project in the Sudan. The project was funded by FAO and executed by the Government of the Sudan.

Box 10. The Sudan: Special Programme for Food Security

Livelihood context and assets/formulation: The World Food Summit endorsed the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) initiated by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to address problems of food insecurity in low-income food-deficit countries. The Sudan is one of the countries that requested and received assistance from FAO under SPFS. Five representative sites have been chosen based on their status as chronic or occasional food deficit. These were Khor Abu Habil in North Kordofan State, Lower River Atbara in River Nile State, West Omdurman in Khartoum State, White Nile and Northern State.

Livelihood strategy and outcome/planning: The project is focused on analysing and identifying the causes of food insecurity, alternatives for intensification and diversification of the livestock and crop production, improvement of water use efficiency, reduction of the large year-to-year variations in production and enhancement of local technologies and practices that have proven successful. At the socio-economic level, the project focuses on the diversification of income-generating activities for the low-income groups, integrating gender sensitivity in agricultural programmes, promoting social equity and conservation of the natural resource base.

Implementation and monitoring/resource allocation: The SPFS project introduced a number of approaches that promoted the long-term sustainability of the project. These included, among others, participatory planning, whereby all stakeholders (beneficiaries, staff, decision-makers, and others) are involved at all levels. It also introduced the notion of revolving fund in order to enhance the process of replication and expansion to new beneficiaries and new areas. Other innovative measures included the introduction of appropriate technical packages that aimed to increase vertical production, to improve agricultural performance, the setup and support of farmer organizations and cooperatives in order to enhance consensus and empower farmers in the decision-making process, to improve their managerial and marketing skills and to mainstream gender issues in the various fields of production, as a success of the project could improve income and livelihood drastically.

Evaluation and building on success: As major achievements, the project increased productivity, agricultural returns and income and allowed greater access to food as compared to traditional farming. This was associated with an increase in water harvesting and supplementary irrigation together with other irrigation techniques. The adoption and replication of new food and fodder production and the involvement of women in production improved livelihoods. The project also contributed to an increasing awareness of the students in environmental issues, especially those related to ecological and agricultural issues. The consumption rates of main crops increased and the nutritional status improved parallel with the increasing availability of food and the diversification of production. The implementation of the revolving fund increased the number of beneficiaries, and farmer organizations enhanced the process through technology application and facilitating the availability of services. Regarding gender issues, one of the objectives of the programme was gender equity and mainstreaming. Women participated in all aspects of the project, including organizational matters and cooperatives management.

III. INTEGRATING SLA AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

The local level is the stage of administration and analysis closest to people and their everyday activities. Local decision-making levels can range from individuals to municipal governments, while local administrative levels can range from villages to municipalities and districts. Local administrative entities manage the resources and affairs of people living in the defined geographic unit or territory.

This section tries to contextualize the process of integrating SLA into development planning and implementation at the local level by highlighting some of the unique circumstances present at that level. It highlights the roles of local governments, communities and civil society as well as the private sector in integrating SLA into development activities and tries to link local SLA initiatives to those at national and sector/project levels. Moreover, it briefly discusses the role donors could play at the local level.

Box 11. Local level key highlights

Importance:

- Implementation of national, sector/project and local plans;
- Immediate outcome visible.

Key issues:

- Impact on poverty alleviation and well-being;
- Multiple activities implemented concurrently;
- Decision-making by stakeholders.

Key players:

- Local government (services, priorities, etc.);
- Communities (social networks, social services, etc.);
- Civil society (management, capacity-building, assistance, services, etc.);
- Private sector (jobs, services, use of local resources).

Data and information:

- Need balance between long- and short-term goal;
- Activities are event-driven (disasters, short-term benefits);
- Data very detailed (age, community school enrollment, etc.).

Sources: Adapted from OECD, 2007; OECD, 2006a; OECD, 2006b; OECD, 2001; and IFAD.

A. IMPORTANCE OF THE LOCAL LEVEL

The usefulness of SLA becomes apparent at the local level. Its outcome is manifested through higher incomes, improved productivity, protected natural assets, and, more generally, improved well-being. Changes in the livelihood context and capital assets directly affect local activities, economy, and others, and thus local livelihoods. Interventions aimed at livelihoods, from national over sector/project levels to the local level, are translated into localized outcomes, which are dependent on the capacity of each individual and each community and on the prevailing environmental, economic and socio-political factors. These outcomes might differ from one community to the next and shape the way in which people are able to act against poverty, to cope and recover from various risks and vulnerabilities (floods, droughts, climate change, lack of institutional and legislative support, among others), or, simply, to take advantage of the opportunities available (institutions, services and others).

The anticipated results and actual experiences in implementing SLA shape decision-making and actions at the local level. Individual and household decisions about livelihood strategies and investments can represent real-life demonstrations of how to actually apply SLA. Those demonstrations can be monitored and evaluated in order to derive the potential impact of the advocated policies, programmes and projects and how people and their community could take advantage of the opportunities that would be offered through the implementation of SLA. This could provide a basis for scaling up, revising, and learning.

Activities being implemented to reduce poverty, improve nutrition and education, promote sustainable livelihood opportunities, and improve availability of information should also enhance the local capacity to apply SLA. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that, while the integration of SLA into policies, plans and programmes is important for sustainable development, it is not easy to generalize the process through which this occurs or should be facilitated. The more localized the scale of analysis and action, the more

difficult it will be to develop broadly applicable guidance on how to design and implement successful SLA-based projects.

Local SLA activities can be linked to those at the national and sector/project levels as SLA decision-making involves different scales and actors depending on the level chosen. As such, decision-making at the local level can be done by individuals, households, and/or such collectives as cooperatives, community-based organizations, businesses, and local governments, while decision-making for the local level usually takes place at such higher levels as the provincial or central government levels as well as in multilateral and bilateral development agencies. Local actors should therefore both benefit from and shape SLA decision-making at other levels in order to ensure successful implementation of SLA-based projects and actions.

B. KEY ISSUES

1. *Characteristics of the local level*

In this paper, the local level is addressed without distinguishing between rural and urban settings, though it is recognized that, under certain circumstances, both settings might display very different characteristics, particularly when it comes to the type of livelihood activities needed. In the discussions below, reference is made mostly to rural areas, although some of the guiding principles could also apply to urban areas.

Poverty is a major determinant of the livelihood conditions at local level. Lower-income groups are usually the poorest as a result of reduced capital assets (human, natural, physical, financial, and social). At the same time, they are faced with a less-welcoming context, including inadequate help from public institutions, lack of legal protection and higher risks and vulnerabilities due to weather, degradation, pollution, among others, all of which, if adequately provided, could notably improve their situation. As such, there are strong complementarities between reducing poverty and improving the livelihoods of the poorest. This is partly true because poverty reduction involves the need to improve the context, particularly through the provision of adequate infrastructure, services and assets. Higher incomes or better skills, for instance, can strengthen the capacity and ability of households to improve their overall well-being and to be less susceptible to the various risks and vulnerabilities.

Improved livelihoods often result from various strategies and activities already being undertaken as part of such regular development programmes as the collection and provision of adequate information, availability of good infrastructure and services, adoption of appropriate technology, ensuring of the presence of adequate social networks and institutional arrangements, and new management approaches. However, those efforts need to be strengthened or adjusted in order to improve both the overall context and assets.

Local governments create enabling environments for local development. Thus, good governance is a requirement for the adoption and implementation of SLA. Local governments should provide a supportive framework of norms, standards, financial incentives, and other types of knowledge, services and capacities to help individuals, households and community organizations take decisions and implement activities that will not have a negative impact on livelihoods both in the short and the long run. To this end, there should be an agreement among all relevant actors at the local level engaged in this process to provide clarity on what each of them should be doing either independently or collaboratively, as well as efforts to partner with potential external players as appropriate.

2. *Key players*

The following is a list of the major players at the local level:

(a) Local governments: The major role of local governments is to provide a political voice to the local population in provincial and/or national decision-making processes. Local governments are also

involved in development and their roles often include, among others, developing strategic plans for infrastructure, housing, land use and allocation, and the regulation of natural resources; delivering such public services as water and sanitation, health, law enforcement, education, emergency response, social protection, energy, and engineering and such public works as road repair and maintenance; and raising and managing local revenues. Revenue raising can involve such actions as collecting taxes or charges and allocating the finances to identified budget items in order to support development efforts. They also can be responsible for administrating/managing local resources, including human and physical resources, and collecting appropriate and relevant data and information, which can support development efforts;

(b) **Communities:** Communities are the ultimate beneficiaries of development policies and strategies. The incentives offered by government policies should encourage individuals, households and other collectives to take decisions that will improve their livelihoods and increase capacity to withstand, cope or recover from crises. The role of local communities includes documenting and sharing information on livelihoods, both context and assets. This information is usually diverse and detailed and might include such information as growing seasons, yields, local disease patterns and pest outbreaks, numbers of pupils in schools, human and animal health issues, availability of water, natural resources and environmental management, land degradation and desertification, and others. However, most of the time, communities lack the necessary technical know-how that would allow them to process and benefit from the above information, which is needed to help development efforts at the local level. Communities implement decisions and activities that were selected to enhance rural development. Communities are also usually involved in sharing experiences and lessons learned, particularly with neighbouring ones;

(c) **Civil society:** The local civil society includes community-based organizations, cooperatives and regional, national or international NGOs. They tend to be most directly aware of, and involved in, day-to-day issues at the local level. The role of civil society in the development process and the application of SLA includes the delivery of public services and the implementation of related programmes and projects. It also supports the establishment and enforcement of supportive policies and legislations and helps inform and promote transparency and accountability. Civil society also gathers and analyses local-level information relevant to risk, vulnerability, adaptive capacity, programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation and dissemination of best practices and assists in awareness-raising, which is an important precursor to action. Civil society actors are knowledgeable of the most appropriate means for delivering messages to communities and are therefore instrumental in helping local governments inform their constituents of new or revised plans and programmes. Capacity-building and training is another area where civil society organizations are usually involved;

(d) **The private sector:** Private-sector involvement is widely recognized as central to poverty reduction, as it provides economic opportunities and improved access to essential goods and services not efficiently provided by governments. Examples can include local and foreign-owned enterprises at different scales, from local restaurants and tourism operations to large manufacturing plants and finance institutions. In developing countries, small family businesses make up the majority of the private sector, but they still play a major role in knitting the community together. Moreover, businesses have a direct interest in boosting development. Widespread poverty can undermine businesses as they might seek markets elsewhere, thereby increasing their cost of doing business. Even more, they might lack the proper labour force, infrastructure, energy supply and/or transport networks needed for their businesses to thrive. Improved livelihoods can translate into competitive advantage, cost savings (but perhaps not in the short-term), reduced liabilities, and investor confidence.

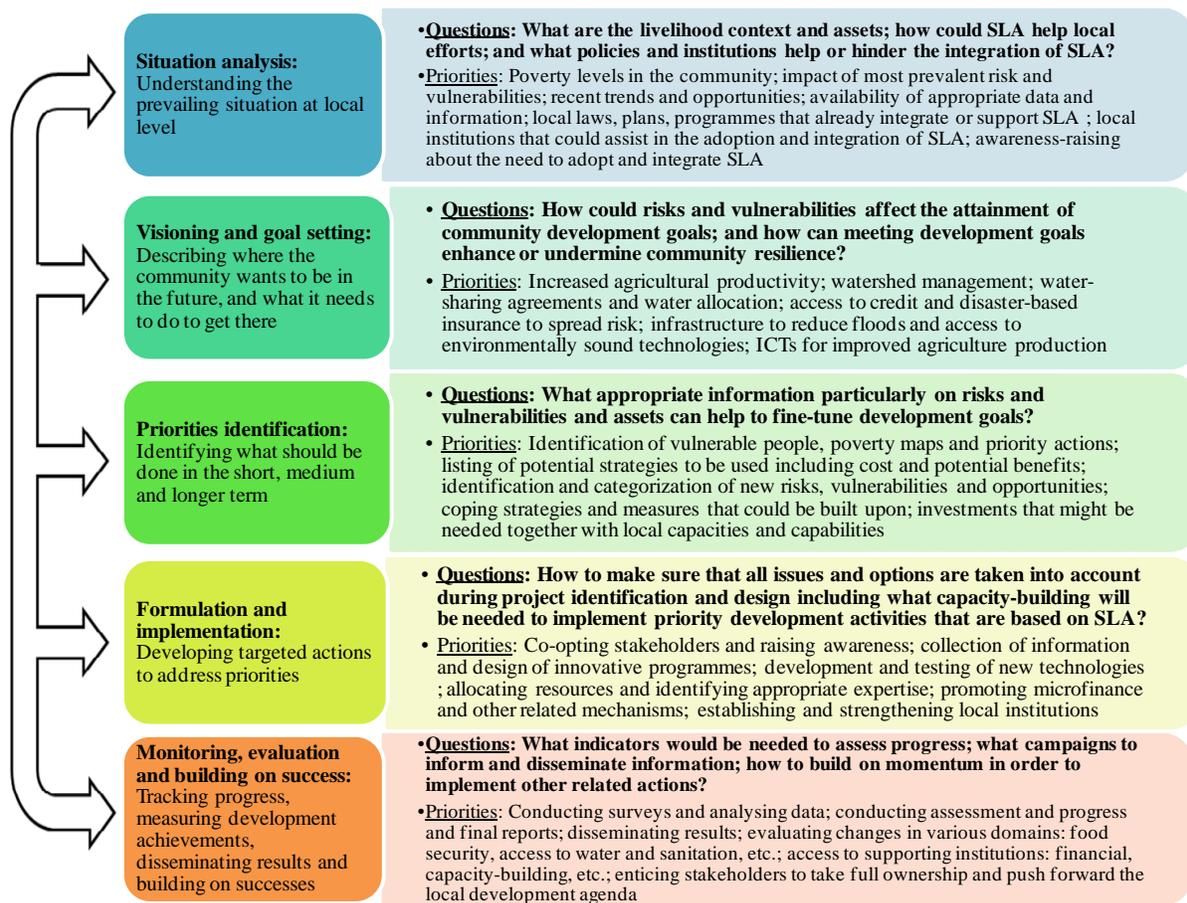
C. REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLYING SLA AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

1. *Elements for successful integration*

The successful integration of SLA-based programmes at the local level requires a broad and sustained engagement and participation with local stakeholders. To this end, local authorities need to move beyond

unidirectional, top-down relationships and reliance on technical experts, to adopting a collaborative approach where local actors are seen as legitimate decision-making agents. Participatory approaches using such specific tools as participatory budgeting will likely ease the integration of SLA into development plans and local programmes, but those tools have to be supported with awareness-raising and targeted messaging programmes on the need to adopt SLA in order to spur local development as local actors might need to learn more about the prevailing context and assets, how SLA-related activities might affect other activities, and what they can do to support local efforts and to help themselves to take advantage of the local development process. Awareness programmes would be conducted for local stakeholders (households, local organizations, opinion leaders and educators), while targeted messaging would rely on such media as local radio, stage plays, flyers, posters, workshops, video, and so on. Figure VI below lists a few steps to integrate SLA into local programme planning and implementation in the form of key questions.

Figure VI. Local planning stage: Key questions and priorities



Sources: Adapted from OECD, 2007; OECD, 2006a; OECD, 2006b; OECD, 2001; and IFAD.

2. Information requirement

Gathering and using appropriate information is also a major requirement to bring about the change needed at the local level. Individuals, households, organizations, businesses and local governments all need information to take decisions that will improve the capacity to deliver better services aimed at local development. The type of information each actor needs, and the way in which it is gathered, depends on the questions being asked and the output. This level and detail of information may be useful for framing the issues and obtaining general trends.

*Local actions are usually planned and managed on short-time scales while development and poverty reduction take more a long term horizon. As a result, the starting point for development at the local level should be by responding to current short-term needs whether or not they contribute to long-term development or poverty reduction. Proceeding this way should also help allay the concerns of the local population by showing them that things are moving so that they might be enticed to contribute more, in economic or non-economic terms, and to make them more amenable to much less popular decisions that might be taken.*³⁵

By adopting this methodology, decision-makers can take full advantage of available opportunities to integrate SLA into local development planning processes. These opportunities include appropriate development planning by local governments, adjusting the local regulatory and service-provision framework, setting appropriate accountability mechanisms and encouraging the participation of stakeholders, the private sector and civil society.

3. Development planning processes by local governments

Development planning is the process of setting goals for human and economic development, and designing strategies to achieve these goals through the allocation and management of human, financial, and natural resources. This is usually done through local development plans. Those local development plans and strategies focus on the distribution and management of natural resources in sustainable production systems and associated human resource development, in addition to the effective delivery of public services in order to protect and strengthen rural livelihoods, thereby contributing to poverty reduction and economic development at all scales.

4. Adjusting local regulatory and service-provision frameworks

Local government can promote the integration of SLA into programmes and activities by ensuring that there is an appropriate and widely understood information base about SLA and its potential benefits. Local governments can also adjust regulatory frameworks that allow for effective land-use planning and resource management.

5. Adjustment of accountability mechanisms (local government)

Targeted measures supporting local development activities that are based on SLA should be included in government accountability mechanisms. These include annual district performance reports.

6. Private-sector and civil society processes

Private-sector and civil society organizations can support development at the local level by internalizing and institutionalizing SLA factors into their own decision-making processes and operations, which could include the strategic planning process (business plan) and the business planning process. The business planning process can include managing activities; insurance (to protect against vulnerabilities and risks while not impeding development); private finance institutions that could support and motivate local-level development (provision of small-scale savings and loan products); and knowing the project cycles in order to programme entries.

D. DONOR SUPPORT

Donors interact with local actors both directly, namely with local governments and NGOs, and indirectly, through financial support provided through locally-based organizations usually at national or sector/project levels, to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate development programmes and projects.

³⁵ Schreckenberg et al., 2010; and OECD, 2001.

Donors play a major role at the local level through, for example, support for decentralization that may have important implications for the adoption and application of SLA. Whether focused on political, fiscal, and/or administrative decentralization, the aim of the process is usually to increase participation, government accountability, and to make public services delivery more efficient, accessible, and responsive to local needs. Local-level initiatives provide a better view to donors on the kind of actions needed locally and the existing relationship between decentralization and local adoption and implementation of SLA for development and poverty reduction. In any case, donors enable the adoption and implementation of SLA at the local level by either providing direct support to projects they oversee or by supporting the efforts of others and sharing data, information and tools that could be of use to their partners.

Boxes 12 and 13 relate the experiences of local development projects in Palestine and Yemen. The two projects were geared towards improving food security at the local level and closely involved stakeholders in all aspects of the projects, since their participation was necessary for the success of the projects.

Box 12. Palestine: SLA and food security project in Bani Shayla, Gaza Strip

Livelihood context and assets/formulation: The Gaza strip is witnessing unstable conditions and people are unable to assure their basic needs due to the scarcity of goods and local resources. The main productive activity in the Gaza strip is agriculture, and many projects have been implemented. Most focused on rural development, reduction of poverty and food security under uncertain conditions. Those projects included the development of household gardens, animal production and small agricultural projects using drip irrigation in order to save scarce water resources. Most projects were small-scale due to the unavailability of cultivated lands. The village of Bani Sheyla is in a rural but densely populated area characterized by high joblessness and malnutrition especially among children. The village is located in the south of Gaza in the Khan Younis Governorate. The village relies heavily on agriculture to assure its basic food needs though cultivatable land and water resources are very limited.

Livelihood strategy and outcome/planning: The project consisted of developing roof-top gardens in order to improve the livelihood of poor families with a special focus on the landless. Specific objectives included: (a) empowering women to reduce poverty and assist their men in ensuring the livelihood of their families; (b) producing food free of agrochemical residues; and (c) assuring good quality food diversity (vegetables, medicinal plants, animal products, to name a few).

Implementation and monitoring/resource allocation: The roof-top garden project targeted poor families that did not have agricultural lands to cultivate. It started in 2007 with the help of experts who sought fifteen pioneering poor families. The association implemented 15 greenhouses on an area of 40 m² each with the financial support of an Italian non-governmental organization (NGO). After the first successes of the project, the network continued to finance on a yearly basis so as to reach 50 families. The roof-top gardens in most cases consisted of long cultivation trays, hosepipes for irrigation, a water tank, organic fertilizers, vegetables seedlings and/or seeds, and an animal production unit (ten hens, a cage and fodder).

Box 13. Yemen: Participatory rural approach: The case of Dhamar

Evaluation and building on success: According to beneficiaries, the project assures food diversity and quality and solves the problem of malnutrition. Poor families are now able to have their own garden on their roof. They can diversify their dishes by using molokhia, squash, eggplants, eggs, and more. Food quality is also improved. 70 per cent of the nutritional needs of people are assured through the project according to the beneficiaries, which lead to a reduction in the expenses for food. Sustainability is assured through the permanent coordination between association and beneficiaries and extension efforts in the field of plant production and protection as well as composting techniques, organic farming, and animal production. The beneficiaries contributed to the identification of needs; they are willing to continue, particularly women; there is respect for the prevailing culture and habits; there is a convenient capacity-building system; experts from the association provide continuous assistance; and evaluation meetings are held periodically.

Box 13 (continued)

Livelihood context and assets/formulation: Women in the Dhamar Governorate in Yemen strive to lift themselves and their families out of poverty through determination, education and their own empowerment, with the help of savings and credit associations promoted by a project financed by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Those women are generally hard workers and very good at multitasking. Their daily responsibilities include looking after the family, preparing food, farming, fetching water, collecting wood and looking after grazing animals. Women have been successful in taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the Dhamar Participatory Rural Development Project. The project focuses on 168 village units (336 families each) in eleven directorates and mainly on poor farmers who either hold less than 0.5 ha of land or are landless.

Livelihood strategy and outcome/planning: The project strategy is to empower local communities in priority setting for development activities and managing requested resources through participation in planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation of activities. All stakeholders are engaged in project implementation through an annual agreement which is subject to evaluation. The project is focused on improving food security, income and living conditions. The project will endeavour to empower the local population, especially women and poor agricultural rural families, to organize themselves and to participate in the project in order to eliminate illiteracy, build capacity, encourage a participatory approach and build governance skills.

Implementation and monitoring/resource allocation: The project has helped farmers in general and women in particular to combat poverty by providing support for literacy, skill development and savings and credit associations. The project implementation focuses on:

- (a) Infrastructures for social and basic needs (water, improvement of irrigation practices and storage capacity, rural roads, education, sanitary units, pilot farms and fields, among others);
- (b) Equipment to improve productivity for basic and market needs and to search for ways to improve income opportunities;
- (c) Training of trainers, extension agents, teachers in schools and farmers in the field;
- (d) Technical and management capacity-building of local authorities working in sustainable development in rural areas;
- (e) Field intervention through extension efforts in the areas of crop, bee and animal production and improved seed production;
- (f) Production of media programmes with the contribution of farmers on natural resources conservation, nurseries, home gardens, conservation, organization of ecological clubs, among others, and on the organization of marketing committees;
- (g) Rural financing and microfinancing for income generation activities.

Evaluation and building of success: Success stories were collected and show different experiences. Those success stories are a reflection of the improvements that individuals, families and communities are reaping through the participatory development approach. The Dhamar project appears to have triggered a ripple effect in rural areas of the governorate, with women learning and benefiting from each other's experience.

Key players (stakeholders, beneficiaries, and others): Direct beneficiaries include farmers, mainly women in the concerned villages in rural areas. The spreading of the know-how will spill over to other communities. The training of trainers will also increase the number of potential beneficiaries.

PART III

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS IN PRACTICE

The above discussions provided an overview of the sustainable livelihoods concept and how it could be integrated into policy and programme design and planning. The following part will now examine in more detail the issue of sustainable livelihoods in the development process with a special focus on practical applications in the ESCWA region. The aim is to outline a regional perspective and to enhance debates. Some of the challenging issues that could be tackled under the aspect of SLA include food security and agriculture development, natural resources management and such emerging issues as climate change or the development of the green economy. The case studies show how difficult and challenging projects could be enhanced if the broader SLA approach were to be applied.

I. SLA IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Two projects are discussed below: The first project shows how SLA can be applied to agriculture and food security with a focus on Lebanon, and the second project demonstrates how SLA can be applied to natural resources management in the Kurdistan governorates in Iraq.

A. LIVELIHOOD APPROACHES AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY: A PERSPECTIVE FROM LEBANON

The agricultural sector of Lebanon is faced with multiple challenges which include, among others, highly fragmented arable land, limited and uneven distribution of water resources, inadequate capacity of its agricultural labour, along with the public debt and unstable political situation. Past political unrest has left its mark on almost all aspects of life, whether economic, social or political, including the livelihood of the population. The agriculture sector is also complex as crops are more or less distributed by regions, with tobacco being mostly cultivated in the south, apples in the central mountains, and sugar beet mostly in the northern plains. This distribution reflects religious/confessional divides in Lebanon and, as a result, political realities have to be taken into account in addition to the many technical and economical challenges already facing the sector.

Poverty in Lebanon is relatively low although a large part of the population is at risk of becoming poor. Vulnerability is high particularly in rural areas where farming is the main source of income. Farmers are highly vulnerable particularly in situations of crisis or other disasters. Rural development programmes usually target people that face various challenges including low income, basic or no education, marginalization, lack of adequate financial resources and limited access to natural and physical resources. Using SLA helps examine the status of the poor and their distribution and thus facilitates planning the required actions needed to help them improve their well-being.

1. *Livelihood context and assets/formulation*

(a) Human: The human capital in rural areas can be described using various indicators, both quantitative and qualitative.³⁶ Poverty is inversely correlated with the degree of education, the lower the education the higher the incidence of poverty. Most farmers (77 per cent) are illiterate or have a very basic level of education and only about 13 per cent of all farmers are 35 years of age or younger, which might severely hamper the adoption of innovative practices.³⁷ Sources of information for farmers are also few. On the one hand, some NGOs try to provide relevant information through training, direct technical assistance and provision of means of production but they face multiple hurdles, including lack of funding and inadequate institutional setups. On the other hand, public technical support suffers from budgetary and human resources constraints, such traditional media as radio and TV do not provide much assistance in terms of agricultural development and the penetration of such modern media as the Internet in rural areas is still extremely low;³⁸

³⁶ The review below is primarily based on education and information provision.

³⁷ UNDP, Oxfam and Capacity Building for Poverty Reduction, 2009.

³⁸ Internet World Stats, available at: www.internetworldstats.com/me/lb.htm, Central Administration of Statistics (CAS) 2006 and 2008.

(b) Social: Lebanon has faced various phases of socio-political unrest and, as a result, a unique system was developed based on sect, tribe, family and political alliance or party, usually divided along confessional lines. The poorest are heavily dependent on this system: Even inside the same homogeneous community, cooperation may be lacking, and public social services are still weak or non-existent. Thus, for example, freshwater is abundant in Lebanon but only about 56 per cent of all households are connected to public water networks. In poor rural areas (the Akkar plains and the towns of Hermel, Bent-Jbail, Baalbeck and Hasbaya, to cite a few) and some urban suburbs (such as the southern suburb of Beirut), only about 20 per cent of dwellings are connected to public networks. The remaining households have to deal with poor quality water. Health-care centres are also abundant in Lebanon, but more than half of the Lebanese population (53 per cent) does not have appropriate health insurance and thus has to resort to poor quality health services. The percentage of uninsured people is even higher in rural areas;³⁹

(c) Natural: Poverty is highly correlated to natural capital especially in environments where people rely heavily on biodiversity, land and water use for their livelihoods. In Lebanon, the environment is considered a public good that belongs to no one and therefore is being degraded at unprecedented levels. Forests cover around 13 per cent of the territory, but tree cover is being decimated for household heating, construction, mining/quarrying, fires or other uses. The high prices of oil by-products exacerbate the problem even further.⁴⁰ The total potentially cultivatable area is around 300,000 hectares; however, it is subject to urban encroachment, land fragmentation and an inappropriate land tenure system. The demand on land for urban development is constantly increasing, driving the price of land higher and displacing traditional uses. The expansion of settlements is chaotic as there is no proper planning and issuance of licenses due to a lack of appropriate enforcement;

Water resources in Lebanon are sufficient to meet the current demand although water scarcity is increasing. Particularly during the summer months, the country suffers from hydrological deficits. It is estimated that the shortage in total water supply in 2010 was about 119 mcm (million cubic meter) and is expected to continue rising to reach 722 mcm by 2030. The shortage in water supply will negatively affect food production and could have such adverse socio-politico-economic impacts as decreased public health levels, decreased food security and increased poverty. Farmers will be among the most affected groups;

(d) Physical: The lack of adequate infrastructure is leading to a deterioration of living conditions in rural areas because of limited opportunities for employment and limited development of rural enterprises. Combined with the inadequate social service provision, this is leading to the abandonment of land as people seek better prospects in urban areas. Most public infrastructure is old and inadequate and, as a result, services are provided inefficiently. The main roads are in good condition but very congested and unsafe, while rural feeder roads are narrow, unpaved, and with low security standards. Electric power is unreliable and expensive compared to average income and to other countries. Water dams are scarce even though there is plenty of potential. Wastewater treatment facilities are lacking. Entrepreneurship and innovation is low and private physical capital in rural areas is scarce. All those shortcomings hamper rural development and thus the improvement of livelihoods, especially among farmers;

(e) Financial: Rural areas in Lebanon are faced with financial shortcomings which prevent major investments by farmers. Below are some major characteristics:

(i) Subsidies are provided for selected crops (tobacco, wheat and sugar beet) though they are being phased out, which is affecting the income of farmers concerned;

³⁹ CAS, 2006 and 2008.

⁴⁰ CDR and UNDP, 2001.

- (ii) Rural credit: The share of agriculture in total commercial credit is negligible (less than 1 per cent) due to the low number of rural banking institutions, the high risk associated with agricultural activities, the stringent collateral requirement, the inadequacy of good bankable projects and the lack of micro- and/or seasonal credits for the agricultural sector;⁴¹
- (iii) The Kafalat programme was designed to subsidize interest rates and to guarantee loans provided by commercial banks in rural areas and particularly to the agricultural sector. The share of credit attributed to the Kafalat programme is only 28 per cent of all subsidized loans;
- (iv) Microcredits are available through a few commercial banks and NGOs. However, the share allocated to agriculture is only about 10 per cent of the total of loans;⁴²
- (v) Other sources of financing include the provision of agricultural inputs by input supply companies on seeds, fertilizers and pesticides. However, interest rates are usually very high;
- (vi) Adequate marketing channels could offer a good source of revenues to farmers but these are dominated by a few intermediaries who tend to underprice agricultural products.

2. Livelihood strategy and outcome/planning

In order to focus discussions and provide appropriate illustration, the analysis in this section will focus on the Hilly Areas Sustainable Agricultural Development (HASAD) project, which is still in the planning process. The project will be financed by IFAD, the OPEC Fund for International Development and the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture and implemented by the Green Plan Programme, an ecological body under the ministry. The project is expected to reach about 6,280 households and will have two main components: (a) infrastructure development (mainly for irrigation); and (b) support to farmers. The area covered is the mountainous areas of Lebanon.

(a) Physical and natural aspects: Returns from rain-fed crops have proved low compared to irrigated ones. Thus, the project will aim to increase farm revenues through the development of the necessary infrastructure in order to provide farmers with irrigation water so as to stabilize their agricultural yields year-on-year. The project will build water infrastructures in selected hilly areas, and the amount of water to be stored varies depending on needs and emergency. Around 95 different potential sites scattered all over the mountainous areas have been identified in order to house medium to small water reservoirs to support the demand of water during dry seasons. Those sites were selected in order to benefit the greatest number of stakeholders possible. Among the site selection criteria were the presence of sufficient arable land, an appropriate cropping pattern, population density, poverty status, topography and the availability of water supply;

(b) Human, social and financial aspects: The project will also build farmer service centres (FSCs) that will provide essential support services and build the capacity of farmers in order to enhance their productivity capability. In addition to providing appropriate market intelligence, the range of services to be provided by these FSCs will be large enough to allow farmers to overcome most technical problems they usually encounter in relation to farm management, production and protection of crops and post-harvest techniques. A minimum of three FSCs will be established in three growth poles: North Lebanon, South Lebanon and Bekaa. Each FSC will be expected to provide the following three services:

- (i) Technical expertise (irrigation practices, water conservation, production and protection techniques and post-harvest techniques) and market intelligence (up-to-date market information and trends) both of which are usually lacking in most technical assistance provided to farmers at farm level;

⁴¹ UNDP and Oxfam, 2009; CAS, 2006 and 2008; Consultation and Research Institute, 2007; Banque du Liban, 2010.

⁴² ADR, 2005.

- (ii) Organization of farmers to increase their self-help and bargaining power by establishing and/or strengthening producer cooperatives. These cooperatives will be expected to assume such duties as procurement of inputs, storage services including provision of cold storage facilities, processing through locally-owned small food processing units and provision of related technical support to these units;
- (iii) Facilitation of access to low-interest credit schemes and development of bankable business plans for farmers and cooperatives. A resident business plan expert will be available to prepare business plans and feasibility studies to allow stakeholders to access the credits offered by various financial institutions. The same expert will also assist in training on the management of cooperatives.

3. Potential benefits of adopting an SLA approach

The HASAD project was not designed and planned with SLA in mind and as such could benefit from it in order to reassess some of the objectives of the project and the ways services will be provided. In particular, a more detailed profile of the assets of the population could be elaborated together with the overall prevailing context facing stakeholders. However, most of the major components of SLA were touched upon during the development of the project and therefore a future evaluation and reorientation of the project can easily benefit from SLA. Some of the benefits or interventions that SLA could bring to this project are provided in table 4 below.

Box 14. Implementation and evaluation: Integrated Rural Development Programme Baalbek-Hermel

The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was implemented in the Baalbek-Hermel area in the 1990s. The aim of the project was to control the growth of illicit crops in the area by providing those involved with alternative income sources and thus entice them to abandon the cultivation of those illicit crops. The expansion of illicit crops occurred during the civil war and, at its height, covered about 15,500 to 20,000 hectares. In 1997, it was decided to put an end to this cultivation through a combination of policing (law enforcement) and local development programmes. Thus, the IRPD of the Baalbek-Hermel area was started with a total budget of about US\$4.5 million and lasted for about 18 months.

The major achievements of the IRDP included the establishment of a revolving credit scheme to address the cash-flow problems of farmers; setting-up of a network of local development and credit committees to build up a participatory structure; rehabilitation of water supply systems for Baalbek and expansion of agricultural irrigation schemes; establishment of agricultural extension and research facilities and support to pilot alternative crop cultivations; rehabilitation and equipment of the government hospital in Hermel; training nurses in primary and advanced health care; and, provision of alternative income source for women through handicraft. A second phase of the project achieved the following results: maintaining and enhancing the credit scheme; integrating the development and credit committees and other stakeholders in an enhanced participatory development planning process; starting operations in primary health-care centres in Aarsal, Nabi Shit, Chmistar, Deir Ahmar and supporting the public hospital in Baalbek and Hermel; implementing an education programme including awareness-raising activities in 20 high schools; organizing a youth working camp with 60 participants in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the municipalities of El-Ain, Labwe, Zabboud, Bajjaje, and Jabboule; provision of computer training for 210 students for 18 months; provision of vocational training for 50 early school leavers; provision of literacy courses for 400 adults; and supporting local women NGOs in handicraft production and food processing activities.

In February 2001, an assessment of the IRDP of Baalbek-Hermel pointed to the following weaknesses:

- (a) Land tenure was inadequate as many farmers held no legal title to their lands, which created strong barriers to support such services such as credit, and prevented owners from appropriately developing water springs or dig wells;

Box 14 (continued)

(b) Insufficient number of qualified and experienced technical staff, which resulted in a chaotic implementation of activities and especially longer-term programmes;

(c) Technical staff spent a substantial amount of time responding to ad hoc requests, thereby being unable to implement agreed-upon plans.

As a result, the IRDP of Baalbek-Hermel was viewed by stakeholders as not having achieved its objectives. Among the impediments was the fact that it overlooked the historical problem of land fragmentation and formalization. The unformalized land tenure system was a major limiting factor affecting the development of microcredit schemes. The land could not be used as collateral because of the prevailing land tenure and, as a result, it was opted instead to accept individual guarantors. The system was quickly abused by applicants and a substantial amount of loans was used for such non-intended purposes as urgent household expenses. Moreover, the IRDP was not immune to political pressure. As a result, the implementation of the programme was negatively affected or lead to unintended results.

Had an appropriate SLA analysis been conducted, several of the above impediments could have been anticipated and addressed during the planning and designing stage. A detailed livelihood analysis would have allowed to assess the assets of stakeholders and to identify limiting factors, which would lead to the identification of landowners and landless tenants and their problems including the risks, vulnerabilities, institutions and processes (including the capacity of local and public institutions) faced. From there, more appropriate and focused strategies could have been developed in order to respond more effectively to the specific needs of all beneficiaries.

B. SLA AND NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT: A CASE STUDY FROM IRAQ

Between 2007 and 2009, Iraq experienced one of its worst droughts of the last few decades. Agriculture and animal farming were heavily affected and especially so in the mountainous Kurdistan Regional Governorate (KRG). As a result, the KRG is trying to develop a drought impact assessment and recovery and mitigation framework and as such requested UNDP to take the lead in developing a short- to long-term strategy and to provide practical advice in planning and implementing preventive measures. This case study presents this drought mitigation strategy under the aspect of SLA.

1. Livelihood context and assets/formulation

The KRG rural areas are mostly mountainous and are characterized by a wide and rich diversity which offers potential for development. The region has specific limitations and potentials in terms of local development, water management and conservation, and drought mitigation, which could be summarized as follows:

(a) Human: Basic education is of poor quality, and the region suffers from a lack of awareness on sustainable agricultural practices and sustainable livelihood systems. Rural livelihood systems are very fragile and unstable, with a high dependence on agriculture. This vulnerability and fragility of livelihood systems is increased by aged farmers and manpower;

(b) Natural: Water resources are abundant in most parts of the KRG as a result of relatively rich rainfall and the availability of rivers, streams and springs. However, the region is highly subject to recurring droughts. Rangelands are far from villages, which increases the stress on livestock. The KRG region is diverse with a lot of mountains and plains and a wide range of climatic conditions and microclimates. It has a relatively cold climate and its narrow lands and terrain with high slopes play an important role in the determination of crops and techniques to use. The plains are suitable for intensive agriculture, and the region specializes in greenhouse and cereals production. An important part of the region is covered with forests and

other wooded lands but these are scattered and not properly exploited. Natural and biological diversity have not been fully studied and much still needs to be discovered and understood;

(c) Physical: The water supply network is limited, the sewage system is often non-existent and the road network is old and no longer sufficient to meet the needs of the region in terms of transport. Mountain communities tend to rely more on water tankers than on municipal water supply networks, which do not reach most villages. There is no adequate infrastructure for irrigation and, as a result, only a limited amount of the total land is irrigated. Since 1991, the government has implemented several development projects in various sectors, but has neglected the agricultural sector though several local and international NGOs and organizations focused only on agriculture. The industrial sector is not well developed. Small industries and some handicrafts are developed in some villages. The long periods of instability and lack of appropriate governance have engendered numerous infrastructural problems, and the high rehabilitation cost is prohibiting meaningful development. Irrigated lands are taxed while rain-fed lands are not, and this further hampers investments in irrigation infrastructure;

(d) Financial: Markets are far away from villages, and this increases the difficulty to sell and buy crops and food. Credit facilities are inaccessible for most farmers and rural people. The high cost of agricultural inputs is a burden on the development of the agricultural sector. Fruits, cereals, and vegetables are important sources of income for rural households. People are abandoning agriculture and leaving their villages for better-paid and more stable jobs in urban areas. The abandoning of irrigated horticulture and rice for rain-fed cereal production (wheat and barley) resulted in the weakening of livelihood systems and a decrease in the village economy as vegetable crops and rice offered a better income than cereals. Some families have succeeded in diversifying their income by enrolling in government and civil service jobs, which provide stable income and builds the resilience of the society in times of drought and other natural risks. However, such jobs are a double-edged sword as they also encourage people to abandon agriculture and other production sectors in order to receive a stable but meager income;

(e) Social: The sociocultural diversity leads to variations in social organization, attitudes, and methods of managing collective goods and community resources. Harnessing this diversity in a sustainable manner is therefore an important issue for mountain areas. Social, health and environmental services are either inexistent or rare. Mountain dwellers are faced with serious health infrastructure deficiencies and lack of job opportunities and, as a result, tend to migrate to cities and are unwilling to return. The region also suffers from an unadapted land tenure system, which impedes investments in land. The political power has always played an important role in the decision-making process in addition to the tribal (in the extended family understanding) mentality and its direct link to local politicians. Several religious communities are living in the mountain and rural territories where the decision-making process is based on a combination of political, tribal and religious consideration;

(f) Other issues: For several years, the region and the country as a whole suffered from political unrest and war. Development priorities were always geared towards urban areas while little attention was given to the improvement of livelihoods in rural areas and particularly in mountain areas. Local producers face high competition from such imported goods as yogurt and cheese, and there is a lack of transformation units particularly for food processing, which is leading to the weakening of the local primary production system. The topography of the region is suitable for sustainable livestock production, mainly sheep and goat. The most important sources of drinking water are deep wells and springs, though most springs are drying up because of the repetitive droughts, the severe wars and the destruction that some of the villages experienced. The area being very rich in water, it should be possible to increase the irrigated surface through the installation of new irrigation systems and rehabilitation of the old and degraded networks though a few institutional changes would have to be made in order to encourage investments in irrigation infrastructures. Agricultural feeder roads should be developed and maintained. Forests, rangelands and other wooded lands should be properly managed as they could provide good sources of income in addition to their important contribution to the mitigation of climate change, conservation of the biological diversity, mitigation of the effects of droughts and combating desertification and land degradation. The diversity of the landscape and

altitude allows the production of a wide range of crops. Such good-quality traditional crops and produces as rice, Erbil yogurt, honey, and fruits should be encouraged and strengthened. Dams and rivers offer a high potential for fish production. Such new industries as ecotourism might be encouraged;

(g) Drought as a livelihood problem in KRG: The droughts of 2007, 2008 and 2009 were very severe and affected a population that was already suffering from the impact of previous drought spells. The droughts had a wide geographical reach and a disastrous impact on the lives of the Iraqi population. The limited access to water led to the erosion of livelihoods, migration to cities, a drop of summer and winter crop production, increase in unemployment, and such water-induced diseases as typhoid and diarrhea. Some government authorities stated that the adverse impact on the population was very severe mainly because of the drying-up of water sources (springs, deep and shallow wells); the bad management of water resources by authorities, communities and farmers; the increase in population, especially in urban centres; the development and construction operations requiring large amounts of water; the unavailability of long-term strategic water projects; and the lack of a long-term and comprehensive strategy to combat the impact of drought;

The population has developed different mechanisms to deal with the impact of drought. Those have ranged from deepening wells beyond 40 metres in an attempt to get water, buying or hiring water tanks to transport drinking water for their livestock and household use and to migrating to towns and cities where water was more readily available. Farmers considered selling parts of their lands, especially their orchards, in order to support their families. In 2007 and 2008, the Government of Iraq and the KRG declared drought and made available a wide range of resources for emergency purpose. Only relatively limited resources were made available for emergency purposes in 2008 and 2009;

The lack of data on drought events and their magnitude is a major obstacle in understanding the nature of the problem. Consistent, accurate and reliable information is needed to describe the magnitude and urgency of the drought problem to decision-makers so as to make them prioritize the necessary measures. Information is also essential to draw the most appropriate strategies and policies. Statistics on the causes of water unavailability are available but not complete. However, it is clear that, if drought is a natural phenomenon, water scarcity and unavailability is often induced or aggravated by the behavior of people. In a region where rainfall varies between 200 and 1,200 mm/year, the challenge of water management is very important. Current changes in climatic conditions are translated in fluctuations of rainfall, a decrease in the number of rainy days and a shift in the seasonal period of rain and snow. However, the appropriate management of water resources could decrease the impact of drought on livelihood systems;

It is not possible to understand the current drought impact and vulnerability of local communities in KRG without taking into account past and current anthropogenic activities, wars and land uses. Local resources have always been in the hands of communities which used and abused them. Human intervention has been so strong that its impact is visible everywhere on the landscape and the vegetation pattern. Current drought events are strongly affected by the severe human pressure and such resulting activities as burning, clearing, terracing, cultivating, and excessively using water resources and, lately abandoning lands because of wars, drought and unsustainable livelihoods. The impact of recent drought events and their increasing severity and intensity somehow reflect recent socio-economic changes that have occurred in KRG and in the Middle East: successive wars, changes in traditional land use and lifestyles, migration, destruction of the traditional water systems (*kahreez*), changes in agricultural practices, decreasing value of the agricultural products, remoteness of villages from urban centres and destruction of traditional livelihood systems. Changes in the livelihood systems and in land-use patterns that have occurred during the last few decades are parallel to the increasing impact of drought on local communities. This trend is not observed where livelihood systems are more diversified and resilient and where sustainable traditional land uses remain the major socio-economic system;

(h) Available opportunities: Despite the gloomy picture provided by the recurrent droughts in KRG, the region also has a lot of untapped potential that could help spur its development. Below is a short review of some of these opportunities:

- (i) Agriculture and forestry: There is a great potential for producing various crops and animal products including fruits, cottage gardens, rain-fed and irrigated agriculture, goats, sheep and cattle herds and various animal products (milk, yogurt, cheese, and others). However, there will be a need for capacity-building and upgrade of infrastructure;
- (ii) Demographics: There is a large pool of affordable, though unskilled, labour and a potential high demand for local produces in surrounding cities. Efforts should continue to be exerted on building the skill level of the local labour force, creating jobs and encouraging the creation of small businesses;
- (iii) Economy: The development of infrastructure should alleviate poverty particularly in rural and peri-urban areas, and could help in the development and exploitation of such local natural resources as forests;
- (iv) Tourism: The region used to be a major tourist destination from within Iraq and from neighbouring countries. Efforts are being exerted to revive the tourism sector, particularly ecotourism and rural-based tourism, and these efforts should be strengthened;
- (v) Industry: Before 1991, there were a number of cement, textile and cigarette factories, which were located in Sulaimanyah and Erbil. Although most were destroyed, new ones have been or are being built (steel, water bottling, dairies, fruit canning, tomato puree and jam factories as well as oil refineries in Erbil). Special industrial zones have been delineated, but supporting policies should be strengthened;
- (vi) Social services: Those are still largely inadequate and therefore greater efforts should be exerted to develop and institutionalize them.

2. Livelihood strategy and outcome/planning

Based on the above review, a strategy for development and drought mitigation was developed for the KRG. The strategy is based on the 10-year strategy of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) as it presented substantial advantages when compared to other approaches. The strategy emphasizes on shifting from a single-sector to a multiple-sector approach while taking into account the concerns of stakeholders and their roles. The proposed strategy is comprised of two strategic objectives (improving the livelihood of the population and improving the ecosystem) and a number of operational objectives (capacity-building, institutional reform, financial and technology development, among others).

The strategy contains a few priority goals which would need to be discussed and developed through a participatory process with all concerned stakeholders. The priority goals identified include the following:

- (a) Developing and strengthening the administrative/institutional system by providing it with the necessary flexibility to adapt to change;
- (b) Adopting an ecosystem-based approach that maintains health, structure, functions, composition and biodiversity of an ecosystem and includes such issues as integrated land-use planning and sound ecosystem management;
- (c) Developing appropriate legislation and policies for the sustainable management of water and land resources;

(d) Stimulating market diversification, particularly for local products and promoting value added by attracting manufacturers (particularly small and medium enterprises);

(e) Creating a comprehensive national reporting system on livelihood systems and sustainable management of water and natural resources, combating desertification and land degradation and mitigating the effects of drought;

(f) Maintaining and enhancing the skills and knowledge of water, agriculture and land resources practitioners at all levels (farmers, engineers, technicians, NGOs, private sector, municipalities, and so on).

3. *Implementation and monitoring/resource allocation*

In order to increase the odds of a successful implementation of the strategy, it will be necessary to adopt and implement a coordination mechanism which will put emphasis on livelihood systems and which will involve all such major development actors as the ministries in charge of agriculture, water resources, planning and others, municipalities, environmental agencies and other relevant entities together with international bilateral and multilateral partners, agencies and NGOs. The advantages of such a mechanism would be to better address livelihood systems, adopt a holistic approach, improve the effectiveness of detection and ensure a rapid response, build capacities at all levels and improve the ability to use more personnel, improved and modern tools and high technology facilities. However, an effective coordination mechanism will be needed in order to harmonize and prioritize the approaches of the various players.

The traditional management of the landscape (“the Mesopotamian Garden”) has allowed for the continuous and almost uninterrupted occupation of the space by local populations over centuries. This traditional management system was integrated in that it always allowed for the simultaneous use of the land for agriculture, grazing, forestry and other uses despite the cyclic changes in climate and the seasonal variations in water availability. With current scenarios taking into account climate change and increasing drought events, holistic management approaches to these resources are needed in order to increase the resilience of the society to drought among other events.

Community involvement: Involving local communities in land and water management should be emphasized in order to build on their knowledge of local intricacies and to ensure long-term commitment. There will also be a need to ensure the full commitment of local governments (municipalities and sub-regional governorates) but also the regional governorate and the central government (ministries concerned). It will be important to highlight the significant role of municipalities and local communities in the decision-making process regarding the management of the land and water resources and in the sustainability of livelihood systems.

Collaboration: A holistic strategic approach to address drought, water scarcity and water unavailability issues will be needed. The issue of upland-lowland relationships and collaboration with regards to water management will need to be dealt with. Any action taken in the KRG may be reflected in the lower lands in other parts of Iraq and, conversely, any action taken by neighbouring countries will be reflected in Iraq in general and in the KRG in particular. The issue of transboundary cooperation and collaboration will thus remain a crucial aspect to be emphasized and addressed in appropriate platforms. An effective drought mitigation strategy involving all stakeholders concerned, international organizations including United Nations agencies, national and regional organizations, local communities and grass-roots organizations does not exist in the KRG and therefore needs to be established. Such a strategy would propose clear operational objectives and activities that address the issue of the drought-livelihood nexus with the identification of the organizations in charge of each activity.

Policies: The promotion of sustainable land and water development in mountain and rural areas can play an important role and benefit lowlands and urban areas by ensuring adequate supplies of water, environmental stability, conservation of biodiversity, and a rural-urban population balance. This will require

integrated policies, planning and social learning processes. Several main policy instruments should be integrated and coordinated because of their strong impact on the mountains and rural areas and on the sustainability of their livelihood systems. Those would include general economic and social policies, policies relating to agricultural and rural development, policies relating to markets, policies aimed at establishing a democratic and participatory process, and policies designed specifically to influence natural resource use and protect the environment (including water-related policies).

The key principles of the SLA strategies for the sustainable development of mountains and for sustainable land and water management in mountains and rural areas would have to consider the following: be people-centered; reach a consensus on a long-term vision; be comprehensive and integrated; have targets with clear budgetary commitments based on a comprehensive and reliable analysis; incorporate monitoring, learning and continuous improvement; be country-led and regionally-owned and based on high-level government commitment; build on existing processes and strategies; ensure effective participation at all levels; link national and local levels; and develop and build on existing capacity.

The above would become operational by putting into place, on a continuous basis, four main processes:

(a) Political process: Strong political commitment from top leadership as well as from local authorities will be required. There will be a strong need for a central coordinating body involving all ministries so as to reach across all government entities for the support needed, along with non-sectoral ministries and such agencies as finance or planning. The commitment and engagement of the private sector and civil society will also favour the sustainability of the different processes and will increase the resilience of the society to the various risks;

(b) Participatory process: Both governmental and non-governmental groups should be involved in the design of strategies, exchange of information, decision-making and implementation of strategies;

(c) Technical process: Through this process, the knowledge base would be developed by building on existing strategies, designing a system for harmonizing key economic, social and environment-related policies and carrying out the building of capacities on a continuous basis. An important aspect of the technical process is the crafting or amending of legislations so that they reflect and support policies;

(d) Resource mobilization process: Domestic and international resources would have to be made available. Mechanisms need to be developed to involve the international community in the process, while the country or region remains in full ownership of the process.

4. Potential benefits of adopting an SLA approach

The development of the KRG drought strategy, although comprehensive, was not based on an SLA analysis. The strategy could benefit from the inclusion of SLA elements, notably with regard to the determination of the economic status of residents concerned and the problems they face. Most of the impeding factors (livelihood context) have already been outlined but they have not been integrated into a livelihood asset analysis, even though such integration would allow the development of more appropriate and focused drought-related strategies that would lead to an adequate livelihood outcome for the KRG. As stated in the previous section, some of the benefits or interventions that SLA could bring to the development of the KRG are provided in table 4 below.

C. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The above two case studies have tried to apply the livelihoods approach to assessing development outcome on the ground, and how the approach could be used or adapted depending on the types of livelihoods in question, and the nature of external shocks.

It has been concluded that the development programmes examined were not developed with SLA in mind, this latter approach would have seen more positive achievements. The initial step in all the above programmes would have been to conduct proper SLA assessments (identification of assets and describing the livelihood context and the negative factors in presence), taking into account that those assessments could benefit from multispatial analyses at various levels. Adopting a livelihoods approach to development problems would certainly involve wider types of analyses, as they would cover a larger population or wider areas, and thus be more time consuming but the end result would be more focused strategies and far greater achievements if well implemented.

Key issues for livelihood approaches include how the need and priority of different interventions be determined, and what would be the most appropriate ways for addressing the various rural crises that are sure to be identified with the conduct of thorough analyses. Important determinants would be the scale and stage of the crises, the availability of resources and the response and management capacity/ability required for the different types of interventions. In some cases, reference would be made to past crises to identify those with the greatest impact while in others the possibility of community-managed programmes would receive priority as that would allow to free up the limited resources while allowing quicker responses compared to top-down managed interventions.

The major achievements of the livelihoods approach in situation such as above would be to broaden horizons as livelihood approaches recognize the coexistence of different risks, and consequently the need for simultaneously addressing threatening risks and the erosion of livelihoods in the longer term. A livelihoods approach explicitly acknowledges life before and after rather than waiting for a dire situation in order to intervene. It encourages a more searching and detailed analysis of the impact of various factors on the lives of people and livelihoods so as to generate more appropriate responses, which are more in tune with local aspirations and diversity.

TABLE 4. POSSIBLE SLA INTERVENTIONS FOR THE HASAD PROJECT AND THE KURDISTAN REGIONAL GOVERNORATE

Asset category	Priorities	Examples of possible interventions
Human	Training, education, awareness-raising, improved food security and access to better diet, improved access to health and education services	Capacity-building in such areas as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult literacy • Resource management • Livelihoods diversification • Production and post-harvest techniques • <i>Zaatar</i> production • Improved health
Natural	Assisting communities to use their resources more sustainably, improving the post-harvest use of resources, improving access to sectoral service provision, supporting rehabilitation of degraded environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable and accessible sources of renewable energy • Production enhancement initiatives • Resource user associations • Cooperatives development
Financial	Improving access to credit, providing saving mechanisms, awareness-raising for formal credit, establishment of insurance schemes (including for hazards), improving financial flows through natural assets, providing business training to improve the management of finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved access to savings and credit schemes • Small business management (including farm management) • Schemes for improving agricultural produce trade

TABLE 4 (continued)

Asset category	Priorities	Examples of possible interventions
Physical	Helping to improve access to infrastructure, providing access to information on improved technologies, building capacity in communities to improve or develop their own physical assets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of human and social assets in the project area in order to facilitate access to and management of physical assets • Participation of user associations in the management of infrastructure, construction on physical structures (wells, dams) and restoration of degraded infrastructures
Social	Strengthening community organization skills, building on existing institutions, raising awareness of social organizational structures and functions, building up trust, providing leadership training, encouraging the inclusion of marginalized groups, supporting networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening of user associations • Gender aspects • Inclusion of vulnerable people • Promoting youth activities, among others

Source: Adapted from Allison and Horemans, 2006.

II. SLA AND EMERGING ISSUES

A. SLA AND CLIMATE CHANGE: VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT AND GUIDELINES FOR ADOPTION

1. Potential climate change impacts on natural resources and livelihoods

The potential impact of climate change includes an increase in water scarcity, the degradation of agricultural land and the deterioration of public health and socio-economic conditions. Despite its low contribution to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the ESCWA region has a high risk to greatly suffer from climate change, and this might negatively affect the achievement of national and regional development plans. In this century, the increase in temperature in the Arab region is expected to reach 2-4°C,⁴³ and this is expected to lead to the following:

(a) An increase in drought cycles, which will affect groundwater quality and quantity; this means, for instance, a reduction in freshwater of 15 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively, for Lebanon and Syria;

(b) A decrease in agricultural productivity (up to 15-20 per cent according to the FAO) and a loss of biological diversity;

(c) An increase in desertification and land degradation, which is expected to reduce the agricultural land by 12-15 per cent, particularly in Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates;

(d) A 30-50 per cent reduction of the flow of the Euphrates and Tigris and a fluctuation of the Nile from +30 to -70 per cent;

(e) A possible decrease in the capacity of desalination plants, with Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Yemen being the most affected Arab countries as a result of high population growth and acute water shortage.⁴⁴

⁴³ IPCC, 2007.

⁴⁴ FAO, 2008.

Other potential negative effects might include an increase in the occurrence of such natural disasters as floods and hurricanes, similar to the Guno Hurricane in Oman; the drowning of coastal areas in lowlands and deltas as a result of a seawater level increase, which will result, among others, in a loss of the quality of groundwater resources, particularly in Egypt, Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic and the Gulf States.

The potential social impact of climate change is expected to be critical in the Arab region mainly as a result of the limited employment opportunities outside the agricultural and other sectors susceptible to climate change, given the prevailing lack of diversity in the economy of the region. Among the expected potential social impacts of climate change are the following:

- (a) Possible political unrests and conflicts due to increased competition over the dwindling natural resources, mainly water and land;
- (b) The displacement of population and mass migration from flooded or drought-affected areas in Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates;
- (c) An increase in unemployment and a loss of income due to agricultural land losses, and a decrease in tourism, fisheries and several other productive sectors;
- (d) An increase in poverty levels and health problems among the distressed population and marginal groups.

The impact of climate change on human and livelihood security will be severe as the most affected population groups will be those who are already vulnerable as they have weak capabilities and poor facilities to adequately adapt to climate change. As a matter of fact, vulnerable people are those mostly dependent on the ecosystem for their livelihood (fishers, pastoralists, farmers, and others).

The development of adaptive capacity to reduce the adverse impact of climate change requires action at various interlinked spatial levels. At farm level, households will adjust by changing farm practices or abandoning farming altogether. At sector/project/basin level, good management of land and water resources and the environment will determine the impact of climate change, while the response to it will vary depending on the changes that will have been observed or anticipated. At national level, actions will be more global and will target the ecosystem and the well-being of the population and will consist of the enactment and implementation of policies and programmes on such issues as prices, trade, investment and transport, but also regional and international cooperation.⁴⁵

2. Climate change adaptation and livelihoods

The analysis below deals with the assessment of vulnerability to climate change and presents potential indicators that could be used to conduct this assessment. Emphasis is put on assessing the impact of climate change on livelihoods but also on the development of adaptation strategies that fit the conditions prevailing in the region. Usually, climate change modeling methodologies are integrated with vulnerability and impact assessment approaches in a multidisciplinary manner in order to study their impact on livelihoods. ESCWA is pioneering a regional initiative on assessing the impact of climate change on water resources and socio-economic vulnerability in the Arab region in cooperation with other regional and international partners. The methodology is based on four steps, which are: (a) a baseline review; (b) climate change impact analysis and vulnerability assessment; (c) awareness-raising and information dissemination; and (d) capacity-building and institutional strengthening.⁴⁶

Climate change impacts need to be identified in order to measure its effects in a sustainable development context. This can be done by analysing impacts and mapping hotspots of affected areas based on key issues of regional concern and by using geographic information systems and remote sensing. For

⁴⁵ Ringler, 2008.

⁴⁶ ESCWA, 2010c.

instance, agricultural models can be used to estimate vulnerability indicators related to cropping patterns, water distribution and irrigation efficiency. Other such aspects as human settlement and food security would rely less on formal models and more on expert judgment of vulnerability. To those, economic variables would be added, which are important to determine the vulnerability and the adaptive capacity of communities in terms of service cost, gross domestic production (GDP), dependency on agriculture and unemployment.

Table 5 provides some indicators that can be used to assess climate change impacts on livelihoods, agriculture and food security, among others. Socio-economic vulnerability indicators can be considered as a function of exposure and sensitivity to hazard and adaptive capacity. For example, such water-related hazards as floods, rainfall events, droughts, conflicts, and water-borne epidemics are represented by indicators that measure their intensity, extent and frequency. This approach does not aim to conduct a quantitative climate change risk assessment but rather a qualitative one.

To those socio-economic indicators, the following climate change hazards can be added: (a) seawater rise (people affected who are usually those living in hazard-prone zones; capital market value of infrastructures that could be lost; coastal power and oil installations, tourism resorts, building, and others; areas of fertile agricultural land that would be inundated; area of wetlands that would be lost due to seawater rise; people at risk and potential adaptation costs for protection; and others); and (b) drought (rural community and farmers affected; agricultural area affected; crop loss; yield reduction; income loss; higher consumer prices; and so on).

TABLE 5. TYPES OF INDICATORS USED FOR ASSESSING CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS

Category	Factor	Measure	
Demography/socio-economic	Size of population	Total population	
	Population growth	Population growth	
	Female population	Per cent of females of total population	
	Population density	People per km ²	
	High concentration of people in urban areas		Population in largest city (per cent of total population)
			Population in urban agglomerations of more than one million (per cent of total population)
	Economically dependent population	Per cent of young and old to working-age population	
Agriculture	Dependency on agriculture	Per cent of agricultural land to total	
		Per cent of workforce in agriculture	
		Per cent of rural population	
	Dependency on rain-fed agriculture	Per cent of rain-fed land	
	Level of land degradation	Per cent of degraded land	
Food security	Reliance on single or few crops	Per cent of product of top three strategic crops	
	Reliance on locally produced food	Per cent of food produced locally	
	Food productivity	Cereal yield in kg per hectare	

Source: ESCWA, 2008.

3. Development of climate change adaptation strategies

In the development of climate change adaptation strategies, for example for water resources, sector managers need to identify activities that actually assist in alleviating and avoiding the adverse impacts of climate change on the sector. The table below outlines a few measures that could be adopted to support adaptation to climate change on both the demand and supply sides in the water and other related sectors.

TABLE 6. EXAMPLES OF ADAPTATION OF THE WATER SECTOR TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Vulnerable water management	Adaptation at supply side	Adaptation at demand side
Municipal water supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase reservoir capacity • Desalinate • Inter-basin transfer • Rain harvest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use grey water • Improve water efficiency • Reduce leakages • Conserve • Use economic instruments • Enforce water legislations
Pollution protection (degradation of water quality)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance treatment works • Reuse and reclaim • Upgrade water protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce effluent volume of waste • Promote alternatives to chemicals
Agriculture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rain-fed • Irrigated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve soil conservation • Supplement from other sources as needed • Develop biosaline agriculture technology • Improve tilling practices • Harvest rainwater • Reuse adequately treated domestic wastewater • Research and select adapted crops and varieties • Elaborate adapted agronomic practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use drought tolerant crops • Increase irrigation efficiency • Empower local water user associations • Activate economic instruments
Flood management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build reservoirs and levees • Protect and restore wetlands 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade floor warnings • Reduce floodplain development

Source: ESCWA, 2008.

Included in climate change adaptation is the process of adjustment through which people reduce adverse effects on their health and well-being and take advantage of the opportunities that their climatic environment provides, including how they reduce vulnerability. This suggests that successful adaptation requires a wide range of behavioural adjustments from households and institutions in order to facilitate changes in socio-economic systems aimed at reducing vulnerability to climate change. In implementing those changes, it needs to be ensured that no adverse socio-environmental externalities that could affect others or future generations are created. Adaptation policies, strategies and measures would have to change parallel to the overall context so as to maintain a dynamic developmental path well suited to the various communities. Those changes would follow a few principles, which could include, among others, the need to (a) recognize the context of vulnerability, including the existence of multiple stressors; (b) acknowledge that different values and interests affect adaptation outcomes; (c) integrate local knowledge in adaptation responses; and (d) consider potential feedbacks between local and global processes.⁴⁷

4. Considerations and guidelines for developing livelihood strategies

⁴⁷ Eriksen et al., 2011.

to adapt to climate change

Below are a few key issues to consider in guiding the process aimed at defining and implementing adaptation measures in order to increase resilience and to enhance livelihoods:

(a) Long-term sustainable adaptation to climate change will require the integration of infrastructure, policy and economic instruments as well as behavioural changes by the public into national sustainable development strategies;

(b) Building resilient water and sanitation supply systems and infrastructure (namely to achieve MDG 7) and implementation of ecosystem-based adaptation and maintenance of a minimal environmental flow to protect public health;

(c) Adaptation of climate risk management frameworks and development of such water-related disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies as contingency planning and preparation for the risks of more intense droughts and floods cycles;

(d) Flexible measures for adapting to greater uncertainties, especially those associated with extreme climate events that would be integrated into adaptation strategies (namely long-term scenarios based on climate projections);

(e) Strong cooperation at the level of ministries in decision-making, planning and implementation of national climate change adaptation strategies as well as integration of top-down and bottom-up approaches. The role of sustainable livelihoods in climate change adaptation would be mainstreamed into the policies and programmes of all ministries concerned. Stronger institutions are necessary to build and manage any additional capacity required and to implement the necessary adaptation measures;

(f) Policy changes need to be identified within such existing development challenges as food security, poverty reduction, environmental and ecosystem protection, and disaster risk reduction by formulating appropriate adaptation to climate change policies and ensuring strong linkages to developed livelihoods strategies;

(g) Information and knowledge-sharing and communication among all stakeholders, nationally and regionally, would be improved. Accurate and reliable data on climate, water, agriculture, social aspects, biodiversity, and livelihood assets, need to be widely available by enhancing monitoring systems and establishing central databanks for better management and dissemination of information at all levels;

(h) Building long-term resilience by enhancing adaptive capacity for livelihoods and ecosystem conservation and promoting integrated water resources and land management approaches. “No-regret” and “low-regret” options/scenarios should be given priority as a first stage when adaptation to climate change is determined as possible;

(i) Conducting cost-benefit analyses of adaptation measures in order to consider all potential benefits, including social welfare and public health. The future impact of climate change cannot be treated in the same manner as risky and short-term financial decisions.

There is an utmost need to request the international community to develop additional and innovative funding mechanisms to assist developing countries to build their capacity and to support the integration of adaptation issues in the national and regional developmental agendas. Technological advances in the development and transfer of technology adapted to local conditions must be facilitated in order to improve livelihoods and the sustainable management of natural resources in the context of adaptation to climate change.

B. SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD AND FOOD SECURITY UNDER

CHANGING CLIMATE IN DRY AREAS

The ESCWA region is part of a dry area which faces numerous environmental and social challenges, which could be exacerbated by the looming climate change. Food insecurity is a problem which has risen in importance in the international agenda and which has particular implications for dry areas. The development of a comprehensive programme for developing the livelihoods of the most vulnerable in the dry areas should be a national priority for all countries in the ESCWA region.

1. *Role of SLA*

SLA is an important tool that can help national and international institutions develop effective and targeted rural development programmes. SLA encompasses many important dimensions which include human, physical, natural, social and financial household assets. During the household decision-making process, it takes into account those assets together with their objectives, trade-offs and other factors in order to come up with appropriate strategies to secure their livelihoods. SLA also takes into account the external environment which include markets, institutions and policies but also the uncertainties and shocks created by market fluctuations and weather variability induced by various factors, including climate change. SLA has been used in research and development worldwide and has helped to properly organize rural development problems while allowing to better target development to the right interventions and right groups of more vulnerable beneficiaries.

2. *Food security: A “renewed” challenge*

Food insecurity is increasingly becoming a global concern given the rising prices of basic commodities and, as a result, it is affecting food and agricultural policies at national, regional and global levels. The main drivers of food insecurity include the following:

(a) Long-term underinvestment in agriculture and rural development and in agricultural research and education is a serious issue. Investments in agriculture are low while it is a major determinant of rural development and achievement of food security. Investment in agricultural research and education is even lower and national capacities in this area are declining rather than growing. The state of agricultural research and education (including extensions) falls below what is required to sustain vibrant and productive agricultural and rural economies;

(b) Inefficient and unsustainable farming practices are leading to unsustainable use and degradation of natural resources. Lack of awareness and access to modern agricultural production practices through research and extension are limiting the adoption by farmers of new practices that can help conserve resources and sustain the environment while at the same time increasing the productivity of available resources and improving food security at all levels;

(c) Poor national policies that send wrong signals to farmers leading them to use resources inefficiently are also problematic. Sometimes, policies emphasize short-term increase of production rather than considering the long-term impact on the sustainability of resources. For example, policies may mandate specific crops seen as strategic while these crops may require unsustainable levels of water resources. Such policies need to be reviewed and balanced with policies that consider other aspects;

(d) Such uncompetitive practices and policies as subsidies, trade restrictions, and dumping, among others, by developed countries affect production systems of less-developed countries and hence affect their food security.

3. *The impact of climate change*

Climate change will bring new challenges. In general, there is agreement among most climate models that the dry areas of the ESCWA region will experience higher temperatures and lower rainfall and that this will increase the incidence of such extreme events as droughts, storms, floods, the risk of diseases and pests, crop failures and other losses, unexpected large migration of affected people to urban areas, and increased poverty and vulnerability of the poor.

Overall climate change will also imply that crops and livestock types that are used now may not be as productive as they used to be or, in the worst case, that they may not adapt to the new climate, which will imply even greater efforts in terms of adaptation to climate change through research and development.

4. Efforts undertaken by ICARDA

The International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) leads the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) research programme on dry areas and contributes to others, including conducting rural livelihoods analyses as starting point for adaptive agricultural research. ICARDA conducts research on crop improvement (plant breeding) to address threats of new insects, diseases and drought tolerance; systems productivity and sustainability, including new opportunities provided by fruits and vegetables and herbal and medicinal plants; water and land management to increase productivity and sustain long-term use; and economic, social and policy research to ensure that proper systems diagnosis is made and the enabling environment is properly considered. The entirety of those programmes lead to the production of new crops, practices for production systems, better water and land management practices and policy and development recommendations for targeting and improving rural livelihoods and food security in a way that helps rural people and their production systems adapt to the reality of climate change.

5. The state of rural livelihoods: Evidence from past research

Past research carried out by ICARDA in dry areas revealed, among others, the following findings:

- (a) Large segments of rural households in dry areas live below the income poverty line (15-30 per cent, in some areas in the Sudan and Yemen, even over 50 per cent);
- (b) People are either landless or own small plots and lack other assets;
- (c) They cannot access other resources (they are not credit-worthy);
- (d) They lack social or public safety nets;
- (e) Given the high population growth rate, employment prospects in rural areas are limited;
- (f) A considerable part of the population aspires to leave for cities or wherever they can find better living conditions;
- (g) Non-agricultural sectors are not growing fast enough to offer sufficient employment;
- (h) Household food and nutritional security can be at serious risk;
- (i) Rural women are among the most vulnerable as they face multiple constraints.

6. Concluding remarks

Rural households vary in terms of their human, natural, physical, social and financial assets. Those assets determine the livelihood options to be chosen by rural households and the consequent welfare outcomes. It is possible and necessary to use a sustainable livelihood analysis conceptual framework and other analytical tools to characterize livelihood strategies in a more systematic and less arbitrary way. A clear description of poverty profiles of rural households and their livelihood sources provides information for targeting development and research. It is important to note that, in dry areas, a significant number of rural households do not rely on agriculture as its main source of living, which means that alternative strategies will

need to be considered, including such strategies that will enable households to acquire assets. A number of specific considerations are given below:

(a) Utilizing rural labour surplus: With increasing population and the transformation of agriculture (more labour-saving technologies-trees, modern irrigation, mechanization), agriculture continues to release surplus labour, while there is insufficient off-farm employment and, consequently, many households face increasing poverty. Likewise, rural development policies need to target creating opportunities that increase non-farm rural employment or labour-intensive farm enterprises with high payoff;

(b) Responding to changing demography (age and gender) of agricultural labour: The push factor leading to male migration leaving women to dominate agricultural labour and decision-making implies that there should be clear policies to recognize and develop targeted programmes to support the role of rural women. This may include changing property rights laws, or developing social awareness programmes and special programmes targeting the development of women and their access to technologies, information and knowledge and services;

(c) Taking action on the chronic gap in agriculture and rural finance: The large gap in agricultural finance also indicates that there are untapped opportunities in increasing agricultural productivity and a potential for rural financing to increase rural employment with direct and indirect impact on agriculture. Efforts for improving the rural financial system should increase. Rural finance can be effectively tied to the adoption of specific productivity-boosting technologies, resource-conserving practices, new high-value crops and employment-generating activities;

(d) Acting on the seed supply service: Seed availability is a critical factor in technology transfer as it facilitates the adoption of improved crop varieties, which increase the poverty impact of agricultural research, provide food security and help farmers to adapt to climate change;

(e) Modernizing the dysfunctional extension systems: The gap in information and knowledge transfer requires new enterprise-management-based approach of extension services. Government departments need a complete overhaul of attitudes and to reorient themselves as service-oriented institutions, which is being taken over by NGOs. NGOs can play a major role in providing capacity-building and flow of information and knowledge to farmers.

C. SLA AND THE GREEN ECONOMY

The “green economy” concept is a developmental model rooted in sustainable development. Among its many definitions is its description as “a system of economic activities related to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services that result in improved human well-being over the long term, while not exposing future generations to significant environmental risks or ecological scarcities”.⁴⁸ This concept is rooted in the realization that the environment does not exist as a sphere separate from human actions, ambitions and needs. Green economy builds on the need for sustainable development to reconcile the environment, where we live, with the economy, the system of activities that people undertake as they attempt to improve their standard of living. It reconciles short-term human needs for development with longer-term imperatives to ensure a livable environment for future generations.

This new green economy approach allows development to be considered in a new way. It moves beyond the “zero sum game” model, where some components won at the expense of the others, thus leading to a false choice between the needs for human development and the environment. This often led to environment crises, economic stagnation, or human underdevelopment. Rather, “greening” should be understood as identifying and supporting opportunities to improve natural resource management and providing infrastructure services while meeting the core objective of human development and well-being.

⁴⁸ UNEP, 2007.

SLA integrates well within the green economy framework. However, contributions from a green economy to social goals are not necessarily automatic. It therefore remains necessary for “specific policies and institutions to be attached to green economy activities”.⁴⁹

This synergy can still be achieved because the concept of the green economy is encompassed in SLA core components as follows:

(a) The physical component points to the need for sustainability. To be sustainable, a society needs to be eco-efficient by generating more value through technology and process changes for any given level of resource use. Eco-efficiency applies to all aspects of livelihood activities;

(b) Both the human and social components are ensured by societal needs to reach a “triple bottom line”, where it uses resources efficiently to meet human needs for a livable and equitable life. By optimally managing its natural resources, this society minimizes the environmental impact thus avoiding past mistakes in which problems were only transferred to future generations;

(c) By ensuring that economic activities are both equitable and eco-efficient, a green economy can ensure that financial profits remain sustainable both socially and environmentally. For example, a reduction of harmful environmental impacts not only enhances future livability, but also keeps a large pool of opportunities for future generations;

(d) The need for livability within a sustainable natural system is enhanced by eco-efficient economic activity. This enhances current livelihoods by allowing local knowledge to better leverage local assets.

This synergy means that many existing projects can be adjusted to ensure that they meet the requirements of the green economy. The bottom-up approach of SLA will integrate well within a green economy framework because people striving to sustain their livelihoods often work on balancing the livability, equitability and eco-efficiency. In this manner, green economy projects can focus on meeting any of the five elements of sustainable livelihoods: human (H), social (S), physical (P), natural (N), and financial (F). This equilibrium allows the green economy to achieve greater sustainability and bring new outcomes by ensuring the following:

(a) Income and jobs through modernization of infrastructure: Very often, not all that is green is new; traditional knowledge can often be leveraged effectively to bring about significant improvements in modern projects. There is increased awareness of this in the ESCWA region. For instance, in Saudi Arabia, the design of the new building of the King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) drew heavily from lessons learned from traditional Arabic houses to improve the energy efficiency (F) of its modern buildings and minimize their environmental impacts (N);

(b) Low carbon emissions, reduced use of resources, and reduced generation of waste and pollution: At the local level, much of the traditional knowledge is green. Indeed, it is such local knowledge that allowed people to live in a given environment, and to thrive over generations. Such modern needs as water resource management can often have ancient solutions, as evidenced by the restoration of ancient Qanats (traditional water canals) in the Syrian Arab Republic. When they are put back in activity, restored Qanats are a green technology that is renewable (N), readily accessible (P) and with low running costs (F). This is possible in case such traditional alternatives are in possible reach and keep good water-use efficiency;

(c) Enhanced contribution to broader societal goals of sustainable development, social equity, and poverty reduction: The bottom-up approach of SLA can create benefits that magnify initial investments. This is particularly the case where local knowledge is relied upon. The use of the Qanats, by leveraging local knowledge (H), also enables social empowerment (S) as it allows people to have more control over the means of their livelihoods. By integrating traditional construction knowledge, KAUST may empower

⁴⁹ ESCWA, 2010a, p. 5.

traditional skills (H), potentially opening up new sectors of activity to them and thus enhancing social empowerment (S).

Faced with a limited resource base, the only way forward is to focus more and more on “enhanced energy, material and resource efficiency, increased use of renewable energy sources, and a paradigm shift towards sustainable production and consumption”.⁵⁰ Many of those priorities sit well with the implementation of SLA such as, for example, renewable energy, which can offer great potential for self-sustaining income generation and sustainable rural development. In many rural areas, agricultural profitability is often hindered by the lack of facilities for handling, storing, processing and transporting goods. Decentralized and integrated energy solutions could greatly improve productivity, increase profitability and therefore enhance livelihoods.

The importance of such benefits was illustrated by the central importance of the green economy in the structure of many stimulus packages that were adopted following the recent financial crisis. In those stimulus packages, green economy projects constituted an average of 15 per cent of global stimulus package with such countries as China and South Korea attaining 38 per cent and 80 per cent, respectively.⁵¹ SLA can only enhance this trend by allowing local efforts to trickle up to the larger economy. In addition to financial savings, such a bottom-up approach would empower local people and leverage their skills more effectively, thereby allowing for a smoother transition to a green economy. Thus, greening is expected to provide an opportunity to help facilitate longer-term sustainable development goals and the improvement of the livelihood of the population.

D. INTEGRATED FOREST FIRES MANAGEMENT, PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Within the vision and global goals of the FAO, eliminating hunger, malnutrition and poverty are major priorities in countries of the region. For this purpose, FAO is undertaking projects dealing with several such sectors as nutrition, agriculture development, fisheries, forests and water resources management. FAO is also working with its member countries and the entire international community in order to promote the achievement of the MDGs. For over thirty years, FAO has assisted Lebanon in various areas, including the important issue of natural resources management. As such, it has financed many technical missions and studies on such water resources as the Chabrouh dam, assisted the Council of Development and Reconstruction in the implementation of the sewage water treatment unit in Iaat (Bekaa) and assisted or implemented many other projects, including in the areas of the fishery (assessment of vessels in Lebanon) and forestry.

In particular, forestry projects have been very successful. For example, an FAO project studied the life cycle of the new pest discovered in the Tannourine Nature Reserve over a two year-period, thereby assuring the saving of this forest which was being threatened by the new insect. The Forest Resource Assessment Project also conducted a survey of forests and other woodland in Lebanon and produced a forest map for Lebanon, 40 years after the production of the first forest map. Two years ago, FAO started the Integrated Forest Fires Management, Prevention and Control in partnership with the Ministry of Environment. This paper presents the project and its major achievement and contribution to improving livelihoods in the rural areas of Lebanon.

1. *The project*

The war of July 2006 was devastating at all levels: social, economic and environmental. In addition, the fires that erupted in October 2007 and spread at a tremendous speed to reach and link forests in different provinces very negatively affected livelihoods in various communities in rural areas. Following those two disasters, it was acknowledged that an approach to forest fire management should be adhered to and that it

⁵⁰ UNCTAD, 2010.

⁵¹ UNEP, 2007.

should be accompanied with proper conservation and protection arrangements and provision of proper training and equipment to ensure the sustainable use of forested areas. The numerous cluster bombs from the 2006 hostilities prevented people to access forested areas which, in turn, resulted in poor forest management, loss of crops and livelihoods, especially for those that were dependent on forests. The difficult and time-consuming efforts needed to remove cluster bombs necessitate the adoption of quick alternative measures aimed at restoring livelihoods for local communities through improving their incomes for example.

2. Objectives

In response to the 2006 hostilities and to the 2007 forest fires, the Lebanon Recovery Fund allocated US\$2.6 million in order to implement this project over a three-year period. The main objective of the project is to support early recovery and poverty alleviation through improved forest fire management (prevention and control) and its associated benefits to environment and rural communities through: (a) assessment of locations and extent of forest and other wooded land burned/affected; (b) assessment of the cost of environmental degradation from forest fires; (c) implementation of preventive measures for forest fire protection; (d) implementation of control measures for efficient forest fire fighting; (e) rehabilitation of damaged forests; and (f) restoration of livelihoods generated from the sound and sustainable use of forested areas (in the long run).

3. Partners

The main partner of FAO is the Ministry of Environment. However, the implementation of this project was done in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Interior (Civil Defense), the Ministry of Defense (Lebanese Army), local communities and NGOs. Among the NGOs, the Association of Forest Development and Conservation was the main partner.

4. Activities

The activities of the integrated forest fire management project were wide-ranging, from training and the purchase of tools to building related infrastructure. Activities implemented could be summarized as follows:

- (a) Provision of technical assistance (technical and legal);
- (b) Purchase of equipment and tools for forest fire fighting (six fire trucks for first intervention, bambi buckets for the army, uniforms, fire hoses, and others);
- (c) Provision of training (about ten sessions), which included three sessions on incident command system and one session on aerial fighting (implemented with the United States Forestry Services), five sessions of specialized training on fire behaviour and fighting for volunteers and national institution staff;
- (d) In the region of Andaket (Akkar), the project established a 100,000 seedlings nursery and installed water outlets, signs, and rehabilitated two lookout towers. In addition, more than 20 hectares of forest were cleaned to create a buffer zone including around 23 kilometres of roads in Andaket village;
- (e) Through cooperation with local communities, the project financed nine small-grant projects with the Ministry of Environment. The grants were allocated through an official request to four municipalities and five NGOs;
- (f) In addition, 55 hectares of degraded land were reforested and 35 other hectares will follow in early 2011.

5. Project impact

It is not easy to evaluate the impact of the activities done through this project, especially those implemented a few months before its end. However, the cooperation of local communities and their willingness to work with the project was a best practice for the project. The impact of this project on the livelihood of the local population was great, which was the result of awareness campaigns conducted in more than 90 villages; trainings benefited more than 300 stakeholders; and small grant activities were implemented in nine villages with most of the focus on infrastructural activities which will need local labour to be implemented. Other achievements included the provision of equipment to municipalities to create and maintain yearly buffer zones around roads, which also requires the participation of local people; the establishment of nurseries to help people plant trees together with accompanying training on tree maintenance and harvest for future operations; and conduct of forest fire protection activities that can save forests so that they continue to provide benefits to local communities, which collect both non-wood forest products and fuel wood.

PART IV

CONCLUSIONS, LESSONS LEARNED AND WAY FORWARD

I. LESSONS LEARNED, CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES, AND WAY FORWARD

A. LESSONS LEARNED

The case studies presented above illustrate various aspects of how SLA could be applied or could be integrated into analyses. None of the above illustrates a perfect or comprehensive example of how it should be applied or used to conduct an analysis. The majority of cases detail projects and situations which were implemented based on other methodologies with SLA being applied as a tool to assess achievements based on the secondary information that was provided, which in most cases were insufficient to conduct a thorough assessment despite the efforts of the ESCWA team to harmonize the cases and standardize the approach of data collection and situation analysis. In fact, the different cases presented are coming from different profiles and diverse intervention types in diverse contexts on the ground and conceived under different approaches and priorities. From the analyses, it can be seen that SLA is highly flexible and thus could be used to conduct more detailed pre-project analyses, to implement projects and to assess achievements upon completion of the project. It should be acknowledged that there is no single way of applying SLA as it will always depend on the prevailing situation as outcomes change with changing conditions from one project to the other. For example, the roof-top garden was widely viewed as successful by the beneficiaries in Palestine due to the occupation and imposed hardship, and as such would hardly be a type of project which could prove successful in other less-constrained settings.

Thus, this guide should be viewed and used as a first step to systematize the application of SLA and to promote its mainstreaming in policies and programmes rather than a tool for duplication. As said above, the guide is not a “one size fits all” but rather a flexible tool which needs to be adapted to fit prevailing contexts and assets. The adoption of SLA would likely entail a societal organization that is flexible in the face of changing challenges rather than trying to control or model the specific conditions to fit it. As such, SLA would neither lock people into certain technologies or practices nor reinforce dependency relations. Instead, actions need to address prevailing challenges in order to enhance or alleviate the livelihood context while improving livelihood assets through well-chosen and targeted livelihood strategies. Mainstreaming SLA in programme planning and implementation is complex. In the case of rural development, the application of SLA would entail empowering and providing various livelihood options to the poor in ways that enhance their assets, while avoiding production patterns that entrench dependency or create vulnerability, environment and land-loss problems.⁵²

Improving livelihoods in a sustainable manner also calls for a strengthening of social resilience. The cases of Egypt, Palestine, Saudi Arabia and the Sudan, to name a few, underscore the importance of enhancing livelihood capitals together with community empowerment as part of sustainable development, as they emphasize community participation and involvement of local institutions to promote local ownership. The five livelihood capitals are made up of different structures, norms and networks that enable people to respond either individually or collectively while enabling knowledge-sharing and the spreading of risk. Such organization is scale-dependent and is associated with a flexible and adaptive society.⁵³ One of the major challenges reflected in the case studies, however, is that strengthening local capacity alone does not effectively reduce vulnerability. Increased sustainability can only be achieved if local capacity is combined with measures aimed at including socially marginalized groups, making the voices of vulnerable groups heard in decision-making processes that affect their development interests and making these interests count in the face of pressures from such economic development as physical development of lands that reduce the land rights of the poor.⁵⁴

⁵² Morse et al., 2009; and Scoones, 1998.

⁵³ Ospina and Heeks, 2010; and Ashley, 2000.

⁵⁴ Morse et al., 2009; and Katepa-Kalala, 1997.

The road to applying SLA starts with the understanding that a livelihoods approach is a process rather than a list of actions and measures that address specific challenges. The application of SLA requires going beyond the one-time road or infrastructure building, water and sanitation connection or land improvement, and questioning the assumption that every SLA action will be beneficial. The consequences of actions and measures must be considered within the much broader social and environmental context; trade-offs and the potential for negative outcomes over space and time must be recognized. The normative principles of applying SLA can be considered a first step in guiding responses towards social justice and environmental integrity.

Below are a few lessons learned both from the case studies and from the discussions with experts who attended the Expert Group Meeting on Promoting Best Practices on Sustainable Rural Livelihoods in the ESCWA Region, which was held between 24-25 November 2010:

(a) Capacity-building: In the area of capacity-building, needs should be identified (where, what, why and how) in light of national policies and strategies and taking into consideration the leverage that could be played by local administrations, cooperatives (management, ownership, organization, motivation, follow-up), civil society and other partners and actors. SLA capacity-building should focus on training and beyond in order to stem rural exodus and help fight urban sprawl, focus on more than access to market and off-farm income, leverage ecotourism, promote traditional constructions, quality of life and focus on new ways to lure people back to rural areas. Capacity-building would also target illiteracy and technical illiteracy, peer training and emulation and agromarketing;

(b) Gender issues: Women are at the centre of (rural) development and should therefore be viewed as role models. They are more sedentary and locally focused and as such should be empowered by promoting women agro engineers, extension officers and project managers, and finding a way to limit the impact of social stigma (positive examples are reported from Palestine, the Sudan and Yemen, among others). Ideas and convictions of women could be easier to discuss inside a women society rather than from an outsider perspective, particularly in rural communities of the region;

(c) Social issues and social sustainability: There are traditions deeply embedded in rural areas in the region that may fit well with SLA principles. Consequently, building on local social structures, local adapted and tested knowledge and highlighting their good values could be of a wider benefit. On the ground, promoting and upscaling pioneering spirit and initiatives, not necessarily meaning new ideas, could produce great results. Those include, for example, local adapted knowledge (Kahreez/Qanat in Irak), water harvest at domestic scale, the generation of adaptive fatwas to be able to profit from credit systems (Palestine), which are all good examples of where tradition and SLA can meet to solve problems and lead to improved livelihood in the local context. Regarding poverty dimensions, SLA should try to deal with the whole concept of sustainability instead of the excessive focus on just the “conventional poor” strictly correlated to income. People often need to improve livelihoods without necessarily being poor. For example, sustainability and local rural needs satisfaction in Oman and Saudi Arabia, among others, is not related to poverty;

(d) Rural exodus: Fighting rural exodus by focusing on youth groups implies that focus should be on sustainable livelihoods, not just on the poverty/income binomial. In fact, some case studies presented showed that in certain needy rural regions in Oman, Saudi Arabia or Northern Iraq, for example, people are not poor in a strict sense but are vulnerable because the population closely depends on a few sustainable systems that are susceptible to the fragility of the landscape;

(e) Participatory approach: In the ESCWA region, there is a need to involve more local communities in order to better orient the various initiatives, especially with the accelerating environmental change and/or degradation. Preferably, new interventions should be done on the ground and in close collaboration with local stakeholders so that new and emerging problems are treated systematically under a participatory approach in order to suggest and test various alternatives and solutions;

(f) Implementation in new and ongoing projects: There is a need to pursue an SLA agenda that would adapt to surrounding, especially legal, governmental and donor, environments. However, depending on circumstances, there might be cases where there would be a need to bring people after the fact (In the Oman fishery case, the evaluation of the impact of the increase in net size on fish diversity and fishing potential was discussed after the implementation. The feedback of the fishermen was positive in response to this change). Regarding the implementation possibility of SLA in ongoing alternatives, it is possible to adapt by reorienting the priorities and bringing people back to the centre. In some circumstances, it could be difficult since rational changes during project implementation could be seen by local beneficiaries as a sign of failure and of misperception of the objectives or even as a lack of long-term vision. People would have to be prepared and convinced prior to the changes on the ground. They should be part of the change and not only be directed by it;

(g) Funding: The local funding and coordination pattern is a key to promote ownership. In fact, most development initiatives in rural areas start with extra capital (donor, oil, and national budget, among others. Once this external push effect ends, only a solid auto-financing mechanism can ensure sustainability. It is the key to success and, in many cases, will determine the end judgment on the success or failure of the project. Several examples can be found in the case studies of Palestine and the Sudan, among others. In such poor countries as Palestine, the Sudan and Yemen, the role of donors is dominant and particularly important at the beginning when they tend to propose and fuel fixed or determined approaches. There is a need to harmonize those various visions targeting local needs, with national priorities and the SLA-specific agenda for a given phase. Focus should be on developing microcredits so as to make auto-financing and community financing a major objective for sustainability. There would be a need to reduce the gap between large-scale policies and local needs. The external remittances and off-farm income and all the funding coming from outside rural activities can be a good starter, but sustainable auto-financing mechanisms will be key to success. Here, the role of the private sector would be essential in order to give more power to SLA-based projects. This sector could link the projects to the economic agenda under a freer market mechanism and a more dynamic and enlightened business and market approach;

Natural resources and climate change: Such national priorities as natural resources and environmental issues should be kept at an ultimate level in SLA initiatives because of the ongoing trends in climate change. Endemic water scarcity makes water a fundamental issue for the region. Management and research and development can partially help mitigate the problematic water situation;

(h) Pilot projects: Pilot projects are important. They can help introduce innovative ideas and approaches and disseminate good practices through field visits, short movies, documentaries and other educational materials. They take time to set up and investigate as they require more rigorous/scientific selection of case studies and more hard data on implementation. They show multiple focuses on production (not strictly agricultural, but also industrial and artisanal), on management and auto-financing and on solving real problems on the ground, as was the case in Jordan, Palestine, Yemen, and other countries. Pilot projects can also show a variety of other experiences from around the world that could be applied in the local context. Even focusing on failure stories or failure components can be helpful in order to improve management while avoiding failure under comparable circumstances (Egypt, Palestine, and others). Meanwhile, in order to successfully cross the boundaries with SLA, there are economic costs involved due to the lack of formalized links, the lack of trust among stakeholders and the lack of communication;

(i) Areas of priority for SLA in the ESCWA region: National priorities that may not be strictly “green” but can contribute to taking further steps towards sustainability need to be adapted. Such is the case, for example, for nomadic rural environments where there is a need to create focus centres around which people can gravitate, adapt or adopt technologies that fit such local needs as renewable solar energy that may be more important than hard structures for those communities. Value-added activities could include off-farm income, post-harvest focus on enhancing development flexibility, optimization of resource use, hedging against large resource variability, and leveraging on niche products, among others.

B. CHALLENGES AND PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Previous discussions highlighted a number of avenues for integrating SLA within policies and programmes at various governance levels, policy and resource allocation cycles, as well as within donor processes. However, actual cases of adoption or application of SLA within the region are still few. The reason is that SLA is not in the mainstream of development programmes in the region, especially that it is always felt that there is no clear distinction between development resulting from the application and adoption of SLA and that resulting from the normal development course, namely regular activities to improve living conditions or other development approaches. However, most actions/activities under the umbrella of development are usually subsets of SLA and as such could be built upon to further the mainstreaming of SLA in the various programmes and strategies and at the various governance levels. This could be achieved by identifying and specifying more clearly the various parts of SLA as has been highlighted in previous sections, which include the livelihood context, the livelihood assets and the livelihood strategies together with the expected livelihood outcome. Below is a review of some challenges and priority areas that need to be addressed in order to foster the mainstreaming of SLA within the three different decision-making levels:

1. *National level*

One key challenge is the inadequate availability of, or access to, relevant data and information that is critical to allow the integration and application of SLA in most, if not all, development strategies and programmes. At the national level, the data and information needed should cover all the aspects of SLA, including the vulnerability context and transforming structures and processes or the livelihood context (trends; shocks; seasonality; structures: public, private, civil society; processes: policies, legislation, institutions, culture, and more); livelihood assets (human, social, natural, physical, financial); livelihood strategies (activities chosen to achieve a goal); and livelihood outcomes (achievements or outputs of strategies). Conducting such a comprehensive review could result in a need assessment in terms of what additional information might be needed and from in the identification of priorities for action.

However, appropriate collected data and information should not be considered final as no comprehensively descriptive data and information will ever be collected. Decision-making will always have a certain level of uncertainty as decisions will have to be made in all instances as countries cannot afford not to address the needs of their citizens and especially the most pressing ones. Thus, decision-making will also have to address the investments required in order to improve information to better inform future decisions. Other challenges might include incorporating SLA considerations within national development policies. Mobilizing key stakeholders is a major issue as it helps in improving coordination with existing development mechanisms, including various agreements and commitments, and adjusting all policies and strategies accordingly.

International donors have a key role to play in facilitating the implementation of stand-alone measures as well as the integration of SLA within core development priorities and projects. They can support capacity-building efforts to improve knowledge of SLA as well as its potential benefits and outcome and priorities at all levels. In this context, there is a need for greater awareness-raising on the importance of adopting SLA within donor agencies. Donors can also use high-level policy dialogues as a vehicle to raise the profile of adoption and application of SLA with senior officials in such key ministries as finance, planning and administration in partner countries. Finally, donors also need to better coordinate and harmonize their various efforts to promote the adoption and utilization of SLA and the implementation of SLA-related programmes at country level.

2. *Sector/project level*

The project level is critical for the adoption and integration of SLA considerations, and indeed much of the recent progress in this direction has been made at this level. Among the priority actions that are needed in order to further deepen the integration of SLA at the project level is the need to incorporate SLA

throughout the programme cycle (from inception to implementation and evaluation), to develop, pilot test, and implement SLA-based projects that might be relevant for various communities before widespread dissemination. Others would include the need to develop appropriate metrics and indicators to assess whether any efforts at better integrating SLA have proved effective, and to engage a variety of stakeholders in order to identify multiple options and indicators to monitor progress and success.

Among the major challenges is the fact that there is no specific strategy on how to integrate SLA into programmes and activities and that the available scenarios on how SLA is applied are not markedly different from other development activities. This could hamper the scaling-down of programmes at the sector/project level and, as a result, increase the presence of significant uncertainties associated with the various variables of SLA (context and assets, among others), which are important in project design. From an administrative point of view, project managers may also not have sufficient flexibility to implement SLA as they see fit. This is true because, once a project has been selected at the sector programming level, project managers are constrained in terms of the changes they can bring forward with regards to the overall methodological approach to be followed.

Some key recommendations to promote the integration of SLA at the project level include:

- (a) The need to develop appropriate tools and methods for designing and implementing SLA-based projects;
- (b) The need to compare and reconcile the diverse attempts that have been made so far, and a wider implementation;
- (c) The need to evaluate the effectiveness of programmes that have been implemented so far;
- (d) The need for capacity development in order to enhance understanding with regards to the various aspects of SLA and its impact on project implementation.

3. *Local level*

Despite the establishment of enabling conditions and the identification of entry points, the integration of SLA into local development processes still faces various challenges, including, among others:

- (a) Awareness-raising: Proper awareness on the importance of SLA in helping communities improve their day-to-day lives is still lacking, which represents a significant impediment to integrating SLA into programmes and activities and to inciting its utilization at the local decision-making levels;
- (b) Information: The role of different types of information for local-level adoption and integration of SLA into the decision-making process is very important as has already been stressed. Perhaps most challenging is the availability of various scenarios at a scale that is relevant to individual communities. Scenarios that might be available at upper levels or from other set-ups (national, regional or international) might, in most cases, not be readily applicable at community level, especially in this region because of the changing and unique local specificities (culture, gender issues, and varying levels of development, among others). Thus, they would have to be scrutinized so as to extract those parts that might be used. Those general trends and plans could thus provide a starting point for considering and expanding the application of SLA at community level, though they might not be enough to encourage drastic changes in the way business is conducted at the community level in the region;

- (c) Capacity: Local governments and organizations are almost always under-resourced and overcommitted. Budgets are typically stretched, whether the funds of local budgets are raised locally or allocated by central governments. Technical knowledge in the design and implementation of development initiatives, especially those building on the sustainable livelihood framework, is limited most of the time if

not lacking. As a result, the design of meaningful development plans and strategies is usually done at national level and as such does little to take into account the specific needs of a given local community. For instance, a community lacking water would be put on the same pedestal as another community with plenty of water. Those inadequacies are a reflection of the lack of resources of local governments in order to respond to local needs and often very limited capacities to invest (as almost all local revenues go to recurrent expenditures or debt repayment);

(d) Competing local (and national) priorities or needs: Development needs usually compete with other such priorities as disaster relief, the need for improved political or civil security, and others. In rural communities, because living in poverty may have been incorporated into local views and options or because of entrenched benefits (regular handouts from national governments or from donors or international aid), local authorities may be reluctant to allocate sufficient resources to remove a constraining factor. Rather, they prefer to allocate the limited funds to more pressing needs that are usually not covered as part of the national or international social safety net programmes (salaries and other benefits, illegal activities, and others). The key to ensuring that SLA and SLA-based programmes and activities are fully integrated into the local context is to create links between the various SLA applications and integration and improved livelihood;

(e) Institutional set-ups that might inhibit the adoption and integration of SLA: Complicated and unresolved institutional questions or conflicts may present a barrier to the integration of SLA into community decision-making and programme implementation. For example, poorly defined or insecure land tenure may impede a revision of local land-use plans and thus prevent people from adopting certain land-improving strategies, since they might feel they have no guaranteed returns on investments if the land is suddenly taken away.

C. WAY FORWARD

1. *Capacity-building*

As discussed above, some of the major challenges impeding a widespread adoption of SLA include the lack of adequate knowledge with regards to its effectiveness and an appropriate individual and institutional experience for using it. Those two challenges can be addressed through appropriate capacity-building programmes. This capacity development would be aimed towards a better knowledge of SLA (scope, components, and application, among others) and its mainstreaming into policies and programmes at all levels in order to achieve better decision-making and implementation that would result in increased contribution to, or achievement of, such development goals as poverty reduction or improvement of living conditions.

2. *Mechanisms for capacity-building*

A capacity needs assessment would have to be conducted in order to identify the kind of support that might be required. Capacity-building might include the conduct of technical training on SLA and on this guide and would involve individual stakeholders and institutions. Since SLA puts people in the centre, training components should include empowerment, giving responsibility to local communities regarding the importance of their role and leadership in the conception, orientation and the implementation of adapted projects, and focusing on ultimate priorities selected by themselves, among others. This is not easy to do when the complexity of rural life is associated with numerous independent and interrelated factors. The message of the training should be that people will receive from SLA projects what they already contributed to the selection process. Therefore, it is important for people to learn how to make a good selection of key criteria for change to avoid having unadapted projects imposed on them.

Technically, capacity-building programmes would be tailored according to each sector or theme (agriculture, water, transport or energy) to be emphasized. To this end, training-of-trainer programmes might prove helpful in reaching a wider audience. Other capacity-building programmes might include

conducting awareness-raising workshops on potential impact and on principles of SLA, institutionalizing SLA (laws and regulatory frameworks, assigning responsibilities, and disseminating information and knowledge, among others), supporting systematic monitoring and evaluation systems and establishing networks to enhance the exchange of experiences.

3. SLA for capacity development

Capacity development involves using and increasing existing capacity.⁵⁵ The country should take stock of its expertise as related to SLA and start to integrate SLA in national institutions in order to strengthen them while avoiding, as much as possible, to bypass them or to establish competing mechanisms. Moreover, the inexistence of domestic capacity related to SLA should not be construed as an argument to avoid the adoption and implementation of SLA. Experience shows that taking into account the above considerations will ultimately lead to a more sustainable outcome with the adoption of SLA.⁵⁶

TABLE 7. TYPES OF INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT THE STRENGTHENING OF LIVELIHOOD ASSETS

Asset category	Possible areas of intervention
Human	Training, education, awareness-raising, human rights, improved food security and access to better diet, improved access to health and education services
Natural	Assisting communities to use their resources more sustainably, improving the post-harvest use of resources, improving access to sectoral service provision, supporting rehabilitation of degraded environments
Financial	Much can be done indirectly through other assets. Social organization can improve access to credit and provide saving mechanisms, awareness-raising in formal institutions can increase access to formal credit, support can be provided to assist the establishment of insurance schemes. Improving natural assets can improve financial flows. Providing business training can improve the management of finances
Physical	Helping to improve access to infrastructure, providing access to information on improved technologies, building capacity in communities to improve or develop their own physical assets
Social	Strengthening community organization skills, building on existing institutions, raising awareness of social organizational structures and functions, building up trust, providing leadership training, encouraging the inclusion of marginalized groups, supporting networks

Source: Adapted from Allison and Horemans, 2005.

II. CONCLUSIONS

Maintaining coherence between improving livelihoods and achieving policy goals is a key requirement for any good development strategy. SLA promotes such integrated thinking by providing a conceptual and practical link between micro-, meso- and macrolevels of development programmes and as such contributes to a poverty-relevant programme outcome. Thus, SLA offers a reference participatory frame for:

- (a) Analysing the context factors of livelihood systems, which are vulnerabilities and opportunities as well as the roles and influences of policies, institutions, and processes on the livelihoods of poor people, to identify vulnerable groups;
- (b) Analysing their endowment with assets, their strengths, and their requirements for development support;

⁵⁵ OECD, 2006b.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

(c) Identifying and formulating appropriate strategies in order to improve livelihoods or well-being (outcome) and determine the role and relevance of transforming institutions.

SLA facilitates investigation and monitoring of the interface between policies, institutions, processes, and structures, on one hand, and the livelihood strategies and outcomes, on the other hand, through an entire programme cycle management (from formulation, to planning, resource allocation and implementation). At the planning/formulation stage, it facilitates the identification and validation of alternative entry points in the context and core of livelihoods for effective poverty-reduction measures. It also offers a useful framework for assessing poverty and development needs, guiding impact hypotheses, and the intervention logic at the level of a strategy implementation. Finally, SLA provides a useful framework for setting monitoring priorities or, in short, for tracking development-induced changes in the livelihoods of poor people.

The guide covers the issue of SLA and sustainable agriculture, food security and rural development; natural resources management; and the management of emerging issues and others related to the application of SLA for rural development. The guide took advantage of the various suggestions of experts and incorporated the case studies that were provided in order to illustrate certain aspects of interests. Less emphasis was put on discussions related to the SLA concept and methodology and more on its application and flexibility together with its capacity to target people from the local to the national level, with a special emphasis on poor people. The guide includes the structure and key elements of the application of the SLA concept for rural development and an overview of the application or analysis of development policies and programmes in the Arab region using SLA through a number of case studies and other experiences.

The guide is designed to be an analytical tool to foster a better understanding of SLA and a more focused approach for addressing issues of sustainable livelihood, particularly at an operational level. It is meant to be used as a resource material for analysing, designing and implementing programmes for sustainable rural development. The impact of SLA should be highlighted in supporting sustainable agriculture, achieving food security and promoting rural development (lessons learned from case studies of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, the Sudan and Yemen). The concept of SLA could be used to enhance the management of the quickly depleting and degrading natural resources of the region (cases from the Kurdistan Regional Governorate of Iraq, Lebanon, Oman, and Saudi Arabia, among others) while the interlinkages between SLA and various such emerging and challenging issues as climate change, green economy, desertification or land degradation, to name a few, should be further explored.

The contextualization of SLA as a methodological tool for sustainable development in the ESCWA region brings value added to enhance livelihoods at the local level, particularly in rural contexts (case study on saving and lending women and farmer cooperatives in rural areas from Jordan and Palestine, among others). There is a need to design and adopt innovative local policies adapted for SLA taking into account that strategies may vary depending on prevailing conditions, particularly political and governance structures. The promotion of such a political environment should include, inter alia, a priority resetting for rural areas, the empowerment of rural groups, the issue of growth with equity, the different dimensions of sustainability, the importance of insurance systems against calamities, and more. The promotion of auto-financing of projects while taking into account the cultural dimension is an indicator of sustainability and voluntary work.

Next steps

In the area of capacity-building, there is a need for effective extension programmes, coaching tools and training for planners and grassroots beneficiaries and for institutions in order to build technical capacity and increase expertise for implementing SLA. Concerning the guide, there is a need to build national and regional capacity in its utilization towards the design, implementation and management of SLA projects. It is necessary to map other case studies and conduct detailed analyses both on success stories and failed cases in order to learn from previous experiences.

In order to operationalize SLA in the ESCWA region, there is a need to thoroughly assess what could be the next steps in policy formulation, programme design and implementation with emphasis on the types of programmes needed for income diversification, the target beneficiaries, the scope and means and resources required. It is also essential to emphasize the importance of gender and equity issues in improving livelihoods in rural areas. The importance of SLA in helping fight desertification and alleviating other problems should also be stressed together with mainstreaming it into sustainable land management programmes and others. Emphasizing on sustainable livelihoods could help reverse rural-urban migration by enhancing conditions in rural areas. However, an enabling environment as well as a supportive legislative system need to be put in place.

The role of donors and international development assistance should be reassessed in order to identify possible complementarities in addressing the issue of sustainable livelihoods and identifying areas for partnership that could complement local SLA initiatives, particularly in the design of small-scale and pilot projects and when scaling them up at national and regional levels and conducting impact assessments. It is essential to follow up with interested experts in the field in order to establish a community of practitioners (network) and a repository of information on tools, success stories, applications and policy options for promoting sustainable livelihoods with a regional and Arab specificity. At a higher level, it is vital to liaise with such regional and international organizations as UNDP, ICARDA and others in order to identify areas of common interest in the operationalization of the integration of sustainable livelihoods into policy and programme planning and implementation, particularly at national and local levels.

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