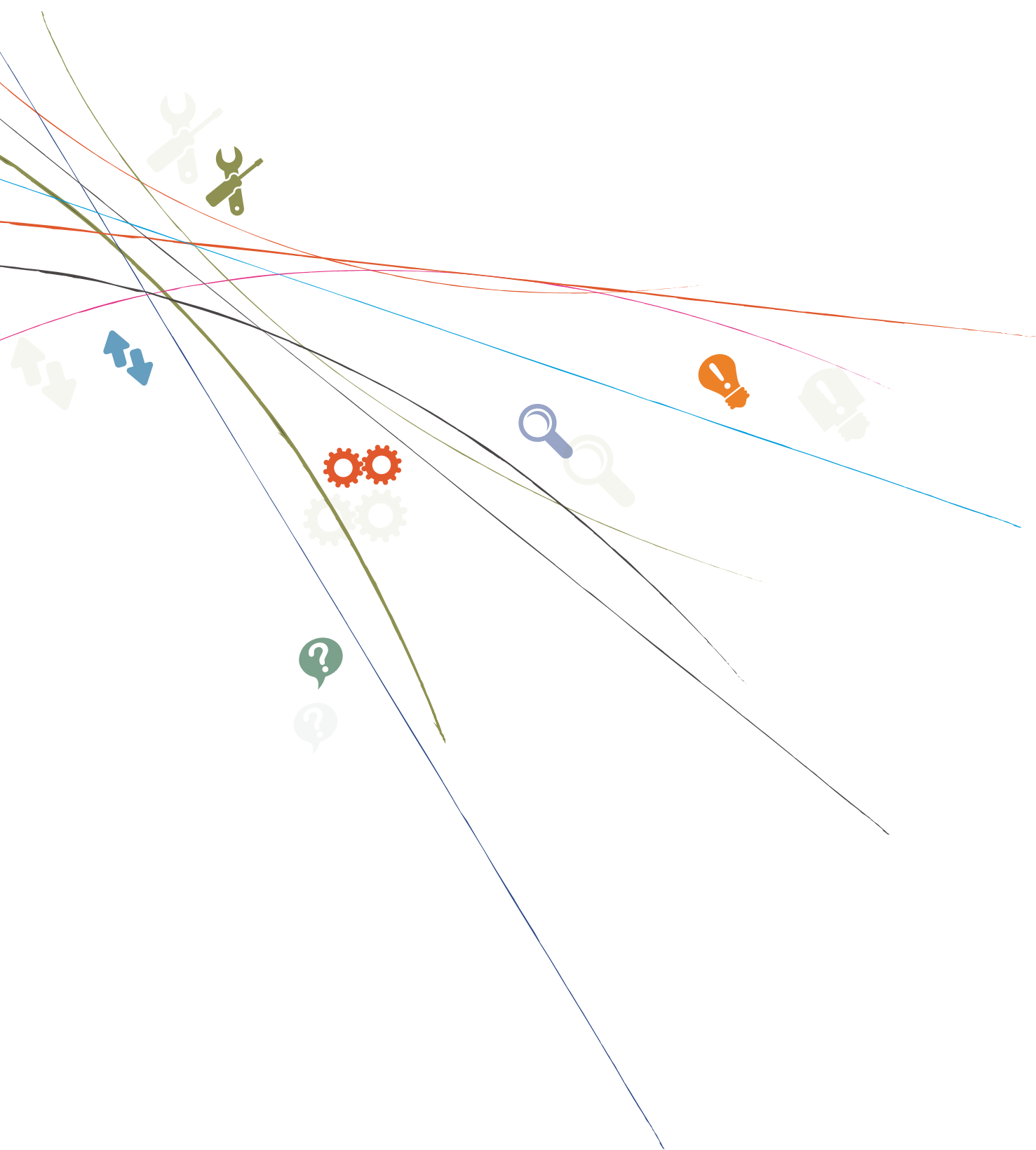




# **THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS HANDBOOK**

**An asset based  
approach to poverty**



The background features a central point from which several thin, colorful lines (red, blue, green, black, pink) radiate outwards. On the left side, there is a vertical stack of five icons: a wrench and screwdriver, two blue arrows pointing right, two red gears, a blue magnifying glass, and an orange lightbulb. Two large, rounded rectangular callouts are positioned horizontally. The top one is olive green with white text, and the bottom one is orange with white text. At the bottom, there are two logos: a red flame icon for Church Action on Poverty and a green person icon for Oxfam.

# THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS HANDBOOK

An asset based approach to poverty

**Written by:** Catherine May, Greg Brown, Niall Cooper and Lucy Brill

Thanks to the local projects who allowed us to use their projects as examples to illustrate this guide:  
Thrive in Thornaby, Splotlands Credit Union,  
South Riverside Community Development Centre,  
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#### INSIDE BACK COVER – SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS DVD

– 12 minute video explaining the sustainable livelihoods approach, including interviews with people involved in case studies described in the Handbook.



Chapter 1:

# INTRODUCTION

**This handbook is intended to introduce community development workers and local activists to the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA), an exciting and innovative means of researching the opportunities for change within our households and communities. The Handbook is also potentially relevant for academics and policy makers who are interested in finding out more about how the approach can be used more generally within research and policy development on poverty.**

## **What is the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach?**

This approach adopts a distinctive perspective on the understanding of poverty and on how to intervene to improve the conditions of people in poverty. It takes as its starting point not deprivation but assets: the strengths and capabilities of people living in poverty and the strategies they use to 'get by' through drawing on these different assets. Connections are then made between the detailed household level information and the wider context and this information is then used to plan and prioritise possible actions to bring about positive change in people's lives.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach has been developed by organisations working in the global South, and has been brought to the UK by international development organisations such as Oxfam and the UK government's Department for International Development (DfID).

The approach has only recently been applied to anti-poverty work within a UK context. Since 2005, Oxfam and Church Action on Poverty (CAP) have been working with local partners to pilot the approach in the UK, to explore whether it offers any new insights into UK anti-poverty work. We have now gained sufficient experience to suggest that the approach is as relevant within a rich (yet unequal) Northern country as it is in poorer Southern countries. By publishing and using this Handbook we hope to encourage others to use the approach within their own neighbourhoods and communities.

## **Seeing people in poverty as agents of change: a participatory and people centred approach**

Mainstream research on poverty, particularly in the Northern hemisphere, has often tended to view people in poverty as a uniform group of passive and vulnerable people 'in need'. In contrast, this approach shows that poor men and women are in fact active agents who make rational decisions and choices about their lives, and in response to social and economic change. It is important therefore to consider them not just as clients but as citizens who have fundamental rights to democratic accountability and to a role in decision-making about policy.

At a practical level, this means that the approach:

- starts from people's everyday experiences, and uses this information to build up a picture of their livelihood strategies;
- actively involves people and respects their views;
- explores how existing policies and institutions impact on households and communities, and upon the different dimensions of poverty they define;
- stresses the importance of influencing these policies and institutions so they promote the agenda of people in poverty (a key step is political participation by poor people themselves);
- seeks ways to support people to achieve their own livelihood goals, building where possible on their existing coping strategies.

## **The strengths of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach**

The strengths of the approach are its ability to:

- Directly involve people with experience of poverty in the research process and the resulting analysis.
- Build up a holistic picture of people's lives that includes their capacities, skills, health, social networks and access to services, as well as their financial situation.
- Understand the lived realities of people living in poverty – including the different dimensions of their lives and the ways these come together to form coping strategies.
- Start from the positive assets that people have rather than focusing on what they do not have.
- Reach out to people who are often far from mainstream services and support them to access those services which are appropriate.
- Make connections between the micro level (people's daily lives) and the macro level (the regional and national policies, institutions and processes that have the most impact upon them).
- Build up an understanding of the power-dynamics underlying the different aspects of people's lives.
- Value what is often unvalued and invisible, for example, non-financial assets.

## A powerful tool for participatory community based research

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach differs from traditional ways of researching poverty because it examines people's lives as a whole, rather than focussing exclusively on their financial situation and also because it starts from their strengths, their assets and resources rather than their needs. We have found that using this new, positive approach to community-based research allows us to access more accurate information and thus formulate better solutions.

The approach also provides a participatory framework for analysing poverty within communities. It is carried out using methods and tools that invite research participants to reflect on their experiences and to play a part in the analysis, and in planning subsequent actions.

A key aspect of the approach is that it enables people – both individually and collectively – to analyse and develop new insights into their own situations, to understand better that they themselves have skills and assets and to develop new strategies to move forward. In our experience this process can not only lead to better quality information but it can also be directly empowering for the individuals concerned and for the group as a whole.

‘I didn't realise just how heart wrenching (doing an SLA interview would be), but seeing your life in front of you – you know what's going on with you, but seeing it all together, it can be a real eye opener really, it does make you think afterwards, ... a couple of weeks later .... it stays with you’ (Caroline Hardy, SLA participants, Cardiff)

## What can the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach be used for?

Before starting a livelihoods project, it is important to set clear objectives for the process. The approach can be used in different ways, including:

- Deciding which local initiatives would be of most use to the local community
- Understanding which policies have the greatest impact on households and communities and what changes are needed
- Setting priorities and collating evidence to be used for fundraising
- Looking at how factors such as gender impact on livelihood strategies and identifying ways to address these issues
- Strengthening local networks and community links.

## Where and how has it been used?

This manual is based on Oxfam and Church Action on Poverty's experience developing livelihoods projects in the UK, working with local partners in Thornaby-on-Tees, Cardiff, London, Glasgow and the Peak District.

Below are brief descriptions of the SLA projects that we have carried out to date. We will return to these examples throughout this handbook in order illustrate particular points. The Appendix contains references to the reports that have come out of these projects as well as other useful resources.

### Building Sustainable Livelihoods in former manufacturing towns in the North East

**Location:** Thornaby and Stockton on Tees  
**Partners:** Thrive, Church Action on Poverty (CAP) & Oxfam

THE FIRST UK BASED SLA project was undertaken by Thrive (a Church Action on Poverty local project on Teeside, working in partnership with Oxfam). It took place in Thornaby, a small town that was hit hard by the restructuring of the mining and manufacturing industries in the 1970s and 80s, and where levels of poverty and unemployment remain well above the UK average. Detailed interviews were carried out with participants from 24 low income households, mapping the assets available to household members and analyzing them by gender.

The researchers were employees of Oxfam and CAP and they developed many of the tools used in this handbook. Thrive has worked with local people to respond to the findings with the creation of the Women of Thornaby group, Thornaby Listening Ear, and a peer mentoring programme focusing on debt (funded by the local Primary Care Trust). A second survey using the Approach has also been carried out in the adjoining town of Stockton-on-Tees.

**For more information see *When Ends Don't Meet* (2006).**



## Voices for a Change: Exploring the Livelihood Strategies of People in Poverty in London

**Location: Inner London**

**Partners: ATD Fourth World & Oxfam**

ATD FOURTH WORLD DEVELOPED the Voices for a Change project to find out more about the lives of people living in poverty in inner London. The project trained people who were living in poverty as peer researchers, who then worked in pairs to interview other people living in poverty in London, to find out more their lives. Interviews were taped and transcribed by ATD volunteers and the peer researchers were then actively involved in analyzing the research to identify the assets which enabled people to withstand or move out of poverty, and the barriers that kept them in poverty. Several of the peer researchers were then ready to take on a role as a spokesperson for other people in poverty, for example, they presented their findings at a seminar for policy makers in London in June 2008.

**For more information see *Voices for a Change* (2008).**

## Making Ends Meet across different communities in South Wales

**Location: Inner Cardiff**

**Partners: Splotlands Credit Union, South Riverside Community Development Centre, Oxfam**

IN 2005, OXFAM WORKED with two partner organisations in Wales: the South Riverside Community Development Centre (SRCDC) and the Splotlands Credit Union (SCU) to analyse the livelihoods of 46 people living in two distinct neighbourhoods in Cardiff. Residents of Splott are predominantly white, working class with smaller pockets of minority ethnic communities including Gypsy and Traveller communities, Somalis and Eastern Europeans, whilst Riverside hosts a large predominantly Asian community, with residents of Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Afghani as well as Yemeni heritage. Both areas are also home to a number of refugees and asylum seekers.

The interviews were undertaken by staff and volunteers from the community organisations in each area, using the Approach as a framework. The study identified key priorities for future work and also helped to build a closer relationship between the two community organisations, as they had not worked together prior to this project.

**For more information see *Making Ends Meet* (2008).**

## Exploring small farmers' livelihood strategies

**Location: Peak District**

**Partners: National Farmers' Network, Oxfam**

THE NATIONAL FARMERS' NETWORK developed this project to build their understanding of the livelihoods strategies of the hill farming community of the Peak District. Many hill farmers have small farms on marginal land and often work very long hours to earn only a meagre income. In recent years this situation has worsened as the livestock industry has faced the twin challenges of declining profitability and serious disease outbreaks.

The Farming Lives project worked with farming families on an individual basis to help them to find possible ways to improve their livelihoods as well as identifying broader policy related issues. Three facilitators with farming backgrounds were trained in the Approach and its tools, and suitable families were identified through groups and people who worked closely with the Peak District farming community.

The information collected was verified through drop-in sessions held at Bakewell Livestock Market and at local agricultural shows.

**For more information see *Farming Lives* (2009).**

## Conclusion

We hope that this chapter has encouraged you to find out more about the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and demonstrated how it can be used in a number of different contexts. In Chapter 2 we look in more detail at the theoretical basis of the approach, and in Chapter 3 we consider some methodological questions; Chapter 4 contains a brief overview of a number of tools. Each of these sections are inter-linked and it is important to read the first two before embarking on the tools in Chapter 4.

**Chapter 2:**

# **THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH**

**This chapter provides a brief summary of the key theories underlying the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA). Before you get started with your livelihoods project it is important to understand these ideas and think through how they will best be applied in your neighbourhood. As mentioned in the introduction, there are two parallel strands to a livelihoods project:**

- **building up a picture of the livelihoods strategies and asset levels within the community; and**
- **exploring how these factors are related to external policies, institutions and practices that impact upon households and communities.**

## Key Concepts of the approach

- Everyone has assets in their life, both financial and non-financial, these assets are combined in order to create a livelihood. However for those living in poverty, the combined assets may not be robust enough to provide a sustainable livelihood, leaving people vulnerable to external and internal 'shocks'.
- People with the least number of assets will frequently be those who experience discrimination in their lives – women, people from black and minority ethnic communities, people with disabilities and people living in deprived communities. However, the approach demonstrates that it is possible to be poor in terms of financial assets yet rich in non-financial assets, e.g. family support.
- Government policies often focus upon a single part of someone's life, such as their earnings or income, and ignore the many other factors that impact upon people's lives (e.g. family commitments, health issues). Policies which recognise the 'whole' would be more effective in terms of helping people to break out of poverty.
- Focusing upon existing assets is a contrasting approach to the traditional deficit analysis which asks what people need, rather than what they have. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach uses positive language and helps to uncover what would enable people to fully realise the potential of their existing assets and strategies.

## Livelihoods Analysis

Traditionally the experience of poverty within the UK has been assessed using an external needs analysis of individuals and communities, identifying what people lack (e.g. work, money, skills) and placing the onus on external researchers and policy-makers to identify solutions to the problems. Focusing upon a lack of assets draws attention to the negative aspects of life and fails to spot people's strengths and potential.

In contrast, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach starts by looking at the day to day experiences of people's lives. Its starting point is the assumption that in order to make ends meet people draw upon a combination of different assets that are available to them. This includes financial assets, but human, social, physical and public or natural assets are also considered.

The ways in which people combine their assets to support themselves and their families, and the decisions and choices that they make within the context in which they live, is what makes up their livelihood strategy. The approach sets out to understand these strategies and the impact of both internal and external factors upon them.

The final stage of the approach is to identify the constructive steps that could be taken to improve an individual or family situation further up the livelihood ladder, starting from their own experiences and building upon their existing strategies, to enable them to make their livelihoods more secure and sustainable.

**The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach was developed by organisations working within the global South and owes much to Robert Chambers' work on the 'wealth of the poor' and participatory methodologies. He offers the following definition of a livelihood:**

*"A livelihood comprises 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 manage to enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base"*

Chambers & Conway 1991

## The Approach divides people's assets into five categories:

**Human assets:** the skills, knowledge, good health and ability to work that together enable people to pursue different livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood objectives.

**Social assets (or social capital):** the social resources which people can draw on including informal relationships of trust, reciprocity and exchange with families, friends and neighbours as well as more formalised groupings (e.g. community and faith groups).

**Physical assets:** the tools and equipment that people need to be productive along with the basic infrastructure needed to function – e.g. affordable transport and energy, decent housing and access to information.

**Financial assets:** including earned income, pensions, savings, credit facilities, state (welfare) benefits, child maintenance, etc.

**Public assets:** public services, including libraries, local organisations and regeneration groups as well as people's general engagement within their community beyond the immediate circle of friends and family.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach was developed for work with rural communities in the global South. In this context natural assets were used instead of public assets, where 'natural assets' includes the soil, the weather, livestock and crops which many poor people in developing countries rely on to produce their own food and to gain an income. This is less relevant in the UK, so in most of our pilots we have replaced natural assets with public assets, in recognition of the important contribution that public services and welfare benefits make to the livelihoods of many people living in poverty (although natural assets were retained in the National Farmers' Network project with hill farmers in the Peak district).

A key principle of the approach is to recognise that these assets are interlinked and need to be considered together, in order to understand an individual's livelihood strategy, their vulnerabilities and potential opportunities. The following case studies provide examples of this:

FIONA WAS WORKING full time when she met her partner (strong financial assets). After five years together, she had a baby but her partner wasn't interested in the child. Fiona developed severe post-natal depression (reduced human assets), and took leave from work. Her partner also started drinking heavily and became abusive towards her. After two years she left him (social assets). Initially he paid maintenance for their child but after a while he gave up his job to avoid having to pay and as a result she and the baby lost their

home (reduced financial assets). At first they stayed with relatives (social assets), until Fiona was rehoused by the council (public assets). She went onto income support for the first time in her life (public assets). Now the baby is one year old she keeps her depression at bay by volunteering, as a way of getting her out of the house (social and human assets). She is keen to find work but doesn't want to rush into a low paid job which she feels may make the situation worse.

(Adapted from *When Ends Don't Meet*, p34.)

THE FARMING LIVES PROJECT contacted one farming family during a period of particularly wet weather (external shock), which delayed silage making (natural asset) and the muddy conditions made the cows extremely dirty, thus prolonging milking as their udders had to be washed before they could be milked. The man was working on his own as his wife was recuperating from an operation (reduced personal assets). He was also caring for their children, including a disabled daughter who had to attend hospital appointments regularly. The family was struggling to cope and appeared to have no family members to call upon for support (few social assets).

(Adapted from *Farming Lives*, p28.)

In Chapters 3 and 4 we explain how you can use the livelihoods approach to investigate the assets people can either access or control. It is important to remember that depending on their situation and livelihood strategy there will be concrete differences in the assets that people need in order to put together a feasible livelihood strategy – and there will also be different expectations about what level of assets are needed. Therefore for some people a car will be an essential physical asset (e.g. for those living in rural areas where public transport is limited - particularly if working anti-social hours); for others a mobile phone will be critical (e.g. for many migrant workers who are dependent on employment agencies and move around the country as work becomes available in different locations).

## Mapping the External Context: Policies, Institutions and Practices

In parallel with the household level research, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach also explores how processes and organisations operating locally, regionally and nationally impact upon households and communities. The policy environment in the UK is complex: people living in poverty are subject to forces exerted by many different organisations and institutions. Prevailing trends and decisions taken at national (and sometimes international), level can have a profound impact on low-income households in deprived neighbourhoods in the UK.

The approach also seeks to identify the opportunities and barriers that emerge from these interactions that enable (or could enable) people to develop more secure livelihoods. This strand of the approach starts by mapping out the key policies, institutions and practices that are thought to affect people's livelihoods within the neighbourhood/community (although it is often necessary to return to this mapping process later in the light of additional information gathered in the household survey).

By **institutions** we mean both the public and the private organisations that make and enforce legislation, provide goods and services and trade in the market economy. These bodies decide on a set of **policies** which are the principles, rules and plans which guide the actions of governments, local authorities and other major institutions (at least in theory, since policies can sometimes be undermined by unforeseen circumstances). Finally, prevailing social, cultural and religious **practices** within a community can also have a major impact on livelihoods, influencing for example, who has primary responsibility for childcare and other domestic responsibilities within the household and who has control over particular assets (e.g. the car). Both these factors can then restrict the ability of particular household members to seek paid work outside the home.

Examples of relevant policies for a livelihoods analysis could include minimum wage and benefit rates, economic development plans, regeneration initiatives and the decisions of corporations to either invest in an area or to close a large factory or branch. Mapping relevant institutions would be likely to cover local and national government bodies, major public services, welfare institutions and private companies. The local economy is also likely to be a key feature of the external context. Questions to be investigated include:

- Where do people get their income? (e.g. benefits – Job Centre, bank, post office, employment hubs)
- Where do they spend it? (Where are the shops, leisure facilities, pubs?)
- Where does this money go? (Are the shops, pubs, etc. locally owned – so that the money goes back into the local economy, or are they chain stores, larger companies and banks which take money away from the local community?)

Wherever possible you should begin this mapping process before you start contacting individuals. Tool 7 (p35) has some tips to help you do this.

## Power Relations and Diversity Issues

An important principle of the Approach is the recognition of the significance of the **power relations** that exist both within and between households and communities. Mapping the assets and comparing the differences between, men and women, or people of different ages or ethnic heritage, allows us to explore how these factors operate at different levels. Firstly, at the household level, there are almost always differences between who uses and who owns the assets to which (in theory) all members of the household have access, and uncovering these can help us to understand the underlying power relations within the household (e.g. if a woman cannot drive the household car will be of little use to her in terms of accessing employment).

In order to document these differences accurately it is important that the researcher takes time to explore the different day to day routines and livelihood strategies of the various members of the household. This can mean, for example, finding out who earns, and who spends, the household income, who owns the assets in the house, who takes primary responsibility for dependents and who has the most social networks (which are a considerable asset for many people). There are tools that you can use to do this with individuals, households or communities in Chapter Four. It is also important to consider how information is collected, bearing in mind that individuals may not be able to speak freely in front of other members of the household.

One of the strengths of the Approach is that it looks into a household or community to understand what is happening beneath the surface. This means that the recommendations that come out of the project are based upon the reality of people's lives, rather than making assumptions about what happens within the household.

Secondly, if information is collated about household composition, it may then be possible to identify differences between different types of household: e.g. how do lone parent and two parent households differ in terms of their ability to juggle their caring responsibilities with paid work?

It is also important to ask how these differences relate to the external context, and here a detailed mapping of the prevailing social and cultural practices may be particularly relevant. For example, there may be gendered expectations and stereotypes which influence (often unconsciously) the roles and responsibilities which men and women take on within a household and the employment opportunities which they seek.

An example of this would be when a child is unwell, there will often be an expectation that the mother rather than the father will be able to take time off work to care for the child. This may in turn impact upon the woman's future career if she is seen as less committed and less suited for more responsible (and better paid) positions than her male colleagues.

Recent research by the Fawcett society and others has confirmed that women in the UK are far more likely to experience either a period of poverty or ongoing poverty. This is often caused by the responsibilities that women assume as primary carers for relatives and the barriers that this creates which prevent them from accessing better-paid employment. An additional factor is the gender pay-gap: the substantial difference between the average wages paid to women and men within the UK, which again reflects the fact that men's work is seen as of higher value than women's work.

Likewise, comparing livelihood strategies across different ethnic communities may point towards possible interactions between cultural practices and livelihoods. However, care needs to be taken before jumping to conclusions, we should not take it for granted that we understand how these cultural dimensions affect livelihood strategies. For example, the low levels of economic activity amongst women of Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage could reflect cultural traditions that prioritise their domestic roles or it could reflect their experiences of racism and discrimination in the workplace (or a combination of factors).

Useful background information about the likelihood of discrimination against someone based on their gender, race, (dis)ability or other perceived differences is available from bodies such as the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and the Institute for Public Policy and Research.

## Findings: Assets

In this section we provide some concrete examples of the ways in which different communities value and use their assets, as documented in our previous livelihoods projects.

### Key Assets in Splott and Riverside in Cardiff

THE LIVELIHOODS PROJECT in Cardiff, which worked in two distinct neighbourhoods within the city, found that the most important assets that contributed to someone improving their livelihood were:

- Key human assets included skills in community development, small business set-up and the ability to take vocational courses.
- Family networks constituted an important social asset, they enabled people living in poverty to call on members of their extended family both for informal childcare and also for loans. However, we found that

white women in Splott were much less able to call on help from their family for childcare than ethnic minority women in Riverside.

- Regular, affordable public transport to key employment locations was identified as one of the most significant public assets.
- The most important physical asset was access to a home in a good state of repair with enough room to accommodate the family.
- As this study specifically targeted people experiencing poverty it is no surprise that for the respondents interviewed, financial assets were the weakest aspect of the livelihoods picture.

### Interlinked Assets in Thornaby

OUR FIRST LIVELIHOODS PROJECT in the town of Thornaby in Teesside was carried out by staff from Oxfam and Church Action on Poverty. One of the findings demonstrates clearly how the assets are interlinked and also how the sustainable livelihoods approach can provide important insights into the gendered nature of poverty:

'a particularly common scenario for women was the breakdown of a relationship (social asset), leading to poor health (human asset), leading to decreased ability to earn and increased debt (financial assets), leading to poorer housing (physical assets) – sometimes compounded by ineffective or unhelpful responses from public services.'

**See *When Ends Don't Meet* (2006), p42.**

In both the examples above the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach to data gathering and analysis was able to demonstrate the different ways in which men, women and people of different ethnic heritage are either able or unable to access a range of different assets. We found that women commonly have lower real or potential financial assets, yet their social assets were often stronger than those of men.

### Findings: Livelihoods Strategies

People draw on their different assets to build a livelihood strategy, which enables them to manage and sustain their lives, and the lives of their families, (or in simpler language, they find ways to 'get by'). Those who have plenty of assets in all five areas will have strong strategies, probably with a number of 'back-up' plans should the primary plan fail. For example, if we consider a typical 'reasonably comfortable' household, their asset base will be relatively strong – both adults are in good health and have relevant skills and experience (human assets), they own their own house and car (physical assets) and are both in well-paid and secure work (financial assets). In addition they have strong social networks (social assets) and have the confidence and knowledge to hold those responsible for public services

to account (public assets). Conversely those with weaker assets will often struggle to build sustainable strategies, or livelihoods. However, even those with fewer assets will often find ways to manage, as is shown in the following example:

### How people in poverty 'get by' in inner London

THESE QUOTATIONS are taken from interviews with people in poverty, carried out by ATD Fourth World's peer researchers:

"I have to look after my pension money – that's why I do the market on Sundays – which boosts up my income, so I can survive on my benefit".

"We have to choose the things we buy, balance to be able to fit in what we want to eat in the house. We look for bargains. Buy one, get one free, or things that are about to expire."

"I can count out 200 agencies which give jobs cash-in-hand to people, but to people who do not speak English because they won't mix up their business."

See *Voices for Change* p11.

If we unpack these quotations a little further, we can see that the strategies followed by the participants were shaped to differing degrees by the prevailing policies, institutions and practices operating in inner London at that time. Some of the questions that are raised by these quotes include:

- **State pensions** – who sets the rates? How do they do this, and does this amount provide sufficient income to keep pensioners out of poverty? This pensioner's job on the market could suggest that it does not, although it is also important to consider whether the person gains other benefits from working (e.g. social benefits).
- **Special offers in Supermarkets** – does this draw people into supermarkets (as opposed to cheaper food shops e.g. street markets) where they may well be tempted spend more money on non-essential products. Does this mean people travel further to access these offers? Do they have the time and means to afford that travel?
- **Cash-in-hand work** – this example suggests that although employers may be fined for employing people off the books, many continue to do so. Why would employers do this? Can you find other sources of information about informal economic activity of this kind? Why would people work cash-in-hand knowing the risks? Is it because there are insufficient formal employment opportunities available locally or are there other advantages to informal work?

## Livelihoods Ladder

As a person's assets increase they are better able to protect themselves from shocks and their vulnerabilities decrease. In Thornaby we developed the idea of the 'livelihoods ladder', as a way to understand these transitions: as a person builds their asset-base their position on the ladder moves up, but if they subsequently lose assets (for whatever reason) they risk falling back down the ladder (see Table 1 on page 14 for more information). As you are developing your project you may find it useful to identify appropriate benchmarks that help to determine the transitions between the different rungs on the ladder and thus make it easier to categorise households. For a suggestion of how this could be done, see Tool 10.

## What happens when things go wrong?

### Trends and Shocks

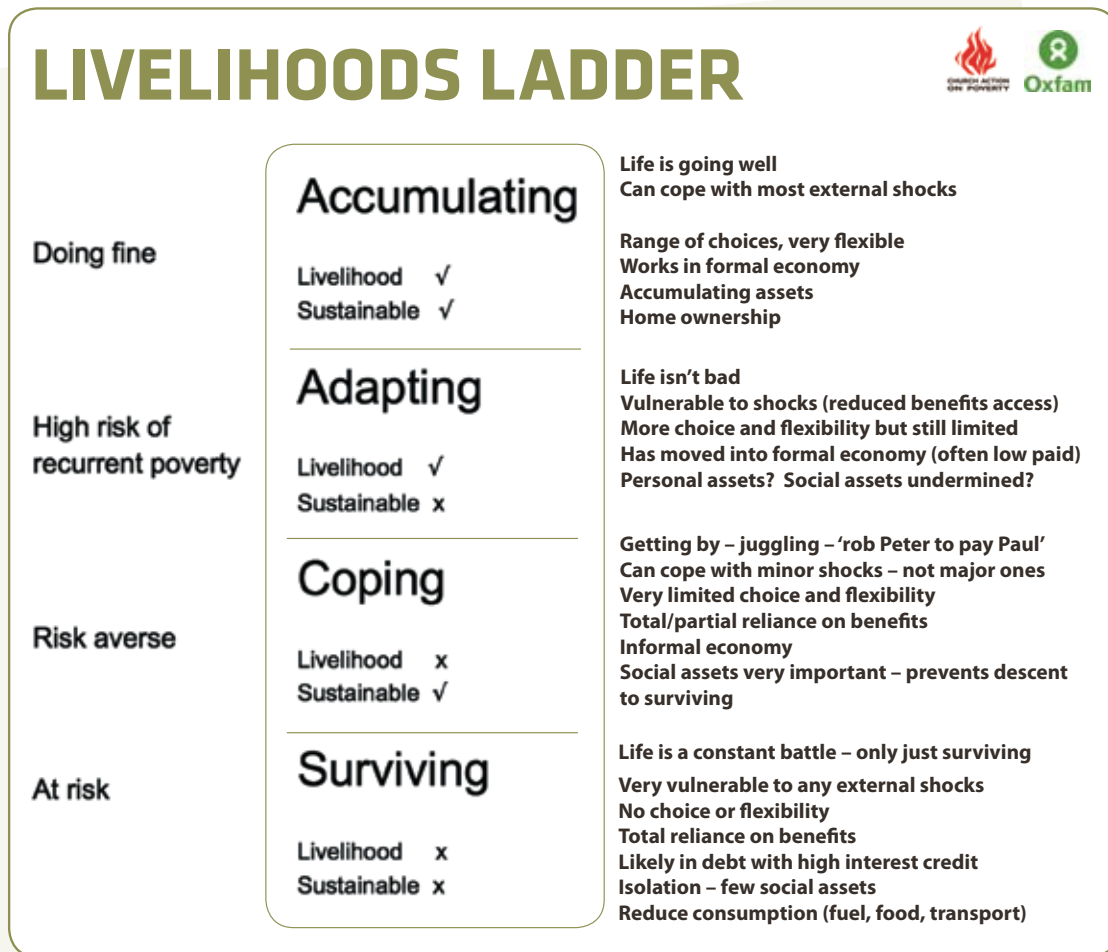
These are the events and situations that are beyond the control of the individual/household.

**Trends** include broad changes affecting large sections of the population, for example demographic and population changes, shifts in the national and global economy e.g. recession and processes of deindustrialisation, as well as changes of government (although the significance of each of these will vary greatly over time and place).

**Shocks** are major events in the life of the individual or household, such as a bereavement or the loss of a job or home. It is important to remember that for many people a shock may not initially seem to be that important, however further down the line it can have a far reaching impact. For example, if the washing machine breaks down, a household with adequate financial resources would be able to resolve the crisis by either repairing the machine or buying a new one. One interviewee in our Thornaby project did not have the money to do this and so was faced with the option of taking out a loan to enable them to buy a new machine, using the local laundrette (which can be very expensive) or hand washing their clothes at home (which is time consuming and can cause damp).

The increased likelihood of women both experiencing poverty and being responsible for care means that they are more vulnerable to shocks, so that if the care arrangements for children, the sick or the elderly break down, women are often expected to make alternative arrangements which may either jeopardise their livelihood strategies (e.g. give up their job) that they may not be able to afford. Women's income-generating (e.g. baby-sitting) and expense-saving (keeping vouchers for money off items) activities that actually prevent or delay shocks are often not recognised or included when measuring household income by more conventional research methodologies.

Table 1:



For example, although a relationship breakdown can be deeply traumatic for anyone, our research suggests that for women the greatest impact can often be the knock-on effect on other assets. This is demonstrated in the following example:

**Relationship breakdown**

BRIGID, NOW IN HER 50S, lives on her own in rented accommodation. She previously owned a house which she was able to keep after her first marriage ended. But a short disastrous second marriage led to her having to give up the house and move into the rented house she is now in. Her health also deteriorated rapidly to the point where she has been unable to work for the last fifteen years. She now has very few possessions and is demoralised by being constantly in debt. Brigid has a strong social network including church links which she relies on for support in a variety of ways.

*When Ends Don't Meet (2006), p46.*

**Taking Action**

The final stage of the Approach is to take some form of **action** to address the issues identified in the research. Wherever possible this should be agreed with the research participants; a good way to start this process is to invite interviewees/participants to a local meeting to discuss the research findings. Examples of possible actions include:

- Arranging a public meeting for community leaders, policy makers and the broader public, to present the findings and call for action
- Setting up a group of participants who have similar experiences and can therefore offer support to each other
- Campaigning for changes in local services
- Setting up a group to directly deliver services/support to the community
- Producing a policy briefing paper, which can then be distributed to policy makers, either locally, regionally or nationally



### Responding to debt problems

THE LIVELIHOODS PROJECT carried out by Splott Credit Union in Cardiff revealed the high levels of debt in the area. This demonstrated the need for debt advice and the credit union was subsequently able to secure funding to employ a specialist debt adviser to support credit union members.

### Seeking to influence policy

THE NATIONAL FARMERS' NETWORK held a national conference to share their findings from the Approach with farmers' networks and organisations from across the country and is seeking ways to influence relevant rural policy makers such as Defra, the Rural Communities Council and the National Farmers' Union.

### Women working together

THE LIVELIHOODS PROJECT in Thornaby revealed a high number of women who felt isolated and were experiencing mental health problems. The only support they had was from within their families and many were struggling to get by. The project partners provided some support and space for the women to meet on a weekly basis and to gain the confidence needed to approach local policy makers. They now run support groups and engagement days with local service providers. They also have access to counselling/mental health services through the local voluntary sector (which had not been available previously).

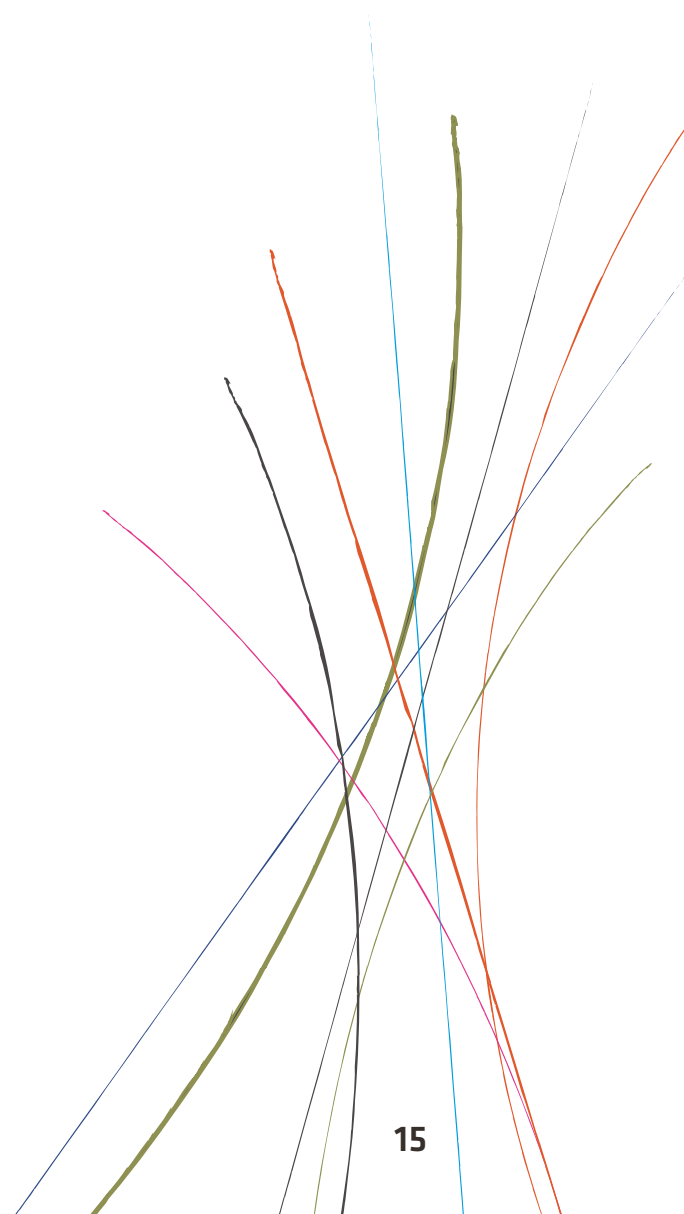
Another interesting action that has come out of the work in Thornaby is that the research process itself has helped to build participants' human assets by developing their confidence and skills. This has led some to take up opportunities to strengthen their other assets, by for example, looking at possible training opportunities or accessing debt counselling services. Thrive has then encouraged these individuals to join with a wide constituency of local people which has begun to engage with power holders and service providers in an attempt to bring about change in policy and allow people to build up other assets.

### Building on the positive

BY USING the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach to analyse its research, ATD Fourth World's project in London documented both the positive achievements of people living in poverty and the barriers and vulnerabilities that prevent them from moving out of poverty. By building on the positives, the research identified possible ways to remove the barriers and provided campaigners and advocates with further insights into what can make a positive difference to the lives of London's poorest people.

## Conclusion

**This chapter has outlined the key concepts on which the sustainable livelihoods approach is based, such as the assets that people draw on to put together a livelihood strategy. These strategies are shaped by the wider power dynamics that operate both within and outside the home which lead people to consciously or unconsciously adopt particular roles both within the household and the wider community.**



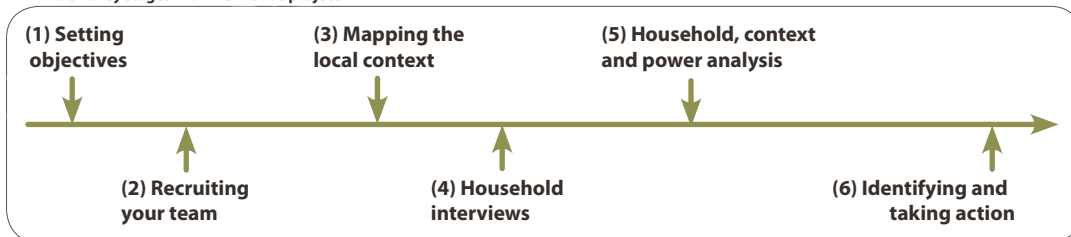
Chapter 3:

**SUSTAINABLE  
LIVELIHOODS  
METHODOLOGY**

## Key Stages in a Sustainable Livelihoods Project

This chapter explains how to carry out a livelihoods project. The chart below summarises the six key stages that a typical livelihoods project will go through.

Table 2: Key stages in a Livelihoods project



### Stage One: Setting objectives

The first stage involves establishing clear objectives for the project. To carry out an effective project it is crucial that the team establish (and agree upon) clear objectives from the outset. Do not rush this step or you risk your livelihoods project being vague and unfocused and as a result it is likely to be less effective.

The approach can be used to achieve a range of different objectives. Examples include:

- To build a holistic picture of the lives of people living in a particular neighbourhood and to understand the strategies they use and the assets they have, within the context of the external policies, institutions and practices that influence their lives.
- To develop a sense of community ownership through the shared experience of undertaking and sharing the research findings.
- To help the community to identify and prioritise useful and relevant local initiatives.
- To understand which policies are having the greatest impact on the livelihood strategies of households and communities and what changes are needed (and to back this up with evidence).
- To set fundraising plans for local community groups.
- To build the capacity of local people to tackle the barriers that prevent them from accessing a more sustainable livelihood.

You may have other ideas for why you would like to use the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach in your community. One of the strengths of this approach is that it can be used in very different contexts, provided that the starting point for the project is to support people in a community to develop their assets and strengthen their livelihoods.

### Stage two: Recruiting your team

A Livelihoods project can either be carried out by a pre-existing team of people (for example a residents group or community organisation) or a team can be

recruited specifically for the various tasks. It is important though to clarify from the start the different roles and responsibilities of those involved (see below).

The ATD Fourth World case-study below demonstrates the benefits of working with a team of peer researchers who have themselves had direct experience of poverty, although it is important to recognise that this can be time consuming for the project manager as each individual will need training and support throughout the project. An alternative approach (used in the livelihoods projects in Cardiff and Thornaby) is to recruit researchers from project staff and volunteers already working with local community organisations.

### Using Peer researchers with direct experience of Poverty

The eleven peer researchers who took part in ATD Fourth world's project all reported that their involvement in the project and the confidence and skills they had gained had inspired them to embark on new steps in their own lives, such as greater involvement in their own community or moving into employment, training or further education. For example one peer researcher has become very active in her community – volunteering in the local library and with an environmental group which involves giving presentations to people about energy-saving methods. Another said:

'The project gives you the confidence to be able to do things for yourself ... When I get a chance I'm going to pay a visit to my local council, to see what they're doing about poverty in the area, and I'll show them our report.'

Another, who now has a part-time job, said: 'Do not underestimate the need for confidence building. I definitely feel able to take the skills gained [from the project] such as speaking, listening and team work and to apply them in another setting.'

**From *Voices for Change*, ATD Fourth World**

## Key Roles in a Livelihoods Project

This section outlines the different responsibilities of those involved in a livelihoods project. It is important to clarify at an early stage who will be responsible for carrying out each one.

**Project Manager:** the person who co-ordinates the overall project. S/he is responsible for ensuring that the interviews and mapping exercises are carried out as effectively as possible, that the analysis pays attention to the underlying power dynamics as well as the information collected, and that the participants are fully engaged with the process.

**Researcher(s):** the people who will carry out the interviews or community mapping. They will need to ensure that the interviews are carried out as objectively as possible, that they are written up as soon as possible and shared with the participants and the Project Manager. Researchers also contribute to the analysis.

**Participants:** the people who agree to share their life experiences with the researchers through either interviews or group-mapping exercises. They are also invited to take part in the analysis and subsequent actions, and are central to the success of the livelihoods project. They should be happy with the findings from their own household and feel empowered through their involvement in the project.

### Training & Support

As your team begins to plan your livelihoods project it is important that everyone is clear about the objectives and principles of the project – you may need to provide some formal training if this is new for some of the team members (Chapter 2 outlines the theories underlying the approach and so could help with this).

As a group it may also be useful to work together and agree a common understanding of power and gender analysis. Tool 11 can help you to discuss these issues with your team.

A livelihoods project puts the participants at the centre of the project and starts from their experience. The information that is gathered is then used to support the participants and to help them understand their livelihood strategies within a broader external context. The approach is very much a bottom up process, in which participants are encouraged to take control of the process throughout its phases. If this is to happen it is essential that all of those involved are committed to working in a non-judgemental way. This will also make it easier for the project to gain the trust of participants, making them much more likely to speak openly and accurately about the way that they live. As a result, we believe that the sustainable livelihoods approach can provide a more accurate picture than many consultation or more traditional research processes.

Some team members may also need training in interviewing skills and in social research (this is particularly important if you are using people who are new to this work). It is important also to work through important issues such as confidentiality, boundaries and how to ensure that the team members look after each other and do not put themselves or the research participants into potentially risky situations.

## Stage three: Mapping the local context

There are two distinct information gathering processes within a Livelihoods project:

- 1) Collecting information about the assets and livelihood strategies of individuals and households.
- 2) Mapping this information onto existing policies, institutions and practices that impact upon these households.

It is often easiest to start your project with this second strand, mapping the external context, as this may then help you plan your livelihoods project. Start this process by collecting existing information about your neighbourhood so that you can take account of any existing local issues. For example, your project team will need to decide exactly which geographical area you plan to cover and set clear boundaries so that you can decide who to include in the household study. This process leads naturally onto the mapping of the relevant policies, institutions and practices that affect your local community, although this will almost certainly need to be revisited later on, as new information emerges from the household survey. See Tool 7 for some ideas on how to complete this stage.

Some key questions and reminders to help with this stage are:

- Is the area defined geographically and are there boundaries?
- Do the people who live there recognise these boundaries or have they been created by the local authorities?
- Are there any historical legacies that define the area – e.g. was it previously aligned with a different area?
- What are the key public or economic assets in the area (e.g. is there a large employer/retail park/information hub)? How accessible are they?
- What cultural or religious norms exist in the area? What is the impact of these?
- What information is available about the area? A good starting point is often the local Council website or by enquiring at the Council's offices. Things to look for are:
  - o Who lives in the area? Are there distinct ethnic communities? How can we make sure that our analysis includes the experiences of all of these groups?
  - o Has the area been recognised as an area of multiple deprivation? What trends has this uncovered? How are these being tackled?
  - o What opportunities are there for involvement in local decision-making processes?
- Remember that any information you find is likely to reflect the views and priorities of the organisation that produced it. The information you collect at this stage should only inform, not direct, your project.
- You are aiming to build up a fairly general overall picture at this point, don't forget that more detailed information on particular issues can always be added at a later stage.

#### **Stage four: Household analysis**

The sustainable livelihoods approach is not about numbers or being able to draw up statistics for a particular area. It is about working with people to gain an insight into their lives and their livelihood strategies and to understand why they make the choices that they do. This means that the focus is on the quality of the information you gain, rather than the number of people who are included. In our livelihoods projects this initial information was collected through participatory interviews with individuals and households, because of the sensitive information that was often discussed. Depending on the focus of your livelihoods project, you may decide to bring groups of research participants together, but it is important to make sure that the facilitators are sufficiently skilled in providing a safe environment so that participants are able to speak freely.

## **Finding Research Participants**

Decide who you want to interview – e.g. gender and age breakdown, household composition – singles, couples, families with children, etc. Are there particular minority groups that it will be important to include? Do you want to include any households within a particular area or are you going to restrict your project to low income households? If so how are you going to assess this?

In deciding which households to interview you need to be aware that who you are interviewing will have an impact on the findings. So if you only interview men or only interview women, you will not be able to generalise the findings in terms of the community as a whole. It is also important to ensure that your research participants represent the different groups within the community, in terms of gender, age, ethnic background, sexuality and household composition.

Next think about the existing networks that you and other members of your team could use to identify potential research participants. Are there any obvious gaps, and if so, can you identify potential 'gatekeepers' that might be able to help you fill these; for example, are there local faith or community organisations that could introduce you to members of a particular religious or ethnic community? Are there meeting points or local services where you might be more likely to find people – e.g. Sure Start or local primary schools for parents. In planning your project remember to factor in the time it will take to meet with these organisations and secure their assistance with your project. Don't be afraid to go out onto the street and knock on doors to find participants – but again, bear in mind that such an approach is likely to be time consuming and is more likely to be successful if informed by accurate local knowledge (and also think through how you will support your team during this process).

As your project develops, it is important to review whom you are interviewing and to identify any significant gaps – for example, in Thornaby the team found it easier to find women to interview, so at one stage they had to make a conscious decision to prioritise male interviewees to ensure that the final research reflected both male and female experiences.

## The interview process

As mentioned above, this approach starts from the lived experiences of participants and seeks to involve them actively throughout the process. If this is to happen, the project team will need to work in an inclusive and non-judgemental way, ensuring that participants are encouraged to take the lead wherever possible. As mentioned above, team members may need training and preparation to facilitate such a process. If you are working with children or vulnerable adults your researchers will also need a criminal record check.

It is also important that the participants can trust that their identity will be kept confidential, and not shared outside of the livelihoods team or in any report or presentation of the findings without their consent. The only exception to this, which should be explained to participants at the start, is where information is revealed about a child or vulnerable person at risk of harm, which should then be passed on to social services.

Wherever possible, and especially if the research process involves visiting people in their homes, it is recommended that interviewers work in pairs. Ideally, this should be a man and a woman, though arrangements can (and sometimes should) be adapted depending upon the interviewees' needs. One of the researchers then takes the participant through the interview process, asking questions and explaining the exercises, whilst the other focuses on taking notes and capturing as much information as possible. They can also add follow up questions if something is unclear or they identify particular gaps.

In order to analyse your research findings you need to be able to compare across households, so it's important to make sure that the format of the interviews is similar. Wherever possible try to speak to more than one household member, to build up a more comprehensive picture of the situation. You also need to decide how you will keep a record of the information you collect – sessions can be taped and transcribed or the researcher can take notes and write them up afterwards (this needs to be done as soon as possible after the interview or group session, so that as much detail as possible is recorded). Whichever method is used, it is important to check back with the participant that the record is an accurate account of the process and that they are happy for their information to be used.

## Reflective Exercises

In our livelihoods projects we used different participatory exercises as an integral part of the interview process (see Tools 1-3, 5-6 in chapter 4). These enable the participants to reflect on different aspects of their lives (for example, use of time, resources coming in and going out from the household, their assets and capabilities). They can also provide a good opportunity for the researcher to understand how relations within the household function (who goes out to work? who controls the household finances? who stretches the limited food budget? who has access to the car?) and any social and cultural practices which may affect these (who fits their work around caring for the children? who always goes to the pub on a Saturday evening?). Again it is important to use these exercises in a systematic way so that you collect similar information from all the households. Researchers will also need training to ensure they are familiar with the tools and can use them in as participatory a way as possible.

## Interviewing Skills

It's important to make sure that the people carrying out the research have good interviewing skills, so that they can encourage the research participants to speak openly about their experiences but not direct them or influence their responses.

## Open and Closed Questions

When starting off conversations the pattern can typically be a brief, non-leading, closed question followed by an open question to get more detailed information:

***So Claire, how long have you lived in this area?***

***Oh, about 10 years.***

***And what do you think of the area?***

***Well, it's ok; we know plenty of people in the Close...***

Open questions prompt longer responses and give control of the discussion to the person being interviewed and provide a more accurate reflection of their feelings. They don't tend to have a 'yes'/'no' response. For example:

***What is the area like?***

***How did that make you feel?***

***How have you found the service offered at the resource centre?***

***How do you get by if you're a bit short one week?***

***What has it been like living here?***

In contrast, closed questions usually lead to yes/no answers which are less likely to provide the detailed information you need for your livelihoods analysis. Examples include:

***Do you like living here? (answer: yes/no)***

***Have you got much money?***

## What Not To Do!

### Leading Questions

Leading questions lead the interviewee to provide answers that the interviewer may be expecting or that they want to hear. It's important that researchers carrying out a livelihoods project avoid leading questions, otherwise their results may be biased and/or inaccurate. You want people to answer your questions from their own experience, not to say what they think you want to hear. Here are some examples:

**Interviewer:** *Do you think the community centre should run a crèche?*

**Respondent:** *Yes that's a good idea.*

**Instead, you could say:**

**Interviewer:** *What services and activities would you like the community centre to provide?*

**Respondent:** *what we really need is a youth club for teenagers, there's nothing for older children to do after school.*

**Q.** *It's not very nice around here is it?*

**A.** *No, it's not is it.*

**Instead, you could say:**

**Q.** *What is the area like? What do you think of the area?*

**A.** *Well, it's not too bad. There's a good community spirit but it can be a bit dodgy at night.*

### Referring On

Although livelihoods research can touch on very personal subjects it is also important to remember that researchers are not counsellors and need to be clear about what follow up the project can – and cannot – provide. It's often useful to draw up a list of local services for common problems, then the livelihoods researchers know where they can refer people for support if they need immediate help or raise issues that the project will not be able to address.

## Verification

Livelihoods projects usually focus in depth on a relatively small number of households or individuals. Wherever possible it is important to complement this in depth research with a more open process that involves a larger number of people. This helps you to check that your project is really capturing the important issues faced by the people living in an area (or from a particular community), and to highlight any significant gaps when there is still time to address these. Again its important to do this in as participatory a way as possible – Tool 12 (p45) in chapter 4 provides a good starting point, and other participatory appraisal tools can also be used.

### 'Market research'

THE NATIONAL FARMERS' NETWORK complemented their in depth analysis of sixteen farming families, with a short survey that was completed with 77 farmers. They set up a stall at their local livestock market and asked farmers at the market to talk briefly with members of the research team. Towards the end of their livelihoods project they also set up stands at two agricultural shows, which provided an opportunity to verify provisional findings with a much wider range of people whilst also promoting the Network.

## Stage Five: Household, Context and Power Analysis

### Recording and capturing the information

Community researchers should carry out their interviews in pairs and wherever possible one will take notes during the interview and then write these up shortly afterwards. Usually participatory exercises are included in the process, often with charts and pictures that are completed during the interview or group discussion – these can then be photocopied and added to the notes of the interview. Alternatively tape recorders can be used, but it is important to ensure that this does not inhibit the research participants from speaking freely, and also that the project decides how best to analyse the tapes (transcription is a time consuming business!). The project also needs to decide how and where to keep the raw information so that it cannot be accessed by other people.

If the researchers take notes during the interviews and then write up the sessions, it's important that this is done as soon as possible after the interview so that as much detail as possible (and even some direct quotations) can be included in the interview record. If you are working with a team of researchers this needs to be done consistently across the team, so that all researchers are recording roughly the same level of detail. If the researchers work in pairs then one person can take notes and write these up and the second can then add anything that has been missed.

If you decide to include detailed case studies or quotations in your research report then it's important to think how to protect the identities of your participants. Simply changing their name may not be sufficient if they could still be recognised from their account of their experiences, so you may also have to change other minor details, whilst still maintaining the sense and impact of the story wherever possible.

### Analysing the household data

When planning your project it's important to find a way to analyse carefully the household level information you collect, to identify the common themes and priorities for action. One way to begin this process of analysis is to bring all the research team together (including any community researchers) and to discuss as a group the key issues emerging from the research. These issues can then be used as a starting point for a more detailed analysis, checking carefully whether and in what way they arise in each interview and also noting any other issues which may have been missed out in the wider discussion or which could be important for only one section of the community.

Each interview will document the assets within the household, and who has access to these, and then where the individual would therefore be placed on the livelihood ladder. You are also looking for the strategies that people already use to cope with their situation, and how these can best be strengthened or improved – and also whether there are significant differences between, for example, men and women, or people of different ages or ethnicity.

Livelihoods interviews also include a series of participatory tools which cover similar areas from slightly different angles (see Tools 1-3, 5-6). This will enable the researchers to build up a broad picture of the household, and also to make an assessment of the accuracy of the information provided. It can also lead to useful insights into the ways in which both intra-household power relations (between men and women, for example) and external social and cultural practices can impact on households.

It's important to identify common themes and patterns and also to identify differences between for example, men and women, or people of different ethnic heritage. It is also important to place the household level information within its broader context, to ask what are the external factors that are either strengthening or undermining people's livelihood strategies – this means returning to the mapping of policies institutions and practices that you carried out at the start and seeing how this fits with the household analysis. The research team can begin this process but feedback and discussion with the wider community is vital to ensure that there are not significant gaps in your knowledge (Tools 12-14 can help you with this, and can be used either by an individual researcher or by the research team.)



## Stage Six: Publish Your Findings and Take Action!

Initial findings should then be presented back to internal stakeholders and community researchers, and wherever possible with the research participants themselves (Tool 12 will help with this). The feedback meeting with research participants and stakeholders forms the first stage of action planning in response to the issues identified in your research. It's important not only to prioritise the issues but also to begin to think of possible ways to address them – and this might help your prioritising, in terms of working out what action your organisation (and any other local stakeholders) can feasibly take in response to the findings. Remember that it's better to decide on one or two relatively small actions and actually carry them out than to set very optimistic goals that may never be achieved.

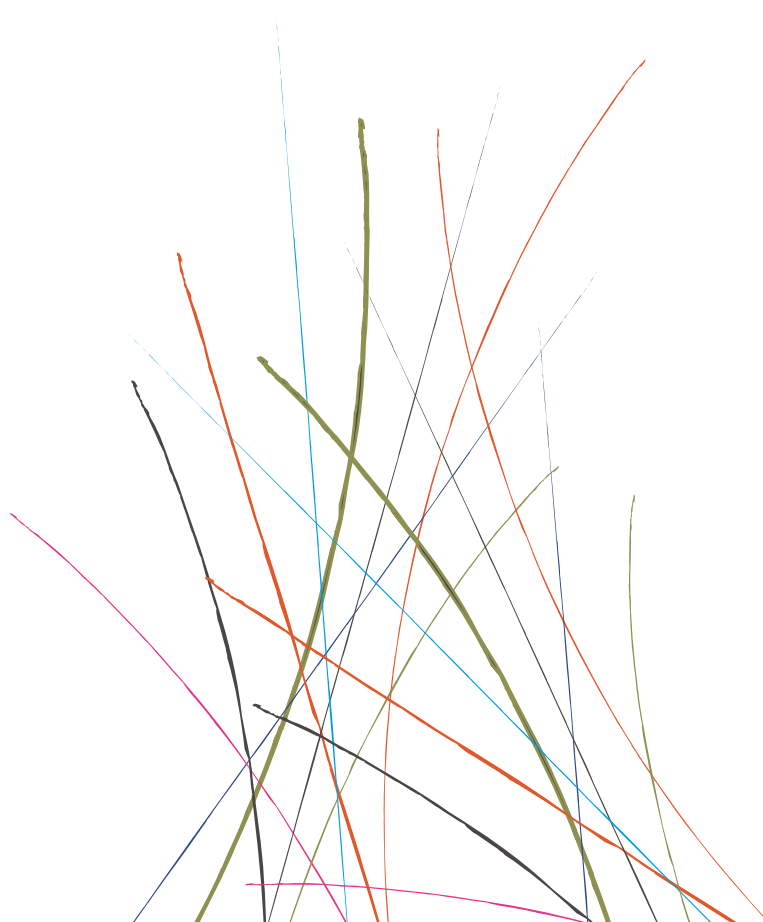
An important part of the decision making process will be to carry out a power analysis (Tool 8), asking how could these changes be brought about, and what influence can the project/local people exert to achieve them? It's important to recognize that there are different strategies open to you, and no set formula – it's up to your organisation or group to decide what you can do, taking account of your resources and skills and also the opportunities that are available at the time. Thus for example, you might decide to develop practical, local level activities that your community organisation could implement directly (possibly with additional funding), that would have the advantage of bringing some immediate benefit to the local community – or alternatively, you may feel that it is better to concentrate your energies on advocacy and campaigning work, to influence the actions of a larger organisation such as the local authority, a key service provider, or employer.

Publishing your findings can be done in whatever manner is most practical to your project, but we suggest that you hold a community gathering where you can celebrate the completion of your livelihoods project and discuss the findings with local community members and stakeholders. This also provides an opportunity to prioritise possible actions coming out of your project and to find ways for the community to take them forward. It's also important to find a way to feed back your findings to key service providers and decision makers, possibly by producing a written report or by organising an event where they can hear directly from project participants and community researchers.

Once you have finished the analysis follow up with the action you have decided on. This should be a direct result of the household/context analysis and community consultation. Ideally, go back to the households after the action has taken place, and learn what the impact has been on peoples' lives.

## Conclusion

**This section has outlined what you need to think about in planning each stage of your livelihoods project. You are now ready to go on to chapter 4, where we outline the tools that can help you carry out your project. We recommend that you read through them all before deciding which are the most appropriate for your community. Feel free to adapt them to your own particular situation.**



**Chapter 4:**

# **TOOLS FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS**

## Introduction

This chapter describes a series of tools that can be used at different stages of a livelihoods project. Some of these have been developed specifically for use in livelihoods projects, others have been adapted from handbooks for participatory and gender based community research (see Appendix). We recommend that you include at least some of these tools in your livelihoods project, as we have found that these are an important way of enabling participants to engage actively with the process. Some of the tools are designed for use with individuals and households, whereas others are more suitable for group work. Similarly some are intended for collecting information (data collection), either about household assets and livelihood strategies or about the external context (policies, institutions and practices), whilst others are to help you work with groups on analysing and verifying the information and planning possible actions in the final stage of a livelihoods project.

We've included a range of different tools, but it's important to remember that not all will be appropriate for every project. We recommend that you read through the chapter carefully, and then select several tools from each section that seem best suited to your project. The tools are intended to be used flexibly, so feel free to adapt them to the particular needs of your project. For the data collection phase, you should firstly decide which tools are most appropriate for your situation, and then use the same tools with each household that you interview (so that the information you collect is as systematic as possible).

We have included visual aids and diagrams, and these can be copied to provide handouts for individual and group work sessions. These will also help to ensure that the process is as accessible as possible, with both researchers and participants taking an active role. Different exercises will appeal to different people, so hopefully by using more than one you will find a way to involve the person actively in the interview process, and by approaching the issues from different angles, build up a more detailed picture of their situation. Notes can be made on the handouts by either the researchers or the research participants, and you can also return to an earlier diagram to fill in extra details that come to light later in an interview.

1. Drawing the Household
2. OK/Not OK Timeline
3. Managing Wheel
4. Structured Interviews
5. Livelihoods Strategy Tool
6. Mapping Public Assets
7. Community Mapping Tool
8. Power and Influence Line
9. The Assets Pentagon
10. Livelihoods Ladder
11. Gender Awareness Exercise
12. Verifying the Findings
13. Problem Tree Analysis
14. Identifying livelihood solutions



## 1. Drawing the Household

Collecting information on households	✓	Collecting information on policies institutions and processes	
Analysing information		Verifying and action planning	



### Equipment

House shape template, marker pens, cut-out figures (optional).



### Purpose of tool

To document and illustrate the movement of people within and around the household. Also provides a good ice breaker for beginning an interview.



### How to use

This exercise is best conducted at the start of a livelihoods interview, after the introductions, purpose of research and confidentiality have been discussed with the participant. The house shape provides an easy visual prompt that most people can engage with, and thus is a good way to get the participant talking and also to involve other members of the household who may be present.

Using the house template, ask the participant to describe who comes in and out of their house each day and where they go, starting with the people who live in the household all or most of the time. Next add in anyone else who regularly visits the house or whom household members regularly visit, e.g. grandparents, close neighbours, extended family, key friends; place these people close to the house shape. Next add other people who are in contact with the household, e.g. doorstep lenders, council workers, health/community workers, councillors, etc.; these can be placed a little way from the house shape.

The participants should be encouraged to lead the process, and to mark the information on the template themselves, leaving the researcher able to prompt and to ask questions as they arise. If this is not possible the researcher can ask them to describe the process and fill in the diagram for them, checking back that they have got it right.

This diagram then provides a reference point for the interview as well as an early indicator of flows of resources in and out the household. For clarity, arrows (or numbers) can be used to indicate the frequency of interactions and whether these are positive or negative. If the agencies or individuals involved exchange goods, money or services these details can also be added, with notes indicating how much and how often. If you are simultaneously interviewing people from the same household each person can fill in their answers on the same diagram, using a different coloured pen (you might need a piece of flip chart paper for a large family!)



### What you are looking for...

- The material and non-material support that the household receives.
- Social networks of trust and reciprocity (e.g. the extended family may provide informal child care, or a good friend may lend money in a crisis).
- The differences between men's and women's interactions, both within the household and outside of it.
- Any common trends across interviews.

These interactions help illustrate how a livelihood is constructed. Conversely, an interviewee may have very few such networks and relationships and/or may access very few public assets. This can suggest that they are struggling to sustain themselves and are in surviving mode.



### Remember!

**Look for power imbalances! Does one person in the household have more social assets than the others? Does one member have more caring responsibilities than the others? Are there hospitals/schools nearby (public assets), or is there a lot of travel involved in accessing these type of services?**



## 2. OK/Not OK Timeline

Collecting information on households	✓	Collecting information on policies institutions and processes	
Analysing information		Verifying and action planning	



### Equipment

Flipchart paper, marker pens (2-3 colours).



### Purpose of tool

To assess the impact that life events have upon household livelihoods over time (both immediate and long-term impact).



### How to Use

Interviewees should be asked to pick a point in time (usually 5-10 years previous), which was the start of a significant period in their life. This might be moving into the area, starting or ending a job or relationship or starting a family.

Make sure that the participant chooses the starting point of the timeline. A horizontal line is then drawn across the page as the 'timeline', with the start time on the left and the present on the right. Approximate dates for key events in the participant's life can then be added onto the timeline, with drawings and quotations to fill it out. Then ask the interviewee to draw a line on the paper with a different coloured pen, moving above and below the timeline to mark periods of time when they were 'ok' or 'not ok'. Quotations and pictorial references can be added to give depth to what is written on each line. You can also cross-reference this chart with the information provided on the house tool, again to build up a more complete picture of the person's life.

Have an example ready to show the interviewee. If at all possible the interviewee should be invited to fill in the timeline so that the researcher is free to concentrate upon asking the questions.



### What you are looking for...

Above all, the researcher is looking for the impact that various life events have had upon people's livelihood assets over time. For example, the break-up of a relationship may have reduced financial assets but lead to increased social and human assets upon relocation out of the area.

The researcher also needs to consider the different effects that these events have upon men and women: Who gained and who lost out in any changes? Remember that you are also looking for trends across households in this respect.



### Remember!

**Look for links between assets – did gaining one asset (e.g. gaining a qualification – human asset) have an impact upon other assets? (Enabling a person to find work – financial asset.)**

**Look for differences between different members of the household.**

**Do similar life events affect men and women in different ways? How?**



### 3. Managing Wheel

Collecting information on households	✓	Collecting information on policies institutions and processes	
Analysing information		Verifying and action planning	



#### Equipment

Pens, flipchart paper or managing wheel template.



#### Purpose of tool

To document how and when income and resources enter and leave the household, to assess the sustainability of the livelihood strategies used over a week, a month or a year.



#### How to Use

Start with a photocopy of the managing wheel (or draw them on flip chart paper), and explain that you want to understand how the household manages financially. The wheel is divided into 7 sections, each one indicating a day of the week. Ask the interviewee to fill in each day with details of what money comes into the house (e.g. wages, income support, child benefit, borrowing), and where is it spent (e.g. weekly shopping, bus fares, fuel tokens). Include any additional information that emerges during the conversation, for example, 'Monday – shopping trip to Netto (further away than Asda, but cheaper)'.  
  
There may also be events which occur monthly or even annually and these can either be added onto the wheel with qualifying statements, or onto the edge of the sheet with descriptions of frequency. As this is intended to be a participatory tool so interviewees should be encouraged to fill in the template for themselves if they are willing to do so. Different members of the household can use different coloured pens to fill in the same diagram.



#### Questions to ask

Who goes shopping? Who decides what to buy? Do you get help from family or neighbours? Do you do anything for them in return? Are there days of the week (or month) when there's no money left? What do you do then? How do you budget for expensive items (e.g. school uniform), and special occasions (e.g. Christmas)? What happens in emergencies e.g. if the cooker breaks down or you lose a purse?



#### What you are looking for...

The coping strategies that households use to help them manage their household finances on a low income. How they deal with crises, and who they can turn to for support. Additional sources of income e.g. informal or casual work, market stalls etc.



#### Remember!

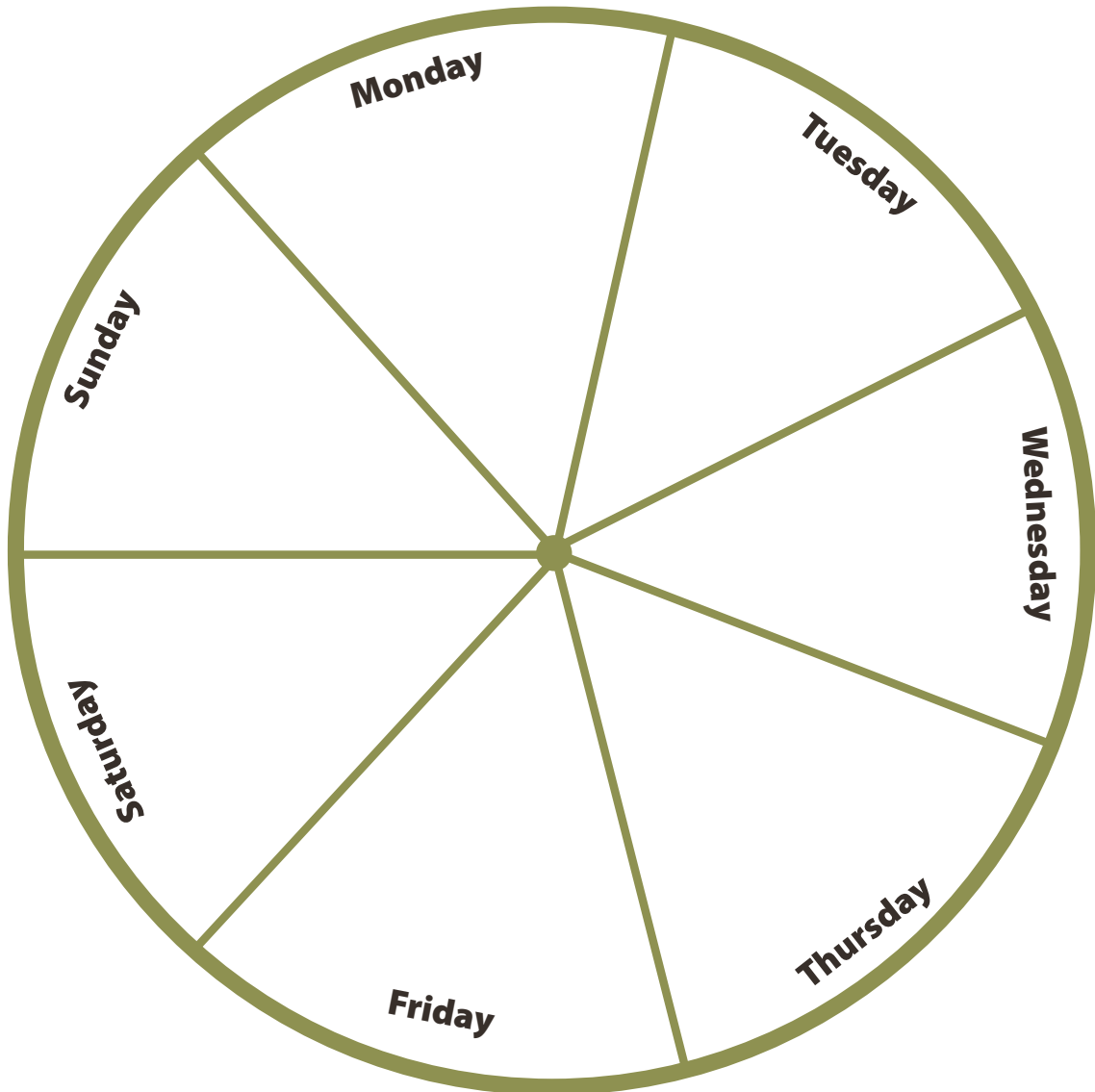
**Some of the issues raised on the managing wheel might provide opportunities for follow-up questions, e.g. 'What company is the loan with?' 'Who does the baby-sitting?'**

**Check out how often particular events happen ' How often in the last month have you had no money left three days before payday?'**





### 3. Managing Wheel



## 4. Structured Interviews

Collecting information on households	✓	Collecting information on policies institutions and processes	
Analysing information		Verifying and action planning	



### Equipment

Means of recording information (i.e. tape recorder or note-taker), list of questions to guide the discussion.



### Purpose of tool

To complement the information that has been collected through the exercises, and to explore specific issues in more depth.



### How to use

If you are recording the interview, you will need to ask the participant for their written consent, and explain carefully how you plan to use and store the tapes. It is also a good idea to show them how to use the tape machine and explain that if they want to turn the tape off at any point that is fine.

It is important to ask questions that relate to all assets, although you are likely to have already covered some of the issues in the earlier exercises. You may also decide to focus in more depth on a particular asset, if for example, this relates to a particular community issue or area of your work. We have included some examples of questions used in previous projects, which you may be able to adapt to your own situation. If you want to create your own questions then you should refer to the guidance in Chapter 3 (pp 17-18).



### What you are looking for...

- People's asset base and the way they make use of the assets they have available to them.
- Differences between men and women within households.
- Detailed information that has not been covered by the other exercises, e.g. the names of debt companies or local services.



### Questions to ask

On the next page is a compilation of questions based on research carried out in Teesside and London, which are a guide to the kind of questions you can ask.



### Introduction

- Could you begin by telling me a little bit about yourself?
- What is the best thing about your life at the moment?
- What struggles do you face at the moment? (e.g. health, income, services)
- Who or what makes life better or worse?

### Public assets

- What local services do you use (e.g. Job Centre, Sure Start Children's Centre, library, etc.)?
- What services do other people in your household use?
- What about other people who you spend time with (e.g. extended family, friends, neighbours), what do they use?
- How easy it is to access local centres and resources? If it is difficult what could be done to make it easier?
- Do you use public transport? What do you think about public transport in your area?
- Do you think men and women access these services differently? If so, how?

### Physical assets

- What sort of accommodation do you live in?
- Who owns your property? Who is responsible for paying your rent or mortgage? Is the tenancy/ mortgage in joint names?
- How much of your weekly/monthly income is spent on the mortgage or rent.
- What sort of transport do you use, and what for? Which member/s of the household own and/or use these vehicles?
- Do you own any equipment that you use to bring in extra income or favours from people you know (eg sewing machine, lawn mower, DIY tools)?

### Human assets

- How would you describe your health? Have you had any major changes in your health over the last 5 years or so?
- How is the health of other people in your household, or of those people close to your household?
- What kind of caring responsibilities do you and other household members have? What about other people in the household?
- How did you do at school/college?
- Do any members of your household have any qualifications? If so how have they helped them in life?

### Social Assets

- Who are the people who you depend on for support?
- What activities do you do for fun? Who do you do these activities with?
- Who are the people that you rely on in life?
- What groups/networks/formal organisations are you part of?
- Are other members of the household involved with any groups/organisations/networks?

### Questions - Financial Assets

- What is your main income source? (This can either be the amount or the source, depending on what is most useful for your project).
- Do you have other sources of money coming into the house?
- What money can you access from friends/family? What do you use this to pay for?
- What about other people in the household? What income do they have? How do they spend it? Is there a difference between people's income/spending in the household?
- How is the household getting by on the current income?



## 5. Livelihoods Strategy Tool

Collecting information on households	✓	Collecting information on policies institutions and processes	
Analysing information		Verifying and action planning	



### Equipment

Flipchart paper, strength/barrier template, small pieces of card (optional).



### Purpose of Tool

To enable the participants to reflect on (and the researcher to document) the strengths of their current livelihoods strategies, and the barriers that they face in improving the situation.



### How to Use

This tool should be used towards the end of the interview, to provide an opportunity for the participant and researcher to reflect and assess the effectiveness of their current livelihood strategies. Begin by asking the participant what are the strengths of their current strategies, and write these down on the template. Then do the same thing with the barriers they face.

**Strengths:** 'The things which you use to help you get by', e.g. helping out with childcare, informal work, friends/social networks, the local community centre, church and your own resilience and resourcefulness.

'Sally's mother has the kids on Friday and Saturday evenings, so I can work in the pub'

'I have a stall at the car boot sale once a month and earn a bit of extra cash from that'

**Barriers:** The things which prevent your livelihood being sustainable' – for example - not being able to afford childcare, ill-health, debt, not having enough money to survive on, low wages, inaccessible transport links.

'They're advertising jobs at Asda but there's no bus service after 6pm.'



### Questions to ask:

Ask the participant to sum up their livelihood strategy in a couple of sentences.

How do the strengths in column 1 (strengths) help the household to overcome those in column 2 (barriers)?



## 6. Mapping Public Assets

Collecting information on households		Collecting information on policies institutions and processes	✓
Analysing information		Verifying and action planning	



### Equipment

Flipchart paper and different coloured marker pens.



### Purpose of tool

To map out the public assets that impact upon the household or community, to find out how people use (or don't use) local services and community organisations.



### How to use

This tool can be used both with individual households and also in groups. Give each household a piece of flip chart paper and ask them to draw a stick person in the centre, to represent themselves. Ask the participant to draw symbols on the paper to represent the places they go to in the neighbourhood (e.g. work, Job centre, school, pub, mosque), and also mark how often they go there. (It is often useful to prepare an example beforehand that you can show to participants so they can see how their drawing might look).

They should then draw arrows to show how often and how far they travel to get to these places. The thickness of the arrow should denote the frequency of the interaction and the length of the arrow should denote its distance. Different colour pens can then be used

to jot down a comment beside each symbol to show whether it either helps or hinders them in building a sustainable livelihood ('getting by'), and their thoughts or feelings about it.

It can be useful to ask about specific areas, landmarks, or buildings – but do not lead the conversation, allow people to tell you about the places that are of most relevance to them.



### Questions to ask

What are the people/places that you visit in the community?

If a friend or family member looks after your children – how often do they do this? What time do you drop the children off? Do you go there by bus? Is it easy for you to get there?



### What you are looking for...

The public and social assets that people access to create their livelihood.

The resources that people make use of in the community.

The benefits, drawbacks and accessibility of community services as perceived by the interviewee.

## 7. Community Mapping Tool

Collecting information on households		Collecting information on policies institutions and processes	✓
Analysing information		Verifying and action planning	



### Equipment

Access to local contacts and networks, internet access.



### Purpose of tool

To map out what you already know about possible policies, institutions and practices that may be relevant to the community you are working with.



### How to use

At the start of a livelihoods project, the research team needs to find out what information already exists about the community or neighbourhood where you are working, to help you plan your project and to begin to map the policies, institutions and practices that are likely to impact on local people's livelihoods.

This can be a time consuming process and so it is often easiest if one person takes responsibility for carrying out this task in a systematic way and producing an overview that the project can return to at the analysis and action planning stage. Think about what are/could be the key policies, institutions and practices that could impact on people's livelihood - reread the relevant section in chapter 2 (p8) to get some ideas, but when you are starting out be prepared to collect information on a wide variety of issues.

You need to find which ones are most likely to be relevant for your particular project. A good way to start is to talk to two or three people who have lived or worked in the area for a substantial period of time and can give you a picture of its recent history and the key

actors and organisations. It is also worth contacting local service providers (e.g. the council), and finding out as much as you can about, for example, the local economy (who are the major employers and key industries or sectors?), who lives in the area (is it mainly young families, single people or older people? are there significant minority communities?), and what are the key challenges they face.

It is also important to do an internet search, and to collect information about institutions that operate at different levels: relevant central government departments, regional agencies and local councils (the larger ones may have a policy or research department) and key service providers such as Primary Care Trusts, schools and the job centre. At the local level, its also important to contact local community organisations, residents groups and faith groups, all of which can provide useful background information and may sometimes have produced a more detailed report about their area. Don't be afraid to ring people up and ask them to talk to you – if you can find the actual person who has written a research report they will probably be only too happy to discuss their work! You can also download information from the most recent census for particular wards, although at the time of writing this is quite out of date (the last census was carried out in 2001).

It's good to set yourself a deadline for the first stage of this process and arrange to feedback and discuss what you have found with others involved in your project. Remember though that this is just the first stage of this mapping process; you will need to return to it once you have collected information from the households participating in your livelihoods project.

## 8. Power and Influence Line

Collecting information on households	✓	Collecting information on policies institutions and processes	✓
Analysing information		Verifying and action planning	✓



### Equipment

Post-it notes, flipchart paper and marker pens.

Purpose of tool: To find out what local people see as the relevant policies, institutions and practices which affect their livelihood and how they understand power working in their community.



### How to use

Ask participants to write down (on post-it notes) the names of government bodies, decision-making organisations, local service providers or any other local groups they know of which have the resources and power to set local agendas and make decisions. (They may find it easier to think of individuals they know of, for example, 'Jack the councillor who helped my mum get rehoused' or 'Sarah from regeneration who organised the consultation'.)

Draw a line down the centre of the flipchart paper from the top to the bottom, and another across the page. Write 'high' at the top and 'low' at the bottom, and 'cannot influence' on the far left and 'easy to influence' on the far right. Ask the group to stick their post-its on the chart according to which they think have a high or low level of power and influence, and how easy it is to influence them. Work through the various organisations and individuals listed and discuss each one with the whole group.

It may also be useful to refer back to the Community mapping tool (Tool 7), and use this as a prompt in case the group does not mention organisations that you think may be significant.



### Questions to ask

- Who are the organisations and individuals that make decisions in the local area?
- Who are the organisations and individuals that hold power at a national level?
- Have you heard of \_\_\_\_\_? (Insert the name of a local/national organisation/MP, etc.) What do you think they do?
- How does that organisation affect you in your daily life?

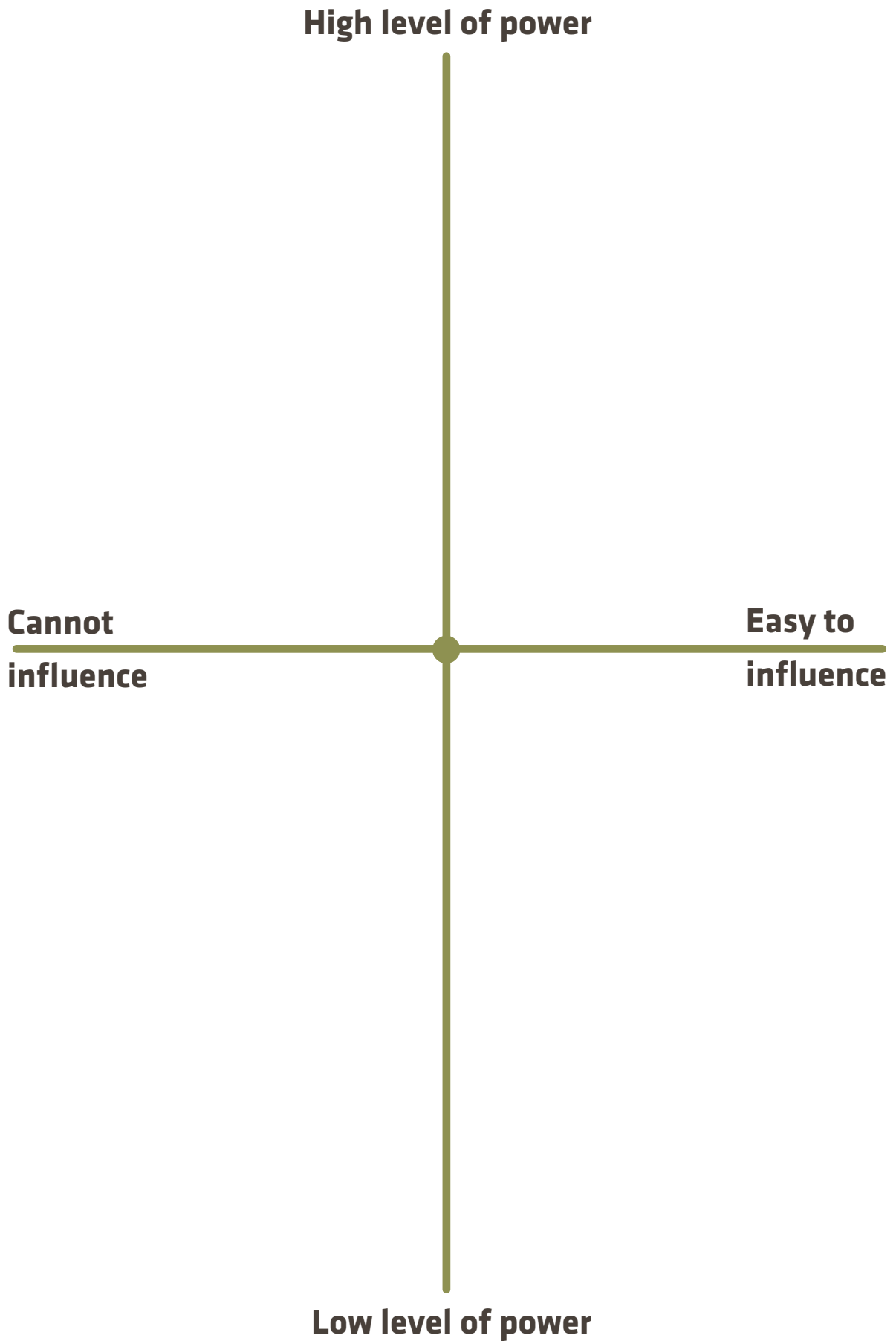


### What you are looking for...

This tool is a good way to check out whether your initial mapping process has covered the key organisations that local people see as responsible for the decisions that affect their lives. It can help you identify areas that you have missed out in your initial mapping and also to make an assessment of how much local people know about the decision making and power structures that impact on their lives. For example, when this exercise was used in Stockton recently, nobody in a grassroots community support group had heard of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) – the government's mechanism for including people in regeneration.



## 8. Power and Influence Line



## 9. The Assets Pentagon

Collecting information on households		Collecting information on policies institutions and processes	
Analysing information	✓	Verifying and action planning	



### Equipment

Photocopies of the Assets Pentagon, interview transcripts or notes and copies of the exercises completed with each household, flip chart paper and marker pens.



### Purpose of tool

To begin to analyse the household interviews and exercises, drawing out information about each of the five assets and documenting that systematically. It can be used with a group of peer researchers or by a single researcher.

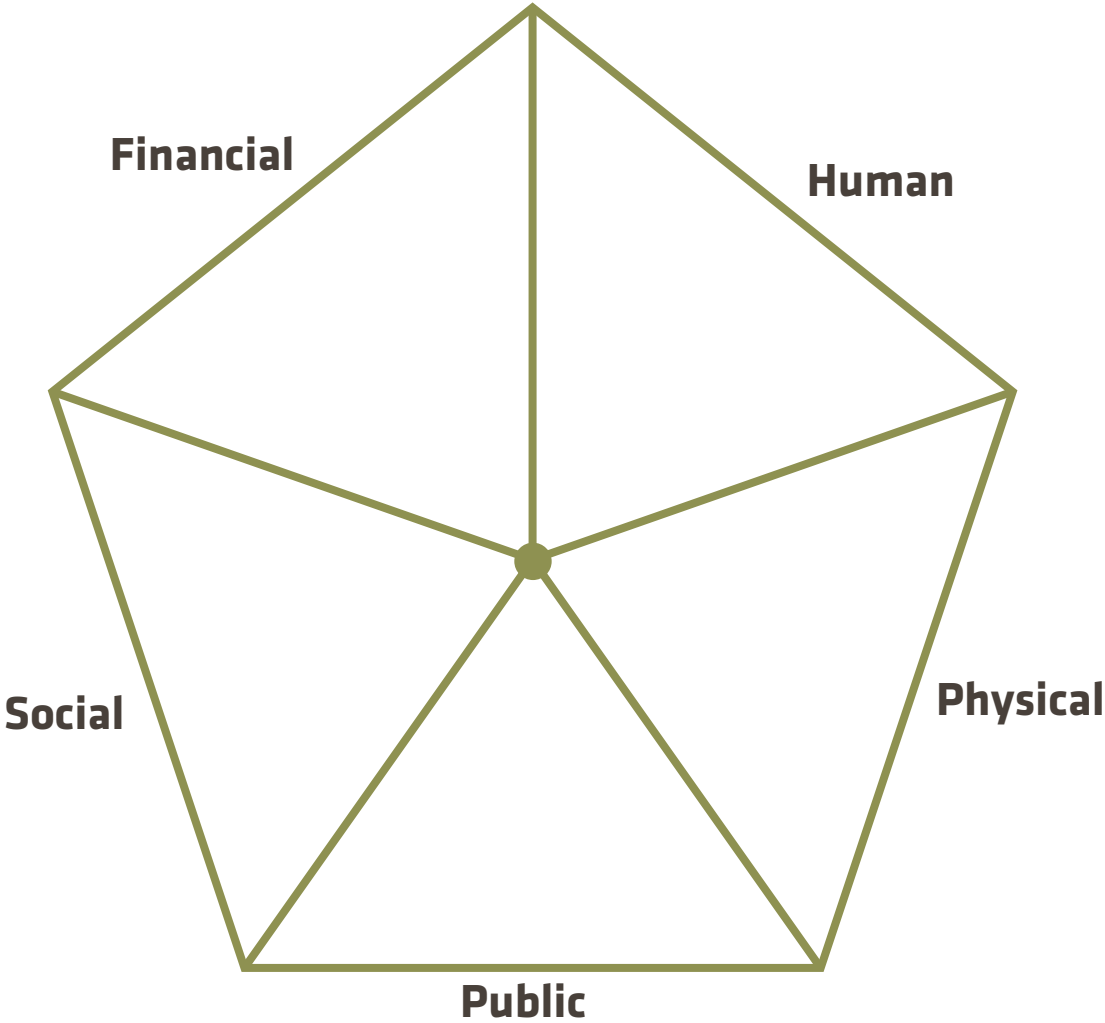


### How to use

For each household, read through (or summarise in the group) all the information you have collected and list on the template the key assets and vulnerabilities in relation to each area of the Assets Pentagon. If you are working in a group, you may have to discuss and agree the most significant points, making it less likely that the process will miss anything important – but it is also more time consuming so its important to allow enough time for this process. Mark on the pentangle any significant differences between different household members (e.g. men and women).

Repeat this process for each interview. You should end up with a series of completed pentangles that can then be compared. For each asset take a piece of flip chart paper, make two columns – one for men and the other for women – and list the different assets that come up for both men and women. Use ticks to indicate when an asset is repeated in more than one interview. This provides a clear visual record of the different assets of men and women in your project. You can also repeat this process for other distinct groups – for example, households with children and those without, or households from different ethnic groups. (If you find it difficult to fit everything in, write the points on post it notes and stick these onto the flip chart).

**9. The Assets Pentagon**



## 10. Livelihoods Ladder

Collecting information on households		Collecting information on policies institutions and processes	
Analysing information	✓	Verifying and action planning	✓



### How to use

Before you start the exercise, its worth taking some time to discuss what characteristics would suggest that a household is within each stage of the ladder. The Table above will give you some pointers.



### Equipment

A photocopy of the livelihoods ladder template for each interview.



### Purpose of tool

To continue the analysis of the interviews, to make an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the household livelihoods strategies and then to consider where they should be positioned on the livelihoods ladder.

Ideally this exercise follows on from the Assets Pentagon, but if not make sure that each member of the group is familiar with the interview material. Look at the different assets that the household can draw upon and the barriers that they face, discuss in the group where on the ladder they would best be positioned and make notes on the chart to explain the reasons for your decision.

The notes made in Tool 5 will show you where the participants placed themselves on the ladder – do you agree with their self assessment? If not can you explain why?



### How to use

This exercise follows on from Tool 9, and continues the process of analysing the information you have collected from the participants in your livelihoods project.



### Questions to ask

- What are the barriers that are keeping the participant low down the ladder? What might help address these?
- What risks and vulnerabilities do they face? Would moving up the ladder increase these vulnerabilities? How could this be addressed?
- How do external policies, institutions or practices affect household movement up or down the ladder?

### Stages on the Livelihoods Ladder

**SURVIVING  
COPING  
ADAPTING**

**At risk:  
Risk averse:  
High risk of  
recurrent poverty:  
Doing fine:**

Everything is a struggle  
Things are ok, but unlikely to get much better in the future  
Things are beginning to gradually improve  
The household is strong and can recover from shocks

## 10. Livelihoods Ladder



## 11. Gender Awareness Exercise <sup>1</sup>

Collecting information on households		Collecting information on policies institutions and processes	
Analysing information	✓	Verifying and action planning	✓



### Equipment

Facilitators' and participants' stories, newspaper cuttings.



### Purpose of tool

To raise awareness of gender issues and the different experiences of men and women, particularly in relation to resources and power issues.



### How to use

This tool can be used as a training tool at the start of a livelihoods project, or with a stakeholder group, when they are planning possible actions.

Divide the group into smaller groups of five, and ask each group to come up with a story that reflects differences between men and women. This can either be based on group members' own experiences or a story

can be taken from the livelihoods research or from a TV programme or newspaper. If using participants' stories check that they feel comfortable sharing within the group and explain that the story may be based upon their experience, but is not necessarily an account of their experience. If participants are unsure about using their own stories, start with one from the newspaper or a case study, and then after that has been explored, ask if anyone has another story that can be used.

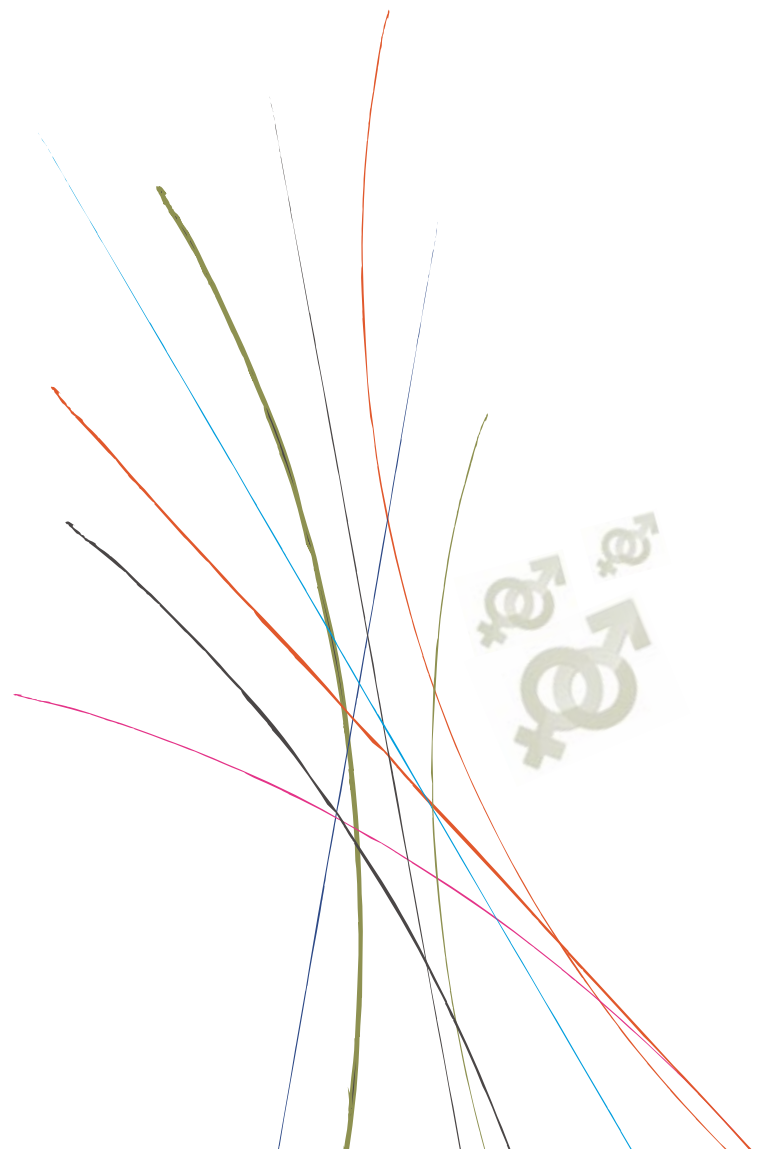


### Questions to ask

Once the story has been shared draw out the differences between men and women within the stories and work through the following questions:

- What kind of barriers do men and women face?
- Who has assets?
- Who owns what (property, vehicles, etc.)?
- Who makes decisions?
- Who gains and who loses?

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from What Men and Women want (2004), p44-45.



## 12. Verifying the Findings

Collecting information on households		Collecting information on policies institutions and processes	
Analysing information		Verifying and action planning	✓



### Equipment

Post-it notes, flipchart paper, marker pens, sticky dots (optional).



### Purpose of tool

To feedback the research findings to a wider group of local stakeholders and participants, and to provide an opportunity for this wider group to comment and raise questions, before the research is finalised. This is also the first stage in building support for possible action in response.



### How to use

Use large pieces of flip-chart or A3 paper and head each piece with one of the five assets; underneath the heading write down the key findings relating to that asset (or use the flip charts you produced in Tool 9).

On another sheet draw the livelihoods ladder and then some of the key factors that would place households in the surviving, coping, adapting or accumulating area. Mark on the chart how many households came into each category.

### Public Assets in our community are:

#### Good

Library

Buses to town

#### Bad

No buses to hospital

Local leisure centre is very expensive

### Financial Assets in our community are:

#### Good

There is a Credit Union (although not very well known)

Job centre well-placed

#### Bad

Poor access to low-interest credit (only high-interest credit available)

Low-wage economy for most people

Ask people to comment on whether they agree with your findings. Explain that these are overall findings, and will not reflect the experience of every household or individual in that community. Be sure to record the information that people tell you. If you find people mostly agree with your findings you can be confident that the information you have is accurate and useful. If a lot of people disagree you may need to return to your interview notes and check that you have not missed key pieces of information.

## 13. Problem Tree Analysis

Collecting information on households		Collecting information on policies institutions and processes	
Analysing information		Verifying and action planning	✓



### Equipment

Post-it notes, flipchart paper and marker pens.



### Purpose of tool

To break down problems in order to better understand possible causes and effects, and then to identify possible solutions.



### How to use

This tool should be used to work with project participants and key stakeholders to plan actions to respond to the findings of your livelihoods project (it therefore follows on well from the prioritisation exercise at the end of Tool 11). Before the meeting starts the facilitator prepares a piece of flip chart paper with a drawing of a tree (see template opposite).

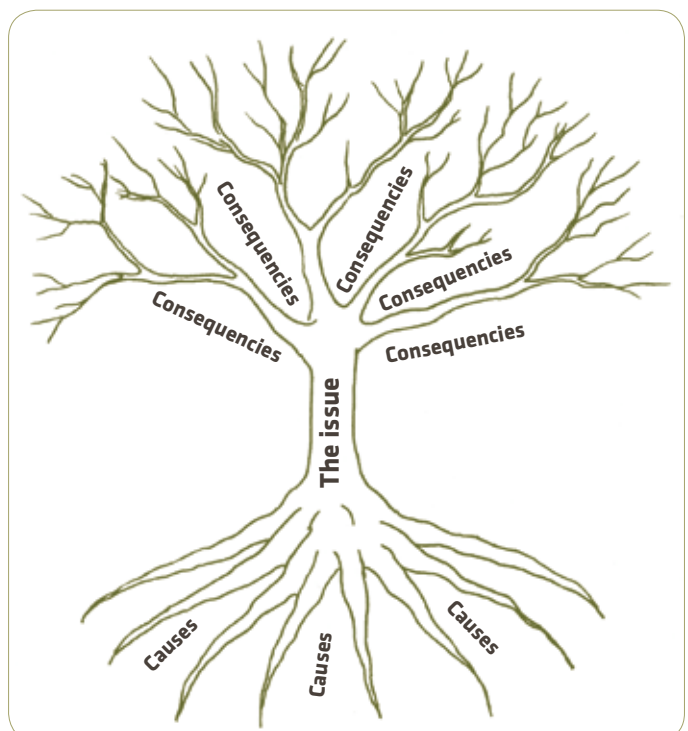
The facilitator introduces the exercise by inviting the group to discuss the problem or issue that has been selected for analysis. Discuss the causes, effects and consequences of the issue and ask the participants to write down the main points on post-it notes.

Invite the group to place their post-its on the tree diagram. The key issues in relation to the problem form the 'trunk' of the tree. The causes of the problems are added as the 'roots', and the consequences are added as the 'branches'. These can be added on as post-it notes, or drawn straight on depending on the consensus of everyone in the group. Make sure that you allow sufficient time for the group to discuss the issue fully, and be prepared to add extra insights onto the diagram. If you are working with a large group, you could get smaller groups to create their own tree around a different issue.



### Questions to ask

- Does the tree represent reality?
- What are the economic, political and socio-cultural dimensions to the problem?
- Which causes and consequences are improving, and which are getting worse? Which are the most serious? And the most urgent?
- Which causes and consequences are easy to tackle? What possible solutions might improve the situation?
- How could a policy change help address a cause or consequence, or create a solution?
- What criteria are important to us in thinking about a way forward?
- What decisions have we made, and what actions have we agreed?





## 14. Identifying livelihood solutions

Collecting information on households		Collecting information on policies institutions and processes	
Analysing information		Verifying and action planning	✓



### Equipment

Flipchart and marker pens.



### How to use

Display the Assets Pentagon Chart (Tool 9) and the Power & Influence line (Tool 8) where they are clearly visible to the group.

Prepare a table on a piece of flip chart paper, with four columns and six rows. Write the top five issues identified on the Assets Pentagon (Tool 9) and/or the priorities identified in Tool 12 in the left hand column, and write 'national, regional, local' at the top of the other three columns. For each possible barrier or weak asset area, ask the group to identify organisations that could take action or policies that need to change in order to address the issue. Write each possible action on a post it and decide where it fits – is it a local action that could be taken by local people and community groups, or does it require a regional or national policy change?

If the former, ask the group to then consider who is best placed to take this action, how this group of stakeholders and participants might be involved, what resources would be needed and what obstacles might they face. If possible, then work with the group to develop a concrete action plan with time scales and allocated tasks.

If it requires a policy or institutional change at regional or national level, the group then needs to consider how best to go about securing such a change. Discuss in the group which decision making body is responsible for the policy or institution that needs to change and use the Power and Influence chart to see if the group can come up with possible entry points or opportunities to influence these bodies.



### What you are looking for...

Any interventions must be practical, manageable and realistic. They can be achieved through changing existing services, working in partnership, or creating new ones. The group should also consider the influence of external factors and think through how local people might be affected by top-down policy directives. The participants can then begin to get an appreciation for how change might best be achieved in their community.

## Appendix

### Sustainable Livelihoods Projects

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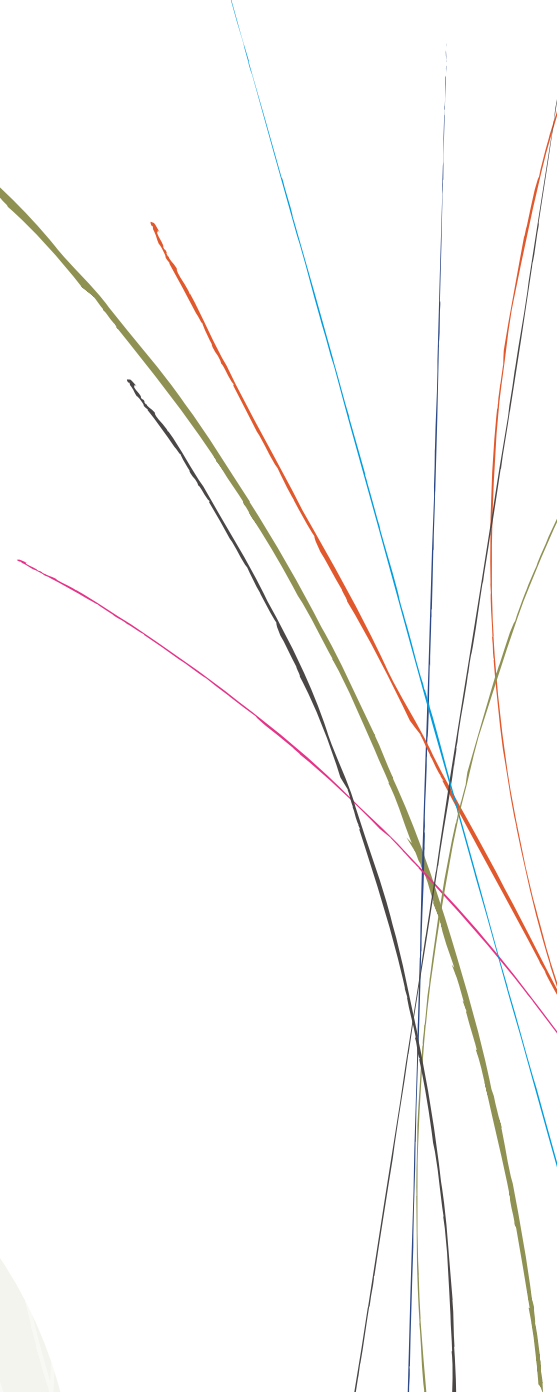
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