Operationalizing Household Livelihood Security:

A Holistic Approach for Addressing Poverty and Vulnerability

Timothy R. Frankenberger, Michael Drinkwater, Daniel Maxwell,
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Tel: 404-979-9127
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Abstract

CARE officially adopted Household Livelihood Security (HLS) as a programming framework in 1994. Over the past 5 years, CARE has been working to institutionalize the approach in its programming worldwide. This has neither been a smooth nor easy process. Significant progress has been made in improving concepts, strengthening their application, and understanding their implications on program design and evaluation.

This paper describes how HLS has been operationalized in CARE. Drawing on lessons learned from a number of countries, the paper shows how livelihood concepts and tools have been taken into account in strategic planning, diagnosis, design, implementation, monitoring, reformulation and evaluation.

Household Livelihood Security continues to be the cornerstone framework that CARE uses to carry out its programming efforts. It allows CARE to have a more holistic view of the world to inform our programming decisions, enabling the organization to better understand the root causes of poverty. In addition, it helps to clearly identify opportunities and leverage points for positive change. Application of the livelihood framework should not be considered a linear process, but rather a flexible, dynamic and iterative process over time.

Taking a holistic view does not always mean that one must undertake multiple interventions. Application of the HLS framework can be done using various entry points.

Over the past several years, CARE has identified several analytical lenses that have been incorporated into a HLS holistic analysis to better understand the root causes of poverty. These analytical lenses include basic needs, a human rights perspective, civil participation and action, gender and the policy environment. These various lenses are significantly influencing the future directions of CARE programming.

In the end, the HLS framework is helping CARE make strategic choices about where to concentrate its limited resources and how to leverage its comparative advantages to achieve the most positive and lasting change. It is through these efforts that CARE will contribute to the global effort to end poverty.

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Operationalizing Household Livelihood Security: A Holistic Approach for Addressing Poverty and Vulnerability

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Michael Drinkwater
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SECTION I

A. Introduction

Household Livelihood Security (HLS) has become CARE's basic framework for program analysis, design, monitoring and evaluation. HLS grows out of a food security perspective, but is based on the observation that food is only one important basic need among several, and adequate food consumption may be sacrificed for other important needs. Given that the causes of poverty are complex, HLS provides a framework to analyze and understand the web of poverty and people's mechanisms for dealing with it.

CARE officially adopted Household Livelihood Security as a programming framework in 1994. Over the past five years, CARE has been working to institutionalize a livelihood approach to its programming worldwide. This has neither been a smooth nor an easy process. CARE has put a lot of effort into mainstreaming HLS by developing tools and methods and training staff, as well as encouraging reflections and learning to improve the framework. Significant progress has been made in improving the concepts, strengthening their application, and understanding their implications on program design and evaluation.

The purpose of this paper is to describe how the Household Livelihood Security framework has been operationalized in CARE. Drawing on lessons learned from a number of countries, the paper attempts to show how livelihood concepts and tools have been taken into account in diagnosis, design, implementation, monitoring, reformulation and evaluation. Examples will be provided on how the livelihood framework operates in different contexts, such as emergency, mitigation, recovery and development settings. Emphasis will be given to how participatory approaches have been integral to this process. In addition to the use of the livelihood framework in new program designs, the paper will document experiences dealing with retrofitting existing projects/programs that originally did not use a livelihood framework. From this paper an attempt will be made to draw out the lessons learned to provide future guidance.

B. A Brief History of the Inception of Household Livelihood Security

In the past several years, much conceptual progress has been made in our understanding of the processes that lead to food insecure situations for households (Frankenberger 1992). In the 1970s food security was mostly concerned with national and global food supplies. The food crisis in Africa in the early 1970s stimulated a major concern on the part of the international donor community regarding supply shortfalls created by production failures due to drought and desert encroachment (Davies, *et al.* 1991). This primary focus on food supplies as the major cause of food insecurity was given credence at the 1974 World Food Conference.

A Focus on Household Food Security with an Emphasis on Food Access (1980s)

The limitations of the food supply focus came to light during the food crisis that again plagued Africa in the mid-1980s. It became clear that adequate food availability at the national level did not automatically translate into food security at the individual and household levels. Researchers and development practitioners realized

that food insecurity occurred in situations where food was available but not accessible because of an erosion to people's entitlement to food (Borton and Shoham 1991). Sen's (1981) theory on food entitlement had a considerable influence in this change in thinking, representing a paradigm shift in the way that famines were conceptualized. Food entitlements of households derive from their own production, income, gathering of wild foods, community support (claims), assets, migration etc. Thus a number of socio-economic variables have an influence on a household's access to food. In addition, worsening food insecurity was viewed as an evolving process where the victims were not passive to its effects. Social anthropologists observed that vulnerable populations exhibited a sequence of responses to economic stress, giving recognition to the importance of behavioral responses and coping mechanisms in food crises (Frankenberger 1992). By the late 1980s donor organizations, local governments and NGOs began to incorporate socio-economic information in their diagnoses of food insecurity.

The household food security approach that evolved in the late 1980s emphasized both the availability and stable access to food. Thus, food availability at the national and regional level and stable and sustainable access at the local level were both considered essential to household food security. Interest was centered on understanding food systems, production systems, and other factors that influence the composition of food supply and a household's access to that supply over time. What was not clear was how nutritional outcomes were factored into food security deliberations.

A Focus on Nutritional Security with an Emphasis on Food, Health and Mother and Child Care (early 1990s)

Work on the causes of malnutrition demonstrated that food is only one factor in the malnutrition equation, and that in addition to dietary intake and diversity, health and disease, and maternal and child care are also important determinants (UNICEF 1990). Household food security is a necessary but not sufficient condition for nutritional security. Researchers found that there were two main processes that have a bearing on nutritional security. The first determines access to resources for food for different households. This is the path from production or income to food. The second process involves the extent to which the food obtained is subsequently translated into satisfactory nutritional levels (World Bank 1989). A host of health, environmental, and cultural/behavioral factors determine the nutritional benefits of the food consumed; this is the path from food to nutrition (IFAD 1993).

This work on nutritional security demonstrated that growth faltering cannot necessarily be directly related to a failure in household food security. It shifted the emphasis away from simple assumptions concerned with household access to food, resource base, and food systems, by demonstrating the influence of health and disease, "caring" capacity, environmental sanitation, and the quality and composition of dietary intake on nutritional outcomes.

A Focus on Household Livelihood Security (1990s)

Research work carried out in the late 1980s and early 1990s indicated that the focus on food and nutritional security as they were currently conceived needed to be broadened. It was found that food security is but one sub-set of objectives of poor households. Food is only one of a whole range of factors which determined why the poor make decisions and spread risk, and how they finely balanced competing interests in order to subsist in the short and longer term (Maxwell and Smith 1992). People may choose to go hungry to preserve their assets and future livelihoods. It is misleading to treat food security as a fundamental need, independent of wider livelihood considerations.

Thus, the evolution of the concepts and issues related to household food and nutritional security led to the development of the concept of Household Livelihood Security. The HLS model adopted by CARE allows for a broader and more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between the political economy of

poverty, malnutrition, and dynamic and complex strategies that the poor use to negotiate survival. The model places particular emphasis on household actions, perceptions and choices; food is understood to be only one of the priorities that people pursue. People are constantly being required to balance food procurement against the satisfaction of other basic material and non-material needs (Maxwell and Frankenberger 1992).

To summarize, there were three strategic shifts in development thinking that led CARE to the adoption of a livelihood approach:

1) a shift of concern from regional and national food security to a concern with the food security and nutritional status of households and individuals;
2) a shift from a food first perspective to a livelihood perspective, which focuses not only on the production of food, but also the ability of households and individuals to procure the additional food they require for an adequate diet;
3) a shift from a materialist perspective on food production to a social perspective, which focuses on the enhancement of people's capacities to secure their own livelihoods (adapted from Maxwell 1996).

C. Definition of Livelihood Security and the Underlying Principles

Many of the definitions of livelihood security currently in use derive from the work of Chambers and Conway (1992). A livelihood "comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims, and access) and activities required for a means of living; a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation." (Chambers and Conway 1992).

Household Livelihood Security has been defined as adequate and sustainable access to income and resources to meet basic needs (including adequate access to food, potable water, health facilities, educational opportunities, housing, and time for community participation and social integration) (Frankenberger 1996). An attempt now is being made in CARE's work to shift more to rights-based approaches, which place more emphasis on access issues and the policy environment, as well as treat people more as active beings.[1] (See figure 1). Livelihoods can be made up of a range of on-farm and off-farm activities that together provide a variety of procurement strategies for food and cash. Thus, each household can have several possible sources of entitlement, which constitute its livelihood. These entitlements are based on the endowments that a household has, and its position in the legal, political, and social fabric of society (Drinkwater and McEwan 1992). The risk of livelihood failure determines the level of vulnerability of a household to income, food, health and nutritional insecurity. The greater the share of resources devoted to food and health service acquisition, the higher the vulnerability of the household to food and nutritional insecurity. Therefore, livelihoods are secure when households have secure ownership of, or access to, resources (both tangible and intangible) and income earning activities, including reserves and assets, to off-set risks, ease shocks, and meet contingencies (Chambers 1988). Households have secure livelihoods when they are able to acquire, protect, develop, utilize, exchange, and benefit from assets and resources (Ghanim 2000).

The idea of Household Livelihood Security as defined above embodies three fundamental attributes: 1) the possession of human capabilities (e.g. education, skills, health, psychological orientation); 2) access to other tangible and intangible assets (social, natural, and economic capital); and 3) the existence of economic activities (Drinkwater and Rusinow 1999). The interaction between these attributes defines what livelihood strategy a household pursues, and is thus central to CARE's Household Livelihood Security model.

[1] See for example Clare Ferguson (1999) "Global Social Policy Principles: Human Rights and Social Justice", on the active/passive difference between rights-based and needs-based approaches.

CARE fully recognizes that our partners (donors, host government counterparts, and local civil society and community-based groups) may be using or adhering to different development approaches (models or frameworks). While the language and content may differ to varying degrees, CARE believes that the HLS framework is compatible with other development approaches because of the principles that underscore HLS (Beckwith 2000). These include:

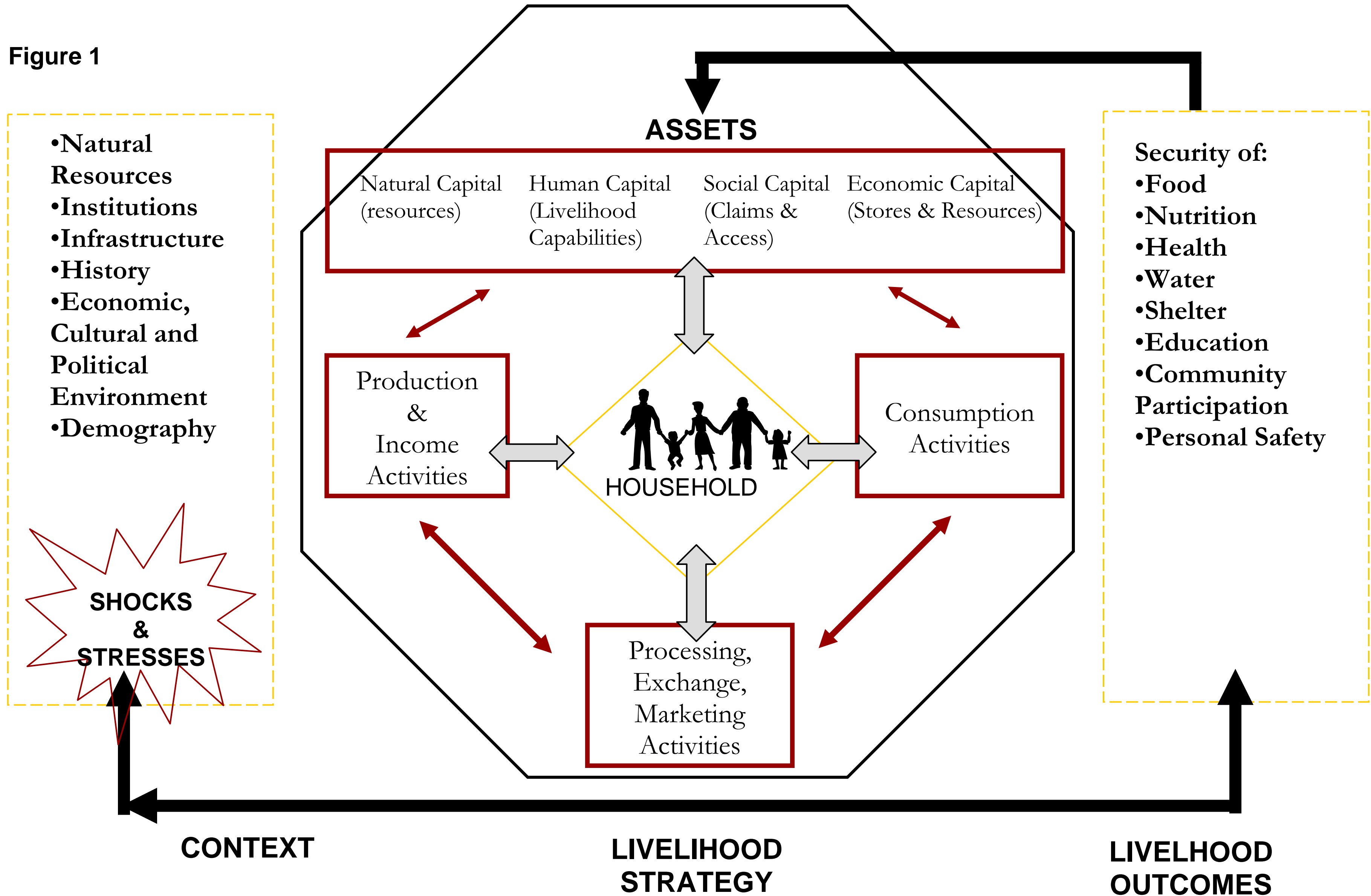
- conducting a holistic analysis to inform decisions;
- engaging active participation of target populations throughout the project cycle;
- targeting impact change at the household level;
- focused programming interventions to build complementarity, synergy and leveraging;
- establishing coherent information systems;
- undertaking on-going reflective practice; and
- facilitating flexibility in terms of project entry points and aligning interventions with root causes over time.

In its simplest form, livelihood security is the ability of a household to meet its basic needs (or realize its basic rights). These needs include adequate food, health, shelter, minimal levels of income, basic education and community participation. If any of these basic needs is not met, CARE considers that household to be living in absolute poverty (Frankenberger 1996). However, simply satisfying one's basic needs is not adequate to ensure that people can rise above and stay above absolute poverty (Beckwith 2000).

For CARE, sustaining livelihood security depends on a number of enabling conditions that must be in place. These include human rights recognition, civil participation/action, risk management, an enabling policy environment, gender equity and environmental stewardship. By contributing to the establishment of this enabling environment, CARE hopes to assist people in meeting their basic needs on a sustained basis. CARE believes that these elements are the underpinnings of our vision, " … a world of hope, tolerance and social justice, where poverty has been overcome and people live in dignity and security."

CARE'S LIVELHOOD SECURITY MODEL

Figure 1



After Swift, 1989; Drinkwater, 1994; Carney, 1998; Frankenberger and Drinkwater, 1999

D. Putting Theory Into Practice - Dissemination and Decentralization

CARE has faced a number of challenges in trying to institutionalize a livelihood approach. This transition has resulted in enormous debate and feedback from the field as country offices tried to operationalize the concept.

The Household Livelihood Security concept was first introduced in 1994 by the Food Security Unit in CARE headquarters. Using design opportunities presented by the development of new USAID Title II funded programs and other donor resources, an attempt was made to use a holistic diagnostic approach to design livelihood security programs. Since then, multi-sectoral teams have conducted rapid or participatory livelihood security assessments in countries, as many and diverse as Ethiopia, Honduras, Guatemala, Haiti, Mozambique, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Angola, Afghanistan, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, Togo, Benin, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Madagascar, Nicaragua, Bolivia, and El Salvador.

After the first wave of assessments was carried out in 1995-6, many country offices became interested in the approach, although the assessment methodology at that stage was viewed as being too expensive and extractive. Tensions were also created with some country offices who felt that the framework was being imposed on them from Headquarters. Confusion existed on the objectives of these assessments, and whether the HLS approach was simply an assessment methodology or a whole project process framework.

Numerous reflective discussions and workshops were held in each of the regions that focused on the lessons learned from the application of HLS diagnostic tools. This enabled each region and country office to adopt its own context relevant approach for implementing a livelihood security framework. Many countries opted for smaller assessments that were more participatory and less quantitative. The challenge has been to allow for this flexibility and creativity and at the same time ensure that country offices are adhering to bottom line principles (these are discussed later).

Similarly, at Headquarters many of the sector specialists felt that the livelihood framework was also being imposed on them by the senior management. This created some resistance to its adoption. Much of this resistance could have been avoided through a more inclusive process in the beginning.

In some countries, the donors were not very receptive to holistic design processes, particularly if they had a sector bias in funding. For example CARE India and CARE Bolivia had some difficulty at first convincing their major donor that holistic assessments and multi-sectoral designs were appropriate. Changes in staff and programming direction within the donor organization allowed for the more holistic programming to be brought in later. In Nepal, holistic programming was achieved by having different donors fund different sectoral activities targeted to the same remote areas. There is still some concern among some donors as to the compatibility of sector-wide approaches and livelihood approaches.

Sector biases of Government Ministries with whom CARE is aligned also can present difficulties in cross-sectoral programming. For example, in India CARE works with the Ministry that overseas the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) safety net program. This Ministry does not deal with agricultural development. If CARE wants to expand its activities into improving agricultural productivity of the poor, it has to align with a different part of the Indian Government. Such agreements are not always easy to establish.

In the beginning, many of the interventions that were implemented were along traditional lines. More recently, CARE country offices have tried to take into consideration other cross-cutting social and political issues that may be hindering the poor from achieving livelihood security. Policy advocacy and rights based approaches are now starting to be integrated into programming activities. Such programming changes

demonstrate CARE's recognition that poverty is not only a matter of inadequate access to income, food and services, but fundamentally a social and political issue too.

One key question that continues to be asked by some CARE staff in the organization is: What are we really gaining through the application of a livelihood security approach? The responses that have come back from the field with regard to the value-added of this approach include that HLS:

- improves CARE's ability to truly target the poor and vulnerable households in programs, yet builds on households' existing abilities and activities rather than resource needs;
- is dynamic and ensures that needs and opportunities addressed in project activities are those which will centrally address prioritised household livelihood security concerns;
- provides a useful link between CARE's emergency relief and development programs - all households encounter shocks and stresses;
- is equally applicable in urban and rural settings;
- assists country offices to achieve complementary relationships between projects with the same geographical coverage (including projects and programs of other partners and governments);
- generates coherency in Country Office information systems;
- provides a clear conceptual focus for building partnerships to address poverty alleviation (including community institutions);
- results in poor households and communities being able to show definable improvements in their livelihoods (Drinkwater and Rusinow 1999).

SECTION II. Operationalizing the Household Livelihood Security Framework

At all levels of programmatic decision making, the HLS framework is CARE's point of departure (see figure 2). The various lenses embedded within the livelihood framework assist us in our analysis of a given situation or geographical area, whether we are working at the strategic, regional, program, project or sector level.

A. Creating Livelihood Security Profiles

Livelihood Profiles are derived for a country or region through analytical lenses that are clustered under the following categories: contexts, conditions and trends; livelihood resources (economic, natural, human and social capital); institutional processes and organizational structures (government, civil society and private sector); livelihood strategies (productive and exchange activities); and livelihood outcomes (e.g. nutritional security, food security, health security, habitat security, education security, income security, social network security, safety, and environmental security).

Context, Conditions and Trends

A holistic analysis of livelihood security begins with understanding the context for any given population. To understand the macro-level factors that influence the range of possibilities for livelihood systems, we must consider the social, economic, political, environmental, demographic, historical, and infrastructural information. It is this information that sets the parameters within which livelihood strategies operate. This information is primarily derived from secondary data to reduce costs.

Livelihood Resources

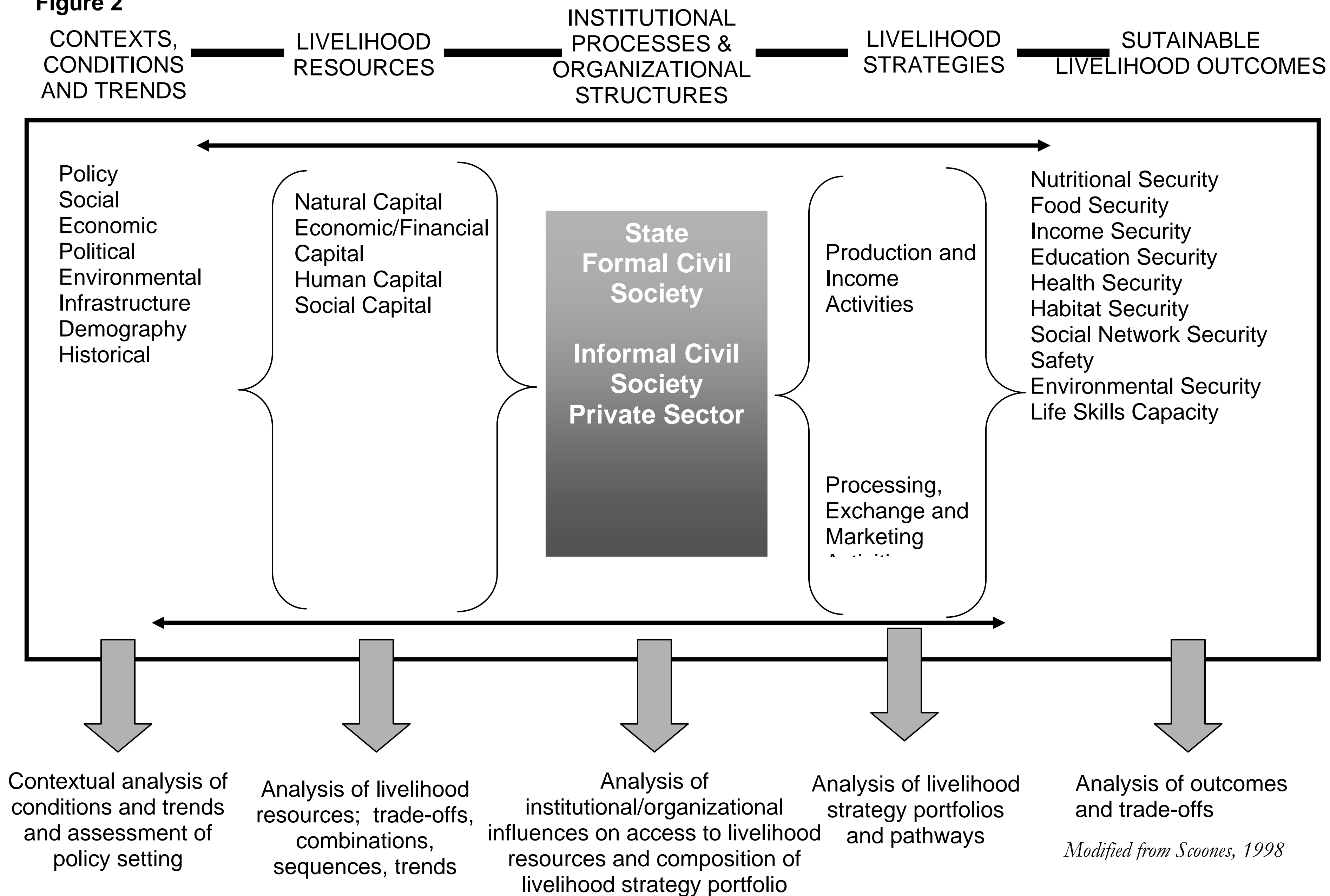
Households have access to both tangible and intangible assets that allow them to meet their needs. **Natural Capital** consists of natural resource stocks from which resource flows useful for livelihoods are derived (e.g. land, water, wildlife, biodiversity, and environmental resources). **Social Capital** is the quantity and quality of social resources (e.g. networks, membership in groups, social relations, and access to wider institutions in society) upon which people draw in pursuit of livelihoods and as safety net mechanisms to meet shortfalls in consumption needs. The quality of the networks is determined by the level of trust and shared norms that exists between network members. People use these networks to reduce risks, access services, protect themselves from deprivation, and to acquire information to lower transaction costs**. Human Capital** consists of the skills, knowledge, ability to labor and good health, which are important to the pursuit of livelihood strategies. **Economic Capital** is the productive resources and stores (e.g. savings, credit, remittances, pensions, etc.), basic infrastructure (e.g. transport, shelter, energy, communications, and water systems), production equipment, and other means that enable people to pursue their livelihoods.

In the analysis of these resources, it is important to take into account the combinations necessary for sustainable livelihoods, the trade-offs that exist between resources, the sequences that may exist between them (i.e. which resources are prerequisite to others), and the long-term trends in their use (adapted from Scoones 1998).

Institutional Process and Organizational Structures

A number of institutions operate in the community milieu that influence livelihood outcomes. The State not only provides services, but also provides safety nets, changes policies, and can limit freedoms that can have positive or adverse effects on livelihood systems. Similarly, Formal Civil Society Organizations (NGOs, CBOs, parastatals, cooperatives, churches) can provide enabling conditions or constrain opportunities for households. Informal civil society (e.g. informal community networks) consist of the web of networks within which individuals and households belong. These networks can have positive or negative influences on the livelihood strategies that people pursue. The Private Sector can also create or limit Households' opportunities. It is important in any analysis to take these various institutions into account in the formulation of any sustainable interventions.

HOUSEHOLD LIVELIHOOD SECURITY: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS



Livelihood Security Strategies

Households combine their livelihood resources within the limits of their context and utilize their institutional connections to pursue a number of different livelihood strategies. Strategies can include various types of production and income-generating activities (e.g. agricultural production, off-farm employment, formal sector employment, etc.) or some combination of the two. An HLS analysis should determine the livelihood strategy portfolios that different households pursue and the historical pathways they have taken.

Livelihood Security Outcomes

To determine whether households are successful in pursuing their livelihood strategies, it is important to look at a number of outcome measures that capture need or well-being satisfaction. Nutritional status is often considered one of the best outcome indicators for overall livelihood security since it captures multiple dimensions such as access to food, healthcare and education. Other livelihood outcomes that should be measured include sustained access to food, education, health, habitat, social network participation, physical safety, environmental protection, as well as life skills capacities. Analysis of these outcomes should not only determine what needs are currently not being met, but also what trade-offs are there between needs. In addition, the analysis should help determine the synergistic relationships between these outcome measures.

In addition to these standardized measures, attempts are made to derive from the community the criteria they use for determining livelihood improvement. These measures are often location specific. Every effort is made to establish community-based monitoring systems to enable the community to track improvements themselves.

Currently, CARE is trying to establish these livelihood profiles during the Long Range Strategic Planning Process for each region in which we operate (e.g. Bolivia) or in analytical work conducted as part of a program design exercise. This ensures a more holistic perspective is taken in any project design for that region, even if a short-time horizon is provided to develop a particular proposal for a donor. This will allow CARE to take a more holistic perspective in any project design for that region even if we are given a very short time horizon to develop a proposal for a donor. These profiles would be periodically updated as new information comes in from projects. The framework provides a way to organize the information.

B. Working with Partners

A further area of increased exploration within the context of CARE's work in recent years is the generation of a growing range and intensity of operational relationships with other organizations. Gone are the days when CARE saw itself primarily as an organization responsible for the direct delivery of goods and services to those affected by emergencies, and to the poor and vulnerable in general. There are multiple reasons for this, but some of the pre-eminent are:

- CARE increasingly sees its role in programming as one of experimenting with innovative approaches, developing new models from these, and then seeking their wider replication.
- Replication, scale-up and spread of programs, in order to achieve a more widespread impact, all require the influencing and cooperation of a wide range of other agencies.
- The achievement of real and lasting benefits to livelihoods is not something that can be easily achieved by one agency operating alone. It requires the building of new and innovative partnerships, which include governmental, civil society, private sector and donor agencies.

These factors in particular have caused CARE to see increasingly its international responsibility in terms of seeking to influence, and in return learn from and collaborate with, a growing number of agencies of different types and hues. This role is being played out at all levels at which CARE operates: internationally, regionally, nationally and more locally within country contexts. New program approaches with an increased emphasis on partnership and multi-agency collaboration are being generated, with CARE's role often being to facilitate the creation of linkages between community-based and other CSO actors, government and private sector agencies who commonly have not worked together previously.

From CARE's perspective, partnerships are defined as "mutually beneficial alliances of diverse types between organizations where roles, responsibilities and accountabilities are clearly defined. Partnerships facilitate continuous two-way learning and are based on trust, shared vision and commitment to common objects. Partnership is a means to achieve improved quality of life for more beneficiaries through sustainable service delivery, better responsiveness to local development needs, and increased scale and scope of programs."

In terms of vision, "CARE will strive to be a reliable and trusted partner with an enhanced reputation and ability to improve the livelihood security of poor households through a diverse dynamic network of partners. In every intervention, CARE will explore linkages that reach greater numbers of people, alleviate poverty and save more lives" (Beckwith 2000).

The major objectives for CARE's partnering include:

- ensure sustainable service delivery capacity;
- expand the scope and scale of programming;
- increase impact.

The major partnership principles advocated by CARE include:

- weave a fabric of sustainability;
- acknowledge interdependence;
- build trust;
- find shared vision, goals, values and interests;
- honor the range of resources;
- generate a culture of mutual support;
- find opportunities for creative synergy;
- address relationship difficulties as they occur;
- see partnering as a continuous learning process.

One example of such partnership relationships is the Strengthening Capacities for Transforming Relationships and Exercising Rights (SCAPE) project in South Africa. South Africa is a country of multiple institutions, but often with limited capacity and limited scope to their activities. This applies to many parts of the complex and cumbersome three-tiered government structure, as well as to civil society. All are struggling to adapt to the changes wrought by the coming of a democratic government and society in 1994, which has resulted in a process whereby the country's non-white population has gained rights it lacked previously, but where old attitudes and practices hinder the evolution of more empowering development approaches. This creates a situation which does not enable people to gain the confidence and understanding of how to exercise their new rights so as to benefit their livelihoods. This applies equally to local communities, civil society organizations working with them, and to local government, all of which retain an expectation that resources and solutions will be provided centrally.

Accordingly, over the space of two years, the CARE South Africa office has been developing and piloting a program in which it works with multiple partners in the furtherance of transforming both the horizontal and vertical relationships that affect the nature and effectiveness of local development policies.

More commonly in CARE now, many country offices are working in partnership with Municipal Governments. For example, in Latin America, both CARE Bolivia and CARE Honduras have been working with Municipal Governments in their project areas, focusing on strengthening planning and service delivery. One of the key findings from a recent evaluation of the program in Bolivia was that Municipal partners are very effective institutions to promote HLS programming. This is because these institutions are holistic in their service delivery. Similarly, in Southern Africa, urban livelihood programs have established successful partnerships with municipal authorities in Zambia, Madagascar, Mozambique and Angola.

C. Strengthening Civil Society

Much of our partnership efforts involve working with civil society groups. This is illustrated by our work with local NGOs in Somalia and South Africa, and community-based organizations in Mali and Zambia. In its most tangible form, civil society is defined by CARE as the range of institutions and organizations that represent individual citizens and/or that provide people the means through which to collectively connect themselves to government or the private sector. Civic action is the dynamic and collaborative relationship among citizens, government and the private sector that contributes to the well-being of individual citizens. For CARE, a strong civil society means ensuring a dynamic and beneficial relationship between the institutions and organizations that represent government, the private sector and civic groups. CARE's civil society strengthening efforts include: 1) building organizational capacity and strengthening institutions; 2) supporting mechanisms for dialogue and advocacy between the three sectors of society; 3) increasing the effectiveness and synergy between these institutions for the benefit of individual citizens; and 4) promoting the inclusion of the poor, disenfranchised and marginalized citizens in benefits derived from civic action (Beckwith 2000).

Strengthening civic action to promote Household Livelihood Security involves strengthening government, the private sector and civic groups in order to help the poor reduce risk, improve access to services and lower transaction costs. Institutional analyses carried out in program design should help determine the weak institutions that need to be strengthened. To be effective, each sector must be able to manage risk as well as the complementary functions it is suppose to serve during non-crisis years. Risk management is one aspect that has not been taken into account in most CARE institutional assessments.

D. Long Range Strategic Planning

Long Range Strategic Planning (LRSP) exercises have been carried out for every country in which CARE works. These plans are normally developed for a 5-year period, unless the country is under emergency conditions, which entails shorter planning horizons (often 2 years). The HLS framework has been used in this planning process for organizing data on vulnerable groups in different geographical areas, causal explanations regarding shocks, trends and processes, macro-micro linkages that are key to understanding the programming areas, and institutions that we will create alliances within program implementations. The trend over the last couple of years has been to move from descriptive and impressionistic summaries to analytical processes and syntheses of priorities. The LRSP helps the country office align its programming where the need is great, the potential for partnering with local institutions is high and where CARE has a comparative advantage. Secondary data is primarily used in this planning process.

Within the Latin America Region, CARE Guatemala used the HLS framework in crafting its 1998-2002 Long Range Strategic Plan. Similarly, Haiti, Honduras and El Salvador modified their information gathering and analysis using a HLS framework. As part of these planning processes, it was perceived by each of the country offices that certain structural adjustments were required to implement HLS programming. Structural changes included the creation of regional decentralized structures that would allow for multi-sectoral programming within a given geographical area.

After reviewing the lessons learned from these structural changes, country offices in Latin America are realizing that structural changes do not necessarily lead to better HLS programming. HLS programming does not always favor one type of structure over another. Centralized sector-based structures and regional structures can both promote coherent HLS programming. What is important is to use the HLS framework to target CARE's interventions more effectively in order to achieve leverage, synergy and cost efficiencies. A variety of team management styles can be put together to achieve these objectives. One of the key bottlenecks facing most country offices in implementing HLS programming is having sufficient technical expertise to both service specific geographical area demands as well as establish a significant level of consistency across geographical areas regarding programming approaches and methodologies (Beckwith 1999).

Another area of concern expressed by country offices is that they are tending to grow in geographical scope and complexity vis-à-vis multi-sectoral programming wherever they operate. Application of the HLS framework should help them clarify their rationale for working in specific geographical areas and, hence, to consolidate their portfolio and promote more focused targeting of interventions (Beckwith 1999). When programmatic decisions are not focused through the use of the framework, a less strategic growth of programs can put considerable strain on staff and management.

E. Diagnosis Leading to Design

The need for holistic analysis as a basis for a livelihood approach often engenders nervousness in program staff who fear that it implies a lengthy, in-depth and complex process (Drinkwater and Rusinow 1999). Alternatively, the livelihood analysis might take on a life of its own; indeed it may become and end in itself. Both of these dangers can and should be avoided, as it is critical to minimize gaps between the analysis and design stage, as well as avoid unnecessary data collection and maintain an interactive relationship with stakeholders (Drinkwater and Rusinow 1999).

A wide range of tools can be used, such as a quick situational analysis to an in-depth or geographical wide analysis of livelihoods, to determine the causes of vulnerability, and the extent of poverty. The key is to ensure that emphasis is placed on gaining a multi-dimensional view of livelihoods which allows for the identification of the most vulnerable households, and the placing of people's priorities and aspirations for

improving their livelihoods firmly at the center of the analytical and planning process (Drinkwater and Rusinow 1999).

Over the past five years, Rapid and Participatory Livelihood Security Assessments (RLSA or PLAs) have become a major tool for the collection and analysis of this type of information, and therefore, a major means of operationalizing an HLS approach. The main purposes of these participatory assessments are to understand the nature of livelihood strategies of different categories of households (social differentiation), their levels of livelihood security, and the principle constraints and opportunities to address through programming. This information is also disaggregated by gender and generation. Therefore, a good holistic analysis will develop an understanding of livelihoods that is contextual, differentiated and disaggregated. Methods used often focus on visualizing information, with community members involved in documenting information as much as possible. Outputs from such assessments at a minimum include the identification of risk factors facing households, key location specific criteria for differentiating wealth categories of households, and identification of key leverage points and opportunities to pursue in future programming.

In terms of the distinction between methodologies, rapid assessments, with a maximum of two days spent per site or area, usually achieve a broader scan over a wider area where little secondary data exists and where a major shock or rapid change has occurred. Participatory assessments offer a more in-depth analysis of fewer communities and are usually undertaken where some of the prior decisions about the likely geographical location of any ensuing program activities have already been made.

Objectives and Information Requirements: The most common objective of Livelihood Security Assessments (LSAs) is to acquire information for the design of programs. However, most LSAs have multiple objectives. The objective may be global learning to gain institutional credibility in an area where there is little or no previous experience, or to get information for strategic planning to improve the allocation of scarce program resources over multiple, competing demands. Building the analytical capacity of staff and partner organizations is often an objective, though rarely a primary objective. Building partnership relationships is also a common secondary objective (Figure 3). An important consideration in setting objectives is whether programs based on information gathered will be scaled up within the planning time horizon. How much primary information must be collected depends on the availability and quality of existing information. In general, the principle is to collect only as much primary information as is required which cannot be gathered from secondary sources (Figure 3).

The analytical framework generally defines the types of information required and includes qualitative descriptive information, quantitative descriptive information, and analytical (or causal) information (see Figure 4). The use of this framework has recently been applied in rural assessments in Malawi and Zimbabwe, and urban assessments in Mozambique and Peru.

- Qualitative Descriptive Information: at the household level, the information primarily required includes the assets held by the household, how these are utilized to earn adequate income, how resources are allocated, and the levels of critical outcomes achieved in terms of food security, nutrition and health status, and access to other basic needs such as water, shelter, education, etc. Assets, of course, include not only productive assets such as land and livestock, or financial assets such as savings or cash, but also the more intangible assets of labor, skills, capacity, and the social relations that underpin livelihood activities. Important among these is the ability of some households to cope with risk and crisis better than others, what these abilities are, and how coping strategies work. At the intra-household level, it is important to consider gender and generationally differentiated roles and responsibilities, power relations, and differential access to resources and opportunities. Livelihood systems must also be understood at the community level, as well as the household level. Household level outcomes have to be put in a

community or broader social and political context, so general information on the social, political, and institutional environment is also a major requirement.

- Quantitative Descriptive Information: for geographic targeting, and for identifying vulnerable groups, quantitative indicators of household basic needs outcomes are required. These will include nutritional status information as well as health status, access to services, literacy levels, access to potable water, etc. Much of this information is obtained from secondary sources.

- Analytical (Causal) Information: for effective program design, not only is it important to understand the current status of target groups, it is also critical to understand the sources of vulnerability, and the causal factors that lead to vulnerability.

Figure 3

DIAGNOSIS DECISION TREE

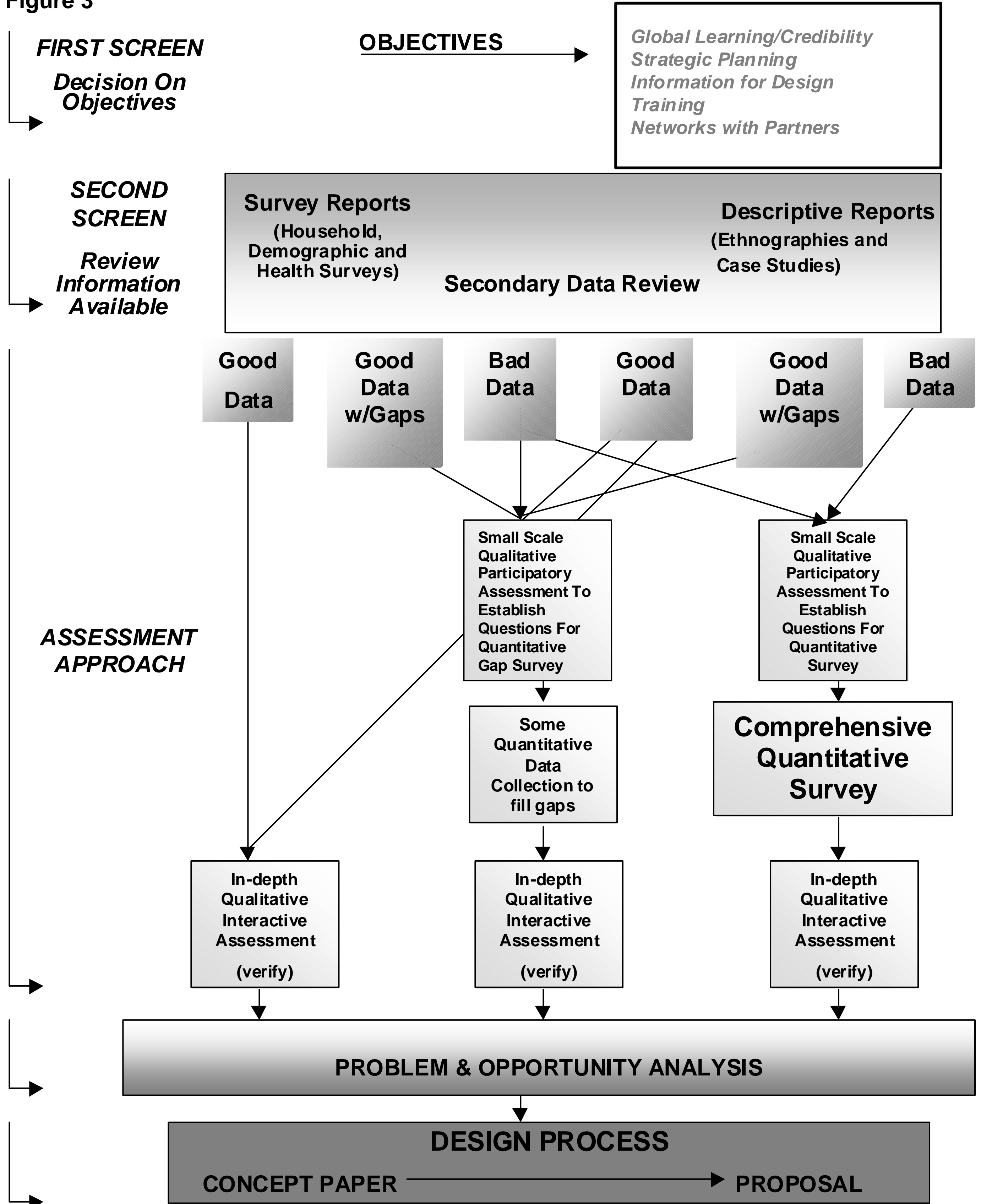


Figure 4

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">Household Livelihood Security Analytical Framework for Program Design, Implementation, and Evaluation</td></tr>
<tr><th>Descriptive Information</th><th>Analytical Information</th><th>Design & Implementation</th><th>Impact Measurement</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual Information
▪ Physical and environmental information
▪ Key features and trends
- Social
- Economic
- Ecological
▪ Institutional information
Community Level
▪ Social differentiation
▪ Socio-political info
▪ Institutional info
▪ Spatial info
▪ Sources of livelihood
Household Level
▪ Household characteristics
▪ Norms
▪ Current status of livelihood security outcomes
▪ Assets
▪ Resources
▪ Economic Activities
<u>Intra-household</u>
▪ Gender
▪ Generational</td>
<td>Understanding Vulnerability
Risk Factors
(seasonal/long-term)
- Ecological
- Economic
- Social
- Political
▪ Coping/Adaptive Strategies
▪ Trends in livelihood strategies
▪ Internal household dynamics
▪ Key external relations that affect HLS outcomes
- Role of social networks
- Role of institutions
- Intra/inter community dynamics
Analyzing Vulnerability
▪ Individual vulnerability
▪ Household vulnerability
▪ Community vulnerability
Opportunity Analysis
▪ Positive responses of households
▪ CBO/NGOs with effective programs
▪ Government initiatives
▪ Policy environment
▪ Collaborative organizations</td>
<td>Design
▪ Identification of key problems and opportunities
▪ Priorities established (leverage points)
▪ Identification of strategies and linkages
▪ Validation with community
▪ Finalize design
Implementation
▪ Finalize program design with community
▪ Conduct baseline
▪ Establish monitoring system to capture empowerment changes, livelihood, and contextual changes
▪ Program adjustments made on the basis of monitoring information</td>
<td>Program Outcomes
▪ Formal impact - M&E system
▪ Impact measured by goal indicators based on norms against baseline
▪ Annual trends monitoring and use for management purposes
Unanticipated Outcomes
▪ Positive and negative generated program, measured by community monitoring system</td>
</tr>
</table>

To understand vulnerability, it is important to take into account the shocks or risks to which households are exposed, their ability to cope with these shocks and their resilience to future shocks. To determine this vulnerability, risk factors can be grouped into those that are:

- environmentally based (e.g. floods, droughts);
- economically based (e.g. macro-economic decline);
- socially based (e.g. breakdown of community management structures);
- politically based (e.g. government policies that adversely affect prices, tenure, service provision); and
- conflict derived (e.g. ethnic rivalries, religious insurgency) (see figure 5).

Once the risks have been taken into account, it is important to understand how households cope or adapt to these shocks. On the basis of this analysis, it is possible to determine trends and livelihood strategies and changes that occur in internal household dynamics. In addition, it is important to determine the role of social networks and institutions in adapting/coping with these changes and analyze the intra- and inter-community dynamics.

On this basis, we can determine vulnerability at the community, household and individual level. This analysis delineates the target populations that need to be focused on in future interventions.

- Opportunity Analysis: in addition to analyzing the problems, it is also important to take into account the opportunities that are available to communities, households, and individuals within the program setting. For example, many households have devised positive responses to constraints they face that could form the basis for intervention designs. This positive defiance approach derives from the health sector, but is equally applicable in other sectors as well. Visioning exercises and Appreciative Inquiry approaches have also been used with communities to build on community strengths (Zambia, Zimbabwe, South Africa).

  Opportunities may also be derived from efforts being promoted by community-based organizations and local NGOs. Such groups may be operating effective programs that address the constraints that future projects can build upon. In support of these opportunities, enabling conditions at the policy level may exist through changes promoted by the government. Finally, a coalition of organizations can collaborate in a complementary way to solve multiple problems simultaneously.

- Design: taking this holistic diagnosis into account and the problems and opportunities identified, an analysis takes place that establishes the key leverage points that will bring about the greatest impact. Once these leverage points have been identified, they are submitted to a series of screens to determine the feasibility of designing a project around them. These screens can include community validation, a review of CARE's comparative advantage, donor priorities, and government priorities. The leverage points that pass through the screens will be the intervention themes around which the finalization of the design is derived. This design process goes into much more depth of analysis around the specific themes chosen.

- Implementation: the project design and any subsequent adjustments have to be further refined with the community before beginning implementation. Participatory design processes are usually carried out at this stage. Once finalized, a baseline is conducted on the outcome indicators that will be measured for project impact. Monitoring systems will also be established to capture project outputs, livelihood and contextual changes, and community perceptions of project success. In some countries, CARE country offices have established longitudinal cohort studies to monitor livelihood changes brought about by the project (Zambia, Mali). Program adjustments should be made on the basis of this monitoring information.

- Capturing Program Outcomes Through Monitoring and Evaluation Systems: formal impact M&E systems are designed as part of the project to measure changes that have occurred over the life of the project since the baseline. The M&E system will measure impact by objectively verifiable indicators based on norms against the baseline. A menu of indicator options has been derived to be used for different sector interventions (CARE 1999). To capture the synergistic affects of any intervention, this list of options can be used for selecting possible indicators. The problem analysis should indicate what the true cross-sector links are likely to be to determine the minimum number of indicators to measure.

  Impact indicators can be derived from normative standards or relative standards based on community criteria. These may not be mutually exclusive. Normative indicators allow us to compare one village or region to another with regards to a set of measures of poverty or well-being. This type of information is important for targeting, resource allocation, and exist strategies. Relative measures or community-derived criteria can be context or location specific. These types of indicators are critical for measuring impact from the perspective of individual communities, but they may not be suitable for cross-project or cross-regional comparisons. Both types of indicators are critical for impact evaluation and should be used in an M&E system.

- Understanding Impact on Social Change: it is impossible to determine beforehand all of the positive and negative outcomes that may be generated by a project and the impact that it has on people's lives. To ensure that the nature of this impact and the lessons to be learned from this are captured from project implementation, steps should be taken in the M&E design to monitor outside the framework of the logframe. Some of this information will be identified through community monitoring systems, particularly for instance the differential benefits accruing to or effects on men, women, children, youth and the elderly and should be used for making appropriate program adjustments.

Figure 5

Sources of Risk to Household Livelihood Security					
Sources of Livelihood	**Types of Risk**				
		Social			
	Environmental	*State*	*Community*	**Economic**	**Conflict**
Human Capital Labor power, education, health	Disease epidemics (malaria, cholera, dysentery) due to poor sanitary conditions, AIDS	Declining public health expenditures, user charges, declining education expenditures	Breakdown in community support of social services	Privatization of social services, reduction in labor opportunities	Conflict destroys social infrastructure, mobility restrictions
Financial and Natural Capital Productive resources (land, machinery, tools, animals, housing, trees, wells, etc.), liquid capital resources (jewellery, granaries, small animals, savings)	Drought, flooding, land degradation, pests, animal disease	Land confiscation, no secure tenure rights, taxes, employment policies	Appropriation and loss of common property resources, increased theft	Price shocks, rapid inflation, food shortages	Conflict leads to loss of land, assets, and theft
Social Capital Claims, kinship networks, safety-nets, common property	Recurring environmental shocks breakdown ability to reciprocate. Morbidity and mortality affect social capital	Reduction in safety net support (school feeding, supplementary feeding, FFW, etc.)	Breakdown of labor reciprocity, Breakdown of sharing mechanisms, stricter loan requirements, lack of social cohesion	Shift to institutional forms of trust, stricter loan collateral requirements, migration for employment	Communities displaced by war, theft leads to breakdown in trust
Sources of Income Productive activities, process and exchange activities, other sources of employment, seasonal migration	Seasonal climatic fluctuations affecting employment opportunities, drought, flooding, pests, animal disease, morbidity and mortality of income earners	Employment policies, declining subsidies or inputs, poor investment in infrastructure, taxes		Unemployment, falling real wages, price shocks	Marketing channels disrupted by war

In addition to capturing unintended effects after the fact through participatory monitoring and evaluation, CARE has begun to put much more emphasis on predicting -- and mitigating -- unintended effects through better program design. Growing out of the concern, particularly in emergencies, to "do no harm," CARE has developed over the past year a set of tools intended to enable a benefits/harms analysis prior to beginning an intervention.[2] Similarly, the organization is also improving its gender analysis methodologies.

The HLS approach permits CARE to plan for and build on positive cross-sectoral impacts. The benefits/harms tools are intended to predict, minimize and mitigate cross-sectoral negative impacts. Under an emergency circumstance, for example, a food project may create dependency and undermine self-reliance, or it may make people targets for raiding. The benefits/harms analysis permits consideration of the overall impact of interventions -- both within the sector of focus and beyond.

The framework organizes cross-sectoral impacts into five categories, and analyzes the different reasons for cross-sectoral impacts. The five categories include:

- Social/Cultural: the clientele of a program, where they are from, what they think of themselves, and how they relate to each other.
- Political: how people participate politically and what their relationship is to the controlling authorities.
- Personal Security and Freedom: how interventions either weaken or strengthen the possibility of violence or physical oppression by one individual or group against another.
- Institutional Capacity: how an intervention supports the goal of helping the local community help themselves.
- Basic Needs (HLS impacts): the negative impacts that an intervention in one of the key household livelihood security areas have in another area or sector. Does the intervention permit people to live with dignity even with respect to the areas in which positive impacts are expected?

The Benefits-Harms Handbook developed in East Africa offers three different types of tools:

- *Profile Tools* aim to help users refine their understanding of the contexts in which CARE works or plans to work.
- *Impact Tools* aim to help users consider the cross-sectoral benefits and harms of projects.
- *Decision Tools* aim to help users evaluate the information from the profile and impact tools and choose a course of action.

Lessons Learned from Livelihood Security Assessments (LSAs): over the past five years, about 30 major LSAs have been carried out by CARE worldwide, as well as a number of more limited exercises (where, for example, a secondary review and limited field information collection sufficed to fulfil the objectives of the exercise). A few of the salient lessons learned include:

- Because the HLS approach was originally operationalized through building LSAs into the beginning of program design, many country offices and staff got the message that if the program was not preceded by an assessment, it was impossible to take an "HLS" approach. Therefore relatively less experience has been gained organization-wide over the past five years with "retrofitting" an HLS approach. A Rapid or Participatory Livelihood Security Assessment diagnosis is a very useful tool for program design or the other potential objectives mentioned above, but it is not a necessary pre-requisite to utilizing the HLS framework.

[2] P. O'Brien. 1999. "Benefit-Harms Handbook." Nairobi: CARE-East Africa.

- It is critical to first assess existing information -- much investment has gone into re-collecting information that already existed in one form or another. Investment of quality staff time in conducting a secondary review pays off heavily in terms of saving staff time and financial resources during fieldwork, and helps to make fieldwork much more focused.

- Working with communities in a participatory manner is critical -- the information generated by an assessment is only as good as the process of generating it. Poor community participation can almost guarantee poor program design.

- While developed primarily under rural conditions, LSA methodology is equally applicable in urban areas, but there are some significant differences in approach.[3]

- LSAs are a tool, not an end in themselves.

F. The Project Design Framework

Perhaps the largest challenge CARE has faced institutionally in operationalizing a livelihood security approach is developing a framework that is at once inclusive enough to facilitate natural variation in its application, depending on both context and the programming instincts of those involved, and at the same time provides definite guidance on what are perceived as bottom line principles.

CARE has evolved a key set of elements or principles of program quality. These principles are illustrated in the diagram below, headed "CARE's Design Framework for Livelihood Projects" (see Figure 6). Several variations of this diagram have been produced over the last year, although the key elements are similar. That is, within CARE's design framework, a program should contain a holistic analysis, a synthesis, a focused strategy, a coherent information system, and reflective practice.

There are three important points to be noted about this design framework. The first is that it is a framework intended to improve the quality of CARE's programs. Thus for instance, within the Southern and West African Region, this diagram provides the central conceptual focus of current efforts across the region to improve programming. The variation of the diagram illustrated here was produced as the organizing focus of a regional design workshop, held in January, 2000, and is also being used as an organizing focus for the program sections of the region's annual operating plan (AOP). This means that there is an increasing focus on program development work in country offices in the region being organized around this framework.

The second point to be noted about this design framework is that although CARE is operationalizing it through the use of a livelihood security framework, this is not an inherent requirement of the framework. The importance of this is that other conceptual approaches can accordingly also be deployed in the practical use of the framework. This is partly shown by the reference to 'participation', 'partnerships', and 'personal and social empowerment' in the second circle of the diagram. Emphases on all these aspects are a feature of most programs in the region using a livelihoods framework, but also bring their own conceptual and methodological tools into the design process, which often provide the 'vehicle' within which the livelihood framework is deployed. Similarly, at an advocacy workshop organized in Sussex in October 1999, others in CARE showed how different analytical 'lenses' – livelihoods, human rights, stakeholder, policy analysis - can all be used in the context of the framework. For the livelihoods framework to be seen as inclusive in this way, enabling a variety of approaches to be evolved and utilized, it is critical to promote a broad institutional practice of the framework.

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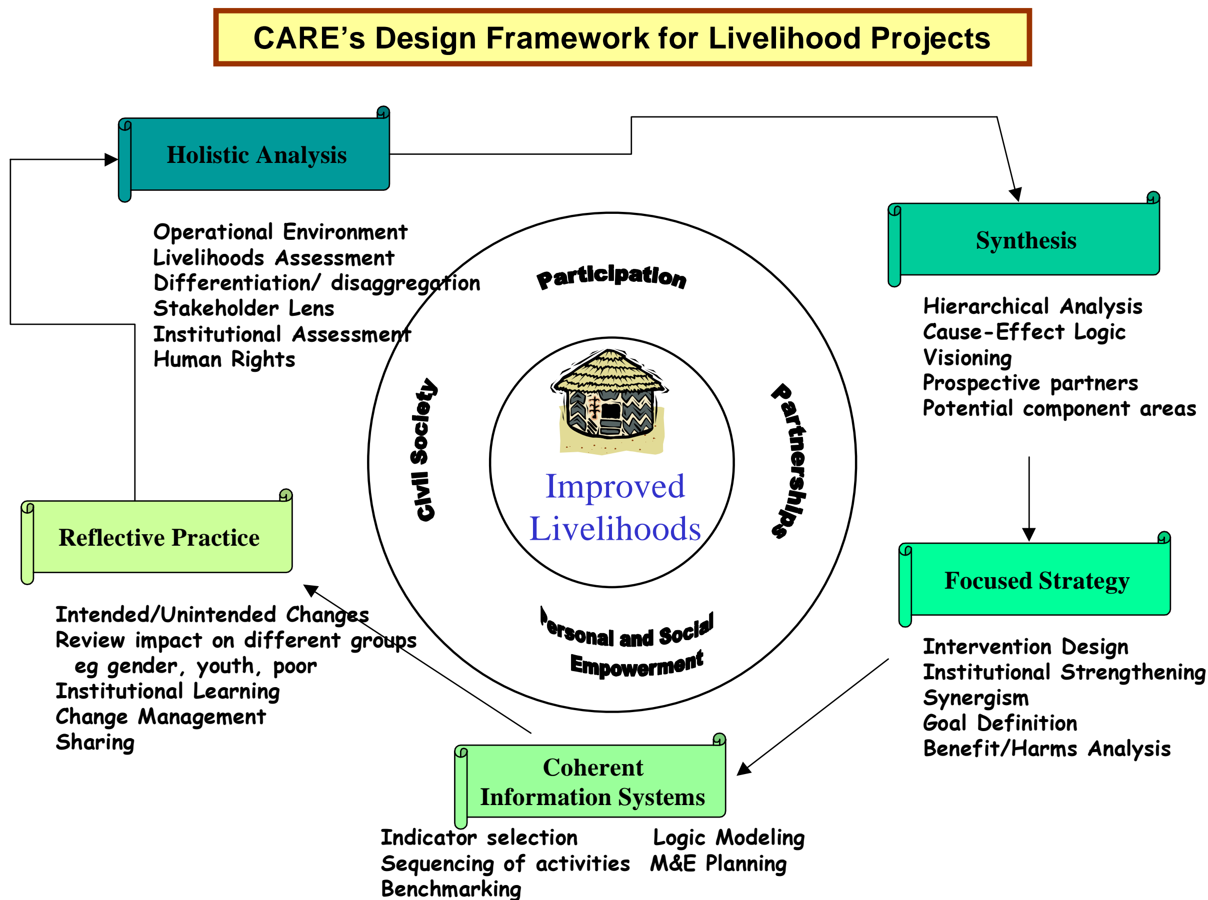
[3] D. Maxwell. 1999. "Livelihoods and Vulnerability: How Different is the Urban Case?" Presented to 1999 Meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology, Tucson AZ.

Figure 6

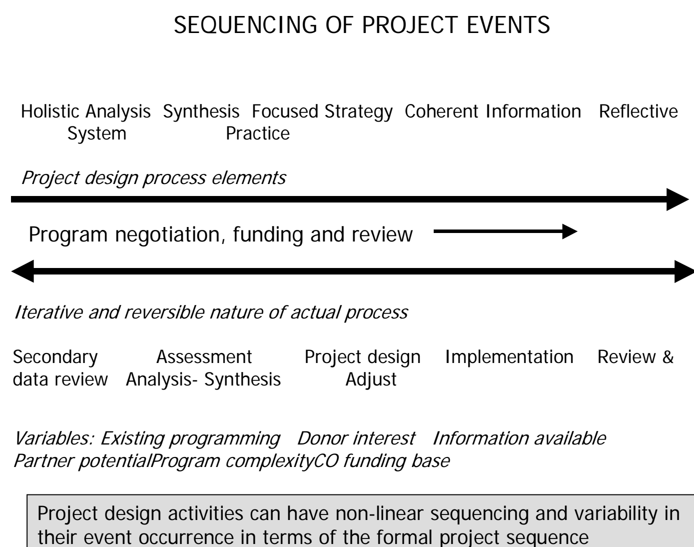


This situation allows the development of a healthy organizational debate over the nature of methodologies being used, and what constitutes good practice in terms of conducting a holistic analysis and synthesis, developing a focused strategy and coherent information system, and being reflective in practice. The points noted under each element of the framework illustrate the developing practice. For example, it has already been stated that if an understanding of livelihoods is to be developed during a holistic analysis, this means there should be an analysis of context (how the household and community relates to the wider world), of the differentiated nature of livelihoods (livelihood categories), and of the disaggregated situations of different individuals within the household (gender and generational roles and issues). In addition, other analytical lenses are also commonly deployed: an understanding of different stakeholder perspectives is developed, an institutional assessment conducted, human rights issues explored either in conjunction with or separately from an examination of basic needs, and so on.

The third point to note about the framework is that it is both an iterative and non-linear framework. There is a 'to-ing' and 'fro-ing' between the different elements of the framework, both before and after the project is formally approved. For instance, a participatory livelihoods assessment exercise may be carried out, as broadly part of the analysis stage, but conclude with methods which lead into synthesis and strategy design. Similarly, some methods may also provide provisional ideas on livelihood indicators, which are then developed more fully during the strategy design, and when the information system is being developed more fully during implementation.

An attempt to illustrate this is contained in the diagram below (see Figure 7). The diagram also aims to show that even at such a point as when the project is formally funded, it may fall at different timings in the process, depending on the status of the factors in the 'variables' list. Thus, for example, Mahavita, an urban livelihoods project in Antananarivo, Madagascar, was funded for five years after a relatively brief secondary review and participatory livelihood assessment exercise. As a result, a great deal more detailed analytical work has also been conducted during the start-up phase. In contrast, other projects may require much more protracted negotiation work for various reasons, and the process to proceed as far as the piloting of activities, before there is any guarantee of more secure funding.

Figure 7



G. Developing Focused Project and Program Strategies

One of the key distinctions between a livelihoods approach and for example, the former Integrated Rural Development Programs of a decade ago, is that the holistic analysis should give rise to a focused strategy, rather than a broad range of inadequately linked activities. The synthesis stage of the analytical activities should be used to build hypotheses on what are likely to be the three of four major project components of 'lines of action', which will have the greatest leverage or beneficial impact on improving livelihoods. Koos Neefjies of Oxfam labelled this *the acupuncture approach*, in terms of the fact that, "a good acupuncturist uses a holistic diagnosis of the patient followed by very specific treatment at key points. Holistic diagnosis does not mean needles everywhere!" (Ashley and Carney 1999: 17).

The types of projects that have been developed at CARE using a livelihoods framework are diverse. Some are of a more multi-sectoral, or disciplinary nature, but applying a livelihoods approach does not preclude projects being largely of a sectoral nature. What is important is that a holistic perspective is used in the design to ensure that cross-sectoral linkages are taken into account, and that the needs addressed in project activities are really those which deal with the priority concerns of households and build upon the experience and coping mechanisms they have evolved (Drinkwater and Rusinow 1999). Increasingly amongst some donors, there is also expected to be an acceptable cost-benefit ratio of resource use, which again emphasizes this issue of key leverage points being identified, which can be expected to lead to the greatest beneficial impact on livelihoods, whatever the type of program.

H. Using a Livelihoods Framework to Redesign Existing Projects

CARE also has substantial experience in using a livelihoods framework to redesign or reorient existing project activities. There are several examples of this in the Southern and West African Region. In all cases, the reorientation process requires a return to the analytical basis for the project or program and reworking this using the livelihoods framework. In practice this usually means conducting some form of livelihood assessment, coupled with a reconsideration of secondary information and the contextual analysis. One example is the Training for Agricultural and Environmental Management (TEAM) project in Lesotho. Following a two year pilot, which had not used an HLS approach, a redesign of the program was carried out for a new pilot, which was largely based on a series of village level participatory livelihood assessments. All told, 46 of these were conducted, of which three contributed directly towards the redesign and the remainder of which were conducted after the funding of the new phase, in part with the intention that they form baseline exercises in the village. In addition, the new two-year phase had an action research component which provided a more in-depth understanding of livelihoods in three distinct village areas, and which also contributed to the design of the project information system. This action research component aided considerably the further modification of the program at the conclusion of the second two-year pilot.

A second and more thorough illustration of the use of a livelihoods framework in redesign comes from Zimbabwe. In a process, which is still ongoing, detailed participatory livelihood assessments in four sites were conducted in November 1999 in the Midlands and Masvingo Provinces. Three of these were areas in which CARE Zimbabwe is already operating. As part of taking cognizance of this, the assessment methodology included visioning activities at both community and team level. At the community level, the aim was to generate ideas on what people saw as the main opportunities and priorities for improving their livelihood security. Then, in their own visioning, the team members were able to use this information together with their knowledge of the current nature of the program in each province to produce creative ideas on how they thought the program might evolve in the future to be more effective in its impact on livelihood security. The process was extremely useful in producing a great deal of consensus, at community and team level, about a clear set of ideas and the issues that would be inherent in their realization, on a way forward.

The assessment information is now being incorporated within a strategic, follow-up process that seeks to improve the nature and effectiveness of existing project activities, develop synergies across these, build adherence to a common set of programming principles, provide a coherent basis for the development of further activities, and from the program restructuring, lead finally into a complementary administrative restructuring of the sub-offices.

I. Reflective Practice: Achieving Greater Gender Equity

One area which CARE has been seeking to incorporate more successfully into its livelihood framework is that of gender. Experience from some of CARE's projects in Zambia, which have been using a livelihoods framework since 1995, has shown that working towards achieving greater gender equity in the benefits of programs is an especially difficult challenge. Dealing with the issue at all requires a project to have both a well-developed information system and the ability to engage in internal reflection and learning. In fact, the 'reflective practice' element of the program design framework was added during a workshop with CARE Zambia staff to discuss their experiences with using HLS and gender frameworks, seeing what the major programming issues were with regards to both, and how they could move forward more effectively with a better integrated 'HLS + gender' approach.

Gender equity in CARE programming entails the condition of fairness in relations between men and women, leading to a situation in which each has equal status, rights, levels of responsibility and access to power and resources. Gender is considered different from sex, which describes the universal, biological characteristics of men and women. Gender refers to the socialization process that assigns certain attitudes, roles and responsibilities to men and women, and results in different opportunities and behavior for each. It is dynamic, varying within and between societies, and over time, and is influenced by cultural, economic, political and environmental factors. CARE seeks to ensure that change brought about by programs responds to mutually agreeable standards of fairness of both women and men in their given contexts (Beckwith 2000).

Equity is different from sameness. It is based on the concept of what is just, and the premise that women and men, by virtue of their common humanity, deserve equal opportunities to define their path in life. It does not prescribe a given division of roles, nor does it ignore the fact that success will ultimately rest with the inspiration and efforts of each individual person. CARE's focus on equity is a recognition that in much of the world today, opportunities are not equal and the playing field is not level (Beckwith 2000).

SECTION III. Conclusions and Future Directions

Household Livelihood Security continues to be the cornerstone framework that CARE uses to carry out its programming efforts. It is considered an organizing framework that is used to systematically inform decisions as well as a desired end state or goal for CARE's programs. The HLS framework enables a more holistic view of the world to inform CARE's programming decisions. The root causes of poverty can be understood more clearly as can be the opportunities and leverage points for positive change. Application of the livelihood framework should not be considered a linear process, but rather a flexible, dynamic and iterative process over time.

While HLS is predicated on taking a holistic view of a given situation, different entry points can be used for its application. In addition, taking a holistic view does not always mean that you must undertake multiple interventions. Ongoing sector-focused interventions may be modified or interrelated to incorporate a livelihood security perspective. Alternatively, a single-sector intervention may provide the key leverage activity in a given situation.

Over the past two years, CARE has identified several analytical lenses that have been incorporated into a HLS holistic analysis to better understand the root causes of poverty. These analytical lenses include basic needs, a human rights perspective, civil participation and action, gender and the policy environment. Currently, numerous staff within CARE are working on the tools and methods that will allow our country offices to incorporate these analysis in our program decision making.

The broader and more in-depth understanding brought about by the application of these analytical lenses will expand CARE's programming choices regarding what is done, how it is done, who it is done with and who participates and benefits. These analytical tools will contribute significantly to the future directions of CARE programming

In the end, the HLS framework is helping CARE make strategically focused choices about where we concentrate our limited resources and our comparative advantages to leverage the most positive and lasting change. It is through these efforts that CARE will continue to contribute to the global effort to end poverty.

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