

HRBA and Sustainable Rural Livelihoods – Summary

This brief refers to a number of results areas within Sweden's Aid Policy Framework which are linked to rural livelihoods, such as food security, market development and increased agricultural production. The Swedish Aid Policy Framework states: "*Guaranteed access to nutritious and safe food is a right and a fundamental prerequisite for a decent life and the opportunity for people to contribute to the economy.*" (p27)

Applying a human rights based approach to initiatives related to rural livelihoods will help staff to understand the responsibilities of different actors in the public sector, private sector and civil society in inclusive and sustainable rural livelihood systems.

A human rights based approach takes a starting point in **international human rights commitments and standards**. Key questions to discuss when assessing support for rural livelihood initiatives are:

- Are international human rights agreements and standards used as a reference to justify and design the initiative?
- Are underlying obstacles to fulfilment of these international agreements and standards described and addressed by the programme?
- Have formal commitment to human rights agreements been made a precondition for Swedish support to the various parties and sub-contractors?
- How will these commitments be monitored and what will be done if there are gaps in compliance?
- Is there an analysis of the risks and opportunities related to human rights and environmental consequences – both positive and negative?

An important element in a human rights based approach is the focus on **empowerment and capacity development**. Key issues to consider are:

- To what extent does the intervention contribute to capacity development of female and male entrepreneurs and smallholders to access markets and negotiate fair prices?
- To what extent does the intervention develop capacities of authorities, investors and businesses to monitor and adhere to legal and voluntary human rights instruments?
- Is there support to capacity development of associations representing farmers, fishers and groups engaged in natural resource management, and has analysis been made of who is included and excluded from these groups (in relation to gender, ethnicity, etc.)?
- Have capacities been developed among duty bearers (often together with private sector actors) to assess and mitigate the environmental and market risks that discourage vulnerable populations from engaging in new markets and more productive agricultural methods?

The questions below, related to the four HRBA principles, may also help to prepare, assess and monitor initiatives to ensure that human rights are enhanced and respected both in results and processes.

<p>Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are fair and effective platforms for public-private dialogue in place, and do they give space to representatives of women and men with less power and status to access agricultural and business development services and to take advantage of opportunities to adapt production patterns and engage in changing markets? • What channels exist for people to determine and choose their own priorities regarding investments in jobs, agricultural production and use of natural resource management? • Do initiatives make space for vulnerable people to take actions of their own choosing to manage perceived risks? This is especially important in 'transformative' efforts that encourage profound changes in livelihood systems in response to climate change or market upheavals? 	<p>Non-discrimination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do policies, laws, regulations or practices regarding investments and control over resources effectively discriminate against specific rural livelihoods (e.g., extensive livestock or smallholder production, slash and burn agriculture, etc.)? • Are the different agricultural products or businesses of men and women valued differently in terms of preferential investments in certain forms of agricultural production or market development? • Are any deliberate measures taken to remove barriers for persons with disabilities, or other minorities to access services or programme components? • Are the livelihoods supported resilient to risks related to climate and market volatility and uncertainty, and thereby relevant for vulnerable populations that cannot afford to shoulder uncertain risks?
<p>Accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the initiative contribute to ensuring that public and private sector actors have systems in place to monitor and disclose social and environmental impacts according to national and international standards? • Are systems in place that ensure that those providing agricultural, financial or business development services/investments are made accountable for adapting their services/investments to meet the demands and needs of all clients (including poor, food insecure and otherwise marginalised clients)? • Are governance mechanisms in place through which stakeholders may challenge decisions or actions that affect them negatively? • Does the intervention contribute to clarity about who (public sector, private sector, civil society) is responsible for providing different livelihood related services, such as agricultural extension, financial services or market information? 	<p>Transparency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the intervention contribute to capacities and commitments for greater transparency in policies and practice affecting land and natural resource tenure, particularly in new forms of land acquisitions and concessions? • Are the services supported accompanied by measures to support smallholders or other marginalised rural people to learn about and understand changing legal norms and market demands that impinge on their livelihoods, land tenure and food security? • Does the intervention contribute to making market and weather information available in forms that enable people to access the information and make informed decisions about how to manage climate and market uncertainty and volatility?

To learn more on a human rights based approach in sustainable rural livelihoods, read the full thematic area brief.