
Sustaining Livelihoods in Southern Africa

Issue: 4 December 2001
Theme: Rights-based approach to development

Contents of this issue:
SL Documents Lessons from Experience
SL Activities Upcoming Events
Reader's Contributions About PLAAS

Editor's notes

This month's theme is rights-based approach to development, with a contribution from Mike Drinkwater of CARE. We start with some more information on key principles and issues in relation to sustainable livelihoods. This provides a basis for seeing why inclusion of rights-based approach to development is important if sustainable livelihoods are to be achieved. We then have summaries of relevant documents and publications on the subject. Current SL programmes and upcoming events are highlighted.

Some more background to rights-based approach to development

Conceptualisation of rights-based approach to development

A Rights-Based Approach (RBA) sees people as active citizens with rights, expectations, and responsibilities. These are based on three crosscutting principles of participation, inclusion and fulfilling obligations. A rights-based approach to development is concerned not just with civil and political rights (the right to a trial, not to be tortured etc) but also with social, economic and cultural rights (the right housing, to food, to a job, etc).

Rather than focus on a legalistic analysis of rights (where the emphasis is on state institutions and structures), many development agencies have chosen to adopt what is called a relational rights-based approach (social, economic and social rights). This emphasises the rights and responsibilities of all individuals and institutions. It has four key elements:

- participatory governance and the right to participate;
- promoting inclusive social and economic development;
- mutual accountability in respect of rights and responsibilities; and
- a holistic perspective focusing on understanding root causes, removing constraints and creating opportunities and choices for livelihood improvement

A way of conceptualising rights is shown in Box 2.

Box 2 Conceptualisation of rights

Right as legitimate claims: Rights are widely characterised as legitimate claims that give rise to correlative obligations or duties.

Rights regime: A rights regime is a system of rights which derive from a particular regulatory order or source of authority. In a given society several may co-exist – all with distinct normative frameworks and means of formulation and enforcement, for example customary law, religious law and statutory law.

Individual rights: These are subset of right-obligation relationships where the rights-bearer is an individual person; group rights would not fall within this subset of rights.

Universal human rights: This can be characterised as an individual right with a universal domain –that is, an individual right that applies to all human beings equally, irrespective of their membership of particular families, groups, religions, communities, or societies.

Source: Moser and Norton, 2001

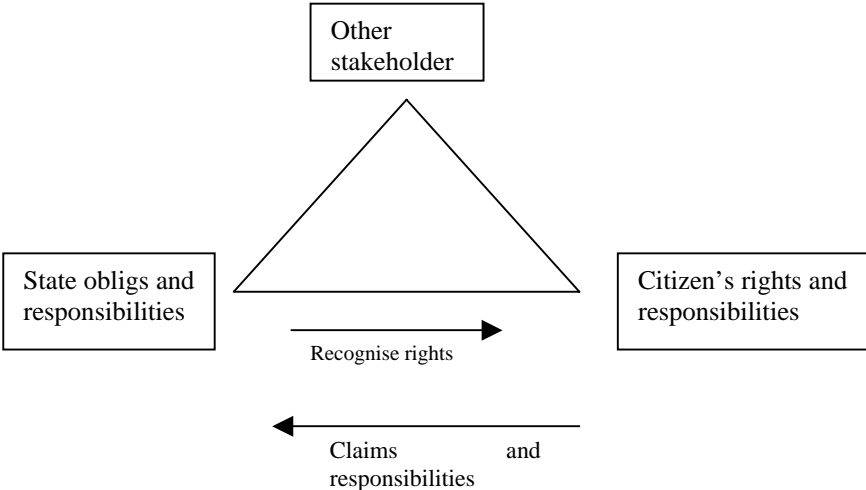
Rights, claims and responsibilities

A fundamental argument of the RBA is that rights are relational, that is, that all stakeholders have rights and responsibilities. Some of the contested areas in relation to rights, claims and responsibilities are:

- State’s obligations and responsibilities to recognise citizens rights;
- Citizens’ rights and responsibilities and ability to claim rights from the state;
- Other stakeholders’ obligations and responsibilities.

A way of summarising the approach would be that State and non-State actors have specific obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, playing a facilitating, provision or promotion role (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Relation between stakeholders’ rights and obligations



Some principles behind the RBA

- People are at the centre of development;
- Need for participation in decision-making;
- Need to analyse and understand power relations and root causes of poverty/suffering;
- Equal worth for all;

- Need to understand social differentiation and empower the marginalised to negotiate with the state and other stakeholders;
- Stakeholders need to be mutually accountable and responsible;
- Recognition of the obligations of the state to facilitate, provide and promote attainment of citizen's rights;
- Recognition of the need to promote the public good and that there are interests and trade-offs that need to be negotiated;
- Social and political analysis of the relationship between the state and citizens;
- Recognition of the dynamic nature of relationships;
- Citizens have rights to make claims on the state and each other, but also responsibilities to both, and
- Need to recognise the reality of differing interests and trade-offs which need to be negotiated and processed.

The link between rights based approach and sustainable livelihoods

There is a considerable overlap in the founding principles of rights-based approach and sustainable livelihoods approaches: both emphasise the importance of influencing the policies, processes and institutions in ways that enable people to achieve better access to entitlements and resources.

The main difference between them is that rights-based approaches are concerned more with what people's entitlements are, or should be, whereas sustainable approaches seek to assess what impact the presence or absence of certain entitlements has on people's livelihoods.

Combining rights and livelihoods approaches ensures a grounding of all forms of development work in a respect for human dignity, in principles of social justice, in the need to address power relations and the causes of poverty, vulnerability and marginalisation more seriously, but at the same time for retaining an embracing respect for humanity and humanness in all we do.

Key RBA documents/articles

To Claim our Rights: Livelihoods security, human rights and sustainable development. By: Caroline Moser and Andy Norton. Overseas Development Institute. 2001. This paper was prepared as the overview document for an ODI-organised workshop on Human Rights, Assets and Livelihood Security and Sustainable Development held in London on 19th and 20th June 2001. It explores the potential contribution of a human rights perspective to the development of policies and programmes that strengthens the sustainability of people's assets and livelihood security. The paper argues that a rights and livelihoods perspective provides the basis for developing a more concrete understanding of social sustainability, and concomitantly, sustainable development. This paper can be obtained from the Overseas Development Institute, 111 Westminster Bridge Road, London, SE1 7JD or www.odi.org.uk

Rights, Claims and Capture: understanding the Politics of Pro-poor Policy. By: Craig Johnson and Daniel Start. Overseas Development Institute. 2001. This paper outlines the ways in which politics and power affect pro-poor policies. It does this by addressing three interrelated features of pro-policy: 1) the role that the state play promoting and implementing redistributive policies; 2) the ways in which social actors affect these actions; and 3) Competing ideas about the role states should play in encouraging particular forms of encouragement. In so doing it examines the challenge of implementing coherent policy, exploring problems of co-ordination, influence and capture. It also considers the ways in which mainstream thinking about rights, governance and development has transformed the conditions under which government and other agents of development design and implement pro-poor policy. This paper can be obtained from the Overseas Development Institute, 111 Westminster Bridge Road, London, SE1 7JD or www.odi.org.uk

Sustainable Livelihoods, Rights and the New Architecture of AID. By: John Farrington. Overseas Development Institute. 2001. This article gives an overview of the range and provisions of new aid vehicles which have been introduced recently, mainly by the Washington-based

institutions and then to assess how they might relate to existing approaches to development, specifically sustainable livelihoods and rights-based approaches. The article starts by looking at the aim of the architecture of aid, which is to integrate poverty and environmental policies into a coherent growth-oriented macro-economic framework, contrary to earlier approaches, achieves a high degree of ownership by countries themselves. It further looks at the conceptualisation and implementation of rights-based and sustainable livelihoods approaches and the link between the two. This paper can be obtained from the Overseas Development Institute, 111 Westminster Bridge Road, London, SE1 7JD or www.odi.org.uk.

The Challenges of Linking Livelihoods and Rights-based approaches to Human Development. By: Mike Drinkwater. CARE Southern Africa. 2001. The paper looks at how a sustainable livelihoods and a human rights approach to development relates to each other. It does this by looking at the origins, conceptualisation and implementation of these approaches. It concludes by highlighting the similarities and differences. The paper can be obtained by writing to either Mike at drinkwaterm@caresa.org or Tsiliso at tsiliso@khanya-mrc.co.za.

Rights-based and Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches: Divergences and Convergences. Khanya-Managing Rural Change. 2001. The paper is a record of the outcomes of a brainstorming session at DFID SA in Pretoria between Bridget Dillon (Social Development Advisor) and Tom Barret (Rural Livelihoods Advisor) of DFID; Mike Drinkwater of CARESA; Leah Nchabeleng of Tihavhama Training Initiative; Ian Goldman and Tsiliso Tamasane of Khanya-Managing Rural Change. The objective of the meeting was to understand the relationship between the rights-based and sustainable livelihoods approaches. The report can be obtained from: www.khanya-mrc.co.za.

What can we do with a rights-based approach to development? A briefing paper for Overseas Development Institute. 1993. This is a report on a study that assesses potentials for operationalising the components of rights based approaches within the universal codes of human rights. A number of recommendations are set out for the application of individual and state action and the localised design and assessment of human rights objectives. The implications apply therefore to both policy and practice of development. For further information, please contact the principal author, Simon Maxwell, Overseas Development Institute Director at s.simon@odi.org.uk

Lessons From Experience

'Lessons' is a new area on Livelihoods Connect seeking to provide the key to unlock some of the questions such as: Is there a substantive body of experience of people using sustainable livelihoods approaches? What are the lessons emerging and who is involved in the projects? It highlights 34 new project summaries of DFID supported initiatives and brings attention to previously published case studies of five innovative projects that used livelihoods approaches. The project summaries provide interesting examples from eleven different sectors including: agriculture; communications; community development; fisheries; forestry; livelihood approaches; monitoring and evaluation; natural resources; sanitation; support to practitioners; tourism; transport; urban development; and water. The summaries are based on work carried out by Hugh Gibbon and David Ridder Smith at NRI, and can be viewed at www.livelihood.org/lessons/lessons.

SL activities/programmes

Khanya-managing rural change together with the Community-based Planning local partner, Mangaung Local Municipality are undertaking participatory ward Plans in Mangaung, mixed urban and rural in central South Africa. To read more about this, visit Khanya's website at: www.khanya-mrc.co.za.

The Intermediate technology for Development Group is facilitating Community-Based Planning pilot study in Zimbabwe, Chimanimane Rural District Council. For more information please contact Absalom Masendeke at absalomm@itdg.org.za.

Upcoming events

International Workshop on Participatory Planning Approaches for Local Governance. This workshop will be held in January in Indonesia. For more information please contact Rose Nierras at R.Nierras@ids.ac.uk.

Useful Internet rights-based approaches to development (RBA)

1. Eldis: <http://nt1.ids.ac.uk/eldis/humar/hum.htm> (Eldis is a gateway to online information on development in countries of the South)
2. One World: www.oneworld.net/ One World is dedicated to promoting human development and sustainable development.
3. United Nations Children Fund: www.unicef.org/crc/
4. United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: www.unhchr.ch/
5. Human Rights Watch: www.hrw.org/links.html
6. Overseas Development Institute: www.odi.org.uk

Future topics

We welcome feedback, ideas and contributions for upcoming topics. The topic for February will be on local economic development and for March on Sustainable Livelihoods and Urban Development.

About CARE

CARE is one of the world's largest private international relief and development organisations. Founded in the aftermath of World War II, CARE enabled Americans to send more than 100 million CARE Packages® to survivors of the conflict in Europe and Asia. CARE has become a leader in sustainable development and emergency aid, reaching tens of millions of people each year in more than 60 countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. For more than 50 years now, CARE has been a vehicle of American generosity abroad. Mike Drinkwater is in the Southern Africa's Office of CARE and can be contacted at: drinkwaterm@caresa.org.

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