

Sustainable Livelihoods a Foundation for Rural Development Leads to Sustainability

Zrównoważone źródła utrzymania Fundacji Rozwoju Obszarów Wiejskich jako droga do zrównoważonego rozwoju

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate and analyse the significance of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) and its application to rural development projects and policies. A literature review is conducted, with the primary focus being on the primary components of the SLA. The researchers noted that the SLA effectively interrogates the livelihoods of the poor and the various mechanisms in the approach. These mechanisms include all forms of capital, the vulnerability aspect, livelihood strategies, and outcomes, as well as the different laws and regulations governing the access and use of resources. The research also noted that the SLA effectively addresses the poor's vulnerabilities. Scholarly heavy hitters like Chambers and Scoones (1992) have pointed out that this method is all-encompassing and hierarchical. The methodology has demonstrated in a theoretical sense that it is beneficial in understanding the livelihoods problem of the less fortunate in rural communities. It is strongly suggested that the government and its development partners adopt and incorporate the SLA into their policies to ensure sustainable livelihoods leading to sustainable development.

Key words: Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA), rural development, rural livelihoods, sustainable development

Streszczenie

Głównym celem tego badania jest ocena i analiza znaczenia zrównoważonych źródeł utrzymania (SLA) i ich zastosowania w projektach i politykach rozwoju obszarów wiejskich. Przegląd literatury skupia się przede wszystkim na głównych składnikach umowy SLA. Zauważono, że SLA skutecznie bada źródła utrzymania ubogich i różne mechanizmy w tym podejściu. Mechanizmy te obejmują wszystkie formy kapitału, aspekt podatności na zagrożenia, strategie utrzymania i wyniki, a także różne prawa i regulacje regulujące dostęp do zasobów i korzystanie z nich. W badaniu zauważono również, że umowa SLA skutecznie eliminuje słabe punkty biednych. Badacze, tacy jak Chambers i Scoones (1992), zwrócili uwagę, że ta metoda obejmuje całość problematyki i jest hierarchiczna. Od strony teoretycznej wykazano, że jest ona korzystna dla zrozumienia problemu środków do życia osób mniej szczęśliwych w społecznościach wiejskich. Stanowczo zaleca się, aby rząd i jego partnerzy rozwojowi przyjęli i włączyli umowę SLA do swoich polityk w celu zapewnienia zrównoważonych źródeł utrzymania prowadzących do zrównoważonego rozwoju.

Słowa kluczowe: Zrównoważone źródła utrzymania (SLA), rozwój obszarów wiejskich, źródła utrzymania na wsi, zrównoważony rozwój

We must rise higher to rescue the Sustainable Development Goals – and stay true to our promise of a world of peace, dignity, and prosperity on a healthy planet.
António Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations

1. Introduction

This study examines how the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) is indicated in rural development programs and policies in developing nations like India to promote sustainable livelihoods for the underprivileged. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach's (SLA) end purpose is to promote the development of economically viable livelihoods; however, the SLA has gone one step further in highlighting the significance of contextualizing the SLA's components for development professionals and policymakers. The article also demonstrates how SLA-guided initiatives successfully achieved their respective development objectives. Elements of the SLA are essential for rural improvement and helping those living in rural poverty.

According to Chambers and Conway (1992), the SLA contributes to a better understanding local livelihoods. At the intersection of development and environment studies, it provides a fresh viewpoint on the work being done, particularly the work of underrepresented groups (Serrat, 2017). The SLA categorizes factors that restrict or expand available livelihood options and demonstrates how those factors are linked to low-quality livelihoods (Asian Development Bank, 2017). It is based on shifting perceptions of the impoverished and vulnerable and of institutions and policies. The ability of the SLA framework to be followed by rural development policies is demonstrated by this idea. The Brundtland Commission defined *sustainability* as meeting the needs of the present without sacrificing the potential to meet the needs of the future (Emas, 2015).

According to Scoones (2009), a person's *capital assets*, which comprise their social resources, material, and activities, are considered to be part of their means of subsistence (Žickiene, 2020). When a livelihood can withstand shocks and stresses, recover from them, and retain or improve its current and future capabilities and assets without depleting its natural resource base, it can be said to be sustained. This generation's use of resources should be something that other generations can replicate and build upon for their own advantage.

1.1. Sustainable Livelihoods

At the crossroads of development and environmental studies, the concept of *Sustainable Livelihood* develops to present a fresh perspective on the relationship between work and economic and social distribution. Specifically, this notion discusses the efforts of vulnerable populations (such as people at the bottom of the income pyramid, indigenous communities, etc.) to eliminate inequality in the household and create a more equitable future for all (Xaxa, V., Saha, D., & Singha, R., 2017). The phrase expresses a desire to broaden the scope of research on poverty to encompass social exclusion and vulnerability as well as its physical manifestations (Krantz, L., 2001).

1.2. Sustainability

The ability of a person to sustain himself over a sufficiently extended period is considered sustainable. The term *sustainability* also refers to the capacity to withstand external shocks or stressors and bounce back by preserving or enhancing one's way of life (Serrat, O., & Serrat, O. 2017). The framework for sustainable livelihoods provides a structure for holistic poverty eradication efforts (Holland, J., Blackburn, J., & Chambers, R., 1998). Through creating participatory, human-centered, and dynamic development opportunities, the sustainable livelihood strategy focuses on addressing the concerns of disadvantaged populations. It is a link between the environment and humanity to coexist harmoniously (Serrat, O., & Serrat, O., 2017). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) proposed by the United Nations are an example of an activity that attempts to enhance sustainable livelihoods. To

ensure that *no one is left behind* and a sustainable planet, all 17 goals for 2030 must be realized (United Nations, 2018). All 17 goals, however, are being significantly slowed by the COVID-19 epidemic and need to be addressed in a coordinated fashion that goes beyond the goals themselves (United Nations Statistics Division, 2022).

1.3. Rural development

The term *rural development* refers to enhancing the standard of living and economic prosperity of people in rural areas, typically less densely populated and more spread out (Moseley, M., 2003).

Land-intensive industries like agriculture and forestry have long been at the forefront of rural development efforts. However, the characteristics of rural areas have evolved due to changes brought about by increasing urbanization and worldwide industrial networks. Rural tourism, specialized manufacturing, and leisure activities quickly overtake agriculture and the extraction of natural resources as the primary engines of economic growth (Ward, N., & Brown, D. L., 2009). The realization that rural communities need to approach progress from a more holistic perspective has led to a greater emphasis on a wide range of development goals, along with traditional solely providing incentives for resource-based industries or agriculture.

Entrepreneurship, social infrastructure, physical infrastructure, and Education contribute significantly to rural communities' development (Rowley, T. D., 1996). In addition, rural development is distinguished by its emphasis on locally generated *Economic Development Strategies* (EDS) (Moseley, M., 2003). In contrast to urban areas, which have many things in common with one another, rural locales are highly distinct from one another. As a consequence of this, a diverse array of strategies for rural development are utilized all over the world. (Van Assche, K., 2015). Further, rural development initiatives aim to accelerate rural communities' social and economic advancement (Chigbu, U. E., 2012; World Bank., 1975), resulting in a foundation for rural development through sustainable livelihood creation and development holistically leading to sustainability. Sustainability is not limited only to rural but also to urban and global contexts by means to control \ preventive measures on Rural-Urban Migration Problem, Environmental Aspects, Economic perspective, Social perspective Etc.

The concept of a *Sustainable Livelihood* was initially proposed for use in rural areas (WCED., 1987) and subsequently changed by the Brundtland Commission. The authors Gibson-Graham, Cameron, and Healy emphasize the concept of well-being and how a person's well-being affects their capacity for successful survival (Gibson-Graham, J. K., Cameron, J., & Healy, S., 2013).

1.4. Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)

The Department for International Development (DFID) created the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) to provide an organized way to list, comprehend, and connect the key influences and causes on people's livelihoods to achieve sustainable livelihoods. The framework can be used as an analytical tool or as a checklist. The SLF is not a stand-alone analytical tool; several other means should employ to pinpoint pertinent issues. A toolbox for technique including risk assessment, participatory poverty assessment, strategic environmental Assessment, and governance assessment, is available on the Department for International Developments (DFID) website.

Source *The sustainable livelihoods framework (DFID, 1999–2001) may be referred for block diagram* for better understanding.

The concept suggests that the relationships between the various components are very dynamic. The framework does not operate linearly and does not seek to convey a mode of reality. Therefore, there is no single path to follow from a shared starting point (DFID (1999), guidelines for the sustainable livelihoods approach introduction to the sustainable livelihoods approach.

They consist of the approach:

- It enhances access to information technology training, better nutrition, and high-quality health education.
- Creating a social atmosphere that is more cooperative and collaborative.
- Enhancing both management and access to natural resources.
- Enabling infrastructure and enhancing access to essential resources.
- Access to financial resources is being improved, and
- They are creating a regulatory and institutional environment that encourages equal access to competitive markets for all people and supports multiple livelihood alternatives. These six activity areas are related to the *Policy, Institutions and Processes* section of the framework and the five different types of capital listed in DFID's SL framework.

1.5. Foundation – Sustainable, Livelihoods, Rural Needs, Development and Sustainability

Consequently, people living in rural areas of countries with low incomes are reliant on natural resources, mainly agriculture (DFID, 1999). The agriculture industry is particularly vulnerable to the shocks and pressures that come from the unpredictable effects of climate change and environmental mismanagement. According to DFID (1999), the lives of the poor and vulnerable are affected by trends, shocks, and seasonality. Rural economies in countries with low per capita income tend to be unstable and poorly resilient to various pressures and shocks (Kapoor, 2019). The impoverished and the oppressed have fewer possibilities for respectable careers, which makes the stability of

their livelihoods more precarious. Agriculture, their principal source of income, can only support them if they have good yields. Therefore, plans and initiatives for rural development need to be tailored to the specific needs of rural areas in terms of sustaining sustainable development on the lines of livelihoods, natural resources Etc.

2. Methods

We took a narrative review method, with the primary emphasis on the current disagreements. The research study is qualitative, and both the desktop and the narrative approach is used in its execution. Both thematic analysis and document analysis were utilised in the data analysis process. Most of the information utilised came from policy documents and peer-reviewed journals that had previously demonstrated an application of the SLA.

2.1. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

On January 1, 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development came into force. World leaders formally accepted these goals during a historic United Nations Summit in September 2015. With these new, globally applicable Goals, countries will coordinate their efforts to eradicate all forms of poverty, combat inequality, and combat climate change over the next fifteen years to ensure that no one is left behind.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as Global Goals, are a follow-up initiative to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that aims to eliminate all types of poverty worldwide. The new Goals stand out from their predecessors due to their call for action on the part of all nations, regardless of wealth, to promote sustainable development and protect the natural world. They are aware that measures to combat climate change and safeguard the environment must coexist with initiatives to promote economic growth and fulfill various social demands, such as social security, education, possibilities for employment, and health care.

Even while the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) do not yet have the force of law behind them, governments are still expected to take ownership of the goals and provide national frameworks for their implementation. The primary responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the progress made in implementing the Goals lies with the countries themselves, which necessitates the collection of data that is timely, accurate, and of high quality. Based on assessments made at the national level, regional follow-up and review will assist with global follow-up and review.

Furthermore, here in this study *sustainable livelihoods a foundation for rural development leads to: sustainability* we find SDGs poster highlighting 1 to 17 goals in most of the cases directly influence the subject matter of concern and very few have indirectly influence into the issue irrespective of the consideration of any Goal 1,2,3....and so on.

3. Discussion and results

3.1. Where the SLA has been and where it's going

The Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA) is a public-private partnership that prioritizes participation, has multiple layers, is dynamic, responsive, focuses on people, and is sustainable. It posed a challenge to the non-participatory policies and bottom-up approach of the colonial regime (Kapur, 2019). The question that needs to be answered is whether (or not) the demands of the post-1990s have been satisfied by the rural development programmes offered by the SLA.

The SLA framework, pushed for by participatory development, served as the foundation for policies implemented in the 1990s. Livelihood strategies, access to capital assets, Vulnerability, policies, and outcomes to address rural livelihoods in two conflicting methods – notions of industrialization and technological advancement (SDG9) — were the primary focus of the presentation (Serrat, 2017). It is believed that industrialization and advances in technology will result in an increase in productivity as well as a reduction in poverty levels (Cornwall & Musembi, 2004).

Like this, Dixon, Gulliver, and Gibbon (2001) contend that the SLA ideals have only partially been thriving, given that an estimated 800 million rural people live in poverty (SDGs – 1,2,3,15,16,17) and are undernourished, and another 1.2 billion people fall below the international poverty datum line. Notably the makeup of rural livelihoods, especially in *under developing or developing countries* (World Bank Data, 2022). remains static because most household incomes still come from farming activities, which are characterized by issues like a lack of funding, demanding access to markets, outdated technology, and traditional on- and off-farm activities that rural populations depend on to survive (Ndulu, 2007). These results are a result of ineffective policy execution.

3.2. The SLA as a People-Centered, Participatory Framework

The main goals of people-centered development (SDG17) within the SLA are improving local communities (SDG 11), self-reliance (SDGs – 6,7,12, etc.), social fairness, and participatory decision-making. It acknowledges that economic expansion does not necessarily promote human advancement. The people-centered strategy assumes

that the development's guardians should include receivers. FAO (2013) acknowledges that a people/community-centered approach emphasizes three fundamental principles: placing power, influence, and resources in the community and recognizing the poor as assets and collaborators in creating new institutions. According to (Ellis & Bahiiga, 2001), people-centered development represents a paradigm change from the fundamental needs approach, characterized by the grassroots approach. This claim is supported by (Morse & McNamara, 2013), who saw rural development as a participatory process that gives people control over their goals for change.

The advent of participatory methodologies, such as the Participatory Rural Appraisal, also marked a departure from the earlier, top-down Rapid Rural Appraisal (Chambers; 1997). Hikwa (2006) goes on to say that the idea of participatory is both specific and presupposes that, in general, those in need of development would be aware of what they require. The SLA provides strategic direction and directs the implementation of development projects; as a result, it emphasizes the significance of understanding how the community or those receiving development rely on its endowment of natural resources. So, as a continuing rural development endeavor, the promotion of the agricultural sector and the provision of appropriate financial assets are crucial. Second, it is crucial to acknowledge that women make up the majority of the population in the agricultural sector, and third, the SLA recommends facilitating access to various capitals. Prioritizing the needs of the rural poor is crucial, followed by giving them control over and input into their development.

Since rural development is based on the premise that paying attention to the complexity of rural livelihoods and rural poverty is a cause and effect, it is clear that rural poverty can only be addressed as livelihood diversification is promoted. As a result, the SLA as an evolving approach has gained momentum. According to Ellis and Allison (2004), the rural poor's reliance on agriculture and natural resources, in particular, undermines their ability to establish sustainable means of subsistence. Hikwa (2006) concurs that extensive information profiling and needs assessment on development are essential for determining the kind of interventions to use, making them person-oriented. According to Lee and Neves (2009), there is a strong link between rural poverty and natural resources. Hence in order to eradicate rural poverty, rural residents must have control over the forestry and fishing industries, among other resources, in their region. Having access to and control over natural resources is a sort of capital, hence. People living in rural areas who do not have access to or control over natural resources face several difficulties, including food insecurity, slow asset accumulation, and poor reaction to shocks and stresses.

According to Kamaruddin and Samsudin (2014), the SLA aids in organizing the variables that limit or improve livelihood chances because different households have varying levels of access to household assets, which the SLA seeks to increase. They concluded that although it is the least possessed, access to capital assets is crucial for the poor. The convergence of variables within the framework suggests that they are interdependent to achieve sustainable lives. That is, the lack of capital assets and their acquisition, as well as regulations, laws, livelihood strategies, and their results, are all linked together to achieve sustainable livelihoods using the SLA. Sustainability is still essential, as demonstrated by a study done in Malawi by Oxfam, which found that the initiative launched to boost livelihoods and food security was successful because the recipients of development interventions in the Chiradzuru District were directly involved (Oxfam, 2014). Participation is crucial for sustainable livelihoods (Cornwall & Musembi, 2004; Hikwa, 2006).

3.3. Variables in the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

3.3.1. Context for Vulnerabilities

For intervention measures to be effective and for development initiatives to be successful, the context of vulnerabilities within the SLA is essential. In this context, vulnerabilities are the chances or risk of living in poverty or doing so in the future (World Bank, 2015). Insecurity in the well-being of people, homes, and communities in the face of changes in their external environment is a further classification. The SLA recognizes that people enter and exit poverty when shocks and stresses cause vulnerability differently. It has two aspects: the outer side of shocks, seasonality, and important trends (World Bank, 2015). Shocks, which include floods, droughts, famines, epidemics, and conflicts, are at the top of the list. While significant themes include the environment, economy, governance, and technology, seasonality primarily focuses on prices and employment.

According to Tirivangisi and Mugambiwa (2017), the pressures and shocks brought on by climate change have become more severe globally, endangering both human life and means of subsistence. It affects food security and depletes natural resources. Therefore, a shock is described as a sudden occurrence that affects how vulnerable a system and its parts are. The severity of the hazard and the sensitivity and ability of people impacted to handle it all play a role in how shocks and stresses affect communities (ACF, 2013). Due to inadequate adaptation and coping mechanisms, climate change poses more significant challenges for developing nations.

Because rural people rely heavily on the environment as their primary source of income, vulnerability inevitably becomes the starting point, as noted by Ellis and Freeman (2004). As previously said, a livelihood must withstand stresses and shocks, recover from them, and preserve and improve its capacities both now and in the future without jeopardizing the natural resource base (Emas, 2015). Emas reiterates that it is crucial to equip the recipients of

development with vital resources and can resist the consequences of shocks and stressors as they occur in light of this claim. To function well, vulnerabilities must rely on other assets, such as capital assets.

3.3.2. *The Context of Capital Assets*

Instead of viewing poverty as merely a result of a lack of income, the SLA evaluates the assets impoverished people have and require to sustain an appropriate income (Serrat, 2017). Poor people can engage in various livelihood strategies, actions, and decisions that ultimately decide their livelihood outcomes based on the assets formed by the vulnerability setting, modifying structures, and processes. Human, financial, social, physical, and ecological resources are among the livelihood assets the poor frequently have to compromise with. Due to their limited access to such resources and inability to establish consistent sources of income, rural residents are particularly vulnerable (Jutta & Joachim, 2013). Before the advent of the SLA in the 1990s, most rural development interventions were bottom-up and did not prioritize the needs of the rural population. Adopting the SLA was a positive step for the poor and vulnerable, who needed it most. According to Serrat (2017), there has been a transition from a material perspective that prioritizes food production to a social perspective that emphasizes improving people's ability to safeguard their livelihoods. This idea stems from the fact that participatory methods have been effectively incorporated into the activities, diagnoses, and designs of the many implementing organizations. According to the SLA, capital assets impact sustainable livelihoods, which can improve rural residents' socioeconomic standing by fostering their resilience. To do this, the capital assets are interdependent.

3.4. *Human as Capital*

According to Campbell and Sayer's (2003) definition of human capital in the SLA context, it comprises the abilities, knowledge, and skills that allow people to pursue various livelihood options and realize their desired livelihood. Given their vulnerability and exposure to poverty, rural communities highly value human capital. It is crucial for the rural community because it allows them to make decisions that will impact their life and means of subsistence. Given that other capitals rely on it, human capital must be considered a cornerstone of the SLA (Jutta & Krug, 2015). According to Kollmair (2002), those who depend on natural resources in rural areas – those who work in agriculture – need to be in good physical shape because their work is primarily physical. In the globalized world, education and skills are crucial because one must understand supply and demand and market data. As a result, the rural population needs help finding sustainable means of subsistence. Naturally, most rural residents need to be well-educated, skilled, or in good enough health to work in a paid job in the sector. Cornwall (2016) adds that education is the best way to change one's place in society. Human capital is frequently taken into account by the SLA framework in terms of the new capabilities that development activities should aim to impart (Kollmair, 2001). Livelihood strategies must incorporate the human factor, which is influenced by people's vulnerabilities in the environments to which they live, the opportunities they have access to, and the vulnerabilities they experience in institutional, social, political, and economic contexts. In particular, IISD (2013) recognizes that as people are at the core of sustainable development, they have a right to a healthy and productive life. The SLA advocates for access to a variety of livelihood resources in order to achieve sustainable livelihoods on behalf of people whose livelihoods are least likely to be so. In order to achieve sustainable livelihoods in the rural sector, information transmission is still essential.

3.5. *Social Capital*

In addition to the human asset, the SLA also considers the social asset, which refers to the social resources people use to pursue their livelihoods (Vorsah, 2015). By bringing about activities that result in coordinated actions that support livelihoods, it refers to the social links that bind people together at the household and community levels. Political capital, which refers to a person's standing in the public eye within a community (for instance, membership in an organization that supports agricultural growth), (ŽIČKIENĖ, 2020) is a term used in the context of social capital assets. The productive advantages of sociability serve as the foundation for the significance of social capital for community development and sustainable livelihoods (IISD, 2013). Social exchange is feasible because of shared standards, values, and feelings of belonging, all indicators of social capital. It is founded on the fundamental cultural standards of identification, trust, reciprocity, and accepted conduct linked to cultural components like networks of reciprocity (Kabir, 2012). One's identification with a specific organization depends on elements like culture and practices. Furthermore, it is asserted that social capital is fundamentally based on links to one's family. It operates inside an economic context and is a valuable tool since it promotes economic change. Increasing social network usage is a source of social capital, according to Salaff (2003), referenced by Kabir (2012). That is supported by Claridge (2004), who claims that social capital is the glue that keeps societies together rather than just the totality of the structures that support them. He says that a lack of information and structures that encourage involvement impact social capital in rural communities. For instance, poverty and social exclusion are common in some rural areas of Southern Europe (Bertolini, P., Montanari, M., & Peragine, V., 2008). In India 21st Century, building geographical cohesion in rural communities, sharing, and having access to knowledge are critical components of social capital. However, compared to metropolitan regions, access is much lower (Claridge,

2004). Social capital's importance in boosting material resources and the competitiveness of the rural economy, which includes the encouragement of people's self-realization, stems from the growth and improvement of social capital, which contribute to the use of hidden intangible resources. As a result, social capital also entails the elimination of participation obstacles. To this purpose, the general lack of knowledge, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, is a hindrance and a stumbling block to the socioeconomic development of vulnerable communities. That is true because the rural economy's social capital relies heavily on human capital, social networks, institutions, and cultural norms.

According to a study by Tirivangisi and Mugambiwa (2017), some rural communities in Zimbabwe are adopting various social capital to survive challenges/problems like climate change. These include group fieldwork, clubs, village savings, and the adoption of indigenous knowledge systems. That is to be understood in light of the idea that relationships matter in communities and can affect a community's wealth by lowering transaction costs. Social capital is spread far more democratically than other types of capital. This fact alone makes it a potent force behind social mobility since it encourages sharing of information and practical norms through channels between people with similar values and standards (Tirivanhu & Nyahunda, 2020). As social capital is closely linked to structures and processes for transformation, it is helpful to think of social capital as a byproduct of these (UNDP, 2017). Similar to how human capital affects the accumulation of other forms of capital, social capital also has a direct impact through improvements in the effectiveness of economic relationships and equal access to resources, such as natural resources, that are essential to achieving sustainable livelihoods.

3.6. Natural Resource Capital

The SLA emphasizes that diverse people, communities, and households all have different levels of access to resources and opportunities for making a living. Attempting to determine how natural resource capital might form the basis for sustainable development that includes sustainable livelihoods is paramount. Land, trees, animals, water, and environmental services are part of the natural resource base (Serrat, 2017). The natural resource base is crucial, as there would be no way to live without it. Their wealth determines the economic standing of nations. All across the world, disadvantaged people rely on natural resources to make a living (Serrat, 2017). Similarly, regulations and institutions that control access to and use of natural resources sometimes need to be more relaxed. Traditional leaders' attitudes and beliefs, often viewed as sanctifying forests, water, and other areas, often act as a barrier.

According to Zhang (2007), the natural environment system is crucial in describing human welfare and economic outputs. Sustainable poverty reduction requires that the poor have access to natural resources. Nonetheless, in most situations, this is not possible. Therefore, rural people's livelihoods are poor because they lack access to natural resources, which compounds their difficulties in obtaining food, building wealth, and returning from adversity (Baumann, 2002). In addition, the inability to recover from setbacks is exacerbated by resource degradation, making life in rural poverty even more precarious for the poor.

Natural resources play a significant part in the livelihood plans of the rural poor, and the SLA is at the center of this. Access and control over natural resources are required for mapping out tactics like securing water, encouraging off-farm labour, and crop rotation (DFID, 2001). Current systems and processes are attempting to govern the terms on which people have access to natural resources, which has led to a heightened focus on their management (Baumann, 2002). These developments add to the doubt from which poor people get their tactics for making a living, fostering a climate of insecurity in the area. It stands to reason that rural people should be at the core of development initiatives to recognize and promote the resources properly.

The SLA's emphasis on people means that the processes and structures mentioned above should prioritize people's needs for sustainable access to natural resources. Since they are more familiar with the context of access and ownership of the natural asset, the community is an excellent location to initiate such dialogues. Diversifying people's means of support is difficult due to constraints imposed by the scarcity of specific natural resources. Land ownership is essential, but in nations like Zimbabwe and many other underdeveloped countries, it has remained unbalanced due to anti-poor policies. The SLA is an effective risk mitigation tool because it plays to people's strengths rather than their weaknesses (Scoones, 2009), claims that communities' increased involvement in conservation efforts has led to better resource preservation and forest regeneration in some areas of Asia. This improvement is tied to locals' familiarity with the forest.

CAMPFIRE is an initiative in Zimbabwe and MINOR FOREST PRODUCES (MFPs) is in India likewise many other nations that employs the promise of financial gain as a hook for engaging locals in managing their natural resources. The success of CAMPFIRE can be measured concerning its stated goal of improving rural residents' standard of living thanks to the livelihoods strategy. The consequences of natural resource management in regions heavily reliant on their underlying natural resources are also highlighted (Harrison, 2015). *Nearly 275 million people live in rural India on the MFP economy, which the World Bank estimates is fragile, of which the tribal population makes up a sizable portion* (Down to Earth Report, 2010).

3.7. Financial Capital

The term *financial capital* describes the money that a population has available to use to meet its basic subsistence needs (ILO, 2019). Access to cash or other liquid assets is a critical factor in determining the relevance of financial capital within the SLA, which determines the diversity of livelihood options available to individuals. Stocks in circulation are a significant pool of available capital. According to the International Labour Organization (2019), savings are the best financial capital because they do not come with risks and do not typically necessitate relying on others. Payments can be made in various ways, including with currency, bank deposits, animals, or grain. Credit institutions and reliable inflows, such as pension payments and remittances, are two other sources of financial resources. Because of its versatility, financial capital can also bolster other aspects of the SLA by funding the acquisition of additional means of subsistence. For instance, households create and implement sustainable livelihood strategies based on their financial capacities. The poor and vulnerable, however, have limited access to finance capital. As a result, it is common for other genres to win out.

The SLA has developed several strategies to improve the poor's access to capital. First, it is essential to create financial service organizations specifically for the poor to boost the productivity of current savings and financial flows. According to the study, there should be ways to increase the capital that the poor have, i.e., there is a greater need to access sources of financial services by removing obstacles to access, considering that vulnerable people cannot give enough guarantee. Legal considerations, like insufficient collateral and financial knowledge, frequently very poor in rural populations, are further hindrances (ILO, 2019).

Increased access by the poor to institutional finance, physical capital to boost the productivity of land and equipment, and working capital to pay for the purchase of inputs have all been significant goals of policy interventions to combat poverty (Serrato, 2008). The ability of the poor to take financial risks, such as implementing production plans or boosting farm tactics, has hinged on their ability to acquire revenue from non-farm sources, such as enterprises. The fact that non-farm businesses in the rural sector are not viable at this stage must be emphasized. That is primarily because there is a lack of access to financial capital (Kumar, 2022).

The Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa have the lowest financial inclusion rates globally. Rural residents require access to financial services for asset development, working cash, risk mitigation, stock and equipment purchases, and infrastructure maintenance (World Bank, 2015). To address these issues, the SLA incorporates measures that support rural diversification, quality employment for rural workers, and inclusive agricultural expansion for secure food supply and sustainable lives (Richter, 2011). Despite their greatest need, the rural economy continues to be the largest untapped market for financial services. Ensuring their financial inclusion can help rural communities realize their significant economic potential (Richter, 2011). Increasing efficiency, for instance, in both on- and off-farm operations.

The SLA was a valuable framework for small-scale fisheries in southwest India since artisanal fisheries are subject to supply and demand uncertainties (Serrat, 2008). It should also be highlighted that the group's financial resources were assessed to determine their financial access strengths and weaknesses. India continues to take pride in producing some of the best fish in the world. The assessment of fisheries' financial inflows further revealed that the primary source of income was from crabs, leading to the development and expansion of the crab industry beyond what it was. *Not overfishing* is critical to good company management and ensuring sustainable production.

It is clear that financial services are crucial for fostering and maintaining livelihoods, and the main issue is that rural areas are not given preference when this resource is allocated. Access is asymmetrical, which harms rural residents' lives.

3.8. Physical Capital

Physical capital measures the physical needs necessary to sustain livelihoods (Lax, Jutta & Joachim, 2013). The physical capital that enables individuals to pursue their various means of survival includes transportation, roads, rail, dams, health, and educational institutions. Poor infrastructure development affects the majority of rural areas in emerging nations. Kumar (2022) draws attention to the need for physical investment barriers preventing the poor from using the correct input and taking advantage of market possibilities. Although the investments made by landless farm labourers in nations like Mexico are modest, irrigation and roads have been promoted as solutions to revive agriculture. Infrastructure for the underprivileged may take the form of productivity-boosting initiatives like equipment upkeep. In addition, developing both on-farm and off-farm operations requires the development of roads, rails, telephony, and electrification.

In addition to focusing on agricultural production, physical capital also considers housing, access to electricity and clean water, and agricultural equipment as indications of a household's socioeconomic standing (Lax et al., 2013; Israr & Khan, 2010). In light of this claim, the significance of physical capital can be divided into two categories: as a tool for increased production and as a catalyst for human growth. According to Israr and Khan (2010), there are cases where poverty in the context of physical capital assets is thought to result from a lack of a particular type of infrastructure, which is a fundamental variety of poverty.

People spend most of their time engaging in pointless activities like collecting water or wood for the fire when they need adequate access to amenities such as energy, health, water, and educational institutions. Roads, power,

and water supply are given much attention by Ellis (2000) because he points out that they cut distances and make it easier to access markets and attract more investment. Electricity also has a significant impact because industrialization is essential for generating employment. However, as seen by the inadequate infrastructure development that has led to the challenging conditions that rural communities face, this has yet to happen.

4. Transforming structures and processes

The SLA emphasizes the significance of pro-poor policies. The institutions, groups, laws and processes shaping livelihoods are represented by changing structures and processes. They are essential because they control access to various forms of capital assets and means of subsistence (Keeley, 2001). Accordingly, DFID (2000) defines *structures* as the hardware (organizations) they create and implement policy and legislation, offer services, make purchases, engage in trade, and carry out a variety of other actions that affect people's ability to make a living. Structures may not function properly together, which could impede access to livelihood methods and sustainable development. The SLA acknowledges that the need for more efficient structures creates a challenge for community access to and management of available resources. In order to promote empowerment and sustainable livelihoods, policies, laws, and other pieces of legislation should be consistent with the other SLA components. The socioeconomic growth of rural areas depends on structures. Governing bodies, laws, and rules are crucial components of rural development. The efficiency of governing bodies and other institutions affects who has access to different capital assets.

Policies, laws, institutions, culture, traditions, and power relations are only a few examples of the processes involved in determining one's means of subsistence (Kollmair & Juli, 2002). Changing structures and procedures directly impact the vulnerability context and access to capital assets. In addition to being dependent on having access to monetary assets and being confined by the vulnerability context, the environment of structures and procedures also significantly impacts livelihood choices and outcomes (African Development Bank, 2017). To do this, processes offer incentives by allowing or restricting access to assets, encouraging people to make their own decisions. They significantly impact interpersonal relationships and allow people to convert one type of wealth into another through markets (Serrat, 2017). Processes and institutions, which are responsible for providing resources to people, households, and communities, impact how people live.

According to Scoones (2009), institutions and policies influence the kinds of livelihood strategies available, as well as how assets can be employed or transferred across various forms. They play a significant role in decision-making and consider the needs of vulnerable groups, such as women, and how they affect women's access to resources for a living. Rural communities in many nations use legal and informal rules of access to resources and the influence of regional culture and customs. To this purpose, traditional community leaders and governmental organizations are tasked with influencing whether or not livelihood prospects materialize for the underprivileged. DFID (2000) also refers to policies as social cement that connects stakeholders' access to various forms of wealth to their ability to exercise power and, as a result, defines the entry points through which they pass on the road to adopting a favourable or unfavourable way of life. That affects how societies respond to socioeconomic pressures by acting or behaving in specific ways (Pawłowski, 2009).

As a result, policies may occasionally be utilized to determine ownership. They are crucial because by formulating sustainable resource management guidelines, they help improve the lives of the poor. That is particularly true for women unable to escape poverty because they do not own essential resources like land, capital, or credit. Therefore, inadequate structures can significantly impede growth because they encourage commerce, access, and resource protection. Additionally, when people need access to the structure of the state, they frequently need to gain knowledge of their rights and how the government operates.

However, DFID (2000) notes that one of the development issues is that changing institutions and procedures frequently fails to help the poor. Elite-controlled policies might be detrimental. However, Neiland and Bene (2004) contend that capital assets are situation-specific and that assets for the poor must be positioned within a suitable and enabling context to promote sustainable livelihoods. Processes can change how the poor lives through access to capital assets. In light of this, laws and regulations specify how the distribution of resources and the means of production should be relevant to the poor.

Different business options should be considered, especially those offering off-farm revenue. In a similar spirit, Bhat and Kashyap (2015) state that having access to capital is essential for household livelihood strategies. On-farm and non-farm activities are relevant livelihood strategies in the study region, according to a study on livelihood strategies conducted in Ethiopia. However, capital assets are needed to carry out these operations.

Additionally, inadequate infrastructure development, a lack of operating capital, technical support, insufficient skill development, and a lack of knowledge are some of the barriers to livelihood diversification identified in the study area. Capital in all forms is necessary for livelihood strategies. That considers that livelihoods cannot be attained without access; as a result, there is a connection between assets and livelihoods.

Development leaders must comprehend livelihood plans as a dynamic process where people mix activities for financial gain. However, most activities are based on agriculture, particularly in low-income countries in the south.

It is impossible to rely on the agricultural sector to be the primary source of income for rural people, as well as to combat poverty, ensure food security, and enhance the quality of life. That is because most of it is rain-fed, is primarily traditional, is marked by low productivity, fragmented land size, and a focus on subsistence, and is dominated by female smallholders who use less than 0.5 hectares. Questions of sustenance are thus in doubt because other elements, like persistent droughts, make it difficult for people to make a living (World Bank, 2015). To achieve this, it is necessary to boost access to financing, empower women, upgrade subsistence farming, and transform rural economies to support decent work.

Similarly, according to DFID (2000), persons with assets are better positioned to have a broader range of options and the flexibility to transition between several livelihood strategies to safeguard their livelihoods. In order to strengthen the variables that support any specific livelihood simply because of an existing resource base, the SLA aims to increase understanding of the factors that influence people's decisions regarding their chosen modes of subsistence. Being the foundation for successful livelihood outcomes, capital assets must be accessible to disadvantaged people and responsive to their needs. Similar to this, measures of livelihood diversification are more critical than ever in the SLA framework in the underdeveloped context, where poverty persists and sustainable economic development is undermined. Although livelihood diversification has received significant assistance for rural communities, according to FAO (2013), most of those groups' livelihood strategies depend on agricultural activities, which impact livelihood outcomes.

4.1. Livelihood Outcomes

Understanding how livelihood results are derived from livelihood strategies, including resource-based activities, non-natural-based, remittances, and pensions, is the goal of the SLA for livelihood outcomes. The results of household members' livelihood strategies, such as food security, income security, health security, well-being, wealth accumulation, and social status, are referred to as *livelihood outcomes* (FAO, 2013). They are primarily affected by the environment of vulnerability, where poor people are exposed to unforeseen shocks and pressures and have limited capacity to deal with and withstand them based on capital assets (FAO, 2013b). This framework links the tactics used with the other SLA components – vulnerability, capital assets, structures, and processes – to show how they relate to food security, poverty reduction, and sustainable livelihoods.

Studies by Yuya and Daba (2018) have demonstrated that rural India's poor livelihood earnings and outcomes result from a lack of access to capital assets. For instance, the level of social capital – which includes memberships in social and political organizations and connections with neighbour's – is the most significant source of resources for a living. Additionally, improving agricultural productivity is a critical prerequisite for raising household income and encouraging the expansion of non-farm activities among rural households (Yuya & Daba, 2018). In Ethiopia, one of the biggest obstacles to sustained agricultural output is a shortage of human resources in managerial and farming techniques (Bhat & Kashyap, 2015).

As a result, non-farm activities like buying and selling, migration, and manufacturing are the primary sources of livelihood outcomes. Clustering a vector of activities and variables for successful outcomes is necessary to identify a livelihood strategy. Because of these things, it is hard to make a living in the country. Developing a strategy for diversification necessitates efficient policies since they have the power to change the rural sector.

4.2. Concluding remarks on the SLA

Although the SLA is a good and honest manual detailing how development programs for the disadvantaged are better positioned for sustainable livelihoods, Despite how admirable it is, it nevertheless has flaws that could make it ineffectual. According to De Haan and Zoomers (2005), one of the SLA's flaws is that each person, household, and community is unique. Therefore, solutions change accordingly. The informal social dominance and power structures that exist within the communities themselves frequently have an impact on how resources and other livelihood possibilities are dispersed locally. The approach needs to address the problem of power relations.

In addition, while the SLA takes gender into account, women are not given enough time or space, and women's issues are not addressed. Because livelihood activities foster processes of inclusion and exclusion, they are not neutral. As a result, some resources become inaccessible, creating social hierarchies in which some members of a society are superior to or inferior to others (Zhang, 2020). The production, acquisition, and possession of products, services, knowledge, or status, as well as the monopoly of capital assets, are all areas where social hierarchies produce conflict. Monopolizing capital assets prevents the vulnerable and impoverished from contributing to the conversation about economic progress. However, organizations incorporating the SLA into their development intervention strategies and initiatives have seen many gains.

5. Conclusions

Based on these discussions, we concluded that the SLA is essential for guiding rural development policies and programs, which is why emphasis is placed on inclusion and addressing the various aspects that have the potential

to promote rural development and sustainable livelihoods. The SLA is applicable as a strategy that may be used to direct development endeavour's in the rural sector due to the following factors:

- **Human Centric Approach**

Results indicate that the SLA promotes inclusive policies and programs for rural development, incorporating the recipients of development into policies that affect their livelihoods. That is in recognition that the success of such programs resides in their hands, as they know best what they want, what works, and what resources are available. Morse and MacNamara (2013) demonstrate that rural development, as stated in the SLA, allows residents to participate actively in development work. Since agriculture is the primary resource base in most developing countries and the rural sector, programs and projects must be tailored to livelihood strategies based on both off-farm and on-farm activities. That makes the programs and projects less bureaucratic and more manageable improves the targeting of those who need the interventions the most and ensures that interventions are demand-driven and responsive to changing risks and opportunities. It has also been observed that where recipient communities have taken the lead, success stories have been documented, and these have an impact on rural development. Agricultural activities with a people-centered approach, project coordination is reduced.

- **Vulnerabilities**

As the basis for sustainable living, the SLA's proponents understand that the rural sector's inherent hazards must be handled. Floods, weather fluctuations, and seasonality are some of the rural sector characteristics that harm the livelihoods of rural inhabitants. As a result, the SLA believes that programs for rural development are required to devise means of overcoming these variables and that the capital assets enshrined in the SLA should be made available to the locals to strengthen their capabilities and, consequently, the livelihoods for rural development. It has been shown that in nations prone to flooding, such as Bangladesh, the government and its partners have endeavoured to adopt programs that increase the residents' ability to cope with and recover from the many stressors caused by flooding.

- **Capital Assets**

The SLA names five critical capital assets as the cornerstones or edifices of sustainable lives. They consist of social, financial, natural, human, and physical capital. Providing capital assets to rural residents may change their lives and means of subsistence. Most of the capital assets outlined in the SLA are still out of reach, contributing to the rural populations' poverty. Every asset is essential because it helps to maintain the equilibrium required for sustainable living. The SLA has changed from focusing on natural resources to a more solid viewpoint where other types of capital take center stage. The SLA acknowledges that having access to capital assets improves rural livelihoods. Poor livelihoods and a lack of diversity result from a lack of access to financial capital. Access to financial services in India has been credited with developing rural fishing. While in many underdeveloped nations, local communities access to and control over natural resources led to the creation of the Campfire initiative, which guarantees resource sustainability and the opportunity for sustainable lifestyles. The SLA urges the prudent use of natural resources, from which most rural livelihoods come, and cautions against overusing them because they must still benefit future generations (sustainable development). While Salaff (2003) contends that social inclusion lowers obstacles to participation, which the SLA promotes, social capital promotes the exchange of information and risk mitigation strategies against threats like climate change. Results demonstrate that top-down imposition of development programs continues under developmental interventions not guided by the methodology. The SLA also includes the physical capital in the form of infrastructure development that supports both on- and off-farm activities, which has proven to be crucial for sustainable livelihoods. Evidence suggests that the rural poor spend a more significant proportion of their time engaged in wasteful work that is harmful to rural development due to the lack of infrastructure development. Last but not least, the knowledge, skills, and good health displayed in the human capital sign that one should possess the knowledge and essential abilities to carry out the activities to pursue various livelihood strategies and attain livelihood objectives. Results, however, indicate that rural people lack the majority of these qualities, which accounts for the continuance of poverty.

- **Transforming structures and processes**

The SLA is a participatory method that promotes policies that help the disadvantaged by paying attention to how resource ownership and use rules and regulations affect them. The majority of rural households rely on non-farming activities supported by natural resources. The results reveal that the distribution of ownership, control, and access to natural resources still needs to be precise. For those who live in rural areas, however, the term *land* is more fraught with meaning than usual because most do not own the land they cultivate. Such rules add to the unpredictability of the situation and the inability to secure loans without collateral. That such people face as a result of being in between leases. Capital asset access is governed by a patchwork of statutes that specify how well the components function together. They let aid recipients chart their course toward progress. Institutions and processes are inherently transforming; they facilitate sustainable livelihoods by giving people agency over their own lives. However, because of elite control, it is challenging for ordinary people to permeate the institutions exponentially.

- Sustainable Livelihood Outcomes and Strategies

One aspect that the SLA promotes is the use of varied tactics. Given that agriculture is the primary source of income for most rural residents, it is appropriate to support a variety of livelihood alternatives. Various measures are required, including agricultural intensification and access to different resources to use in agricultural activities with a chance for success. Results have indicated that some of the techniques used by the poor and successful results include migration, agricultural intensification, and diversification. It is essential to highlight that rural development depends heavily on the natural resource base on which rural livelihood initiatives are primarily based. Therefore, sustainability is at the forefront, directed by wise resource use today without jeopardizing use for future generations. Most countries support the sustainable use of natural resources, but this obstacle persists. The rural sector is now more vulnerable and at risk of climate change, for example, due to the depletion of natural resources.

According to findings from implementing organizations and nations, the Sustainable Livelihood Approach continues to be essential for directing policies and programs for the disadvantaged. People who have used the framework have largely had successful results.

The analysis shows that the SLA is essential for directing development interventions through project management and policy-making. That is clear when anyone considers that earlier strategies used the top-down, non-participatory method prior to the 1980s. Generally speaking, the SLA brought about the transformation intended to establish sustainable livelihoods focused on the recipients of development, emphasizing what they have and have not. Most undertakings guided by the SLA have been successful, and it has been demonstrated. The cornerstone of sustainable livelihoods and development is a bottom-up, inclusive approach.

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