

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH AND ARTISANAL & SMALL-SCALE MINING

by James CARNEGIE, UNDESA Consultant

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) was developed in response to dissatisfaction with the results of development efforts. It was therefore not invented, but evolved and is nothing new, but a combination of what is considered “best practice” in development interventions into an approach.

The SLA is used by many organisations including multi-laterals (e.g. United Nations), bi-lateral donors (e.g. DFID), the World Bank, international NGOs (e.g. Care, Oxfam) national governments and NGOs.

SLA focuses on peoples livelihoods and how they can be improved and sustained.

DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES AND FRAMEWORK

A **livelihood** can be defined as:

“the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base”.

(Carney, 1998)

A simple definition of a livelihood is “how people survive, maintain and improve their well being, and cope with stresses and shocks, now and in the future”

There are seven **principles** of the SLA. These include:

1. People focussed – participatory and responsive

There is a need to recognise the importance of artisanal miner’s views and ideas, their assets and vulnerabilities and what can be done using their own resources. This central to involving the people in their own development process making interventions more relevant, timely and “bottom-up”.

2. Strengths based

This is about recognising that people, no matter how poor and vulnerable they are they have strengths - assets and capabilities. There is a need to see the issues affecting poor people not

only as problems, but strengths and opportunities to build upon, and so using peoples energies and assets for their development.

3. Holistic

This is about recognising that people (including the poor) often have multiple livelihood activities. We need to understand this complexity of people's lives, and that they may not just be involved in agriculture, but also other sectors including agriculture, trading, etc and social, health and others.

4. Partnerships – participatory

As the issues facing poor people are complex and diverse there needs to be a range of inputs that need to be co-ordinated. This means that not only must the community be involved, but also a co-ordinated effort and involvement of a range of stakeholders and service providers.

5. Micro-macro linkages – policy and programmes

The focus of development efforts is at the micro level – communities, linked to service providers and local government (meso level) and an enabling environment of policies and programmes at a macro level. There needs to be linkages, and project and programme harmonisation.

6. Flexible and dynamic – continual learning process

As the environment that ASM is practised is forever changing there is a need for governance, as well as service providers to constantly change and adapt to remain relevant and appropriate. Organisations need to engage in a continual learning process becoming learning organisations.

7. Sustainable – social, economic, institutional, environmental, etc.

There are a number of issues that need to be considered to increase the sustainability of development of ASM communities. These include community involvement and ownership but also being aware of, and trading off the sustainability of environment, economic, social, health, etc.

These principles are focussed on poverty eradication - recognising that the central issue is not necessarily “mining” but “poverty”, and therefore much needs to be done to improve the livelihoods of ASM affected communities.

USE OF SLA IN THE UNDESA ASM PROJECT

The SLA was used to guide the studies in the case study countries of Ghana, Mali, Ethiopia and Guinea.

The overall survey purpose is to develop a set of policy options and best practices towards poverty eradication for use by government, IGOs and civil society at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels.

The specific **outputs** from the country studies are to:

- Develop an understanding of poverty in artisanal mining communities (as well as the role the SL approach can play in eradicating poverty in these communities)
- Produce a set of policy options and best practices towards poverty eradication for use by government, IGOs and civil society at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels through:
 - promoting opportunities of developing alternative and complementary sustainable livelihoods for those involved in artisanal mining; and
 - upgrading the artisanal mining sector to an economically viable activity.

The in-country survey/research process involved:

- (1) firstly **understanding the livelihoods** of people associated with artisanal mining, how these livelihoods are differentiated amongst poorer and richer groups, their assets, vulnerabilities and livelihood strategies
- (2) getting clarity on the **role artisanal mining is playing** in these livelihoods
- (3) What are **the activities** people are undertaking for themselves and how effective are they
- (4) What **services** are people receiving from whoever (public, private, NGO) and how important and accessible are they
- (5) How willing and able are various **institutions/organisations** and the various **levels of government** in serving the needs of the poor in eradicating poverty; and
- (6) What are the implications for **government policies** and programmes.

This logic translated into a research process that places people and the priorities they define firmly at the centre of the analysis. The steps in the research process included:

- The research team first got an understanding of the context, an overview of the main policies and programmes, the general dynamics, and the attitudes and understanding of major stakeholders in the rural and small-scale mining sectors through **secondary documentation** and **interviews** with key players. The team would develop a very clear and concise research **implementation plan** through planning, training and discussion with all stakeholders.
- The team then moved directly to the community level (2 to 3 case study sites) to understand the reality and the issues of the people on the ground. This involved a five day long **Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)** which familiarised the researchers with the main issues (social groups, community assets and vulnerabilities, role of mining, role of other rural based livelihoods, service providers, etc) of the case study area as viewed by the people themselves.
- The next step was to take this information and issues (from the community) and to move up through the layers of government service and support, as well as the private and NGO sectors, using a combination of **workshops**, and **semi-structured interviews** with key informants. This identifies the key policy areas and the institutional issues. The research team then workshop/discuss internally to clarify preliminary findings and the issues arising.

- The research process ended with a **national workshop** of stakeholders involved in artisanal mining and rural development where the findings of the research were amended and validated, and recommendations made. These were then **written up** in both the livelihoods survey report and a country policy report done in association with UNDESA.

The project has aimed to promote:

- Micro level: Local people being active and involved in managing their own development, articulating their demands and not being merely passive recipients of services, grants, aid, etc.
- Meso Level: the existence of an active and dispersed network of co-ordinated, responsive and accountable service providers and
- Macro Level: A positive regulatory and enabling policy environment towards

poverty eradication and sustainable livelihoods in ASM communities in Africa.