

Sustainable livelihoods highlights

research findings for development policymakers and practitioners

July 2009



A researcher interviews a community water supply attendant in Uchira, Tanzania
Anna Mdee, 2004

The myth of 'community ownership'?

The core principles of Community-Driven Development (CDD) and Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches (SLA) assert that 'communities' should own and shape development interventions.

Recognising and respecting people at the micro-level is vital but research from Tanzania suggests that assumptions relating to the efficiency, equity and sustainability of this in practice need to be scrutinised. 'Community' is not a corporate body like

local government and the complexity and divisions that exist within communities need to be understood better.

Between 2004 and 2006, researchers analysed the evolution of the Uchira Water Users' Association (UWUA). UWUA manages a drinking water system for 6,000 people in Northern Tanzania with funding from GTZ, the German development agency. To some degree external donors and practitioners regard this scheme as community ownership and empowerment in action.

Community ownership is highly contested and complex, even in projects which apply 'ideal' participatory practice. In this case, research on the water project revealed a high degree of capture by the village elite, despite GTZ attempts to ensure wide community ownership. This impacted on the poorest people, as the 'community' representatives in the water association did not recognise their problems in accessing and paying for water. Several tensions in the CDD initiatives became clear.

Community ownership vs professionalism

Local community ownership was heavily contested and the organisation showed a shift towards professionalising community involvement. This was necessary to enable the organisation to operate effectively.

Sustainability vs equity

UWUA shows that the supply of drinking water can be improved through providing locally appropriate technology and local salaried staff (not volunteers). Also, it can be sustained through a system of cost recovery through water user-charges. However, there was no consideration either by the donor or the local organisation concerning equity of access to water. Equity considerations have to be championed externally, through regulation, subsidy, advocacy, or legal rights, such as the right to 'free' water in South Africa.

Local governance vs external intervention

Much of the evolution of UWUA was guided by what GTZ viewed as appropriate, albeit with the justification that they were chosen in partnership with the local community. However, this empowered those connected with GTZ and they came to represent the community by default, thus reinforcing divisions. Arguably GTZ's institution building of UWUA also marginalised the democratically-elected village government.

This case study shows that despite having rules in place to enhance local ownership, inclusivity and accountability, in reality the outcomes reflect the concerns of a narrow constituency. These are the individuals with the voice and resources to shape the character of a community-based organisation or institution.

Ironically the successes of UWUA in increasing water supply could be attributed to its bureaucratic management and the persistence of the Chairman rather than a mythical (and unsustainable) ideal of community ownership.

Anna Mdee

Department of Development & Economic Studies, School of Social and International Studies, University of Bradford
Bradford BD7 1DP, UK
T +44 1274 235286
a.l.mdee@bradford.ac.uk

This issue of *id21 highlights* was produced with Livelihoods Connect and its partners in the Livelihoods Network.

These articles summarise the findings presented at a seminar in South Africa in March 2009 exploring the links between sustainable livelihoods and community-driven development.

The seminar was one of a series funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council and co-convened by IDS, Khanya-aidcd, Practical Action and the Universities of Bath and Bradford.

The seminars explore the relevance of sustainable livelihoods approaches today.

Join the debate online:
<http://community.eldis.org/sla>

Livelihoods website
www.eldis.org/go/livelihoods

See also

Community-Driven Development Working Paper Series
www.brad.ac.uk/acad/des/research/poverty/projects/interlink/papers/

SLA in South African government policy processes

The post-1994 mandate of the South African Department of Social Development (DSD) was based on 3 pillars: social security, social welfare and community development.

Traditionally, the main focus has been on social security, largely implemented through individual grants, such as child support grants. Social welfare initiatives focused on relief programmes within which community development was subsumed.

Community development within the DSD was narrowly defined and influenced by the need to reduce poverty rapidly. As such, it was dominated by relief programmes such as Poverty Relief Projects and the National Food Emergency Scheme. An emphasis on economic development led to a focus on projects as a means of job creation and income generation.

In 2004 a strategic reconfiguration of DSD resulted in a notable shift in thinking about poverty, with important implications for the strategies required to combat it. A two-year research study was commissioned to evaluate the impact of the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme and the Urban Renewal Programme being implemented in the 21 poorest rural and urban areas of the country. This study used participatory techniques to undertake livelihoods analysis of households in the study area and assess their access to basic services.

The study highlights a number of issues

- lack of co-ordination and integration of development, both between government departments and within DSD itself
- no common understanding of the meaning of social and community development, sustainable livelihoods or DSD's role in poverty reduction
- inappropriate and short-term use of projects as a primary intervention, and confusion between the large number of different projects.

These findings led the DSD to use a sustainable livelihoods framework to try to understand the livelihoods of poor households better and identify the most appropriate strategies. The report concludes that:



- The key to poverty alleviation is to help households and communities build their assets in a sustained way.
- The DSD could best target interventions at building social and human assets, such as by supporting education programmes.
- The DSD should co-ordinate and integrate activities with other departments and institutions to ensure people's access to other assets, including financial capital, natural resources and physical assets, such as tools and infrastructure.

In order to implement a sustainable livelihoods approach to community development, DSD sought assistance from a partner to help build a shared understanding of SLA. This was done through capacity building sessions for Community Development Practitioners (CDPs) and the development of an SLA toolkit, including household and community profiling methods for livelihoods analysis. The toolkit is to form part of a presidential initiative known as the 'War Room on Poverty' Campaign. SLA is also being incorporated into community driven approaches such as the Community Works Programme and Right to Work.

The learning from this process of action research and capacity-building is currently being used to develop a policy framework. The framework will provide the basis for cross-sector strategy and tools to co-ordinate government investment in building sustainable livelihoods.

Alfa Mahlako
Sustainable Livelihoods Directorate,
Department of Social Development
Republic of South Africa
AlfaM@socdev.gov.za

See also

Urban Synthesis Report: Second Evaluation of DSD Services and Projects

www.khanya-aicdd.org/publications/ISRDP_URP_Urban%20synthesis_report.pdf/view

Rural Synthesis Report: Second Evaluation of DSD Services and Projects

www.khanya-aicdd.org/publications/ISRDP_Rural_synthesis_report.pdf/view

Kgalagadi Nursery School – one of the projects supported by the South African Department of Social Development in South Africa
Khanya-aicdd

Useful SLA & CDD weblinks

Bradford Centre for International Development
Understanding Community Action
www.brad.ac.uk/acad/bcid/research/poverty/projects/interlink/

International Fund for Agricultural Development
www.ifad.org/english/cdd/index.htm

Khanya-aicdd
www.khanya-aicdd.org/community-driven-development/

The World Bank
<http://go.worldbank.org/24K8IHVVS0>

Livelihoods Connect
www.eldis.org/go/livelihoods

Community-driven development and SLA in Zimbabwe

Practical Action's experiences

In Zimbabwe, Community-Driven Development (CDD) for sustainable livelihoods faces enormous challenges. In the 1980s, the government was heavily involved in developing policies and directing resources for community-oriented development initiatives. The state provided most basic services. From 1990-2000, however, Zimbabwe experimented with Structural Adjustment Programmes to stimulate economic growth and development.

These resulted in state withdrawal from service delivery and consequent high levels of unemployment and poverty. Since 2000, Zimbabwe has seen a sharp decline in economic performance and a phenomenal rise in unemployment, disease and poverty.

This period has been characterised by

- controversial structural and policy reforms (land reform, indigenisation policy, agricultural marketing policies, minerals marketing and monetary policy reforms)
- a growing number of non-state agencies focused on humanitarian relief and development services, developing their own parallel structures for service delivery
- discrepancies between micro-meso and macro-level development processes, with limited coordination and links
- no effective mechanisms for integrating local level priorities into district and provincial planning and resource allocation systems
- lack of cross-sectoral learning mechanisms.

Since the 1990s, Practical Action Southern Africa has been using adaptive CDD approaches to achieve food security and sustainable livelihoods among resource-poor communities. These approaches focus on strengthening the capacity of Community-Based Change Agents to transform people's lives.

An initial pilot project in two wards of one district of Masvingo Province has been scaled-up to over 60 wards in the Provinces of Manicaland, Matebeleland South and the Midlands. To date, over one million people, more than half of them female, have benefited from these initiatives.

Benefits include

- reduction in the household food gap for 70-80 percent of the target population
- local diversification of food, and livelihood security initiatives at household and community level
- the incorporation of natural resource-based livelihood coping mechanisms
- market integration for surpluses from improved production systems of vegetables, cereals and livestock
- more responsive support systems for extension and pro-poor policy development.

Each of the CDD steps is underpinned by sustainable livelihood thinking and principles.

The key lessons from this work include

- Community-based planning processes must be inclusive, participatory and non-

discriminatory, and based on locally preferred social dialogue and consensus-building values.

- Transformational capacity-building for community and district change agents must be responsive and transformative.
- Social empowerment must be people-centred and community-driven.
- 'Learning by doing' initiatives must be holistic, realistic and practical, building on local strengths and opportunities.
- Communities must have an effective voice and power to influence change or preferred outcomes.
- Service delivery approaches must be based on micro and meso links for flexibility and adaptability to changing contexts and realities.
- Scaling-up requires building strategic partnerships and relationships with various development agents at all levels – micro, meso and macro.
- Wider change and impact can be achieved through influencing policy and practice using credible evidence from the field.

Absolom Masendeke

Practical Action Southern Africa
Harare, Zimbabwe
absolomm@practicalactionzw.org

See also

Practical Action: Reducing Vulnerability
http://practicalaction.org/?id=region_southern_africa_reducing_vulnerability



Community-driven training on soil and water management using a locally-made A Frame in Gwanda district, Matebeleland South Province, Zimbabwe
Irvine Siyafa, 2007

Livelihoods network

Livelihoods Connect

www.eldis.org/go/livelihoods

Join the online debate

<http://community.eldis.org/sla>

Other seminars in the series

21 July 2009

SLA and Pro-poor market development, Centre for Development Studies, University of Bath, UK

December 2009

SLA, Disaster Risk Reduction and Community-based Adaptation to Climate Change, Practical Action, Rugby, UK

Spring 2010

SLA, Food Security and Social Protection, Bradford Centre for International Development, UK

Summer 2010

Synthesis seminar, Institute for Development Studies, Brighton, UK

Livelihoods and vulnerabilities

Theory and practice in Malawi

Worldwide, efforts are being made to promote sustainable livelihoods through Community-Driven Development (CDD). While Sustainable Livelihood Approaches (SLA) implies external actors supporting local communities in development activities, CDD implies community 'ownership' of development efforts.

In theory, through decentralisation, both SLA and CDD can lead to development. The assumption is that decentralisation allows local communities to take charge of their lives through their representatives. This has proved elusive in reality. An analysis of community-based forestry in Malawi illustrates this.

Malawi's new National Forest Policy was launched in 1996. This policy, along with the corresponding Forest Act of 1997 and the Decentralisation Policy of 1998 are expected to provide the framework for transferring the management of forests from the Government to the communities.

Local communities should be empowered to participate in decision-making concerning their livelihoods by electing representatives. However, since 2000, no local government elections have been conducted; therefore, there are no Councillors to represent local communities. Frontline government staff work as proxy representatives in the absence of elected representatives.

Malingunde has forests and water resources. Dzalanyama Forest Reserve is the source of the Lilongwe

River and is under the State Forest Department's jurisdiction. The Lilongwe Water Board (LWB) has built two dams on the river to supply water to Lilongwe's residents. Local communities use the same resources for their livelihoods: the forest is a source of employment, firewood (for cooking, heating and lighting), and non-cultivated foods. The river is a source of water for drinking and fishing, and the river banks are good for dimba farming (growing fresh vegetables and other crops during the dry season to ensure food security during the lean months).

The LWB and Malawi Environmental Endowment Trust are interested in the ecological functions of these natural resources. However, they view local communities' use of the resources as destructive. Working through forestry staff, the organisations provide funding to local communities to support activities other than those based on natural resources.

In the absence of elected representatives and with the decline in financial resources for community-based development, local communities depend on frontline staff to develop proposals for donors and to guide them in implementation. In line with decentralisation, local communities are encouraged to form new forest governance structures such as Village Forestry Clubs and Village Natural Resource Management Committees. These have to be affiliated with the umbrella Community-Based Organisation (CBO) to access funding from external organisations.

An analysis of the relationships within the CBO, between the forestry staff

and the local communities indicate that the local communities are not the decision-makers, despite the latter being given responsibilities and titles.

Lessons learnt include

- Local communities are socially and economically differentiated, therefore, not all their needs can be met through the CBO.
- Because of power differentials, the local communities cannot make their own decisions regarding their livelihoods
- Poverty limits livelihood choices and worsens vulnerability to other social actors.
- Analysis of power relations needs to be clearly included in the SLA framework: without this, poor local communities will always be vulnerable to others.

Margaret Mwanjani Ganje Sikwese

University of Malawi, Bunda College of Agriculture, P.O.Box 219 Lilongwe, Malawi
mnyaganje@yahoo.com

Analysis of power relations needs to be included in the SLA framework otherwise poor local communities will always be vulnerable to others



Livelihood options: Thai Karen villagers producing baskets in Sop Moei, near the Burmese border. Two refugee camps nearby also provide business opportunities for villagers such as transport (by motor bike), telephone and fuel services to the camps Jan Thompson, 2009

Keywords: SLA, sustainable livelihoods, CDD, community-driven development, community, community-based

This issue of *id21 highlights* was produced with Livelihoods Connect and its partners in the Livelihoods Network.



id21
Institute of Development Studies
University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK
T +44 (0)1273 915785 F +44 (0)1273 877335
id21@ids.ac.uk www.id21.org

id21 is hosted by IDS and funded by the UK Department for International Development. The views expressed in *id21 highlights* do not necessarily reflect those of DFID, IDS or any other contributing institution.

IDS is a Charitable Company No.877338 limited by guarantee and registered in England.
© Institute of Development Studies 2009
ISSN 1460-4205

id21
www.id21.org

