Local institutions and livelihoods: *Guidelines for analysis*

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Norman Messer & Philip Townsley

RURAL DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
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Foreword

Despite so many determined efforts, the fight against poverty and hunger, especially in rural areas, remains a huge challenge! Given the complexity of the problems and the enormity of the task, more innovative and effective approaches are urgently needed. The key actors are those who suffer most – the rural poor themselves. It is crucial to recognize that they have their own strategies to secure their livelihoods which vary from household to household depending on numerous factors such as their socio-economic status, education and local knowledge, ethnicity, and stage in the household life cycle.

At the same time, the strategies of these different groups of people are heavily influenced by and respond to the broader socio-economic, cultural, political, religious and institutional context in which they live. In many cases, the strategies of different groups are complementary and mutually beneficial while in some cases they may uncover latent conflicting interests that call for negotiation and resolution.

Within this broader context, these different categories of households belong to and draw support from a multiplicity of formal and informal local institutions. The latter often provide essential goods and services to the rural poor, particularly in the absence of appropriate public policies, well-functioning markets, effective local governments and official provision of safety nets for the vulnerable. However, policy-makers and development practitioners have paid relatively little attention to understanding this local institutional context and its positive or negative impact on the livelihood strategies of the rural poor. At times, acting in a top-down manner, policy-makers and development practitioners have even created new institutions that did not meet the needs of poor rural stakeholders or have undermined existing institutions that were appreciated by the rural poor.

These guidelines attempt to address these issues by suggesting practical ways of analyzing the role of local institutions and their influence on the lives of the rural poor with a view to assisting policy-makers and development practitioners in identifying more appropriate entry points for strengthening these institutions as well as the legislative and regulatory framework in which they operate.

We hope that these guidelines will be broadly disseminated and used by professionals working in rural and agricultural development.

Maximiliano Cox
Director, Rural Development Division
Sustainable Development Department

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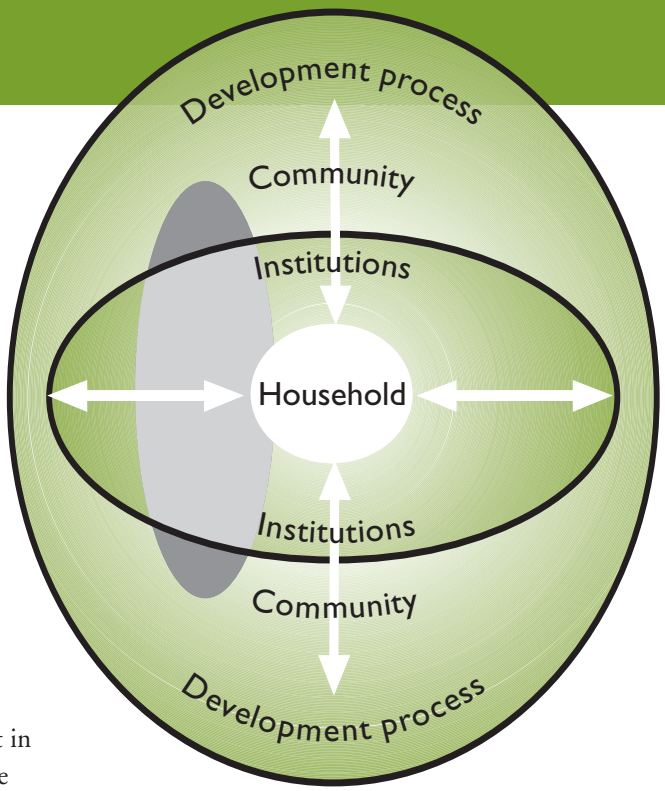
Discussions with many other development practitioners have also had a significant influence on the way these guidelines have been developed. Thanks go to Jock Campbell, Integrated Marine Management Ltd. and to Venkatesh Salagrama, Integrated Coastal Management Ltd., for the numerous stimulating discussions of institutions and livelihoods over the course of three years of research for the Sustainable Coastal Livelihoods Project funded by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID). Discussions with Julian Hamilton-Peach, at IFAD, and Rathin Roy, in India, have also stimulated the thinking behind some of the content.



1. Why the guidelines are needed

Over the past decades, a variety of different programmes and approaches to working with the poor and trying to improve their livelihoods have been developed by different agencies. Many of these have not lived up to expectations, but much has been learnt about how development activities can be more effective in reaching the poor and bringing about sustainable changes in their livelihoods. More people-centred, participatory approaches to working, and a shift in professional attitudes towards a greater recognition of the strengths and potential of the poor, have achieved much in making development efforts accessible to the people they are intended to benefit. Development workers have also become steadily more aware of the importance of understanding not just the people they want to work with, but also the social, cultural and political context in which they live.

In particular, the importance of the role of local institutions has been increasingly recognized. Many development efforts with the poor have failed or proved to be unsustainable because they have not fully understood these institutions and the way that they influence the livelihoods of the poor. New institutions set up to support the poor have often proved inappropriate or have been undermined by existing institutions that were either not recognized by relevant stakeholders or poorly understood.

Participatory approaches to development, including those commonly grouped under terms such as PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) or PLA (Participatory Learning and Action) have done much to improve the ways in which development workers learn about local conditions and identify the poor, as well as understand their strengths and the constraints they have to overcome. But less attention has been paid to ways of understanding the local institutions that shape the environment in which poor people live.

These guidelines aim to fill this gap and help development workers improve their understanding of the role of local institutions. What is it they do? Who exactly do they serve and how? How do they change over time? How can they be strengthened and made more equitable? How can they be made more accessible for the poor?

They are based on the pilot experience of a research programme on "Rural Household Income Strategies for Poverty Alleviation and Interactions with the Local Institutional Environment". This was set up by FAO's Rural Development Division in 1998-99 and aimed to develop a new methodological framework for understanding the linkages between rural household livelihood and income strategies and local institutional environments.

The process described in these guidelines has been called an "investigative" process because it aims to generate a better understanding about these linkages. But, as most development workers in the field know, it is impossible to "investigate" rural conditions without changing them. So, as far as possible, these guidelines try to suggest practical ways for development workers to incorporate the process of learning about these linkages into their work. The goal of these guidelines is not research for the sake of research, but better livelihoods for the poor.

To the best of our knowledge, no methodological guidelines exist on how to trace these linkages with the aim of improving the quality, efficiency and sustainability of poverty reduction initiatives[1]. Many of the tools suggested, and used during the research project, are drawn from the "repertoire" of PRA and other approaches to social research.

2. Outline of content

Table 1 reviews the content of the guidelines. This is made up of seven modules, each covering different aspects of an investigation of the linkages between household livelihood strategies and local institutions. The modules are arranged to represent a hypothetical process for undertaking such an investigation.

Table 1 - Content of the Guidelines

Modules	Content
Introduction	■ Why the guidelines are needed ■ Outline of content ■ The users of the guidelines
Module 1 Understanding the key concepts	■ Understanding the key concepts ■ Households and livelihoods ■ Institutions, and their organizations, policies and processes
Module 2 Preparing the investigation	■ Assessing the available resources ■ Identifying a team ■ Setting objectives ■ Carrying out a literature review ■ Planning the investigation
Module 3 Doing the community profile	■ Basic principles ■ Process ■ Methods ■ Outputs
Module 4 Understanding household livelihood strategies	■ Basic principles ■ Process ■ Methods ■ Outputs
Module 5 Understanding local institutions	■ Basic principles ■ Process ■ Methods ■ Outputs
Module 6 Understanding the linkages	■ Mapping the institutional context and interplay between institutions ■ Methods for taking account of changes and processes ■ Methods for understanding horizontal linkages between local institutions and their influence on livelihood strategies ■ Methods for understanding vertical linkages between "local" institutions and higher-level institutions, policies and processes, and their influence on livelihood strategies
Module 7 Using the outputs	■ Methods for identifying "key" linkages ■ Methods for taking account of changes and processes ■ Measuring and relating linkages between local institutions and household livelihood strategies with sustainable livelihood outcomes ■ Analyzing, reporting and presenting the results (at different levels and for different objectives)

[1] Having said this, we acknowledge the existence of a number of interesting and complementary research programmes and invite readers to inform us of other relevant initiatives that we are unaware of. (Write to FAO's Rural Institutions and Participation Service, Jennie.DeyDePryck@fao.org).

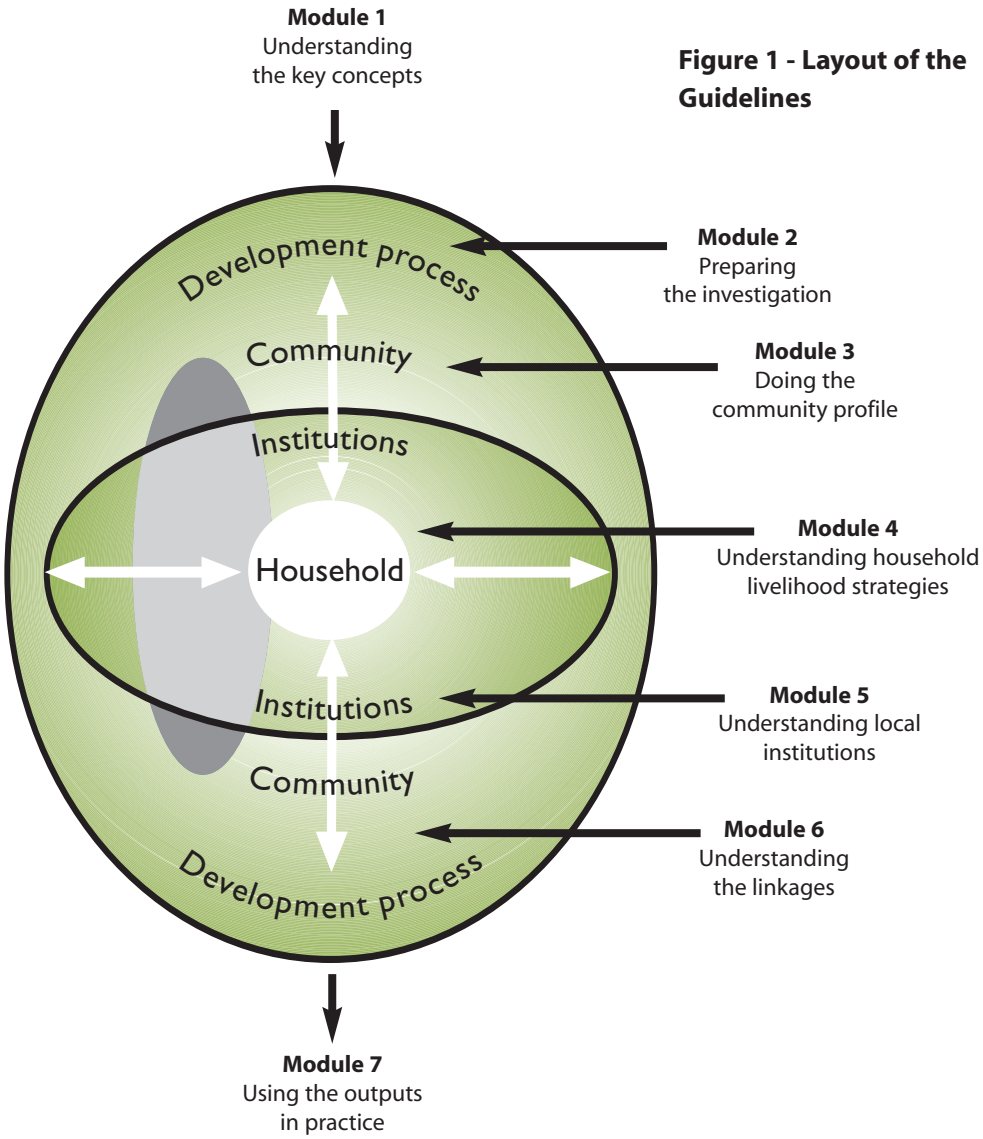


Figure 1 - Layout of the Guidelines

These guidelines are structured around the core elements that are the focus of the investigation: the **community**, the **households** within that community and their **livelihood strategies**, and **institutions** that may be found at all levels, from within the household to the community and in society at large. The relationships between these elements, and the way in which the different modules of the guidelines address them, are shown in Figure 1.

The order in which the modules are presented is just one possible way of approaching the investigation. It assumes a hypothetical situation where investigators are "starting from scratch" with little prior knowledge or experience of the area and communities they are working in. The guidelines should not be regarded as a "blueprint" to be followed exactly but as a source of ideas that will help investigators to design a study that fits their needs. Users of the guidelines should decide for themselves where their best entry point is likely to be. For example, where information is already available about the communities and households that the

investigators are looking at, the community profiles and livelihoods analysis may not be necessary or may require less emphasis and investigators may decide to start off by looking directly at institutions. Whatever the situation, investigators will need to adapt their approaches according to the circumstances they find in the field. Likewise the methods proposed need to be adapted, supplemented and experimented with as they are only intended to represent some of the most common and readily applicable methods, not a definitive selection.

THE MALATUK STORY

An illustrative story is told in excerpts at the end of every module. This shows how a "typical" group of rural development workers might go about using the guidelines to carry out an analysis of local institutions and household livelihood strategies in the field. This story aims to show users how "real-life" problems and issues might be addressed by practitioners in the field. The symbol in the top-corner of this box is used to show that the box contains a part of this story. The story does not try to describe everything that might be learnt during a "typical" analysis, or all the problems that might be encountered. Neither does it necessarily describe "best practice". The intention is to give a concrete, if imaginary, example of how the guidelines might be used in practice. The story does not refer to any particular location. Users of the guidelines will almost certainly recognize some elements that apply to their local conditions and others that do not.

3. The users of the guidelines

The main users of these guidelines will be professionals working in rural and agricultural development, interacting with field level practitioners. Examples might be:

- **development agency staff, project staff, consultants and other professionals** involved in the design, implementation or monitoring and evaluation of projects, programmes and specific field activities;
- **district-level staff of rural development agencies and poverty reduction programmes;**
- **backstopping staff** working for extension departments and directorates, such as supervisors and personnel involved in training extension agents;
- **NGO staff and "community facilitators"** (who may be part of NGO or government programmes);
- **training establishments** providing courses and sessions that address the institutional dimension of development and training of trainers (TOT); and
- **researchers,** such as graduates carrying out fieldwork to complete their degrees or those on assignments that include an investigation of institutions and organizations.

The language used is intended to be accessible to people at this level, who may not be very familiar with English and may not be used to reading social science literature. A conscious effort has been made to avoid academic terminology and "big words", and to thus "lower the entry barrier" to the largest extent possible. When relatively "complex" terms are used, they are explained in some detail and examples are given of what is meant. The two main subjects of these guidelines –

livelihoods and institutions – are probably the most complex words used and much of Module 2 is dedicated to explaining what these terms mean.

Besides these main end-users, other people working in related positions may find these guidelines useful, including:

Middle-level managers of rural development agencies or programmes, for example at the provincial level. They will be able to make use of the guidelines when planning projects and programmes where local institutions play an important role. The guidelines will inform them on what is involved in carrying out an analysis of those local institutions and how they influence and are linked with household livelihood strategies. Managers can thus make informed decisions on how to allocate time and resources for carrying out this type of investigative process and how to design ways of incorporating the findings into ongoing or new development activities.

Policy-makers, who will find the guidelines useful as a means of understanding how conditions at the local level are influenced by policy decisions and how policy reforms are filtered down to rural households through local institutions. The methods suggested aim to improve the communication between development workers and local institutions, and this should also improve the ability of policy-makers to understand "micro-macro" linkages and impacts and take account of them in their policy decisions. The policy dimension, however, is the topic of a separate companion volume (Marsh 2003) to the present guidelines.

These guidelines are not intended for an academic audience. Much has been written on household livelihoods and on local institutions and readers who wish to go into more detail about the issues and definitions involved are referred to the annex and the texts mentioned in the bibliography.

THE MALATUK STORY – SETTING THE SCENE

Musa is a social development specialist working for the Malatuk Poverty Alleviation Project (MPAP). The MPAP targets the province of Malatuk, recently identified in a nation-wide poverty profile as one of the poorest areas in the country. Poverty in Malatuk takes many forms and has many causes.

The area is acutely vulnerable to national disasters: cyclones regularly hit the coastal areas, the low-lying hinterland is subject to seasonal flooding while the upland areas to the north and west are drought-prone and environmentally degraded. The MPAP itself has developed out of the relief efforts following a succession of cyclones, droughts and floods that has seriously affected the area over the last decade, destroying infrastructure and, according to some, setting back local development efforts "by at least 20 years".

Poverty in the area is also blamed on Malatuk's distance and relative isolation from the main centres of economic development in the nation. Attempts to deal with poverty in the area have not been helped by the government's current programme of structural readjustment and economic reform. Spending has been cut and the role of government in the delivery of many services drastically reduced. Health, education and transport services still in government hands have all embarked on programmes to recover at least some of their costs, and many other services have been either privatized or abandoned altogether. While this has led to rapid development in certain parts of the country, noticeably the main cities, other primarily rural areas, such as Malatuk, appear to have been largely bypassed, and there is increasing evidence that conditions may have actually become worse for some sectors of rural society. Outmigration from Malatuk to the country's main cities has increased and there is a fear that, if this trend continues, Malatuk could be condemned to permanent exclusion from the social and economic mainstream of the country.

Another key political development affecting the area is the government's new policy for the devolution of political decision-making and natural resource management to the local level. Elections were held for local assemblies, first at the provincial level and, most recently, at the sub-district level. This is supposed to create more responsive government and greater transparency in the allocation of development resources and decision-making, but exactly how the new local-level government mechanisms are to function has yet to be worked out. There is concern in Malatuk that existing traditional power structures may "hijack" these new local government mechanisms and prevent them from being effective.

The objectives of the MPAP are to address the root causes of poverty in Malatuk. These have been identified as: vulnerability to natural disasters due to poor preparedness and environmental degradation; poor representation of the needs and priorities of the poor in local decision-making bodies; a low level of economic development due to non-availability of appropriate finance; and underdeveloped markets. The project aims to develop an adequate response network to cope with natural disasters, improve the capacity of local institutions to deal with the needs and priorities of the poor, and develop new economic opportunities in the area to stem the out-flow of people to the cities. The current project is to last for five years, but it has been planned as the first in a series of projects, provided sufficient progress is achieved in this first phase.

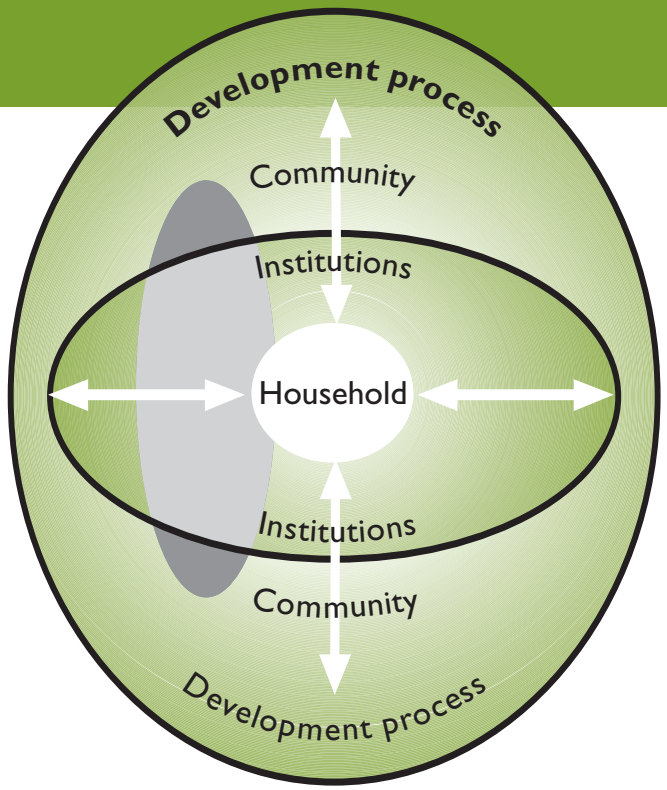
Musa's Terms of Reference give her overall responsibility for the social development aspects of the project as a whole, as well as developing a series of sub-projects looking at specific social development issues. These include activities to encourage the development of "appropriate local institutions" to represent the interests of the poor, reduce child labour and enhance the role of women in local decision-making structures.

Musa's first two months on the project have been spent familiarizing herself with the area and with the project itself. This takes a considerable amount of time, as the project is relatively wide-ranging and complex. Most of her colleagues have technical backgrounds of one sort or another. There are several agriculture specialists, a disaster-preparedness team, a small fisheries group and other specialists in small enterprise development, livestock, cooperatives, transport and marketing. The Team Leader is an administrator but has expressed a special interest in social development issues. In particular, he sees the development of appropriate institutions as being a key element in ensuring sustainable results in all the other fields being addressed by the project. Musa also takes time to get to know the other "key players" in the area – the project's counterparts in a range of local government departments, the NGO community, and local politicians and representatives.

Several of the technical specialists who joined the project earlier have already prepared sub-projects focussing on technical areas that they have identified as holding potential for development and that are thought to be appropriate for the poor. An effort has been made to consult with local people and identify their own priorities and concerns, but Musa feels the "agenda" of these consultations has been strongly determined by the project's need to develop particular types of technical intervention and may well have completely ignored more important issues because they were regarded as not being of immediate concern to the project. According to the project design, these sub-projects are to be carried out by the project together with staff from various local government agencies and some NGOs. Some training has already been given to counterpart staff in preparation for these sub-projects, but it is envisaged that most of the new techniques and approaches that the project wishes to promote will be learned "on the job".

Musa, the team leader and several of their more experienced local counterparts have expressed doubts about this approach. The MPAP is not the first project to work in the area. Past efforts have used very similar approaches only to find, after years of work, that new techniques and technologies introduced by these projects have either not proved sustainable or ended up having little impact on the groups of poor people they were intended for. In the project design, it is stated that the adoption of a more "integrated" approach, involving a range of technical disciplines and government departments, will help to overcome past failings, but it is not very clear how some of the key problems should be addressed. An evaluation of the one recent project – a farming systems development project that worked in the upland areas of Malatuk – identified the persistence of "traditional forms of social organization and institutions" as one of the most important obstacles to sustainable development and "modernization", but there are no suggestions in the MPAP project document on how this problem might be addressed. This report only looked at the upland areas covered by the project, but there seems to be considerable local consensus that the same is true for much of the province.

To try and understand this better, the Team Leader asks Musa to prepare a study that will look at how these local forms of social organization and institutions influence the livelihoods of the poor. He is anxious to understand how these organizations and institutions might affect different sub-projects that are being planned. As he is also under pressure from the donor and government counterparts for the project as a whole to begin working in the field, he asks Musa to try to get some findings out within a month. From her field experience, Musa knows how complex the study of these issues can be and manages to persuade the project to extend the deadline by an extra month, but she is warned that the other project field activities cannot be held up any longer than this



Both of the two key concepts in these guidelines – household livelihoods and institutions – are complex and difficult to "define". The discussion of some of the key concepts below does not aim to offer the "right" interpretations or definitions of these terms – even "experts" have difficulties in agreeing about what they mean. It aims to help investigators to understand some of the alternative ways of interpreting households, livelihoods and institutions and to enable them to come up with a definition that they feel comfortable with and that is appropriate in their circumstances.

1. Households and livelihoods

Household livelihoods, and the strategies that people use to create them, are at the core of development. People may be involved in different social and economic activities as individuals, but it is at the level of the household (see Box 1) that the real impacts of those activities are seen most clearly, and the well-being of the household is generally a key objective for most people, at least in rural societies.

How people define well-being varies. For poor households living in poor rural areas, "well-being" may mean just having enough to eat, shelter for the family and a basic level of security. For other groups, standards may be higher, but, whatever the definition, households will strive to achieve that level and sustain it. A livelihood is basically the means that a household uses to achieve that well-being and sustain it (see Box 2). Just how sustainable a household's livelihood is will depend on many factors. For example, the activities that a household engages in to create its livelihood may degrade the resources on which it depends, making it unsustainable. But if a household has a diverse set of activities that does not damage the environment and ensures food and income throughout the year, that household's livelihood is likely to be more sustainable.

BOX 1 – THE HOUSEHOLD

"*…a group of people who eat from a common pot, and share a common stake in perpetuating and improving their socio-economic status from one generation to the next.*" (FAO, 1992)

There can be no single definition of a "household". Different cultures, and different social groups within cultures, will often think of the household in different terms. Households are usually based on family relationships, but they can often include people who have no kin relationship at all with other household members. Households may pool some of the resources available to individual members, but access to other resources may be different for different household members (for example, women may have less access to some resources than men). A whole household may be poor, but some household members may be poorer than others. In some situations, for example where there is migration, some individuals may be members of more than one household. Usually, members of a household will have some common interest in improving their socio-economic condition from one generation to the next. So the meaning of a "household" always needs to be adjusted to local circumstances.

Poverty can be thought of as an "inadequate" livelihood outcome. It may be the result of the household having inadequate access to assets, like land, water, credit or social support. It may be caused by living in an area subject to acute vulnerability, where there is war, or drought or cyclones. It can also be caused by policies, institutions and processes that are not supportive of achieving an adequate livelihood. In some cases, the strategy that the household uses to combine the different livelihood elements at their disposal may not make the best use of them, leading to failure to provide an adequate livelihood.

BOX 2 – LIVELIHOODS

In these guidelines, "livelihood" does not just mean the activities that people carry out to earn a living. It means all the different elements that contribute to, or affect, their ability to ensure a living for themselves and their household. This includes:

- the assets that the household owns or is able to gain access to– human, natural, social, financial and physical;
- the activities that allow the household to use those assets to satisfy basic needs;
- the different factors that the household itself may not be able to control directly, like the seasons, natural disasters or economic trends, that affect its vulnerability;
- policies, institutions and processes that may help them, or make it more difficult for them, to achieve an adequate livelihood.

The livelihood strategies that households develop to ensure their livelihoods will depend on how they can combine their livelihood assets, take into account the vulnerability context in which they live, and the policies, institutions and processes that affect them. The livelihood outcomes that households achieve with their strategies can depend on any or all of these elements.

2. Livelihood assets

The members of a household combine their capabilities, skills and knowledge with the different resources at their disposal to create activities that will enable them to achieve the best possible livelihood for themselves and the household as a whole. Everything that goes towards creating that livelihood can be thought of as a livelihood asset. These assets can be divided into the five different "types" shown in Figure 2.

This division into five types of livelihood assets is not definitive. It is just one way of dividing up livelihood assets. Other ways may be developed depending on local circumstances. What is important here is that these are all elements of livelihoods that influence households directly or are potentially controlled by them.

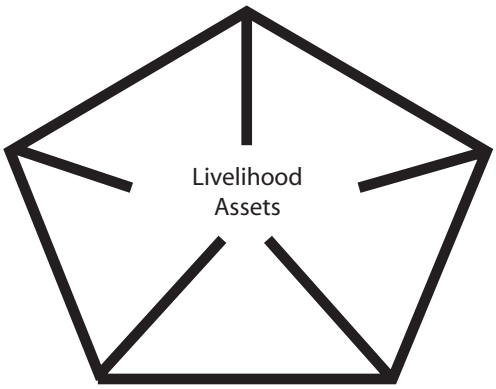
Different households will have different levels of access to this range of assets. The diversity and amount of these different assets that households have at their disposal, and the balance between them, will affect what sort of livelihood they are able to create for themselves at any particular moment. These household assets can be thought of as a pentagon that may be relatively large, well-balanced and regular, implying a relatively strong asset base, or small and distorted, where there are either few assets available or where households are unduly dependent on just a few assets.

This asset pentagon can provide a useful starting point for household livelihood analysis, as it encourages investigators to take into account all the different kinds of assets and resources that are likely to play a role in household livelihoods. In the past, development workers often tended to focus very much on the **physical capital** (by providing new technology and infrastructure), the **financial capital** (by providing credit) and the **human capital** (by providing skills and training). But very often people's access to **natural capital** and the key role of the **social capital** of households has not been properly taken into account. Using this pentagon as a guide can help investigators to get a more complete picture of the household and its livelihood assets.

Figure 2 – Livelihood assets

HUMAN CAPITAL
People's health and ability to work, and the knowledge and skills they have acquired over generations of experience and observation, constitute their human capital. Education can help to improve people's capacity to use existing assets better and create new assets and opportunities.

SOCIAL CAPITAL
The way in which people work together, both within the household and in the wider community, is of key importance for household livelihoods. In many communities, different households will be linked together by ties of social obligation, reciprocal exchange, trust and mutual support, all of which can play a critical role, particularly in times of crisis. These can be thought of as social capital, which forms part of a household's livelihood capabilities.

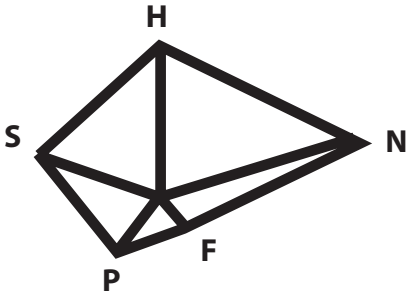


NATURAL CAPITAL
For people living in rural areas, natural capital, including assets, such as land, water, forest resources and livestock, are obviously of key importance for the production of food and income. The ways in which people have access to these resources – ownership, rental, common pool, etc. – need to be considered as well as the condition of the resources themselves, their productivity, and how they may be changing over time.

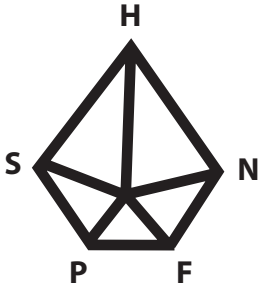
PHYSICAL CAPITAL
Physical capital may include tools and equipment, as well as infrastructure such roads, ports and landing places, and market facilities. Access to these, as well as other forms of infrastructure, such as water supply or health care facilities, will influence people's ability to earn an adequate livelihood.

FINANCIAL CAPITAL
The financial capital available to rural households may come from the conversion of their production into cash in order to cover periods when production is less or to invest in other activities. They may make use of formal and informal credit to supplement their own financial resources.

For example, tribal peoples living in a remote forest area may have strong ties of kinship and mutual exchange (social capital), ample access to rich forest resources (natural capital) and an intimate knowledge of their local environment (human capital), but practically no financial or physical capital and limited access to formal education. The livelihood strategies they adopt will reflect this. They will use their knowledge to exploit a wide range of different natural resources in different ways, ensuring a supply of food, clothing, fuel and shelter through the year. Their ties of kinships and mutual exchange within their community will ensure that they are usually able to overcome episodes of vulnerability, such as sickness or the deaths in the family, without reliance on help from "outside". But the physical capital available to them may be very specialized and appropriate to their local circumstances only. As a result they may have difficulty in adapting to any changes, such a those brought about by destruction of their forest environment or intrusion by outside influences. Similarly, their complete unfamiliarity with financial capital may leave them at a disadvantage if they find themselves involved in market transactions, even if they have products of potentially high market value.



Poor people in rural areas may have only their labour capacity (human capital) and the financial capital they can generate through their labour, but very limited direct access to natural capital, low levels of education and knowledge, and a very low social status that weakens their social capital base. The poorest households may have extremely reduced "livelihood pentagons" with extremely limited livelihood assets of any kind at their disposal.



3. The vulnerability context

A household's access to adequate livelihood assets can be affected by many factors over which household members themselves may have little control. These factors might include:

- **Seasonal changes,** which reduce or increase the availability of different resources at different times of the year;
- **Longer-term changes**, or **trends,** which may affect different aspects of people's livelihoods. These might include changes in population, environmental conditions, patterns of governance, economic conditions and technology. For example, changes in the economic environment due to globalization may create either more competition for households' produce or new opportunities and markets for goods.
- **Shocks,** such as natural disasters, wars or civil unrest, or episodes of disease or ill health, which may suddenly reduce households' resource base or their access to key livelihood assets.

These are all factors that may cause households to become more or less vulnerable to poverty and can be thought of as the **vulnerability context** in which households operate. This context will influence the ways in which households choose to use the various assets at their disposal. For example, where the risks of drought or flooding are high, rural farmers may choose to plant less productive or less valuable crops in favour of crops that are more resistant to these types of risk.

BOX 3 – INSTITUTIONS, ORGANIZATIONS AND PROCESSES:

SOME DEFINITIONS

"… Institutions are "complexes of norms and behaviours that persist over time by serving some collectively valued purposes" (Uphoff 1986)

"They are "the rules of the game of a society" (North 1995)

"Organizations are "structures of recognised and accepted roles, formal or informal" (Uphoff 1986);

"[They] are the players: groups of individuals bound by a common purpose (…)" (North 1995)

"If structures [formal institutions and organizations] can be thought of as hardware, processes can be thought of as software. They determine the way in which structures – and individuals – operate and interact." (DFID, 2000)

4. Institutions and their organizations, policies and processes

The institutions referred to in the title of these guidelines consist of considerably more than the sort of formal, organized institutions that development workers usually deal with. In these guidelines, the term "institution" includes a broad range of **organizations, policies** and **processes** that may influence both the choices that households make about using their assets, and the types and amount of assets that they are able to access. Some of the different elements that make up this group are explained below.

Policies, usually decided upon at different levels of government, will affect how households are able to take decisions or make use of the livelihood assets at their disposal. For example policies for giving more responsibility to village-level institutions may give local people more influence over the decisions that affect them directly. Policies to protect the environment by controlling natural resource use may make it more difficult for poor people to gain access to resources they normally use to support their livelihoods. **The process by which policies are formed** may be as important as the policies themselves. Groups of people who are not consulted about policy, or are not represented in the mechanisms that lead to policy formulation, will have no way of influencing what policies are decided upon. As a result, they are more likely to be adversely affected by those policies. Policies are particularly important for people concerned with improving household livelihoods because **policies can be changed.**

Institutions are also **processes** that include a wide range of "arrangements" found in societies everywhere. These arrangements can be more or less organized (and may include "organizations"), structured or unstructured, visible or invisible. Some definitions of the terms "institution", "organization" and "process" are given in Box 3. Box 4 discusses some of the distinctions that can be made between institutions and processes while Box 5 talks about the differences between institutions and organizations.

These definitions of institutions are open to different interpretations and debate. In these guidelines, all of these different "arrangements", whatever their attributes, are regarded as "institutions" of one kind or another. But people trying to understand institutions in the field so that they can develop programmes to improve the livelihoods of the poor need to have some way of "characterizing" different types of institutions. To do this, it is probably better not to worry about whether a particular arrangement can be called an "institution" or an "organization" or a "process" but to think of the different characteristics, or "attributes", that different institutions (including organizations and processes) might have. There are at least three main sets of attributes that are likely to be important for investigators.

"Visibility"

Some institutions are more "visible" than others because they have a clear structure, they are formal, in the sense that they have clearly defined rules and regulations, and they are organized. By contrast, other institutions may be "invisible" because they do not have a very well-defined structure, they are "informal", they may not have any written statutes and they may not have any obvious organization at all (at least not in the eyes of the "outsiders" investigating

BOX 4 – INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

When you say the word "institution", most people think of formal, organized and visible organizations that have a value for society as a whole and affect large numbers of people. For example, the national legislature, parliament, big private corporations, religious institutions, marriage. But there are other forces, or processes, at work in most societies that are sometimes more difficult to identify clearly but can be equally important for large numbers of people and society as a whole. These are also "institutions", because they have value for many people and affect their lives, but they are not always so "visible" or formal. This is because they do not usually dictate what is done, but how it is done - they are the "rules of the game" in society. Some of these may be formal and recognized – the law is a process, the idea of private property is an institution and a process – but often they will not be written down anywhere. For example, there may be very few women in senior government posts, even though there are laws in place that ensure equal rights for women, because of deeply rooted prejudices against women in positions of responsibility. Even where women are promoted to potentially influential positions, they may be regarded as less "deserving" by their male colleagues because they are regarded as having been "helped" by legislation in support of equal rights for women. This may make it very difficult for them to work effectively, so perpetuating the negative attitudes of their male colleagues. These processes are part of what is called institutions in these guidelines, but they are a particular sort of institution with particular "attributes".

BOX 5 – DIFFERENCES BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

- The terms 'institution' and 'organization' are often used interchangeably but distinctions can be made between the two.
- Institutions generally establish what sort of behaviour is "normal" in society - they are "normative". Organizations establish a common purpose for the people that make them up and their roles in achieving that purpose – they are more "structured".
- Organizations and institutions may overlap - a given organization may or may not be an institution, and a given institution may or may not be an organization. For example, a local bank branch is an organization but not an institution; a central bank is an organization that is also an institution, while money is an institution, but not an organization (Uphoff 1997).
- Both institutions and organizations often, but not always, express "collective goals" that are broadly accepted by all their members.
- Institutions and organizations often include some people and exclude others. This may be an important part of how they are defined, the role they play and the effect they have on rural poverty and the livelihoods of poor households. Understanding why and how this happens is important when looking at rural poverty.
- Organizations can acquire special status and legitimacy if they satisfy people's needs and meet their expectations over time. In these cases, we can say that an organization has become 'institutionalized'.

them). For example, the official "government" of a village may have an office and a series of people occupying well defined roles – the village chief, his secretary, and various other people who perform officially defined roles in the community according to formal rules and regulations laid down in the statute books and the laws of the country. This is a "visible" institution.

At the same time, in the same village, there may be a far more "invisible" form of community governance where the village "elders" are regarded as having the last word in the resolution of conflicts. The role of these elders will often not have any formal recognition, and it may not be well-defined or written down. As a result, the roles and responsibilities of the elders may change significantly over time. There may be little organization or hierarchy within this group even if they wield a significant amount of power within the community.

"Objectives" and "activities"

Some institutions have objectives that are practical and directly concerned with people's day-to-day life and undertake activities of one kind or another to achieve those objectives. Other institutions are more concerned with establishing norms of behaviour and may not carry out any real "activities" at all. A law is a good example of an "institution" that sets down norms of action, but may not explicitly state what specific actions need to be carried out to make sure those norms are maintained.

"Membership" and "participation"

Some institutions are made up of a well-defined group of people (who either chose to become members or were "born members") and have clear, exclusive criteria for membership. Others are more inclusive, often because they dictate how people in general should behave rather than what particular people should do.

These attributes can be visualized (see Figure 3) to help investigators identify and think about particular institutions and the characteristics they do or do not have and why. It may not be possible to "locate" institutions precisely along the different axes in this diagram, and it is very difficult to measure these attributes. Many institutions will have attributes from both extremes of these axes – for example visible and invisible elements. But this diagram can be a useful brainstorming tool – by visualizing institutions in this way, we can understand their attributes and characteristics better and find local institutions that we might otherwise ignore.

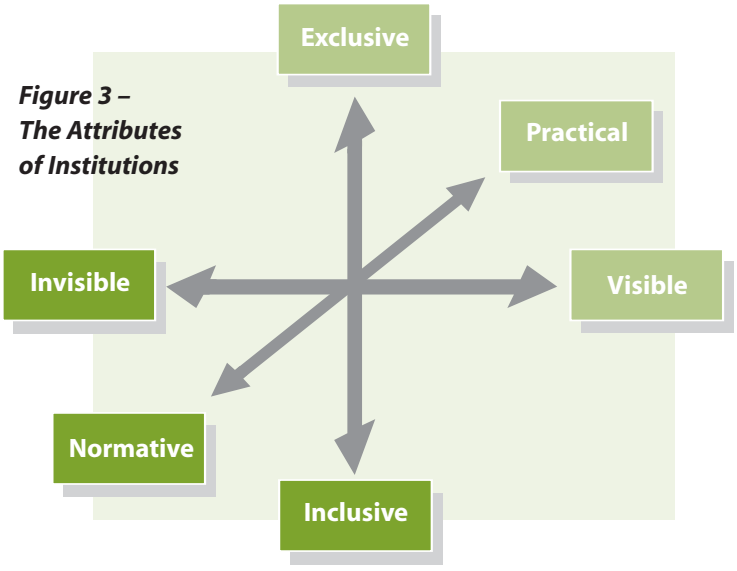


Figure 3 – The Attributes of Institutions

Examples of relatively visible, exclusive and practical institutions are:

- **government departments and offices** responsible for implementing policies and programmes and providing services to the people, as well as scientific centres such as agricultural research stations;

- **political parties** usually set up to represent the interests of particular groups in society and influence new policies, laws and regulations either locally or nationally; political parties are usually as visible as possible(!), structured and organized, and they usually claim to be practical in their orientation – achieving concrete benefits for the groups they represent and society at large;
- **political assemblies** that are responsible for approving laws, and the **judiciary** and **enforcement agencies** that may be more or less active in enforcing rules and regulations and protecting the rights of different groups or individuals;
- **private companies** or **corporations** that own resources, provide services, operate marketing facilities, provide employment and produce wealth for their owners and commodities for consumption.

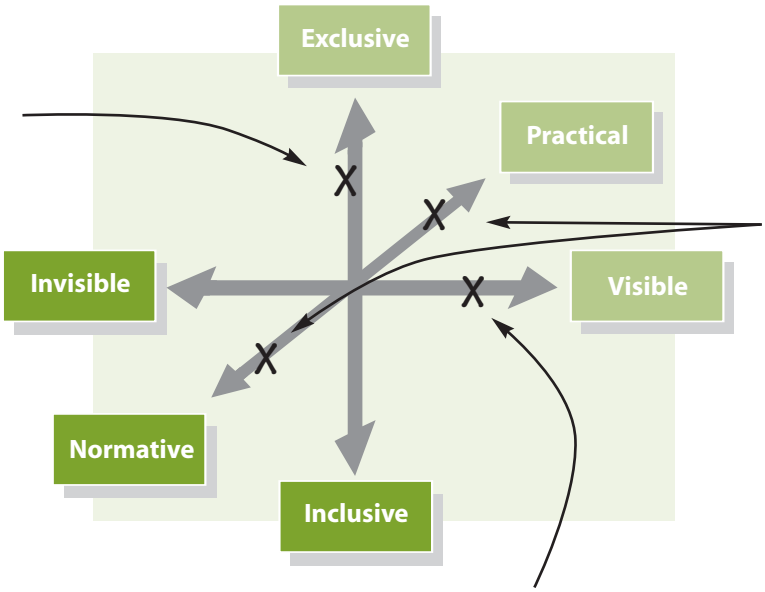
Households that have access to these institutions, or are members of them, may be able to obtain better access than others to the services they provide, the resources they control or the rights that they protect.

Examples of less visible, more informal and less practical institutions that have a more "normative" role and may be more inclusive in their membership and participation are:

- **"rules of the game" or the way things are done,** either in society in general or within organizations and institutions; these rules may be "informal" (less structured/organized) and the result of accepted practice or habit, or they may be more formal and have almost the same weight as law, even if they are not framed in legislation; for example, by law, fishing on a particular area of water may be open to everyone, but in fact the right to control access may be recognized as belonging to a particular individual or community, and it may be accepted practice to pay that individual or ask for the permission of that community in order to fish there; another example might be where there are environmental regulations that limit development in forest areas, but people or organizations with influence are able to ensure that these regulations are overlooked to enable them to exploit those areas. Within organizations, other informal rules may be important, such as officials always agreeing with what their superiors suggest and being reluctant to take any initiative on their own;
- **markets** for goods and services and how they operate; markets may be "free", or regulated by government; they may be controlled by interest groups or individuals or they may be accessible to practically anyone;
- language may play an important role, particularly in multi-lingual societies; where one language is recognized as the official language, either formally or through accepted practice, access to institutions and services of government may be more difficult for those groups that do not command that language or do not wish to use it;
- the communication channels, and the way they are established and operate, and what type of information they transmit, including how that information is stored, accessed and used. These channels are important because information is not generally equally accessible to all, either because of the way it is communicated, the language used or the technology involved, and this can have an important influence on households' ability to improve their knowledge and capacity;

Figure 4 – Institutional Attributes: Government Departments

As with most structured and visible institutions, most government departments are relatively exclusive – they have a set group of people working in them who agree to abide by the rules and regulations that govern them and work to achieve the objectives of the institution as a whole.



Government departments are usually visible – they have offices, buildings and staff. They are also organized – they have clear rules and regulations, and the roles of different people in the departments are well-defined. They have a clear structure, with divisions into sections and a hierarchy of responsibility.

Government departments have clear objectives – for example the health department aims to provide access to health care facilities and improve the overall health of the population (which may be important in maintaining people's human capital). Usually, they also perform specific activities to achieve those objectives – the health department provides medical services, distributes medicine, carries out vaccination campaigns, etc. Parts of government departments may be practical in their orientation – a government hospital is there to provide essential health services to people in a particular area. But other parts may be more normative – senior members of the health department will also be involved in policy formulation, in setting health standards and in defining what is meant by "good health" for the country as a whole.

- the power relations between different groups of people in society, often defined by the prevailing culture or religion; for example, gender (what behaviour is acceptable for men and women), age (how the old and young are regarded and treated), class (how the social and economic status of different groups is generally understood) or caste (the various restrictions surrounding caste that influence what people of different caste groups can and cannot do to change their livelihoods).

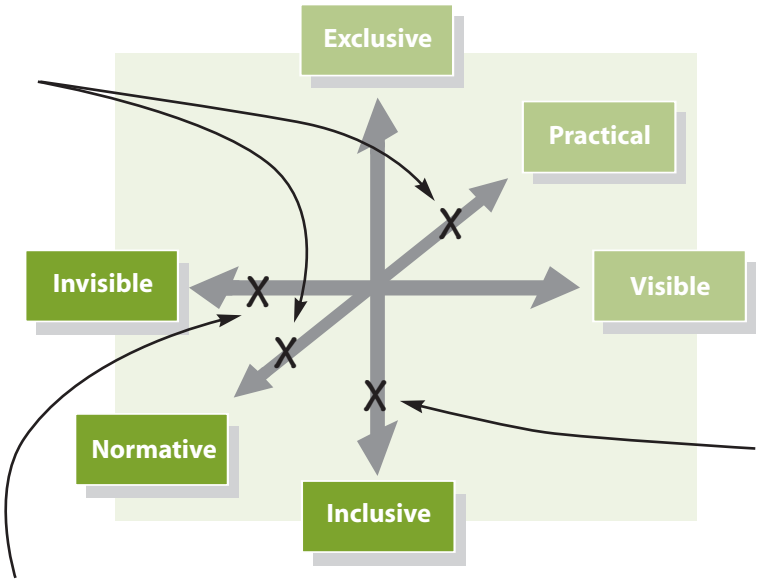
Unlike those factors that form the "vulnerability context", the factors that make up these policies, institutions and processes can be changed, but will usually require action at "higher" levels, such as the level of national government or society as a whole. Policies, major changes to organizational and institutional structures, and changes to laws and regulations are usually decided at this level. But it is extremely important to take these "higher level" factors into account when looking at livelihoods – it is no good proposing changes to local institutions if laws and policies do not allow those changes to take place.

Local institutions are those policies, institutions, and processes that are found in a specific geographical area and are more likely to directly affect the households living there. Many local institutions will not be limited to that area alone – the regulations surrounding the role of women may extend right through society, but they may be apparent in particular ways in a local area depending on the people involved and the local culture. Likewise, policies may be established at a national level, but they may be implemented in different ways in different areas.

Examples of how these different attributes might be encountered in real institutions can help us to understand this better. These are shown in Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 5 – Institutional Attributes: Traditional Land Tenure System

Some aspects of traditional land tenure systems may be normative rather than practical – they may aim to maintain social harmony or sustain the identity of a particular group or community. They establish ways of behaving over land ownership rather than specify exactly what people must do in certain situations. But at the same time, they often have very practical elements. For example, elements in the tenure system may ensure that agricultural production is sustainable within local circumstances.



Within the area where they are accepted, traditional land tenure systems may cover all land and therefore include anyone who has any involvement with land. They are therefore likely to be relatively inclusive – they are not limited to some people but apply to the population at large.

Traditional land tenure systems may not be codified or written down anywhere. They are established by habit, experience, and settlement history. The rules and regulations that govern them may be informal and constantly adapted to changing circumstances. The roles of people involved may change from place to place. This will mean that the institutions may be relatively invisible and apparently unstructured.

5. Livelihood strategies and outcomes

Taking account of the livelihood assets at their disposal, the vulnerability context in which they operate, and the policies, institutions and processes around them, households tend to develop the most appropriate livelihood strategy possible. These strategies may lead to more or less satisfactory livelihood outcomes – poverty is the result of "unsatisfactory" livelihood strategies, because the strategies are based on insufficient livelihood assets, they are vulnerable to shocks and changes, and/or the policies, institutions and processes they are subject to do not support them effectively.

The aim of the investigation described in these guidelines is to understand how this whole range of local institutions affects the livelihoods of people in a particular area. These linkages will be discussed in more detail, but the broad relationships between these different elements are represented in Figure 6. This "framework" can help investigators to develop questions about people's livelihoods and to "organize" what they learn. Naturally, investigators will often encounter issues that may not fit neatly into this framework, but this does not mean that investigators are "off track", or that the framework is inadequate. The framework aims to help investigators to think about livelihoods and institutions and the relations between them – it will not answer all the questions for them.

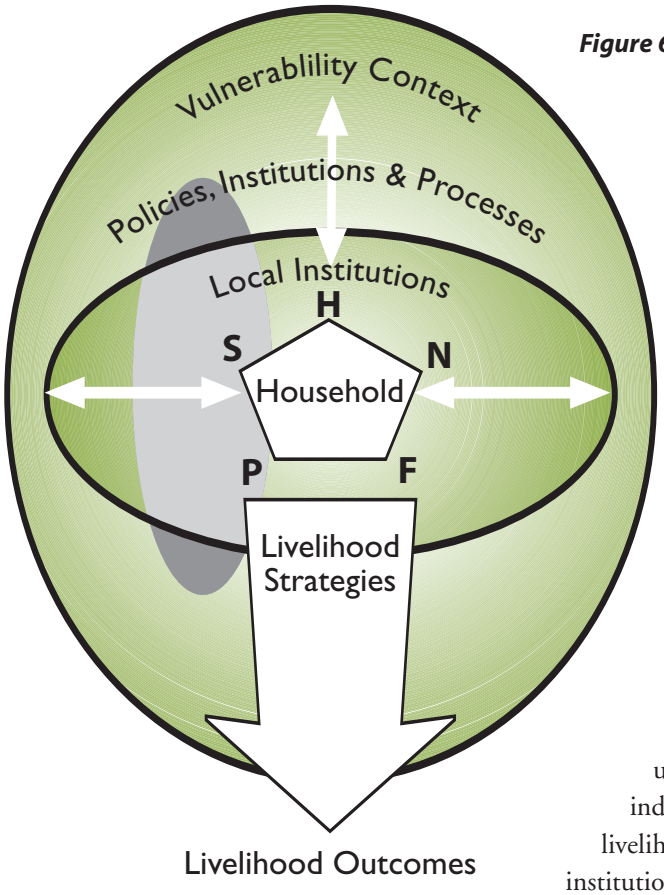


Figure 6 – A Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

6. Linkages between local institutions and livelihood strategies

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework described above serves to explain some of the different linkages that can be encountered between local institutions and livelihoods. But in the framework, these linkages remain relatively abstract. What does a "linkage" mean in more concrete terms? A linkage here is taken to mean any way in which an institution influences or affects a livelihood strategy undertaken by a particular group or individual, or, vice versa, any way in which a livelihood strategy influences or affects an institution.

In terms of the livelihood framework described above, this may mean the way in which an institution affects the different livelihood assets or capitals that people use for their livelihoods – by controlling access to those assets, or by influencing how, where, when and by whom they are used. For example, an environmentally protected area, such as a park or game reserve, represents a particular type of local institution that could link with the livelihoods of people living in the area in several different ways. A protected area would itself be the product of several other institutions - such as the Ministry of the Environment; the legal system that allows protected areas to be created; the constitution of the country that mandates the government to protect the environment; and local pressure groups that have persuaded the government to set up the protected area. The creation of a protected area might strongly influence people's access to natural assets within the area – households that went hunting for animals may no longer be able to do so; people who collected wild grasses, firewood or wild fruits may have their access to these regulated or stopped altogether; grazing of livestock may be prohibited inside the protected area. People's livelihood assets could be affected in other ways as well. The protected area might limit access to traditional religious sites or burial grounds that have particular cultural significance, having an impact on people's social capital. If local people have to move their residence to outside the protected area, their physical capital will be affected. Being made to shift from an area they know well to an area where they are unfamiliar with the natural environment will reduce people's human capital as their acquired knowledge and skills may no longer be relevant.

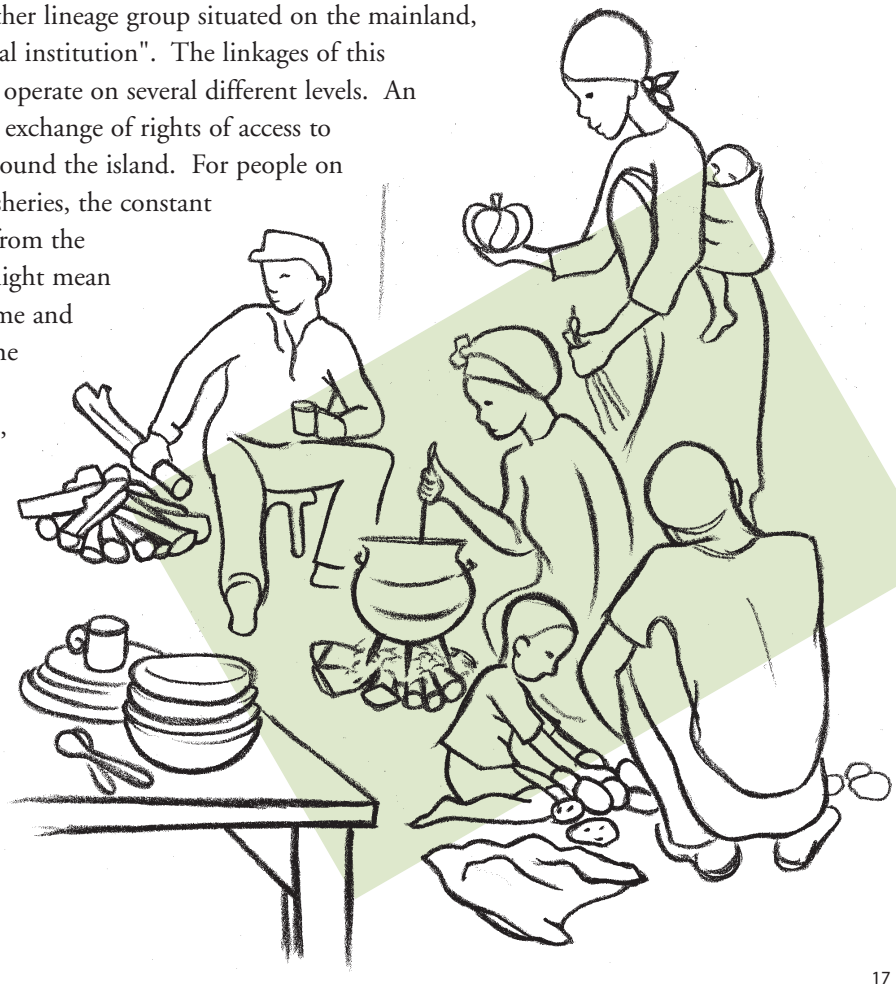
Even without directly affecting the assets that people use, an institution may also change the context in which people live in a way that will affect their vulnerability. In the case of the protected area, successful conservation of wild animals within the area might increase the vulnerability of people living outside to having their crops destroyed or their lives threatened. On the other hand, in the longer term it may reduce local people's vulnerability to natural disasters like drought or flooding by protecting watersheds, wetlands and local microclimates.

A local institution may also interact with other institutions in ways that will affect the livelihoods of people. For example, the setting up of a protected area may mean that local government departments and NGOs are able to gain access to more funds from national and international donors to help local communities deal with their changed circumstances. But at the same time it might introduce new institutions into the area – such as the Parks Service, or environmental groups – that have roles and responsibilities that conflict with existing institutions. Responsibility for controlling ritual sites or decision on land-uses may pass from traditional village government or religious and ritual authorities to park managers.

The linkages in the example above are relatively simple, although they could have very complex impacts on people's livelihoods. But linkages between local institutions and livelihoods can take many different forms, and it is precisely the potential complexity of these interactions that makes them important. It also makes it difficult to "categorize" linkages in a simple way. The relationship between a particular institution and a particular livelihood strategy will often operate on several different levels, all of which are significant.

Another example might illustrate some of these potential complexities and help readers to understand what a linkage means. People from a particular tribe or clan living on an island might only marry people from another lineage group situated on the mainland, this being a custom that constitutes a "local institution". The linkages of this institution with people's livelihoods could operate on several different levels. An integral part of marriage ties might be the exchange of rights of access to natural resources, like fish in the waters around the island. For people on the island whose livelihoods depend on fisheries, the constant acquisition of rights to fishing by people from the mainland through marriage to islanders might mean that more and more people are able to come and fish in local waters, eventually depleting the resource and reducing the viability of fisheries as a livelihood strategy. In return, this marriage institution is being influenced by the fisheries livelihood strategies of the mainlanders.

There would also be advantages to this arrangement. It might cement links of mutual aid with groups on the mainland who perhaps have different livelihood strategies than those living on the island. The ability to call on ties and obligations with these people in times of need – for food, money or water supply – might



THE MALATUK STORY – STARTING OUT

Musa is unsure where to start. Her experience working in participatory development programmes for NGOs has given her a good grounding in understanding the livelihoods of the poor, but she does not have any specific experience in looking at institutions, and is even a little unclear about what the term "institutions" really means. Fortunately, one of her contacts sends her a set of FAO guidelines on "Understanding Linkages between Household Livelihood Strategies and Local Institutions" that she decides she can use as a basis for her study.

Musa has a team of three people working with her. Ravi is a specialist in rural communications who is also an ex-NGO worker with extensive experience in participatory development programmes. His skills as a facilitator at the field level are already well-proven, but he has never done any "research" work. Musa and Ravi have two field staff working with them. Diane is a former rural health worker who used to work for the Ministry of Health and has recently completed a one-year field extension course. She lacks experience in dealing with rural development issues other than health, but she is eager to try out some of the new skills she has learnt during her course. Her experience in the health sector included working on a health survey where she was also involved in some data analysis, so she has experience with computers and databases. Musa's other field worker, Daniel, was selected above all because of his knowledge of the project area. He has never worked in rural development projects before but helped the project formulation mission as a translator and was highly recommended by them. Musa has already been impressed by his excellent rapport with local communities and his vast knowledge of the local culture but has noted that he has a tendency to assume that he already knows everything.

Musa feels confident that, once they get out in the field, this team can do the work, but shethinks that they will need help in designing the investigation and analyzing the results because none of them have really had to deal with institutions in the past. So she gets permission from the team leader to recruit at least one extra person with relevant experience. Musa mobilizes some of her NGO contacts, who put her in touch with a researcher, Dewi, at a university in the provincial capital. Dewi worked in the past on a foreign-funded research project looking at women's participation in local organizations. Since then, she has been preparing a PhD on women's institutions in the country and seems to have the understanding of institutional issues that Musa and her team need. Musa travels to the university and discusses the investigation with her, and Dewi agrees to join the team for a month as she cannot take more time off her studies and teaching responsibilities.

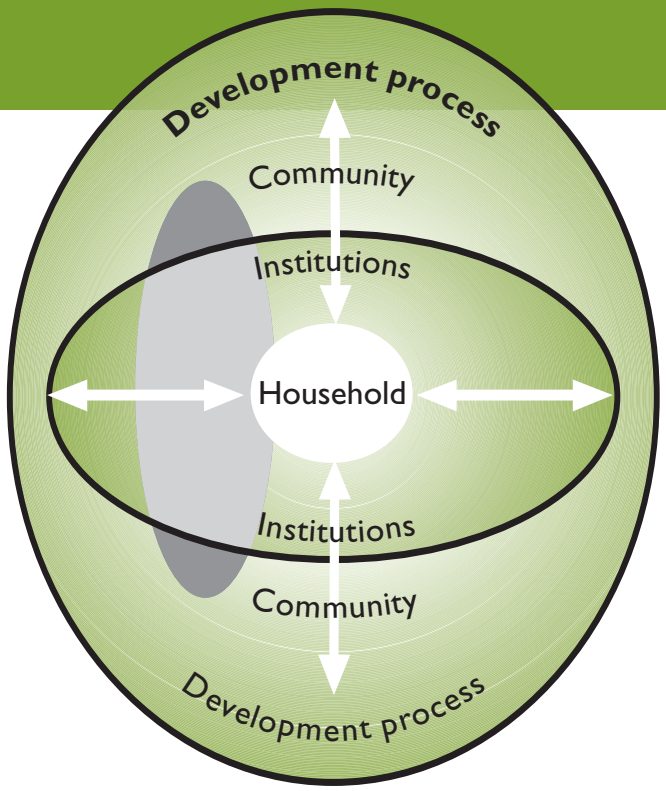
During their discussions of the study and their review of the guidelines provided by the FAO publication, they agree that Musa and her team should work with Dewi in preparing the study but will then carry out the initial community profile by themselves. After this, Dewi will join them in the field to help with the more detailed field work on livelihood strategies and local institutions. Dewi's supervisor also proves helpful and arranges for Musa to have access to the university library to look up any relevant literature as well as recommending some useful titles that he himself is familiar with.

With this team at her disposal, Musa sets to work. Given the timeframe of two months, Musa allocates the first week for carrying out a review of the literature at the university, followed by a two-day session with the whole team, including Dewi, to plan the investigation in detail. They realize that this planning session will be particularly important as they all need to better understand the subject of the investigation. They decide to have this planning workshop at the university so that Musa and her colleagues will not be distracted by routine work demands and can concentrate fully on the preparation of the study. Immediately after this, Musa, Ravi, Diane and Daniel will head back to the field and carry out an initial community profile lasting a week. Then, Dewi will join them to analyze the results of the community profile and prepare the rest of the field work. Musa realizes that the timing of the rest of the field work will have to be flexible, but they aim to have enough information to begin final analysis after about two weeks so that Dewi will have time to help them prepare an outline of the final output.

represent a means of diversifying, and so strengthening, islanders' capacity to ensure an adequate and sustainable livelihood for themselves. This would significantly reduce their vulnerability to sudden shifts in the market or resource availability. Clearly, the links would operate both ways, with people on the islands obliged to help out their relatives by marriage on the mainland. On heir part, the mainlanders sponsor some children of their new relatives on the island to go to school on the mainland, providing them with food and putting them up in their houses.

This single institutional arrangement could have other effects and influences on people's livelihoods. One or the other of the two social groups involved might have better political links with the ruling elite of the country. The benefits from these links might also be transferable to the other groups, encouraging more people to migrate to the capital where they are able to find work or positions in public administration. This in turn might ensure a regular flow of remittances to home villages, constituting an important alternative source of livelihood that might supplement, or even replace, natural resource use. Connections with government acquired through marriage links might also help to attract government services and resources that would not otherwise be accessible.

This institution of "marriage off the island" could also have important interactions with another institution – the market for local goods. As well as ensuring exchange of goods through relations of mutual self-help, the traditions linked with the marriage of islanders with mainlanders might also constitute a means of establishing vital marketing links – regular meetings or fairs where islanders and mainlanders sell their goods to each other (and identify possible marriage partners). Without these market outlets, people's access to income or goods for exchange might be limited, negatively affecting their livelihoods.



1. Assessing available resources

The investigation needs to be prepared taking into account the resources available to carry it out. It is easy to assume, when deciding how to allocate resources for an investigation, that more is better: more time in the field, more data, bigger teams of investigators, bigger reports. This assumption should be avoided. Some of the advantages and risks involved in being ambitious – in terms of time devoted to preparation, fieldwork and reporting, team composition and size, and alternative logistical arrangements – are considered in the tables that follow.

Attempts to stretch the available resources to cover more communities or areas can easily lead to a superficial understanding. Focusing on fewer communities in more depth will generally reap greater rewards. Where it is important to understand a greater range of variation over more communities, it will often be preferable to carry out an initial investigation on a limited scale and then try to set up mechanisms that will allow investigations to continue as a ongoing process. This is discussed in more detail in the section on "*Setting objectives*".

In many situations, key institutions and their linkages with household livelihood strategies may be similar across several communities or an area as a whole. Where this is the case, there may be less need to worry about covering a large number of communities. Once the analysis has been carried out in one place, findings can be verified over a broader area through more limited investigations that focus on those key institutions.

Table 2 – Assessing How to Use the Time Available

Investigators should be realistic about what they can do in the time available for their investigation. They need to decide on minimum objectives for their work, and make sure that they have enough time available to achieve those objectives. If the time seems limited, then they should consider modifying their objectives "downwards" and aim for quality rather than quantity. The time available for carrying out the investigation needs to be distributed in a balanced way between the preparation, the fieldwork, and the analysis and reporting. The advantages and risks associated with devoting more or less time to each of these three areas are reviewed below.

	Advantages	Risks
Preparation	More time devoted to preparation means: ■ a more thorough review of existing information; ■ more time for team building; ■ more time to develop a better understanding of issues and key concepts among all the team members; ■ more consistent data collection in the field based on a better general understanding of issues and concepts.	but can also mean: ■ the team begins its fieldwork with strong preconceived ideas about what they are going to find, leading to distortion of their findings in the field; ■ less time spent in the field.
Field work	More time devoted to field work means: ■ a more thorough and wider coverage to understand variations and complexity; ■ more opportunity for interaction and building rapport with communities; ■ more time for probing and cross-checking of findings.	but can also mean: ■ too much data produced and not enough time to process and analyze them; ■ depending on field work conditions, too much fatigue may result in bad analysis and report writing.
Analysis and reporting	More time devoted to analysis and reporting means: ■ thorough review of findings; ■ time for cross-checking of data; ■ better understanding of complexities in findings; ■ time to develop appropriate means of reporting and presenting findings so that they can be easily accessible to end-users.	but can also mean: ■ tendency to present results in too much detail so that key findings are not clear to the end-users; ■ results are already "out of date" by the time they are reported and presented.

Table 3 – Assessing Team Composition and Size

When a team is being assembled to carry out the investigation, three main issues need to be considered: the levels of skills and expertise on the team, the mix of discliplines and skills, and the eventual size of the team.

	Advantages	Risks
Levels of skills and expertise on the team	Higher levels of skills and expertise mean: ■ better understanding of complex issues and concepts; ■ more experience of alternative research methodologies on the team; ■ higher credibility among end-users.	but can also mean: ■ assumptions among team members that they already know the answers before carrying out the investigation; ■ tendency to be overly "academic" and an unwillingness to make compromises; ■ less space for local researchers; ■ higher costs; ■ end results that are difficult to understand and not "user-friendly".
Mix of disciplines and skills on the team	A greater mix of different disciplines and skills and on the team means: ■ diverse points of view, producing a richer understanding of issues; ■ wider range of technical skills represented allowing more issues to be understood in depth.	but can also mean: ■ higher costs; ■ difficulties in combining different ways of working of different specialists; ■ report may not be written in a coherent manner or not "read well".
Team size	Larger teams mean: ■ better coverage (of existing information, respondents, area); ■ more opportunity for cross-checking and probing of findings; ■ a wider range of skills and disciplines represented.	but can also mean: ■ complex logistics; ■ difficulties in management in the field; ■ fewer opportunities for close participation by all team members; ■ higher costs; ■ greater impact on the community, possibly leading to raised expectations and influencing the types of responses received.

Table 4 – Assessing Alternative Logistical Arrangements

Those planning the investigation should accurately assess the resources and level of logistical support at their disposal before planning the investigation. The objectives and coverage of the investigation should be tailored to the resources available and not attempt to do too much. Alternative ways of making use of resources and organizing logistics that need to be considered are staying in the community and covering a larger number of communities and areas.

	Advantages	Risks
Staying in the community	Staying in the community means: ■ more opportunities to interact with local people and learn about issues under investigation; ■ developing a better rapport with local people by sharing food and accommodation with them; ■ more opportunities for informal discussion that can lead to a more in-depth understanding of issues under investigation; ■ less time spent travelling from accommodation to field area.	but can also mean: ■ creating disruption and embarrassment in communities that are not used to outsiders or are too poor to offer hospitality; ■ people's responses and attitudes are unduly influenced by their perceptions of the team's purpose and interests; ■ limited working space for the team.
Covering more communities and areas	Covering a wider range of communities and areas can mean: ■ understanding a greater range of variation in livelihoods and local institutions; ■ a better understanding of the distribution of different livelihood strategies and local institutions; ■ findings that can more easily be generalized to a wider area.	But can also mean: ■ complex logistics; ■ higher costs; ■ more time in the field spent travelling from one place to another; ■ too little time spent in each location to gain an in-depth understanding, leading to superficial findings.

2. Identifying a team

Who takes part in the team carrying out an investigation will often be determined more by who is available than by the expertise, skills and experience that are ideally needed to carry out an investigation effectively. However, a few basic principles should be borne in mind when assembling the team.

Gender mix

Many institutions will affect men and women in very different ways or only involve one or the other gender group. In order to understand the respective roles of men and women, it is essential that the team is able to interact effectively with both. In some cultures, male team members may not encounter significant obstacles in talking to women, or vice versa. But often, women will only interact openly and freely with other women. This means that a balanced mix of men and women on the investigating team will usually be fundamental to carrying out an effective investigation.

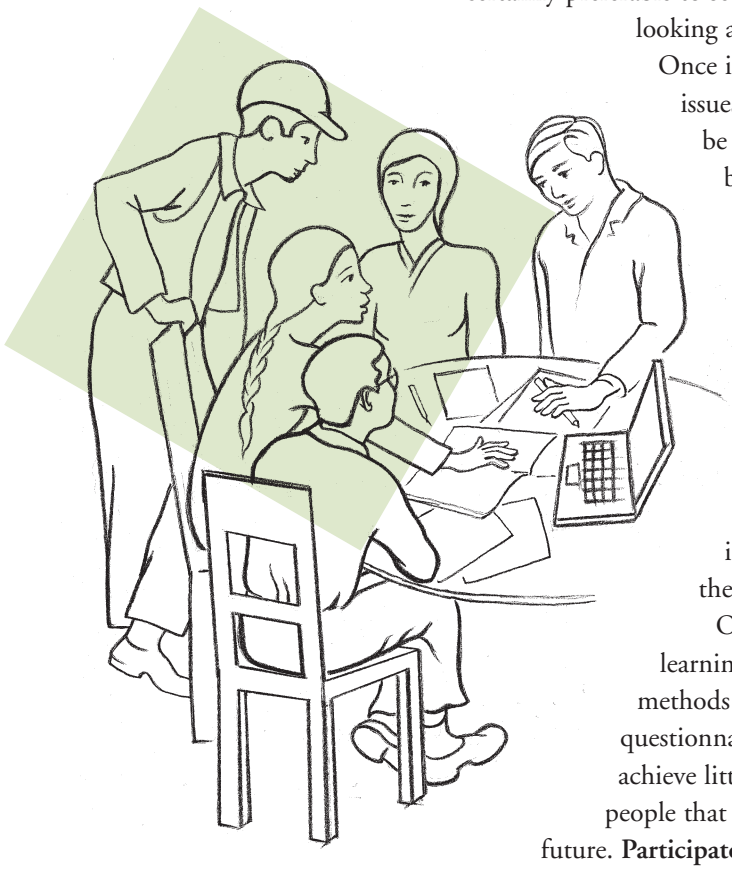
Clearly, the gender composition of a team cannot substitute for a lack of investigative skills. Women and men on the team need to be chosen for their ability to contribute to the investigation, not just because they are either men or women. However, in some cases, special efforts and extra resources may be needed to ensure the inclusion of skilled female investigators. These extra efforts and resources are entirely justified and will usually be essential to the achievement of a useful result.

Qualifications and experience

The formal skills in doing field investigations of this type – for example, asking the "right" questions, being able to probe and interpret the responses, being sensitive to local culture – are generally associated with social scientists rather than people working in other, technical disciplines. Certainly, trained rural sociologists, anthropologists, socio-economists and specialists in rural communications should be able to make useful contributions to the investigation. But, as a general rule, field experience is likely to be more important than formal qualifications, and it should be recognized that not everyone with formal social science preparation will necessarily be in a position to contribute effectively. Often the most useful insights can come from relatively unqualified field workers who approach the investigation with an open mind, and are anxious to learn as much as they can. By contrast, highly qualified social scientists, or other specialists who may be convinced that they already know the answers before they go to the field, could end up contributing considerably less. So the team should be assembled looking not just at members' formal qualifications, but their attitude as well.

3. Setting objectives

The objectives for an investigation of household livelihood strategies and local institutions need to be tailored to the time and resources available. Particularly if the team involved has not had experience of this sort of investigation, it is almost certainly preferable to set limited objectives initially (studying a limited area or looking at just a few "key" institutions or livelihood strategies). Once investigators have achieved a better understanding of the issues, concepts and techniques, albeit in a limited area, it will be easier for them to design further investigations that will broaden and deepen their knowledge.



Both of the central topics of this investigation – household livelihood strategies and local institutions – are highly dynamic, as well as complex. This means that knowledge and understanding of them need to be constantly updated and renewed. Many aspects of livelihoods and institutions can only really be understood through extensive observation and contact, and not through a "one-off" investigation. So, wherever possible, investigators should try to use their initial work in the field to create learning mechanisms that will help them, or others, to continue to "investigate" in the future. Often, creating these future opportunities for a continuing learning process will mean paying particular attention to the methods used during this initial investigation. One-off questionnaire surveys may generate much useful data but they may achieve little in terms of establishing the kind of rapport with local people that will help investigators continue to learn from them in the future. **Participatory learning approaches**, in which local people themselves

learn and benefit from the investigative process, can create a more solid basis for these learning mechanisms, as local people are more likely to perceive the benefits they can gain from continuing collaboration and participation.

4. Carrying out a literature review

The literature that needs to be reviewed in preparation for an investigation of household livelihood strategies and local institutions can be divided into two categories.

1. Literature specifically addressing the issues and concepts behind the study, including:

- literature on household livelihood strategies, both in the area under study and in general; and
- literature on organizations and institutions, both in the area under study and in general.

  This type of literature is most likely to be available in local university libraries, or in project and NGO offices, as well as on the Internet.

2. Documentation that does not specifically address the central issues of the investigation but is nevertheless valuable, including:

- **Historical literature** regarding the area under study (available in local libraries, religious institutions, schools, universities, or from knowledgeable key informants).

  Historical information can help to understand how changes in the political, social, cultural and economic context may have affected people's livelihoods and the institutions that help to sustain them.

- **Statistical information** from census surveys or surveys of agriculture, industry, small enterprise, employment and markets (available in local libraries or local government offices, but also often from on-going development projects and local NGOs).

  Statistical information can help the investigators to determine the "frame" for their study: how many people do they need to talk to? how common are different forms of livelihood? how many people are likely to be affected by different types of institutions? what are the forms and the extent of rural poverty?

- **Anthropological or sociological studies** of local cultures (available in local and university libraries).

  Anthropological studies, especially recent ones, may provide detailed descriptions of customs, beliefs and types of behaviour among different local population groups that are all part of local institutions.

- **Reports** on past projects (available in project offices or with local development organizations and NGOs).

  Past projects may have worked on improving household livelihoods and have had to deal with local institutions. Reports, appraisal missions and project evaluations, as well as specific studies undertaken by projects, may contain valuable information.

Some of this literature will require "interpretation" as it may not specifically refer to household livelihood strategies and local institutions, but it is potentially valuable and may often provide a starting point.

5. Planning the process

Creating opportunities for flexibility

In an investigation of this type, a precise work plan may be very difficult to determine ahead of time. Rather than setting an exact timetable and plan of activities, the whole team needs to have a clear picture of the process they are undertaking and the steps that they need to go through in order to achieve their objectives. Modules 2 to 6 lay out examples of the process for different stages of the investigation, but the ability to adapt to conditions encountered in the field and, where necessary, change the order and even the content of the process is essential. Flexibility, so that new lines of investigation can be followed up as they are encountered, will be vital to success.

Creating opportunities for interaction with the community

The investigation will look at issues that are often quite "intimate" and close to the hearts of rural people. It is unrealistic to expect people to be completely open with outsiders about their habits and norms of behaviour if they have not had the chance to get to know the investigators and feel at ease with them. Planning the investigation so that there are many opportunities to interact with the community outside of the investigative activities being carried out will reap benefits in this regard. One obvious way to do this is to ensure that the team can stay in, or near, the communities where they are working. Often, a very different "story" will be heard over a cup of tea in the local tea shop in the evening compared to what people say when they are being "interviewed".

THE MALATUK STORY – PREPARATIONS

From the FAO Guidelines and Dewi's experience, Musa realizes that there are many aspects of local institutions that she and the team probably will not be able to fully understand in such a short period. To deal with this, Musa and her colleagues set two key objectives for the study: (1) to establish a basis of understanding of linkages between livelihoods and institutions that will help the project start working in the field ; (2) to establish a mechanism that will enable them and their colleagues to continue learning about the more complex aspects of local institutions as the project progresses.

The team sets to work on the literature review. They divide up their tasks: Musa covers the university library and other sources in the provincial capital, as this also gives her a chance to talk to Dewi and her supervisor at greater length and understand the issues that have to be covered. Her discussions with Dewi and other researchers help clarify her thinking considerably, but a lot of the literature she collects seems very theoretical, and she is not sure how to transform it to help the investigation. Still, she uses her reading, and the FAO guidelines, to put together a tentative structure for the investigation. She also finds some (rather old) papers by a foreign anthropologist who spent several years working in coastal villages in Malatuk. These contain valuable information on local ethnography, customs, traditions and traditional institutions, fisheries and farming systems.

Ravi uses his contacts with local NGOs to gather reports on NGO studies carried out in the project area and to look for anything relevant that might have been done by the national NGO community on livelihoods and institutions. From a local NGO involved in the development of agricultural cooperatives, he collects a useful study of "village level cooperation and local institutions" carried out a few years before. From her time as a health worker, Diane is familiar with many of the government offices in the area, various surveys that have been done and most of the official statistics available. She manages to assemble a considerable body of fairly up-to-date statistical information, including voter lists from the recent elections and the accompanying census, and the results of some large surveys carried out by relief organizations.

Creating opportunities for reflection and review

Regular opportunities for the investigating team to meet, discuss their findings and adapt their investigation in response to what they are learning should be considered an integral part of the investigation. These regular team meetings, or workshops, are vital to keep track of the large amounts of information that will be collected, and to identify areas where new issues are arising or where there are gaps or contradictions in the findings. Particularly when combining quantitative and qualitative methods of investigation, it will also be necessary to keep track of the different methods that have been used to collect information on different issues.

These regular meetings can also significantly accelerate the process of reporting on the findings as some of the analysis and presentation of findings can be carried out as the field work progresses. This allows data to be "processed" when it is still "fresh" in the minds of the people who have collected it and will leave less work to be done at the end of the investigation.

Suitable venues for carrying out these regular meetings, their frequency and the availability of key resources (like writing materials and flip charts) need to be planned ahead of time.

Placing the investigation in context

The investigation should not be thought of as an isolated "episode" but as a continuing learning process that may be initiated during the study but should then continue throughout the period when development workers are implementing their programmes in a particular area. When planning the investigation, the ways in which the people and institutions involved can link with future development work should always be considered. For example, if the investigation is organizing focus group discussions in communities involving particular stakeholder groups, those focus groups can become channels for future development interventions, or might constitute "contact points" that can be involved in future monitoring and evaluation activities for development work. In particular, the investigation should be used as an opportunity to understand how information about the impacts of development activities can move from the households that are the "targets" of those activities up to those making decisions about how those activities are implemented, and vice versa.

Daniel's interest in local culture and history prompts him to volunteer to try and dig up any materials that might be available locally on the history of the area and the different communities and people living there. Daniel points out that much of this knowledge may not be written down but says that he can talk to some of the more knowledgeable people he knows and record what they tell him. Musa, worried that he may just end up telling the rest of the team everything he knows, checks a list of key informants for him to meet and what they will talk about. He comes back with a lot of fascinating information about local history and changes in local institutions. He obviously has difficulty in extracting concise "findings" and tends to want to recount everything word-for-word, but Musa emphasizes to him that there simply will not be enough time during their investigation to describe everything they see and hear. He quickly gets the idea and, like the rest of the team, prepares a concise review of "key learning".

Once they have gone over the literature, they spend the next half-day trying to clarify what it is that they are actually trying to study. Musa uses the diagrams described in Module 1 of the FAO Guidelines to go through all the key concepts. The idea of household livelihood strategies seems to be relatively easy for people to understand, and Musa is quite surprised at how quickly her team grasps the main concepts. But when the discussion turns to "local institutions" they encounter more difficulty. From Module 1 in the guidelines, they are able to get a general idea of what is meant by "institutions", but everyone on the team has some difficulty in working out the differences between "institutions" and "organizations". When they start discussing what the guidelines call "processes", the whole issue seems to become very complicated. In the end, as suggested in the guidelines, they use the diagram in Module 1 to go through some of the different institutions they know they will encounter in communities in Malatuk and discuss the different "attributes" of those institutions. Ravi suggests that they focus on what these various institutions actually do and the effect they have on people. Musa agrees with him that they can worry about definitions later once they have understood the institutions themselves. This discussion helps to clarify things enough so that they can get down to more detailed planning.

One of the first problems they have to deal with is deciding where to carry out their study. From the literature they have looked at, it is clear that there is considerable variation in the forms of institutions found in different areas and different "types" of communities. In the

time available, they cannot possibly cover the entire range. Musa decides to concentrate on a limited range of communities where she knows that her technical colleagues are thinking of introducing pilot activities. The information they have is sufficient for them to identify a few types of communities. In the lowland areas, agricultural communities seem to have relatively similar sets of institutions, and people's patterns of livelihood are reported to be fairly uniform. The main differences seem to depend on relative distance from the provincial capital and the amount of migration from particular areas. However, in a few areas the situation is much more complicated. In the large floodplain area near the main river running through the province, there are a number of specialized communities exploiting different niches in the floodplain environment – river and lagoon fishers, floodplain farmers, hunting and gathering communities from different ethnic backgrounds. In the hills in the interior, the situation is even more complex, with at least 20 different hill tribes each with their own language and institutions. Coastal fishers also belong to a distinct socio-economic and cultural group. The MPAP's priority areas have been determined as those most vulnerable to natural disasters, of which cyclones (affecting the coast) and flooding (affecting the floodplain) are the most important. So the team decides to focus, at least for now, on these two areas.

Musa and her team discuss the objectives they have set for the investigation with the team leader. He agrees that it is better not to be too ambitious initially and to focus on just a few communities. He is particularly enthusiastic when Musa explains the team's idea of trying to set up mechanisms that will enable them to carry out their investigations as a continuing process. He encourages them to link up with the monitoring and evaluation cell of the project and discuss with them how ongoing investigations of household livelihoods and local institutions might become the basis for a monitoring system that would involve local people. They also talk to the technical specialists on the project who have already been out in the field looking for opportunities for technical sub-projects. Together with them, they identify a shortlist of communities in the coastal and floodplain areas where her colleagues are eager to initiate work.

This gives the Musa and the team a basis from which to start working. They get down to planning the first phase of their investigation – a profile of the communities where they are going to work.

To identify more precisely the communities where they will carry out their investigation, they decide to carry out a short, three-day reconnaissance, looking at the shortlist of communities they have drawn up and then selecting those that seem most appropriate.

They agree beforehand on a short series of key factors that need to be considered in choosing the "right" communities for their investigation. They decide that during this reconnaissance they should identify communities that are not too large or complex but where local people are engaged in a variety of livelihood strategies, such as different types of agriculture, fishing and trading. Daniel reminds them that the willingness of the local people to take part in the investigation will also be a key factor. They identify some potential "key informants" – local leaders, traditional heads, government and NGO workers – who are familiar with the two main areas they have decided to target and, armed with this and some simplified maps of the areas and communities they are interested in, they set off for the field.

Their first stop in each area is with the local authorities, who have already been informed of their intentions. They explain the purpose of their visit and the investigation they are planning and clarify how it will contribute to the MPAP, which everyone already knows about. Next, they split up into two groups to visit their key informants. With them, they use their checklist of "key factors" to guide their discussions and are able to get a good, general picture of the area and the characteristics of the different communities they have short-listed. One of their key informants, a government officer in a sub-district office, also directs them to the head of a local women's organization. She gives them a clearer picture of the condition of women in the floodplain area where she is active. As a result, they realize that they know very little about women in the coastal communities, so they make a note that this will require special attention when they are working there. They use the maps they have of the areas to talk through with their informants how the communities in the area are distributed and how they differ from one another.

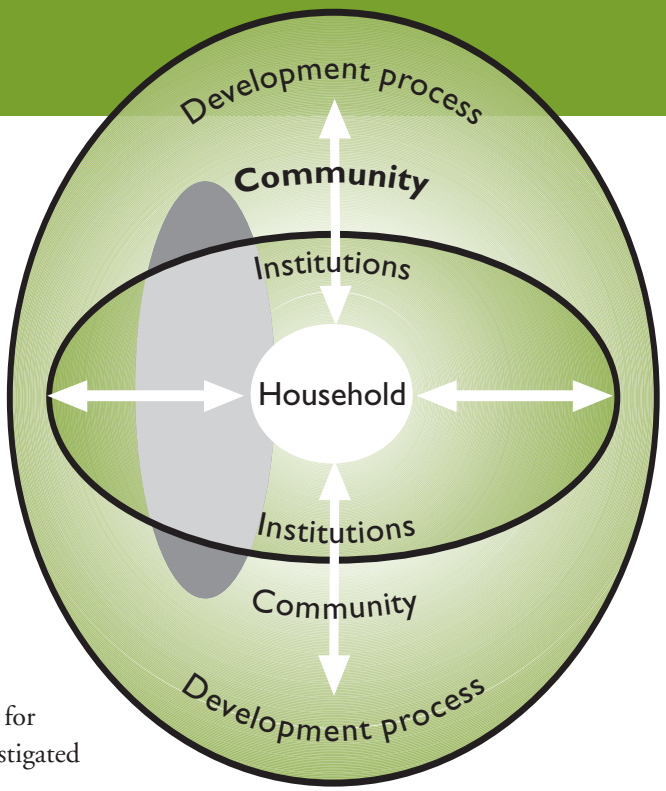
Based on these interviews, they narrow down the choice of communities to three communities in each area and head off to visit them. They introduce themselves to the village heads in each community, explain the investigation and ask to be "shown around" each village. They are nervous that they may raise expectations in these communities, so Musa has carefully prepared an explanation of the investigation that makes it clear that there is no guarantee that participation by the community will mean that project activities will take place there.

In the floodplain, they end up deciding on the community that they originally felt was least likely to be suitable. The village of Baraley is relatively remote and requires a one-hour boat trip to get there, but they are convinced by the fact that people are enthusiastic and interested and seem to have had little experience of studies or surveys. By contrast, the other two communities in that area seem to be suffering from "survey fatigue" as a result of past projects in the area. On the coast, the choice is more difficult. They discover that the "villages" they have identified are really just administrative units and that these are made up of smaller communities, each with apparently different characteristics, livelihood patterns and institutions. In the end, they select a series of these small communities that are relatively close together and appear to have considerable interaction, even though they spread across two administrative "villages", Cosuma and Yaratuk.

From this initial field trip, they already realize that they are having difficulty explaining to people what they mean by "local institutions". When they use the word "institution"; people always assume that they mean formal organizations like schools and government offices. The team has difficulty explaining that they also mean less "visible" institutions, like religious observances, local rules and regulations and customary law. So they realize that they will have to avoid asking direct questions, such as: "What institutions influence decisions about using land?" Instead, they decide to approach these issues more indirectly, asking questions such as: "How are decisions taken about land use?" and "Who makes those decisions?"

module 3

DOING THE COMMUNITY PROFILE



It is unlikely that any investigation of household livelihood strategies and local institutions will ever have enough time and resources to look at all the households and institutions in a particular community. So, right at the start, investigators need to develop a sufficient understanding of the community as a whole to be able to:

- decide which household livelihood strategies to investigate in more detail;
- decide which local institutions might be important for household livelihood strategies and need to be investigated in more depth;
- understand the context in which households and local institutions operate so that they can identify linkages.

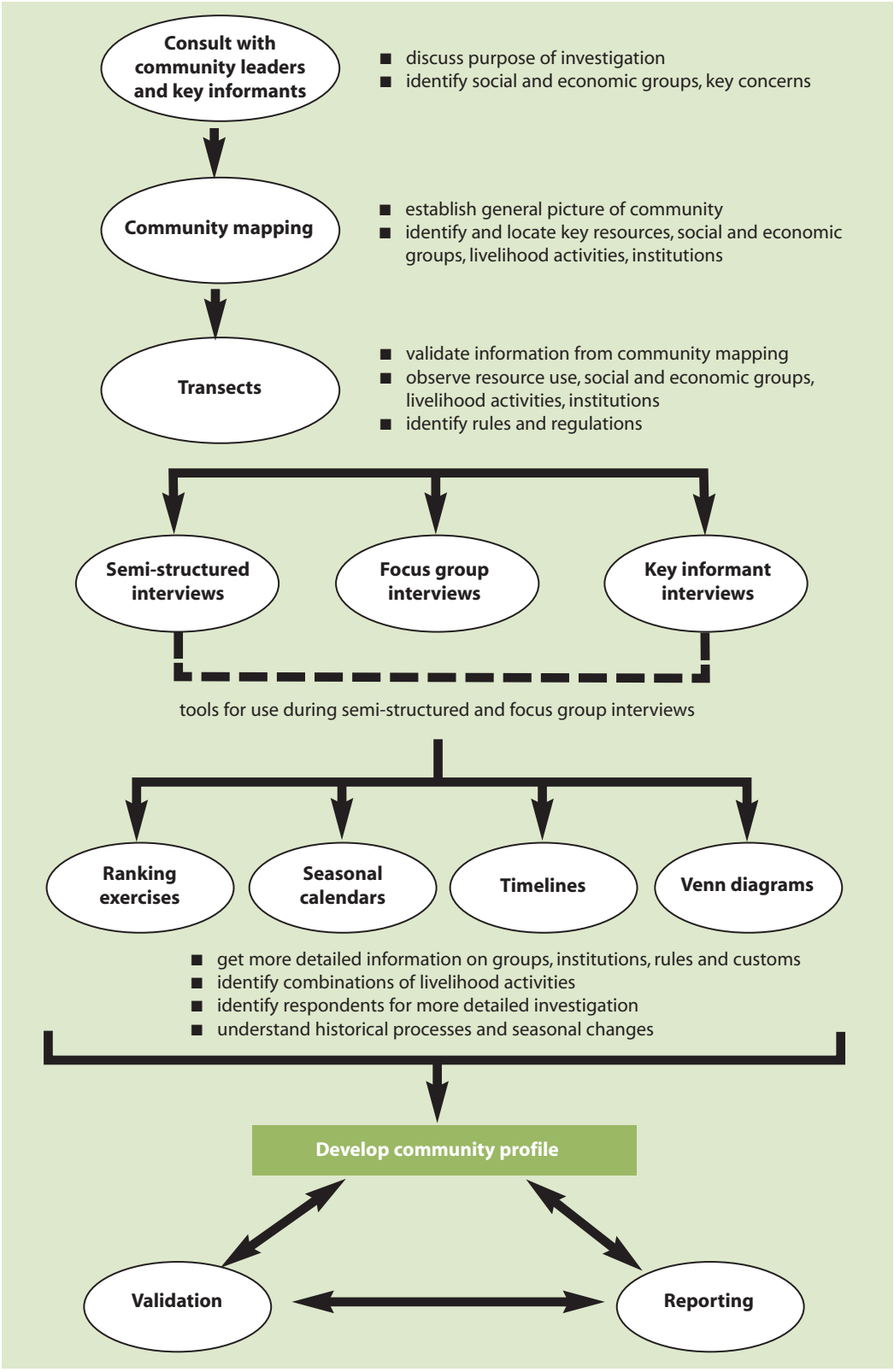
A community profile aims to do this. In the context of an investigation that focuses on household livelihood strategies and local institutions, this profile does not need to be "definitive" – the investigating team does not need to know everything about the community where they are working. This section aims to provide investigators with some methods that are simple to apply, have been proven to be effective and will help them arrive at a sufficient understanding of the community as a whole to be able to proceed with their investigation. This does not mean that, once the community profile has been completed, investigators have no more to learn about the community as a whole. Everything they uncover during the rest of the investigation will deepen their understanding of the community and improve the richness of their community profile. But what they learn during the community profile will provide them with an entry point so that they know where to look, whom to talk to and what approach to use during the rest of their work.

1. The process for developing a community profile

The diagram that follows suggests how different investigative activities might be combined to develop a community profile. There is no single "right way" for combining these different steps, and the methods suggested for each step, into an effective community profile. Investigating teams should always adapt the techniques they use and the way they fit them together according to the priorities and objectives of their investigation and the circumstances in which they are working.

The process shown may be particularly appropriate where the team has little previous knowledge of the community and has to commence working there more or less from scratch.

Figure 7 – Suggested Process for a Community Profile



2. Starting out

The investigating team should aim to use a range of methods to progressively build up a more complete understanding of the community where they are working. The methods should be thought of not just as different ways of "getting more information" out of local people. They are tools for communication that will help local people explain to the team how they understand local conditions. The methods employed should encourage local respondents to think about their own community and their livelihoods from different points of view, and to present their thoughts and perceptions in a way that the investigating team can record. An initial checklist of key issues, such as the one shown below, is a good starting point for the community profile. This should simply review the key issues and the questions that the investigators are interested in, and can be used right from the beginning to guide the team and allow them to keep track of those issues and what they have learnt about them.

TABLE 5 – CHECKLIST FOR A COMMUNITY PROFILE

RESOURCES
- What are the principal natural resources available to the community?
- Who uses them and how are they used?
- Where are they located?

LIVELIHOODS
- What are the different activities that households in the community use to support their livelihoods?
- Who is involved in those livelihood activities (men/women, young/old, different social and economic groups) and how many people and households depend on them?
- When do those activities take place (time of day/month/seasons) and where?

COMMUNITY STRUCTURE
- How many people and households live in the community?
- What is the gender composition and age structure of the community?
- What different social, economic, ethnic and cultural groups are there in the community?
- How are those groups defined?
- Where do those different social, economic, ethnic and cultural groups live?

LOCAL INSTITUTIONS
- What formal organizations and associations are there in the community?
- What rules, regulations and customs are in place?
- Who is affected by them and how?

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE
- What services are available in the community (transport, power and water supply, markets, agricultural extension, health, education, etc.)?
- Who has access to these services?
- How expensive are the user fees for these services?

COMMUNITY HISTORY
- How long has the community been in existence and how was it founded?
- When did different social, economic, ethnic and cultural groups settle in the community?
- How has the community changed over time and what has caused those changes?

This checklist should be constantly updated as the field work progresses and used as a source for developing more detailed checklists for individual interviews or questionnaires.

3. Field methods for the community profile

As with all the elements in the investigation described in these guidelines, creating a useful community profile will depend on using a varied set of investigative tools and then extracting and synthesizing the key learning obtained from them. Here, the particular relevance of some of these tools to the community profile is discussed. The Annex provides a list of publications and web sites with more detailed descriptions of the different tools.

Community mapping

Maps, created by local people, can provide an invaluable visual reference for discussions with them. There are numerous approaches to creating maps, with communities as a whole, with groups or with individuals.

Community mapping can be useful in several ways:

- at the very start of the community profile, as an "ice-breaker"; relatively large groups of local people can be involved in creating a map of the community and each can have an opportunity to contribute;
- giving the team a chance to observe the dynamics within the community to see who are local "opinion leaders", who tends to dominate the discussion and who participates less;
- letting local people play an active role, not just as "informants", but as "teachers", explaining to the team how they see their community, as opposed to simply answering questions posed by the team;
- creating a visual focus for discussion and relating points raised by local people and the team to specific locations;
- identifying transects through the community that will allow the team to observe different agro-ecological areas and natural resources, different groups within the community and different livelihood activities.

Once a basic map of the community has been prepared, it can be elaborated on in various ways.

Observation / transect walk

Once the team has obtained a general picture of the community from the mapping exercise, the team needs to verify the information that has been presented in the map and observe the resources, livelihood activities and the distribution of the various groups that have been identified. This can be done by choosing transects through the community, based on the community map, that will allow the team to observe these different aspects. Team members can then ask local people to accompany them while they walk along these transects so that they can ask questions and allow local people to explain to them what they are seeing.

These transect walks are particularly useful for:

- verifying the information given during the community mapping exercise;
- directly observing the different resources and livelihood activities that people have referred to during the mapping exercise;
- obtaining a more detailed understanding of the resources and livelihood activities by asking probing questions about the people involved (who?), the

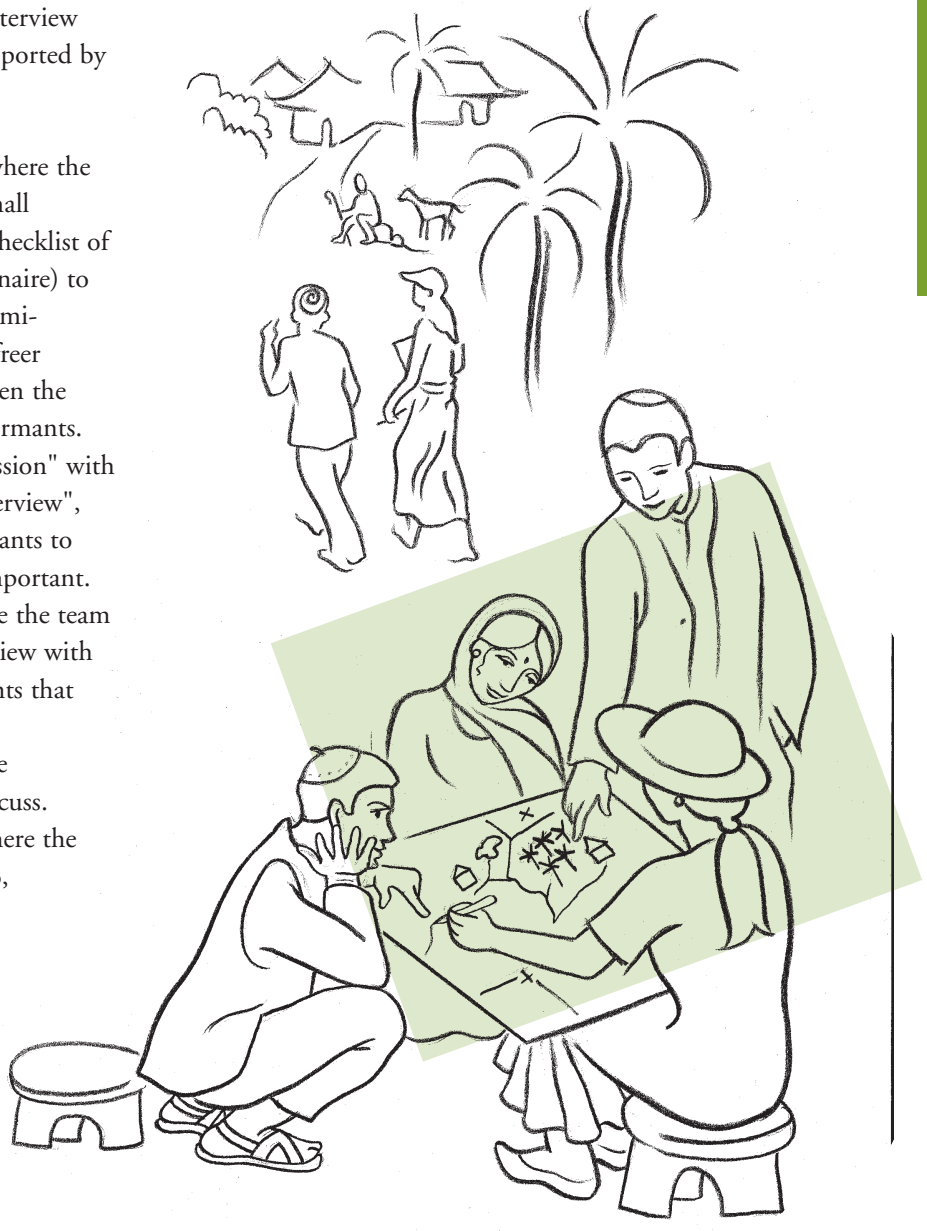
way resources are used and activities carried out (how?), the seasonality and timing (when?) and location (where?) of resource use and the reasons behind particular patterns of use (why?);

- identifying particular groups of households associated with particular livelihood activities and resources and noting where they live and where they can be contacted.

Interview techniques

Once the community mapping exercise and the transect walks have helped the investigating team to familiarize itself with the community, the resources and the different groupings within the community, the team needs to deepen its understanding of how the community is structured, how those resources are used and how groups within the community differ from one another. A range of interview techniques can be used to do this, supported by visual techniques for facilitating those interviews. These include:

- **Semi-structured interviews** - where the team interviews individuals, small groups or households using a checklist of issues or topics (not a questionnaire) to guide their discussions. The semi-structured format allows for a freer exchange of information between the investigating team and the informants. Investigators can have a "discussion" with informants rather than an "interview", creating more room for informants to raise issues that they feel are important.
- **Focus group interviews** - where the team organizes a discussion or interview with a particular group of respondents that have a common interest in or understanding of issues that the investigating team wants to discuss.
- **Key informant interviews** - where the team identifies individuals who, because of their position or experience, are likely to have particularly broad or in-depth knowledge about the community or a particular aspect of the community.



Most of the visual tools recommended for the community profile, such as **maps, ranking, seasonal calendars, timelines** and **Venn diagrams,** can be used as means of facilitating all these types of **interviews** and making those interviews more productive.

Ranking exercises

Ranking exercises are a highly flexible tool for analyzing, prioritizing and presenting information. Once investigators are accustomed to using them,ranking exercises can become extremely powerful means of representing relatively complicated sets of data in a way that is clear to both the investigating team and to local participants.

Ranking exercises are based on a comparison of various factors connected with:

- **Resource use** – such as the people involved, the relative importance or abundance of different resources or the benefits derived from different patterns of resource use;
- **Livelihood activities** – such as the people involved, their relative importance, relative benefits, the relative costs of different activities, the roles of people and institutions in those activities and people's levels of dependence on different activities;
- **Development priorities** – such as the types of constraints/opportunities, ranked by priority, starting with those that are locally considered most important to improve one or another livelihood activity.

The results of ranking exercises carried out with local people can be used as a direct representation of an analysis. The results provide an easy-to-understand record of discussions held with local people on different topics.

Seasonal calendars

The seasonality of livelihood activities and resource use will often play an important role in the way that household livelihoods and local institutions interact. For example, recurring seasonal food shortages among particular groups of people may be the main reason that they rely on local networks of patronage or relationships with moneylenders. Seasonal factors need to be looked at in detail at the household level when the team is investigating household livelihood strategies, but a general picture of seasonal patterns of activity is also important during the community profile. Information from discussions of the community map and from the transect walks will often provide a general understanding of these patterns, but they can be verified and clarified by developing seasonal calendars together with key informants or small groups. Seasonal calendars are a visual tool that provides a focus for these discussions of seasonal variations and represents them clearly.

During the community profile, seasonal calendars will be used primarily to:

- represent and analyze, together with respondents, the seasonal patterns of the main livelihood activities in the community;
- represent and analyze the seasonal patterns of resource use;
- identify patterns of vulnerability due to seasonal factors, who is affected by those patterns and what their responses and strategies are to deal with them.

Timelines

To understand the history of the community, timelines can be developed as a visual focus for discussion of the past and as a means of identifying key events that can provide essential reference points for people when they are discussing the history of the community. This may be especially important when local ways of measuring time are different from those commonly used by the team.

The analysis of past events, such as conflicts, periods of drought or natural disaster, or changes in the natural, social, political or economic environment, and the ways in which households and institutions have dealt with them, may be particularly helpful for the team. Timelines developed with local people can be used directly to illustrate these changes and provide a frame of reference for discussions of community history.

Venn diagrams

Venn diagrams can be used during the community profile for identifying key institutions within the community and the relationships between those institutions.

They provide a straightforward means of clarifying:

- what institutions are present in the community;
- how they relate to one another;
- how their memberships overlap;
- what their main objectives and activities are;
- how important different institutions are for the different groups/persons drawing the diagram(s).

As the use of Venn diagrams involves discussing institutions explicitly, they are better adapted to the analysis of more formal, visible institutions like cooperatives, associations or activity-based groups. They can also be used to look at groupings within the community, such as ethnic, social or economic, religious or cultural groupings, that may be particularly relevant for understanding institutional relationships. They may be less appropriate to discussing "invisible" or normative institutions such as land tenure or informal codes of conduct unless these are related to specific groups of people.

Venn diagrams developed with local people can be used to introduce institutions to be selected for more detailed analysis in the Institutional Profiles discussed in *Module 5 – Understanding local institutions.*

4. Outputs of the community profile

The outputs of the community profile are particularly important as they will usually create a "framework" for the rest of the investigation. Teams are unlikely to have the time to carry out an in-depth community appraisal, but they must make the effort to thoroughly understand who is in the community and what they do, as this will enable them to decide how they are going to look at livelihoods and institutions.

Reporting

As in the rest of the investigation, reporting should be carried out as an on-going process. When the team meets to review its findings and discuss the directions of the investigation, key information and learning should always be extracted and recorded so that, at the end of the community profile, the reporting process should consist of simply "putting together" what has already been discussed during the course of the field work.

Keeping track of information and learning

Even a brief community profile using the methods described above can generate considerable amounts of information, and one of the main challenges for an investigating team is keeping track of all that information and the different methods that have been used to collect it. If the team is going to analyze its findings as the investigation progresses, it needs to be able to quickly see what areas have already been covered, what learning has been generated and how that learning can be illustrated.

Tables like the one that follow can be very useful in keeping track of all this and helping the team to focus on the key issues. It will also ensure that the outputs of the community profile systematically include all the key issues that the team has identified for investigation. Different tables can be used to review and record key information about different topics of investigation, and can be used as "memory checks" later on during the investigation.

For example, the first table uses, as a starting point, the different social and professional groups that might be identified during the community profile and records the key livelihood elements identified during interviews with people from

Table 6 – Review of Learning from Community Profile – Social and Professional Groups, Baraley Village

Social or professional groups in the community	Main livelihood elements of households
Identify distinct groups in the community by their social or professional characteristics	List the distinguishing features of these households' livelihood strategies, including key variants
For example	
Seasonal swamp- fisher households	■ Dry season fishing in swamp areas - men; ■ dry season fish trading – men/women; ■ agricultural labour (harvest) - men/women; ■ wet season cultivation of marginal lowland – men/women; ■ collection of swamp grass and cane - men; ■ mat production - women.
Recent immigrant households	■ Agricultural labour – men/women; ■ petty commerce - women; ■ rural transport – men; ■ vegetable cultivation – men/women; ■ remittances from home province – men/women.

those groups, along with the team members, the methods, the visualization techniques and the type of informant who provided the information. This helps the team keep track of the different sets of livelihood strategies identified and who is involved. The second table records the different institutions identified, which groups of people are involved in those institutions, and how information about them has been obtained and from whom.

Investigators might choose to use other ways of ordering these tables, depending on the information that the early stages of their community profile generate. For example, if a detailed wealth map of the community has been produced, different wealth groups in the community might be placed in the left-hand column and the rest of the information ordered in that way.

The key point is to create a systematic basis for identifying the different household livelihood strategies and the institutions that are present in the community, and keep a record of the information that is being gathered about them. Later, once the investigation focuses in more detail on each of these key areas, information recorded in these tables can be transferred into similar tables developed for the household livelihood profiles and institutional profiles.

Complete recording of the methods used, respondents involved and the members of the investigating team who gathered different information will also help in the process of setting up a mechanism for continuous learning. It will help to monitor whether different points of view of the analysis have been taken into account to ensure a more complete and accurate picture of the situation. A mixed team composition, different sources of information and a mix of different methods help to cross-check the results.

Team members	Field methods used	Visualisation tools used	Type of respondents
Identify the members of the investigating team who collected the information relative to this particular group	Record the different field methods used to identify this strategy	Record the different visualization tools used during the interviews that can be used to illustrate the learning	Identify who the information was collected from
Ravi and Musa	Focus group interview	Resource use map Seasonal calendar	Group – male/female
Diane and Musa	Key informant interview	Seasonal calendar	Individual – female

Table 7 – Review of Learning from Community Profile – Principal Local Institutions, Baraley Village

Principal local institutions identified	Role, activities, area of influence of institutions	People/ groups affected by institutions
Identify different institutions mentioned during course of community profile	Identify the role and activities of different institutions and the general area that they are concerned with or the influence they have	Identify any particular groups that are affected by or concerned with these institutions, including their members
For example		
Youth club	■ Organizes sports activities for village youth; ■ organizes village "clean-up" campaigns; ■ experimental fish farming in local village pond.	■ Young people in the village – male and female; ■ whole village (through "clean-ups"); ■ experimental fish farmers; ■ young people from other villages (through exchange visits).
Malaney - traditional land tenure arrangement	■ Controls access to best quality agricultural land; ■ ensures land use remains within families of limited group of landowners.	■ *Estanio* – original inhabitants of area; ■ *abaduk* – more recent settlers (i.e. most people in the community).

Validation

A particularly important element in a "participatory" investigation is the validation of the investigators' findings by local people themselves. Validation can be carried out either through community meetings, involving as broad a cross-section of the community as possible, or in smaller, focus group discussions.

The validation process provides the team with an opportunity to compare their interpretation of the information collected with local people's understanding. This can be valuable both as a means of validating the information itself and as a way of understanding how local people's viewpoints and interpretation might differ from that of "outsiders" such as the team members. Perhaps most importantly, the validation process plays an important role in ensuring that local people acquire a sense of ownership of the investigation and its findings. This can be particularly important in ensuring that local people continue to work with the team, and with any project activities that might follow, helping them, and project staff, to continue learning about the community and providing feedback on changes and the impacts of project activities.

By the end of the community profile, the investigating team should have a clear picture of :

- the major patterns of resource use in the community, illustrated by maps;
- the settlement patterns in the community and some information about the different livelihood patterns of different groups of people, illustrated by maps;

Team members	Field methods used	Visualization tools used	Type of respondents
Identify the members of the investigating team who collected the information relative to this particular group	Record the different field methods used to identify this strategy	Record the different visualization tools used during the interviews that can be used to illustrate the learning	Identify who the information was collected from
Ravi and Musa	Focus group interview	■ Seasonal calendar; ■ ranking exercise (comparing involvement of men/women, adults and youth in different village activities)	Group – male/female
Daniel and Ravi	Key informant interview	■ Resource use map (showing land distribution and use); ■ timeline (illustrating history of settlement).	Individual – male (*estanio* community leader)
Ravi and Diane	Focus group interview	■ Resource use map; ■ Venn diagram.	Group – male (*abaduk* agricultural labourers)

- the major livelihood patterns in the community and which groups of households are engaged in those livelihood patterns, illustrated by ranking and seasonal calendars;
- the main "visible" institutions present in the community and where they are located;
- a historical profile of the community, different groups within the community and resources and resource-use, illustrated by timelines.

It is likely that, during the course of the community profile, the investigating team will learn much about other issues that will become more important in the subsequent parts of the investigation, such as:

- some of the most important rules and regulations in the community and the livelihood activities that they influence;
- the centres of decision-making within the community and the areas of influence that they affect.

This learning may provide important indications for the team regarding how to proceed with the rest of the investigation, but considerably more detailed work will be required in order to fully understand these aspects of the community.

The subsequent sections of these guidelines will focus on ways of developing a more detailed understanding of household livelihood strategies and local institutions.

THE MALATUK STORY – DOING THE COMMUNITY PROFILE

The team reviews the results of the short reconnaissance visit and makes final preparations for the first part of its work in the field – preparing a community profile for each of the communities identified. The team members have developed a checklist of "issues" that they want to discuss at the community level, and with the help of the FAO Guidelines, they identify different methods they can use during the community profile. Based on this, they come up with a basic programme of what they will do in each community, but they realize that they may have to adapt and change that programme based on what they find in the field.

From the statistical data they already have, they assemble whatever is relevant to the communities they have selected. They decide, right from the start, that they will stay overnight in the communities both during the community profile and the rest of the fieldwork. During the reconnaissance, they have identified places where they can sleep and meet for discussions - a village hall in Baraley and a schoolhouse in Yaratuk.

For each community, the approach they use to start off the community profile has to be slightly different. They send a message informing the heads of the communities when they will be arriving. For Baraley, they also ask if the headman can organize a village meeting during the first afternoon where they can start off their discussions with the community as a whole. The team debates this decision at some length, as Daniel and Diane feel it is a good first move but Ravi is skeptical about how useful it will be. From experience, he knows that certain people invariably dominate "village" meetings. But they eventually agree that it could be a useful way of getting to know the community, even if the information they get out of it will need to be treated with caution. Since the work in Cosuma and Yaratuk will cover two different "villages", and the "communities" concerned are smaller and more numerous, they decide that a single village meeting would not be practicable and that they will organize separate meetings in each of the smaller communities once they are in the field.

In both locations, these meetings start off, after the formal introductions, with a short explanation of why the team is there and then a community mapping exercise. The team members introduce the exercise by explaining that they think the maps they have seen may be out of date and they need to know where everyone in the village lives so that they can try to visit as many people as possible during their stay in the community.

In Baraley, this initial exercise involves a large cross-section of the community, including women and children, and generates a significant amount of enthusiasm. In Cosuma and Yaratuk, the mapping exercise has to be done four times in the two villages

covered. The different "communities" involved include a hamlet of marine fishers, two mixed communities of farmers and traders immediately inland and a small community living in an adjacent swamp area.

The exercise in Baraley starts inside the village hall but then shifts outside to a courtyard where there is more space and more people can participate. The result is a detailed map of the community drawn in the sand, with each household in the village represented. The main livelihood activities of each household are represented and, during discussion while the map is being drawn, a number of "secondary" activities are identified that are more or less important for different households. The end picture gives the team an excellent basis for identifying different groups in the community according to their length of residence, their family connections and their livelihood activities. The results in Cosuma and Yaratuk, at first sight, seem more limited, but this is largely because each of the individual communities is smaller and more homogeneous, and the differences between households within each community seem to be more limited. In two of the communities, the team has to overcome considerable reticence among local people, and, except in the fishing community, participation by women in the mapping exercise is very limited.

Based on the maps of the community developed during these exercises, the team identifies a few transect walks through each community that will allow it to observe different types of resources and activities, as well as meet and talk to a cross-section of local people. The team members ask to be accompanied on these walks by individuals and small groups who can explain to them what they are seeing. They are particularly eager to see how far what has been described in the community mapping corresponds to what they find on the ground. During these walks in Cosuma and Yaratuk, they identify small groups of households that were not mentioned at all during the community mapping because they are not considered "part of the community" – in both places, these seem to be very poor, low-status migrant groups. The team makes a note of the need to find out more about these groups.

In the evening, in each working area the team goes back over the community maps with small groups of informants and gets them to rank relative levels of "well-being" for each household, using a few key indicators that local people have suggested themselves. These include ownership of livestock and land, house size and type, and the numbers of migrant workers sending remittances. They are careful to identify informants from a range of socio-economic groups. In a few cases, they split up to do the same ranking exercise with several different groups of informants from the same community so that they can cross-check the results.

After these ranking exercises, the team reviews the information assembled and makes a provisional list of what appear to be the main activities in people's livelihoods in each community. The team then lists the main variations in livelihood strategies as well as the various types of institution, organization, regulations and arrangements that have been mentioned so far. Based on this, the team members review and update their checklist of key issues to guide them in their interviews the next day. They also prepare a table where they can keep track of the information they collect about each of these groups and about each of the institutions mentioned, leaving room to update these tables as they identify new groups and institutions.

Next, they use their copies of the community maps, which now include a ranking of relative well-being for each household, to identify a range of households covering different economic and social groups and different types of livelihoods. They decide not to worry about visiting a proper "sample" of households at this point but simply to choose a few households that seem to have distinctly different characteristics.

The following day, they visit these different households to carry out semi-structured interviews in which they discuss in more detail the differences between households, the livelihood strategies that people use and why they make particular choices about those strategies. At this stage, they use two main visual aids during their semi-structured interviews. They usually start with a seasonal calendar, on which people can lay out the different livelihood activities they are involved in through the year. Once all the activities have been laid out, they use a matrix ranking to get people to show the relative importance of different livelihood activities for income, food supply and labour. This gives them a basis for asking more probing questions about each activity and the various factors that affect those activities. Diane and Musa organize some time in each community to meet with women, either individually or in small groups, to listen to their perspective and ask the some questions.

The team members quickly learn that they have to be alert at all times, as some of the most important issues arise when they are least expecting it. For example, in Baraley, they learn about a key local institution before they have even begun their "well-being" ranking. During the discussion of how to define "well-being", local people make the point that access to land is an important "indicator", but the amount of land owned is less important than the type and quality of land that households have access to. Most of the best land in the area is farmed by relatives of the owners, who are almost all descendants of the first settlers in the area. The informal arrangement by which these relatives are able to use this land is called "*maraney*", from the fact that most of the landowners live in the provincial capital, Mara. These landowners prefer to distribute their land to relatives, and sometimes to friends, who reciprocate through a variety of informal channels, few of which involve money. The discussion of this arrangement also highlights an important distinction within Baraley between people descendant from the "original" households in the area, who are referred to as "*estanio*", and more recent settlers generally called

"*abaduk*". These two groups have quite different sets of access rights and are involved in different livelihood activities. Both *maraney* and the distinctions between *estanio* and *abaduk* clearly represent very important "local institutions" that will require more investigation. The team sets itself the task, during the rest of the community profile, of establishing the numbers of people included in and excluded from these arrangements in order to make sure that both are covered during the more detailed investigation to follow.

In the small community in Yaratuk, located in the estuary of the major river in the locality, the team members make one of their most important discoveries during their transect walk. While drawing their community map, local people show how important brackishwater ponds for aquaculture have become over the last ten years. Consequently, the team makes sure that one of the transects goes through an area where some of these ponds have been dug. While doing this transect walk, the team stops by one of these ponds to talk to the owner.

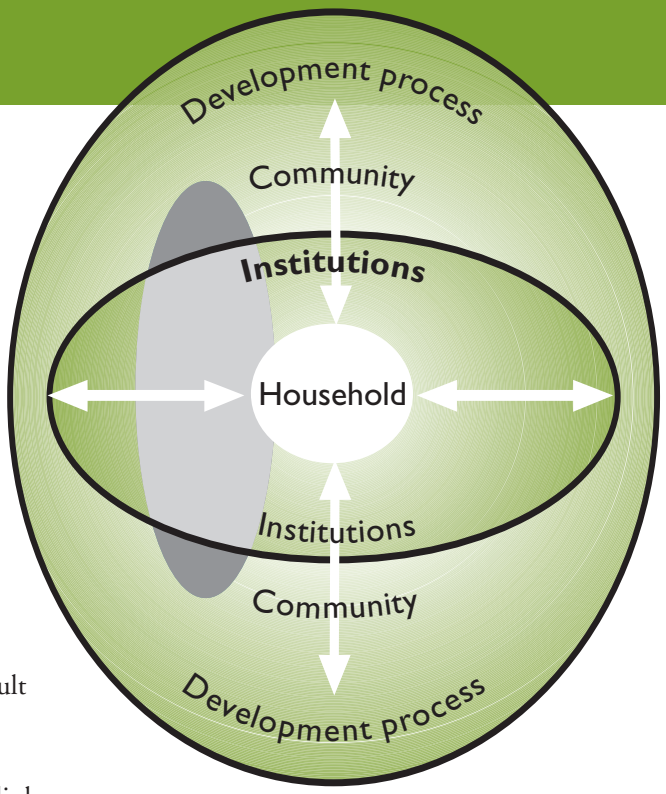
As they are talking, Ravi notices a group of people arriving by canoe at a neighbouring pond and beginning to unload clay pots from their canoe. When he asks who these people are and what they are doing, he is told that "they are just gypsies" who collect fish seed for the pond. Afterwards, Ravi goes to talk to them and discovers that they are, in fact, people displaced from nearby communities who live in boats in the mangroves and live, among other things, by collecting fish and shrimp seed for the brackishwater ponds. They are not considered part of Yaratuk and have no rights to village resources although they live within the village area. They play a very important role in supporting this new aquaculture activity in the area but are subject to very different rules and regulations compared to local people. The conditions of this very vulnerable group, known collectively as "*masleyarih*", subsequently become of considerable concern to the project. This is particularly important because the environmental changes caused by aquaculture development are causing concern in the area, and aquaculture is widely perceived as benefiting wealthier people and reducing opportunities for the poor. But in this particular area, aquaculture has also created significant opportunities for some of the poorest people largely because fish seed collection takes place in coastal swamp areas that are not subject to any form of regulation or ownership. Ironically, the very activity they support – aquaculture – also poses the main threat to this situation as the coastal swamp is increasingly being brought under new forms of institutional arrangements to permit its exploitation by private entrepreneurs.

After a day spent following up these various lines of enquiry, the team reviews its information and feels that sufficient information has been collected to design the rest of the investigation. While everything is fresh, the team members decide to note down the key features of what they should do in the next phase of the study. They make a rough estimate of the number of households they will need to talk to in order to have a reasonable representation of a range of livelihood strategies that they have identified. They discuss what methods seem to have been most useful and what elements will need more precise quantification.

All the team members have been particularly impressed by the level of cooperation they have received from some of the groups. In particular, they have had several very productive focus group discussions with groups of very poor households. The opportunity to discuss issues and analyze conditions with outsiders, like the team, is obviously something these groups value. So the team decides that it will try to build upon these relationships by "validating" any findings that have been generated and encouraging them to take an active part in the next phase of the investigation.

module 4

UNDERSTANDING HOUSEHOLD LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES



A more detailed understanding of how individual households formulate their livelihood strategies will be a vital part of the investigation. If the investigation starts by looking at institutions, rather than households and their livelihoods, it may be difficult to clearly identify the linkages that matter. Only by looking at the level of the individual household will it generally be possible to understand what the effective linkages are and how they affect people at the ground level. So the process of understanding household livelihood strategies will aim to develop **household livelihood profiles** that highlight interactions with local institutions.

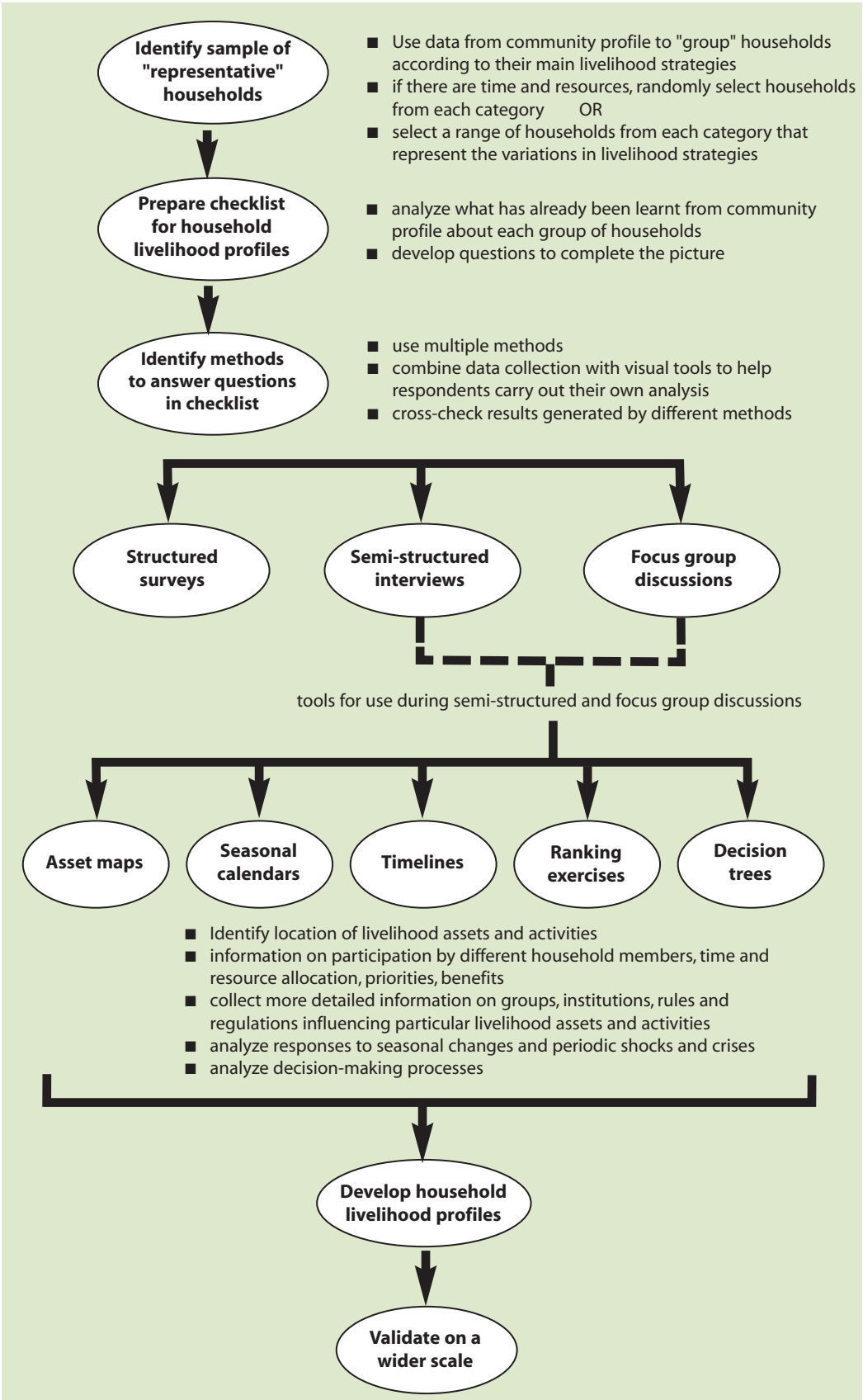
Not surprisingly, household livelihoods will generally be best understood by talking directly with individual households. This is important in order to understand the interaction of different livelihood assets and household members, the specific factors affecting the vulnerability of the household and the influence of different institutions and processes on these aspects of the household.

The need to look at livelihood strategies at the household level inevitably poses a problem about how to generalize the learning obtained from individual household livelihood profiles. A pragmatic approach to overcoming this problem is needed. It is not feasible to carry out detailed livelihood profiles on a large scale, as they are time consuming and require the use of qualitative, participatory methods. But once detailed work at the household level has identified key issues and elements in livelihood strategies in a particular area, the relevance of these on a wider scale can be checked using more traditional methods on a larger scale.

1. The process for developing livelihoods profiles

The overall process that investigators go through for their investigation of livelihoods will depend very much on the time and resources available, but some of the key options and the order in which different activities could be arranged are shown in the pages that follow.

Figure 8 – Suggested Process for Household Livelihoods Profiles



2. Starting out

Based on their profile of the community as a whole, the investigating team should be in a position to identify the key livelihood strategies that different groups of households in the community have adopted. The next step is to focus more on individual households and develop detailed pictures of how those households combine the various livelihood assets at their disposal, how they deal with their vulnerability context and how different institutions and processes interact with the various elements in their livelihood strategies.

Deciding whom to talk to

In most cases, the livelihood strategies of households in a community will be too varied for investigators to be able to cover them all comprehensively. There will always be a need to select those combinations of livelihood elements that seem to be most important for the largest number of people in the community. Based on the tables suggested in *Module 3 – Doing the community profile*, investigators should be able to identify a set of key livelihood "combinations".

For example, the community profile in a rural, lowland community might have identified four or five principle groups according to the main elements in the community's livelihood strategies, such as:

- farmers cultivating on their own land;
- sharecropping on land of others;
- agricultural labourers;
- small traders;
- fishers.

Community profile data should also indicate how these main livelihood elements are combined with other assets and elements within the household to create a complete livelihood strategy. Where these combinations are not yet well understood, the team may need to start working with some of the households in the different livelihood groups they have identified and, in the course of the detailed household interviews, identify how the livelihood patterns of other households nearby may differ so that the team can extend its coverage of households to include a broader range as the investigation progresses.

During the course of the investigation, the aim should be to cover a range of households that are engaged in these principle variations. The sort of sample size that the investigators can cover will depend entirely on the time and resources available. If it is possible to carry out a preliminary survey that allows investigators to identify precisely how many households fall into different categories and then randomly select a sample from these, they can be more confident that the results of their analysis of livelihoods are representative of the community as a whole.

An alternative approach is for the team to regularly meet with focus groups made up of representatives of households from different "livelihood groups" and discuss with them the variations that the team identifies, focussing on how widespread different variations are.

Table 8 – Checklist for Understanding Household Livelihood Strategies

HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION

- Household members, sex, age, religion, ethnic group, health status (disabilities, etc.), dependency status, residency status, roles in different livelihood activities

HUMAN CAPITAL

- What is the educational status of household members?
- What skills, capacity, knowledge and experience do different household members have (training, labour capacity, etc.)?

NATURAL CAPITAL

- What land, water, livestock or forest resources do household members use?
- What do they use them for?
- What are the terms of access (ownership, rental, share arrangements, open-access, leasing)?

PHYSICAL CAPITAL

- What infrastructure do household members have access to and use (transport, marketing facilities, health services, water supply)?
- What infrastructure do they not have access to and why?
- What are the terms of access to different types of infrastructure (payment, open access, individual or "pooled", etc.)?
- What tools or equipment do household members use during different livelihood activities and what are the terms of access to them (ownership, hire, sharing, etc.)?

FINANCIAL CAPITAL

- What are the earnings of the household from different sources (income-generating activities, remittances)?
- What other sources of finance are available and how important are they (bank credit, NGO support, etc.)?

SOCIAL CAPITAL

- What links does the household have with other households or individuals in the community (kinship, social group, membership of organizations, political contacts, patronage)?
- In what situations do those links become important and how (mutual assistance, pooling labour)?

VULNERABILITY CONTEXT

- What are the seasonal patterns of different activities that household members are engaged in?
- What seasonal patterns are there in food supply, income, expenditure, residence, etc.?
- What crises has the household faced in the past (health crises, natural disasters, crop failures, civil unrest, legal problems, indebtedness, etc.) and how did it deal with them?
- What longer-term changes have taken place in the household's natural, economic and social environment and how has it dealt with these changes?

POLICIES, INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES

- What organizations, institutions and associations (societies, cooperatives, political parties, etc.) do household members participate in and what role do they play in them?
- How are decisions reached within these organizations, institutions and associations?
- Who makes decisions about the use of natural and physical resources in the community and how are those decisions reached (what are the centres of decision-making)?
- What laws, rules and regulations affect the household?

One way for the investigators to develop this checklist is for them to take the information on household livelihoods that they have already gathered during the community profile and "fit" it into the livelihoods framework described in *Module 1*. This can help to highlight what areas they already understand and what questions they still need to ask to improve their understanding.

3. Methods for developing livelihoods profiles

For developing their livelihood profiles with individual households, investigators need to select whatever methods they feel are most appropriate for the particular households they are dealing with. Clearly, if they can use at least some of the same methods in all their household livelihood profiles, it may be easier at the end to compare different household livelihood strategies. Moreover, much of the most important information will be descriptive and qualitative, and investigators should not feel bound to use a single set of methods right through their investigation. Methods that work well with some households (for example, relatively well-off, educated traders) may be completely inappropriate for dealing with poor, illiterate and marginalized tribal people. Some flexibility is essential.

Whatever approach is adopted, though, it is important to combine a range of methods that will provide a "three-dimensional" picture of household livelihoods. The methods mentioned below may be useful for this.

Structured interviews

Structured interviews can take many forms. They are best used to obtain information where the possibility of ambiguity is limited – for example, basic information about the household, its components, the status and characteristics of different household members and ownership or use of particular livelihood assets.

Structured information sheets can be used to build up a basic picture of household livelihood assets, such as:

- natural resources, such as land, water, swamps, ponds, forest areas, grazing land;
- livestock;
- tools and equipment;
- boats and fishing gear;
- housing type;
- water supply;
- infrastructure;
- finance;
- forms of access to all these assets.

Using these types of "surveys" rather than traditional questionnaire surveys, which also specify what questions have to be asked, has certain advantages. The information required to complete the sheets can be collected at the same time that the semi-structured interviews are conducted, rather than as a separate activity. They leave more liberty to the investigators to decide how they want to obtain the information required and greater flexibility to adapt to the specific circumstances encountered with different groups of respondents.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are likely to constitute the main method for developing household livelihood profiles. Even if the investigators have decided to develop a more structured survey, they would do well to initiate their work on livelihoods with some semi-structured interviews to give them some initial ideas about what questions they need to ask in their surveys and how to ask them.

Otherwise, much of the information that can be generated from a structured survey can also be obtained using semi-structured approaches. Semi-structured approaches have the advantage of being more flexible and leaving room for the use of a wider range of interview approaches and visualization techniques that should, in the end, generate a richer and deeper picture of household livelihoods. However, because they will generate information that is not always in the same format, it is particularly important that investigating teams be systematic in recording the outputs of their interviews and the learning they generate.

Semi-structured interviews can constitute the frame for most of the other methods discussed in these guidelines, with the various visualization methods being used as tools to facilitate the discussions held during semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews carried out at this stage will generally be carried out either with individuals or household groups.

Focus group interviews and discussions

While semi-structured interviews are likely to constitute the "backbone" of the investigating team's methods for understanding household livelihood strategies, focus group interviews may have an important role to play. As discussed in *Section 2 – Starting out*, focus groups can be used as a way of checking on variations between households and deciding how many households constitute a reasonable "sample" if that variation is to be covered. The regular involvement of focus groups can also create a greater sense of "ownership" of the investigation within the community and establish a more interactive relationship between investigators and local people.

These focus group discussions can also contribute to establishing mechanisms that will enable investigators, or the agencies they work for, to continue their learning about livelihoods and institutions after the initial investigation has been completed on other issues that may be of importance in development work, and on project impacts. In the case of agencies or projects that have community empowerment as one of their objectives, the establishment of such mechanisms that involve local people in analyzing their conditions and looking for solutions may well be essential.

Mapping assets

The data collected using these more structured techniques can be expanded upon using an asset map to identify where different assets are located. The same map can then be used to identify and discuss other key assets that households use, including:

- infrastructure, such as water supply, transport facilities, health services, markets and schools (describing how these are accessed and what rules and regulations apply to their use);

- the location of sources of credit and finance (describing credit arrangements and repayment methods, timeliness with respect to the agricultural calendar, sources of remittances, regularity and frequency);
- the location of different organizations and institutions and the households' contacts with each (describing the roles of those organizations and institutions, their activities and interactions, and the relative importance of each for the household); and
- the location of social networks such as neighbourhood groups, age groups, interest groups, religious groups, caste groups, relatives, patrons, middlemen, moneylenders, etc. (describing the relationships with each and their relative importance for the household).

Seasonal calendars

In rural areas, seasonality will usually be one of the key elements affecting household livelihood strategies and the choices that people make about those strategies. A seasonal calendar will therefore be a key tool for talking with respondents about how they make decisions regarding those strategies. Seasonal calendars can be created together with respondents to show:

- livelihood activities through the year;
- the involvement of different household members through the year;
- earnings and flows of income through the year;
- patterns of indebtedness;
- seasonal changes in food supply;
- patterns of migration.

The calendar can then become the basis for focussing on how household strategies are affected by lean periods, or particularly good seasons. Particular attention can then be paid to the role of social networks, organizations and institutions in supporting households during these critical periods, or in the redistribution of agricultural surplus following particularly good seasons.

Timelines

Just as seasonal variations may play a key role in household livelihood strategies and reveal much about the role of local institutions in helping (or failing to help) households to sustain them, responses to particular crises, shocks or episodes of acute vulnerability will also be particularly informative.

Discussions of these events can be helped by a timeline identifying particular episodes in the past, such as natural disasters, epidemics, health crises in the household or other events that have significantly changed the household's ability to cope.

Once these events have been identified, investigators can ask more questions about:

- the household's responses and changes in strategy following these events;
- the involvement of institutions and organizations in helping them to respond;
- the involvement of social support mechanisms in response to changes and shocks;
- the long term changes brought about by these changes and shocks.

Decision trees

Decision trees are simple visual tools that can help to analyze the steps people take in making decisions and the factors that influence the choices made at each point. They can be particularly valuable when analyzing household livelihood strategies, as they can identify the ways in which different processes and institutions, such as formal or informal rules, laws or social norms, affect the decisions that household members make about using different resources.

Ranking exercises

Ranking exercises can also be used to analyze in detail the role played by different livelihood activities in household livelihood strategies and provide the investigating team with some quantitative indication of the relative importance of different elements. The latter is important because "reliable" data on some of these livelihood activities and the income they generate is difficult to get. Ranking exercises can be useful to analyze:

- income levels from different activities;
- the contribution of different activities or assets to food supply or income;
- the priorities attached to different livelihood activities by household members;
- the time devoted to different activities by different household members;
- the changes that have taken place in activities over time.

Table 9 – Household Livelihood Profiles – Baraley Village
Seasonal Swamp - Fisher Households

Principle household livelihood activity	Type of livelihood capital employed
■ Dry-season fishing in swamp areas - men	**Human capital** ■ fishing skills, knowledge of resource, labour **Natural capital** ■ open access to swamp areas, fish resources **Social capital** ■ relations with fish wholesalers, relations with heads of fishing crews **Financial capital** ■ advances from fish traders, earnings from agricultural labour **Physical capital** ■ own fishing gear, fishing gear owned by others
■ Agricultural labour (harvest) -men/women	**Human capital** ■ labour **Natural capital** ■ land owned by local farmers **Social capital** ■ relations with local farmers, kinship links **Physical capital** ■ agricultural tools

4. Outputs of the household livelihood profiles

As in the community profile, the learning generated from the combination of the methods outlined above needs to be recorded in a practical way. Tables similar to those suggested for the community profile can be used to do this. The tables can take, as a starting point, either the same social and professional groups suggested in *Module 3 – Doing the Community Profile* or other groups of people that have been identified as having broadly similar strategies. The tables developed to review learning about household livelihood strategies will need to cover the basic analysis of the different assets used by households, the vulnerability context and the influence of and on local institutions. The ways in which the learning was acquired and the types of visualisation or data generated to support that particular learning are also tracked, as in the community profile

Examples are provided on the pages that follow. The first table focuses on the analysis of the **livelihood assets** available to households engaged in particular livelihood strategies. Responses to the **vulnerability context** in general and to particular episodes that have increased household vulnerability are laid out in the second table. The key area of linkages with **local institutions** is then approached in the third table. Ideally, the elements in the three tables should be linked – the assets identified in the first table can help to identify the ways in which households have responded to vulnerability (in the second table), and the content of the first two tables can help to identify key livelihood activities for the third table, where they are linked to institutions.

Team members	Visualization tools / form of data available	Type of respondents
Ravi and Musa	■ Seasonal calendar; ■ asset map (showing location of key fishing assets and access arrangements); ■ decision tree (showing process for taking up fishing); ■ data sheets on household assets.	Household – men
Diane and Musa	■ Seasonal calendar; ■ ranking of income sources.	Household – men/women

Table 10 – Household Responses to Vulnerability Context – Baraley Village

Vulnerability context	Livelihood responses	Type of livelihood capital employed
■ Severe flooding (2 years previously)	■ Children and elderly people sent to relatives on high ground after flood warning; ■ shelter from flood on local railway embankment; ■ food from relief agencies combined with fishing; ■ food-for-work; ■ cooperation among *estanio* households to rebuild houses; ■ loans from relatives in cities for food; ■ loans from NGO to replace lost fishing gear.	**Human capital** ■ experience of past floods, skills in predicting flood **Social capital** ■ cooperation within community, relations with people living on higher ground, relatives in cities sending help **Financial capital** ■ advances from fish traders, loans from relatives in cities **Physical capital** ■ local railway embankment, own radio broadcasting information on impending flood
■ Illness of head of household	■ Treatment with traditional medicines; ■ women in household working for better-off *estanio* households; ■ children doing casual labour in return for food; ■ loan from *estanio* community group for medical treatment.	**Human capital** ■ labour of women and children, knowledge of traditional medicine **Natural capital** ■ access to medicinal plants in local forest area **Social capital** ■ tradition of reciprocal help within *estanio* community, relations with wealthier household

Table 11 – Local Institutions Linked with Livelihood Profiles – Baraley Village

Type of household livelihood capital/ activities	Institutions linked with those types of livelihood capital / household livelihood strategies
Natural assets Open access to swamp areas for fishing	■ Forest Department; ■ Fisheries Department; ■ fishing "captains" – heads of fishing crews with traditional "rights" to particular fishing grounds.
Social assets Reciprocal self-help among *estanio* households	■ Rights of *estanio* households; ■ kinship links between estanio households.
Human assets Fishing skills and knowledge of breeding grounds	■ Local NGO involved in fisheries education; ■ young fisher's initiation through elders of same kin (transfer of indigenous knowledge).
Physical assets Fishing equipment	■ Traditional fisher groups own boats and nets collectively.
Financial assets Raw and smoked fish sold for cash	■ Pooling of money in *roscas* (rotating savings and credit associations) to invest in new equipment; ■ youth association's treasury used to maintain boats owned by members.

Seasonal Swamp - Fisher Households

Team members	Visualization tools / form of data available	Type of respondents
Diane and Dewi	■ Oral account; ■ timeline (showing different flooding events, effects and responses).	Household – men/women
Diane and Dewi	■ Timeline of responses; ■ oral account.	Household – men/women

Seasonal Swamp - Fisher Households

Laws, rules and customs affecting those types of livelihood capital / livelihood strategies	Team members	Visualization tools / form of data available	Type of respondents
■ Laws governing access to state land; ■ laws forbidding development of swamp areas; ■ informal practices assigning certain water bodies to particular fishing groups.	Ravi and Daniel	■ Venn diagram (showing areas of responsibility of government departments); ■ oral account.	Household – men
■ Obligations to help relatives and other *estanio* households in times of need.	Diane and Dewi	■ Oral account	Household – women
■ NGO legislation	Ravi and Daniel	■ NGO work plan; ■ Community action plan; ■ Key informant interview.	Household – men NGO staff traditional village chief
■ tightly governed by age-old norms and customs	Diane and Musa	■ Focus group interview	Household – men/ 3 traditional fisher groups
■ some *roscas* are officially registered and have received start-up loans from development programmes; ■ youth association constitution.	Musa and Daniel	■ Semi-structured interview	Household – women 3 *rosca* treasurers

The final outputs of the investigation and analysis of household livelihood strategies should include a detailed profile of key household livelihood strategies, including :

- the key activities that make up that strategy;
- the key types of livelihood capital that contribute to the household strategy, illustrated by asset maps;
- the changes in strategy caused by different factors in the vulnerability context;
- the policies, institutions and processes, including local institutions that influence and are influenced by different livelihood activities.

In addition, the team should have a range of data sets and visualizations that can be used to illustrate the different elements in these household livelihood profiles.

Analysis

Analyzing the findings of the household livelihood profile can present particular problems for the investigating team. As in the community profile, it will be important for the team to constantly meet during the course of its field work to discuss findings and update the tables tracking the information. But the volume of information generated during the household livelihood profiles will be considerably more. As a result, it will be important for the team to identify the key learning that its field work is generating. Constant consultation between team members while they are working in the field is one way of doing this. Organizing regular validation workshops involving local people will also be important as it allows the team's findings to be cross-checked and prioritized.

Where more structured forms of data collection are being undertaken – for example using questionnaire surveys – the time required to enter data into a database and carry out an analysis may make it more difficult for the team to "learn as it goes along". It can help considerably if the analysis of this type of data has been

carefully planned ahead of time – the team should have already identified what sort of outputs it wants from the data and made sure that the database has been set up to allow those outputs to be created. For example, if data from the investigation is being entered into a database, the design of that database should be discussed in detail by the team and whoever will be creating the database. The team should give the database designer examples of the exact tables that it wants to be generated so that the database does not just become a means of storing information but a useful tool that can answer the questions the investigators want to pose.

This means that time needs to be made during the field work for systematically checking data that have been collected, entering them into a database (if one is being used) and carrying out basic analysis while the field work is going on so that any anomalies, problems with the data or particularly interesting findings can be identified while the team is still in the field. If the investigation is being carried out as part of the work of an on-going programme of development, this may be easier as the investigating team may be able to return to the field in the future to check on the results of its analysis. But any team carrying out a study of this kind should bear in mind the need to validate the results of its analysis in the field after the findings have been generated.

Reporting

The information that is generated by the household livelihood profiles will usually need to be summarized into key learning that is directly relevant to the objectives of the study. Other information may have been collected that may be extremely useful in the future. But the large amount of information that can be generated by this kind of study simply cannot all be made accessible within a short time.

In the short term, the priority of the investigators should be to identify those linkages between household livelihoods and local institutions that appear to be most critical for the people in the area. These linkages then need to be demonstrated from the data collected and illustrated with examples so that the next phase of the investigation, the institutional profiles can be planned.

So reporting should be kept brief and relevant. Once again, reference to focus groups in the community who can help the team to validate its findings and make choices about which institutional linkages are of most importance can greatly assist in this process.

THE MALATUK STORY – DOING THE LIVELIHOOD PROFILES

Dewi joins the team again to discuss the findings of the community profiles and plan the next phase of the investigation. The team members debate at some length about what they actually mean by "livelihood strategies" and "livelihood assets". They realize that they have all started out focussing primarily on activities that produce either income, food or goods for exchange. The questions they asked during the community profile reflect this focus. It is Diane who points out that the FAO Guidelines encourage a much broader interpretation of what makes up a "livelihood". She is concerned that some of the issues that she and Musa have talked about with local women, such as the importance of access to clean water, or the ways in which poorer households in the community are helped by better-off households at times of crisis, may be overlooked if the team focuses too much on things like farming and fishing. Musa understands her concern but is worried about the amount of time that might be required if they try, right from the start, to look at all these different aspects of household livelihoods. In the end, everyone agrees that they need to be careful to take as wide a range of activities as possible into account when they are analyzing household livelihood strategies, but that they will have to use the principal income-generating or income-substitution activities as a starting point for identifying whom they are going to talk to.

Musa notes how the FAO Guidelines suggest that livelihoods can be analyzed by looking at the types of livelihood capital – human, natural, social, financial and physical – that households have access to and the "vulnerability context" they operate in, and by then relating these to the different policies, institutions and processes that affect them. They decide that this framework can form a useful basis for a checklist to use when they are discussing household livelihood strategies with local people and, later, for analyzing their findings.

The team tries applying the framework to some of the household strategies that they have identified so far. In the process they realize that, above all, they have identified activities that use different "natural assets" – land, water, fish, etc. They now try thinking about some of the other aspects of the livelihoods of households they have already talked to during the community profiles. They work through the different types of "human capital", like education, labour capacity, skills and traditional knowledge, that have come out, as well as the different "physical capital", like farming equipment, fishing gear or boats, and "financial capital" in the form of savings or traditional credit sources.

For some of the groups they have talked to, they also identify important types of "social capital" that play a role in household livelihoods, like patronage, ties of kinship and different ways that households help and trust each other. They have also identified some of the key elements of what the framework calls the "vulnerability context" – shocks, like the cyclones, floods and droughts that hit the area in past years; and more regular cycles, like the changing seasons, yearly floods or monthly changes in fish availability. The process of applying this framework to what they already know helps them to get a better understanding of what it is they are trying to understand with their livelihood profiles and how they will eventually link with the local institutions they are concerned about.

Taking their cue from this discussion, the team draws up a checklist for the livelihood profiles that will represent the next stage of their investigation. They use the framework suggested in the Introduction of the FAO Guidelines as a way of thoroughly covering all the key aspects of livelihoods they need to consider, but they realize that, when they are actually interviewing people, it may not be possible to follow the precise structure suggested. Instead, the way they put questions will depend on the methods they are using.

For example, if they are asking their respondents to create a seasonal calendar as a means of analyzing their livelihoods through the year, they are likely to start by asking questions about seasonal changes, then ask about activities during different periods, and then ask about the different assets used in different activities. On the other hand, if they are creating a resource map or a resource flow diagram with a household, they need to start by asking about assets and then move on to talking about how those assets change at different times of the year and how they respond to different shocks. But the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework helps them to think through in detail what they are going to talk about in their household interviews.

As they do this, it also becomes clear that many of the linkages between livelihoods and institutions that they are ultimately trying to understand are likely to come out directly during the course of these interviews, so they need to include questions that will draw out these linkages as clearly as possible. They try to come up with a set of simple questions that will encourage people to talk about the institutions that influence their choices about livelihoods. Ravi and Musa's experience in PRA comes in usefully here, as they use the six key question words : what? who?, where?, when? why? and how? as a guide. The information collected about institutions from these household interviews will then feed into the more detailed institutional profiles they will develop afterwards.

Once their checklist of questions is ready, the team draws up a list of what seem to be "key" livelihood activities in each of the three villages it is investigating. The team members then use the information from their community profiles, particularly the community maps, to identify groups of people that are involved in or concerned with these key livelihood activities so that they can identify a "sample" of households with which to discuss different livelihood strategies in more detail.

As they draw up this list and try to identify locations and specific households that they can talk to about different livelihood assets, they immediately realize that they face a problem about how the different livelihood assets they have identified overlap and the complexity that this might create.

For example, in the floodplain community of Baraley, just looking at farming activities, they come up with a whole range of different livelihood assets. There are three main cropping patterns that represent different farming "strategies". In addition there are different forms of access to land – ownership, renting or leasing, several different sharecropping arrangements, and "borrowing" from relatives or patrons. There are also those who work as farm labourers, either exclusively or in addition to farming land on their own. The team does not yet understand what the connections might be between cropping patterns, land-access arrangements and decisions about labour, and it is worried that there will not be enough time to look separately at each of these elements they have identified. Besides farming-related activity, the team will have to take into account different fishing activities that people (including farmers) are involved in and a whole range of other activities, such as the collection of reeds for thatching, house construction, operating boats for transport and small-scale trading, that seem to play a more or less important role at different times of the year.

In the end, they agree that they need to identify about ten households in each community that seem to combine as many of the different livelihood assets as possible, but they have to accept that they will never be able to cover the full diversity of livelihoods in each community in the brief time they have available for their investigation. This reminds Musa of the interest shown in their study by her colleagues in the monitoring and evaluation unit, and she starts thinking about ways in which they could use the monitoring and evaluation system from the project to carry on learning and adding detail to their understanding in the future. One idea that they feel they might be able to use in their current investigation, and that might form a useful basis for future work as well, is to hold focus group discussions with people involved in broadly similar types of livelihood strategy and see whether these focus groups might become a regular "contact point" for the project in the communities. They agree that this might constitute a useful "entry point", particularly as they have already held focus group discussions of this type during the community profile.

The final step in their preparation is to think about the methods they will use with the households they talk to in order to build up a picture of their livelihood strategies. They want to be flexible but agree that there are a few basic sets of information that they should aim to generate with each household. One is a household data sheet that reviews the household components, its basic characteristics, main livelihood activities and education levels, and household asset ownership and access. Another is a map of the households assets, showing where they are located and allowing them to discuss with respondents the arrangements that allow them to have access to these different types of livelihood capital. The team also agrees on preparing a seasonal calendar with each household to show changes through the year and get a picture of the seasonal involvement of different household members in different activities.

These three methods should let them develop a picture of the basic elements in households' livelihood strategies, but they agree that it may not help them learn as much about possible linkages with local institutions as they would like. So they decide to use decision-trees to analyze with their respondents some of the most important livelihood activities in each household and how decisions are reached about those activities as this brings out some of these linkages they are interested in. They also discuss various forms of ranking exercise they could use to get respondents themselves to analyze what they do for a living and what influences their decisions.

They decide to try out this set of methods with a few households in different villages and then discuss how effective they have been, making any adjustments that seem necessary before moving ahead. Given the history of natural disasters that have affected Malatuk over the last decade, they also decide to talk with their respondents about how they responded to these events. They feel that a timeline would probably be the best method to do this.

In each of the three communities, Baraley, Cosuma and Yaratuk, they assemble focus groups made up of about ten people whom they have identified during the community profile as being involved in key livelihood strategies. For example, in Yaratuk, they gather together two different fishing groups – one of people engaged in seasonal small-scale fishing in the neighbouring swamp (combined with agricultural labour) and another made up of the "gypsies" who collect fish seed for local fish farmers.

Another group is made up of small-scale smallholder farmers specialized in farming the acid soils of the area, many of whom also now have fish ponds. Women who use local wild grasses for making mats and other crafts are also an important group in the community, while small-scale traders make up the final focus group. The team realizes that there will be overlap between these groups, but they seem to provide an appropriate starting point.

With each of these groups, they discuss the next phase of the investigation. They have some information already generated during the community profile and they start off the discussion by reviewing this information. They then ask the participants to focus on the differences between the various households that have the particular livelihood activity in common. So, with the group of "gypsy" fish-seed collectors, they ask what different activities households are involved in besides fish-seed collection. Once they have developed a list of the variations, they use a ranking exercise to clarify the numbers of people within that community who are involved in the different activities.

For the "gypsy" community, this highlights how, at different times of the year, the involvement of men and women, as well as older people and children, changes according to what alternatives are available. Some men have taken to seasonal migration to the city in search of work, generally leaving the women and children to carry on collecting fish seed for local ponds. Others are combining fish-seed collection with the collection (illegally, as it turns out) of various forest produce from the mangrove areas and working for local charcoal producers cutting wood and operating charcoal ovens.

Based on these rankings developed in the focus groups, they identify about five to six different households that seem to cover most of the main variations of livelihood strategy that the group has identified. Some of these are already present in the focus group, but they get introductions to the others and arrange a schedule in each community to cover the households they want to talk to in order to develop more detailed household livelihood profiles.

The team aims to make its interviews with households last, at most, about an hour, but, in practice, the duration is very variable. In some households, all the household members take part and are even reluctant to let the team go. In other cases, people are suspicious and it is difficult to get them involved in the different activities like mapping and ranking.

Some of the poorest households they have identified are particularly reluctant to talk to them. More or less by chance, they find that some of these very poor households seem to prefer to operate in a focus group situation. While carrying out a household interview with a very poor group of people involved in the collection and sale of wild herbs in Cosuma, the members of the household originally identified are very shy and seem reluctant to participate in the interview until they are joined by some of their neighbours, all of whom are engaged in more or less the same activities and live in the same way. The discussion then becomes much more lively. After this experience, they decide that continuing to work in the focus group format might be an option when they are dealing with some of the particularly poor and destitute groups that they have selected for the household profiles. Working in a group seems to give these people more confidence in dealing with outsiders. This strategy turns out to be successful in most cases.

As their work on the household profiles progresses, they find the practice of regularly meeting up as a team to discuss what they are doing and what they are learning especially useful. On several occasions, someone or other in the team has problems with the use of particular methods, and the team talks through how they could be solved. The complexity of the learning that they develop from their household livelihood profiles also means that they frequently need to compare notes.

Often, the information they receive during the livelihood profiles with one group turns out to be directly relevant to what other members of the team have learnt with other households involved in other livelihoods. The tables they develop, based on the ones suggested in the FAO Guidelines, prove particularly useful for identifying these interactions between different sets of information, as well as for keeping track of all the different information and the methods they have used to collect it.

Initially, Musa worries about the amount of time the household profiles seem to take. But she realizes that much of the analysis that would be required at the end of the investigation is in fact taking place during the regular meetings the team holds in the field. These meetings have the added advantage of helping the team to analyze what they are doing as they go along, and this helps to keep the work well focussed. To begin with, the team, now consisting of five people with Dewi, divides into two groups, but as the work progresses, Musa decides that she can spend less time participating in the field work and more time going through the findings and issues.

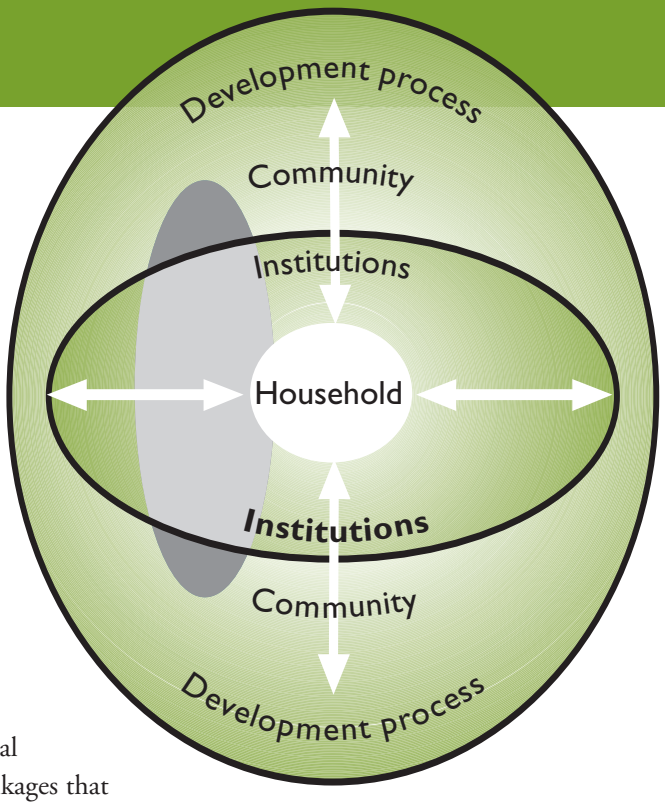
The team also notes that many of the institutional linkages already become clear as it carries out the household livelihood profiles. This means that much of the work during the next phase of the investigation, the institutional analysis, will actually be a question of pulling out and analyzing information already collected and verifying the findings with the institutions involved. The actual field work required for this final phase will be limited to a few more interviews to get more detail about institutions that seem to be particularly important.

The key findings of their livelihood profiles identify a set of key strategies in each community and describe how these strategies are affected by a range of different policies, institutions and processes. As a means of linking these findings about livelihoods to the next phase of the investigation, they take their findings back to the focus groups in each community to discuss them.

These discussions help them to adjust the emphasis they have given to some aspects as opposed to others and allow them to get local people to rank the relative importance of some of the institutional linkages that have been identified. At this stage of the investigation, these focus group discussions prove to be of great importance. Many local people who were still unclear about the real purpose of the study before these meetings, now seem to understand a lot better what it is about and become much more interested. And the investigators come out of these meetings with a clear list of "priority" institutions that they need to look at as part of the institutional profile.

module 5

UNDERSTANDING LOCAL INSTITUTIONS



After looking carefully at a range of household livelihood strategies and developing household livelihood profiles as suggested in Module 4, investigators should be in a position to identify which local institutions play important roles in those strategies. But in order to understand how these linkages work, and how to undertake development activities that will either strengthen existing institutional linkages that help poor households, or develop new linkages that are appropriate and sustainable, much more has to be understood about those institutions themselves.

Local institutions and organizations cannot be taken at "face value". We must try to understand what goes on beneath their "surface". Development workers tend to pay most attention to relatively formal, visible institutions, such as development agencies or various forms of associations and organizations that they find within communities. This is because they are easy to identify, and usually have fairly clearly stated objectives. But institutions often overlap – informal, "invisible" social or socio-cultural institutions, such as caste, gender or informal "rules of the game", may exist throughout society and inside formal, "visible" institutions. These "nested" institutions can undermine the objectives and effectiveness of the formal institutions within which they are "hidden".

For example, a cooperative society - an organized, formal institution – may claim to involve the rural poor as members and support their farming enterprises. But there may be socio-cultural institutions that make it a social obligation for people in positions of power or influence to help relatives and kin. This may mean that those in charge of the cooperative channel the benefits to particular members who are linked to them by kinship. This may completely undermine the capacity (and willingness) of the organization to achieve its objective of being open-access and egalitarian.

Trying to place local institutions and organizations somewhere along the axes in Figure 3 (Module 1) will raise many questions. This in itself can often be a learning experience, as it forces us to think about certain issues which we may not have considered. For example, the regulatory functions of a community-based forestry enterprise to monitor access to village-held common property land; they may be largely informal (or even, strictly speaking, illegal), and reach beyond forest resources to include access to arable land, grazing areas, water, etc.

1. The process for developing institutional profiles

Through the community and household livelihood profiles (see Modules 3 and 4), it should be possible to already get an idea of which institutions and organizations have the most significant impact, whether positive or negative, on the livelihoods of poor households. The process of developing institutional profiles described in this module aims to help investigators to achieve a more in-depth understanding of how those institutions work. This, in turn, should help investigators develop a clearer picture of the linkages to household livelihood strategies and how they may affect development efforts.

Investigating institutions generally requires qualitative research methods that can be time consuming to use, but much of the basic information required to complete the institutional profiles will probably already be available from the community and household livelihoods profiles. Therefore, it should be possible to keep the work required to complete the institutional profiles tightly focussed on specific aspects thus far not covered.

More visible institutions, such as organizations and formal associations, will generally be easier to investigate – they usually have offices and staff who can be approached, and their key attributes are easier to discuss and analyze. These institutions will probably have already been clearly identified and little extra work may be required to complete their profiles. However, even these types of institutions may require understanding the unwritten "rules of the game" at work within them.

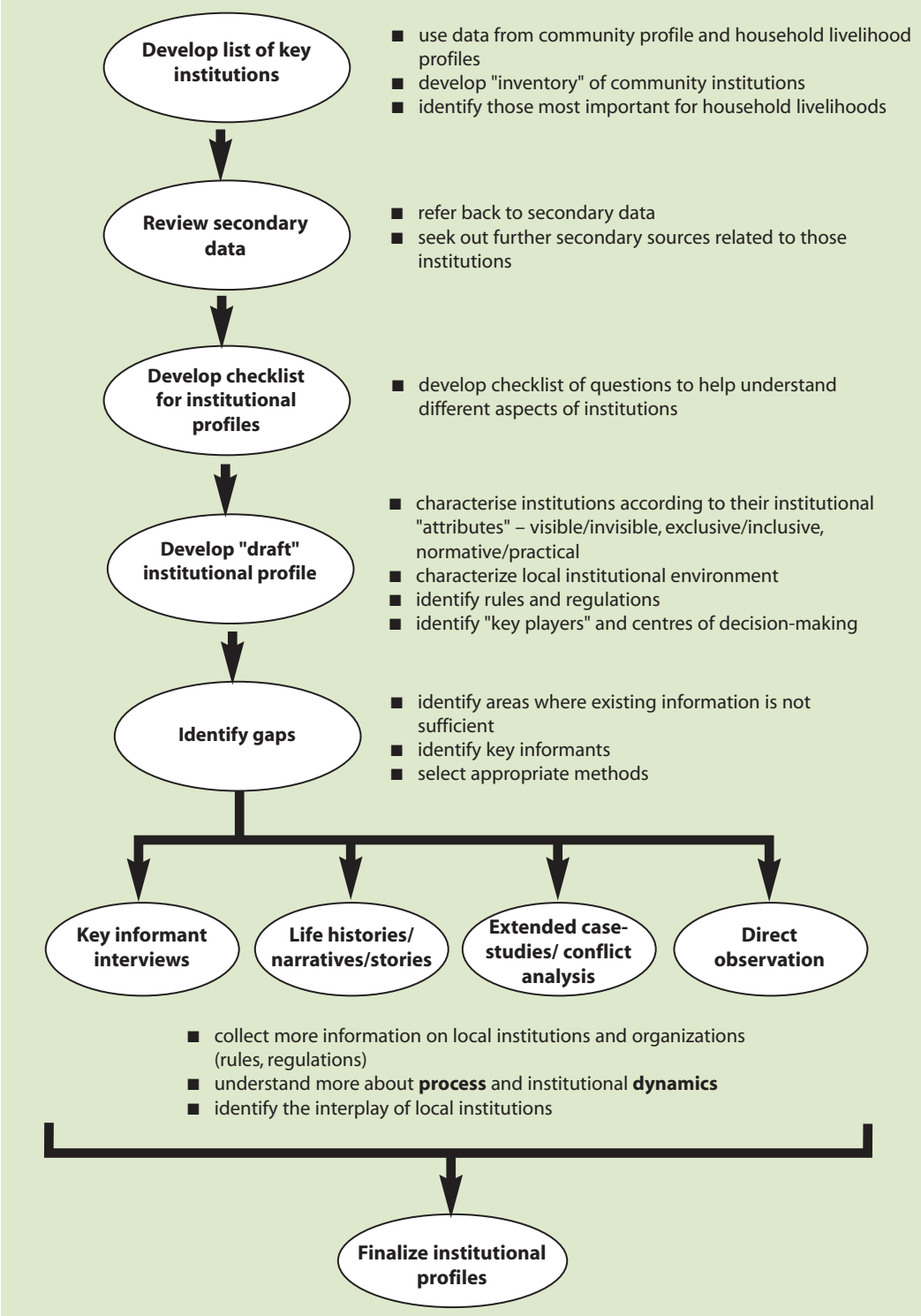
For example, it may be easy enough to discuss with members of a local farmers' association how that association is structured, its objectives and the criteria for membership. However, if key informants have reported that the association is not functioning properly, is inefficient and the managers are misappropriating funds and helping only their relatives and "clients" whom they wish to patronize, it will be more difficult to get the 'real story' from the current managerial staff. Information about these kinds of controversial processes can only be collected using indirect methods, such as historical accounts of the institution (how it has changed and how it has dealt with conflicts) and by talking to stakeholders both inside and outside the institution.

The bulk of the field work required for the institutional profiles is likely to be taken up by the investigation of informal institutions like these, whether they are processes going on inside existing formal institutions or organizations or in society as a whole.

The process for developing the institutional profiles shown in Figure 9 has to be approached in a flexible way. The actual steps that are likely to be required will depend very much on investigators' priorities, the amount of information they have already been able to gather during their field work so far, and the amount of time they have at their disposal to go into detail. Investigators may choose to focus initially on just one or two institutions that seem to be particularly important, or particularly relevant for the agency they are working for, and try to establish mechanisms for continuing their learning through the duration of the project or programme.

In every situation, the team must decide which institutions and organizations are the most relevant and should be explored further. Some "supplementary tools" are presented below for that purpose, which also serve to investigate the interplay and "nesting" of different institutions.

Figure 9 – Suggested Process for the Institutional Profiles



2. Starting out

Secondary data

Particularly with institutions, secondary data can provide an important basis for the initial development of the institutional profiles. Some of this data may have already been collected at the very beginning of the investigation. Sources include project and programme documents, legislative bulletins and reports, data at the different government administrative levels, and research articles from libraries. The nearest local government office should be visited not just as a formal matter of courtesy, but with the aim of collecting and discussing available data and policy and legal documents. Likewise, reports and statistics from government ministries and departments may provide useful background. It may be worth visiting extension agents working in the area and other individuals familiar with institutional issues and related topics.

Developing a checklist

A checklist of key questions to guide investigators as they develop their institutional profiles is important to ensure coverage of complex issues that need to be understood. This checklist can be developed using the key attributes of institutions discussed in *Module 1 – Preparing the investigation.* An example of a checklist for the institutional profile is provided on the page that follows.

The questions that make up this checklist are relatively specific and can easily be developed into a questionnaire if investigators feel that this is the best way to proceed. Otherwise, the questions can be used as a guide for semi-structured interviews.

Drawing up a "draft" institutional profile

Once it has developed a checklist, the investigating team can apply it to the key institutions that it has identified during the community and livelihood profiles. Some of the questions may already have answers, but others will almost certainly require further investigation using the methods suggested in Section 3. The process of developing these "draft" profiles will also help the team to get a better grasp of the institutional issues that it needs to address. Examples of completed institutional profiles using a table format are given in Section 4. Using this format for the draft institutional profiles as well should highlight clearly where more work needs to be done in the field.

Identifying gaps in the information base

The drafting of the institutional profiles may point out possible gaps in information and data, which can also be addressed using the methods suggested in Section 3. In addition, they may serve to fine-tune the checklists to better respond to certain more specific situations, so that a given checklist itself will be refined on a "made-to-measure" basis and thereby improved for use during the remaining time period allocated to fieldwork.

Table 12 – Checklist for Developing Institutional Profiles "Visibility" and "Invisibility"

The form and structure of institutions, their ownership and the key actors or stakeholders

LEGALITY	LEGITIMACY
■ What is the legal status of the institution or organization? for example ■ does is have an official, legal status? ■ is it registered? ■ How was that status determined? *for example* ■ by a policy decision? ■ by legislation? ■ by registration? ■ Who was involved in establishing that legal status?	■ How and when did the institution or organization originate? ■ What sort of local support does the institution or organization command and why? ■ Who initiated the creation of the institution or organization? *for example* ■ local people? ■ local leaders? ■ outsiders (NGO, government, etc.)? ■ Who regards the institution or organization as legitimate?
FORMALITY	**INFORMALITY**
■ What procedures or formally established rules of behaviour does the institution or organization have? ■ What formal roles and tasks are established within the organization? ■ How are meetings called? ■ How often are they called? ■ Are they recorded? ■ Who decides procedures? ■ Who calls the meetings?	■ What role is played by different informal rules or processes? *for example* ■ gender? ■ kinship? ■ class? ■ social status? ■ ethnic group? ■ How do these informal rules affect what the institution or organization does? *for example* ■ do they influence who comes to meetings? ■ do they influence who speaks up at meetings? ■ Who establishes or influences informal rules or processes?
LEVEL	**GEOGRAPHIC COVERAGE**
■ At what level does the institution or organization operate? *for example* ■ family? ■ lineage, clan or tribe? ■ professional group? ■ community? ■ inter-community? ■ women or men? ■ Who, or what, determines the level at which the institution operates?	■ What area does the institution or organization cover? *for example* ■ neighbourhood? ■ village? ■ beyond the village? ■ How (and whom) is the coverage of the institution determined ?

Table 13 – Checklist for Developing Institutional Profiles Objectives and Activities

Their normative versus practical attributes; what institutions say they do and what they actually do

CAPABILITIES	WILLINGNESS
■ What are the stated objectives of the institution or organization? ■ What is the capacity of the institution or organization to reach those objectives? ■ Are the objectives realistic when compared to its capacity? ■ Who is involved establishing, changing or influencing the objectives of the institution and its capacity to achieve those objectives?	■ Do leaders and community members sometimes disagree on the management of the institution or organization? ■ What commitment is there on the part of the institution or organization and its members to achieve its objectives and to follow its rules? ■ Are the names of members and their rights and duties posted on the village council door, or elsewhere? ■ Does the institution or organization have a 'vision'? If yes, is it stated or expressed anywhere? ■ Who is involved in influencing the commitment of the institution to achieving its objectives?
MANDATED OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES	**AD-HOC OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**
■ What objectives and activities does the institution or organization have a mandate to achieve or carry out? ■ What, or whom, does the institution or organization claim to represent? ■ How was this mandate established? *for example* ■ by a government policy? ■ by traditional decision-making procedures? ■ by local consensus? ■ by established practice? ■ Who gave them that mandate? *for example* ■ government? ■ traditional authorities? ■ local people?	■ What objectives or activities, besides the stated ones, have emerged over time? ■ How have they been addressed? ■ Does the institution or organization defend the interests of a particular group of people (does it play an advocacy role)? For whom? ■ Who is involved in establishing or influencing these ad-hoc objectives and activities?
ACTUAL ACTIVITIES	**FUTURE ACTIVITIES**
■ How does the institution or organization achieve, or try to achieve, its objectives? ■ What activities does the organization undertake now? ■ Who participates in activities and who determines where, how and when activities are carried out?	■ How does it plan to achieve its objectives in the future? ■ What activities are planned for the future? ■ Who will participate in future activities? ■ Who determines what future activities will be undertaken?

Table 14 – Checklist for Developing Institutional Profiles
Membership and Participation

Who is included and excluded from institutions or organizations; the rules that govern membership

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION	CONTRIBUTIONS
■ What are the conditions for membership? ■ Does membership in this institutions or organization exclude membership elsewhere? ■ Who participates in the institution or organization? ■ Who is excluded for the institution or organization and why?	■ What fees or other forms of contribution are expected from members? *for example* ■ a lump sum investment, food, time, charitable contributions, sharing of land, water, animals, labour? ■ Is membership transferable or inheritable? ■ How are these contributions determined? ■ Who determines these contributions? ■ Who collects them? ■ Who decides how they are used?

RULES OF THE GAME	"NON-WORKING" RULES AND SANCTIONS
■ How, when and by whom were the rules established to determine who benefits (most/least)? ■ How, if at all, do women participate in the institution or organization? ■ What forms of patronage and protection, if any, does the institution or organization provide? ■ Who are the institution or organization's main beneficiaries? ■ Who decides on how benefits from the institution are distributed?	■ Are some of the rules applied differently to different people? ■ Are there any rules that are no longer working or applied? ■ What sanctions are there in place for not following the rules? ■ How are they enforced? By whom? ■ Are they applied to everyone in the same way? ■ How often have they been applied in the past? ■ Who decides on and enforces these rules ad sanctions? ■ Who has been subject to them now and in the past?

DECISION-MAKING	LEADERSHIP
■ How, where, when, and by whom are decisions made? ■ How are they transmitted to others? ■ What possibilities are there to debate decisions? ■ What form of consensus is involved in decisions? ■ How and among whom is consensus normally achieved? ■ Are decisions ever revoked? ■ Why and when has this happened? ■ Who influences the decision-making process?	■ What leadership exists in the institution or organization? Is there an organigramme? ■ How are leaders chosen/elected? For how long? ■ How closely does the level at which the leadership operates correspond to the level at which the whole institution or organization operates? ■ Who participates in the leadership of the institution, both formally and informally? ■ Who has participated in the leadership in the past?

3. Methods for developing institutional profiles

To a considerable extent, a thorough checklist of institutional issues and the questions to ask about institutions constitutes the single most valuable method for developing the institutional profiles. The development of these checklists should help the investigating team to clearly identify where information gaps still exist.

Where these gaps are identified, additional information may need to be collected directly from people involved in the concerned institutions or from people affected by them, using semi-structured interviews either with key informants or with focus groups. By the time the investigators arrive at this point, they should have sufficient familiarity with the community so that they can easily identify those people who will be in the best position to inform them about different institutions. The interviews carried out at this point will generally be shorter and more sharply focussed than those carried out during the community and livelihood profiles.

Key informant interviews

Key informants can be selected based on their role in the local institutions concerned, their detailed understanding or first-hand experience of particular events (conflicts or crises) which need to be investigated, or because of their overall knowledge of the institutional context and players on a particular situation.

When controversial issues are being investigated, attempts should be made to carry out interviews with more than one key informant in order to cross-check information and compare the viewpoints of different interest groups.

Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews or discussions will help investigators to identify consensus opinions, which are often particularly relevant when looking at local institutions. The discussions held with focus groups can also help to identify the grey areas surrounding institutional roles – areas where opinions about institutions differ or where the roles and responsibilities of different institutions are not clear. Issues where members of a particular focus group disagree will often indicate these grey areas.

One important issue when organizing focus group discussions will be the identification of appropriate groups. From the point of view of the study as a whole, groups of people involved in particular livelihood strategies, already identified during the community and household livelihood profiles, will generally constitute the most relevant focus groups for clearly identifying how institutions inter-relate with specific livelihood strategies. However, during the institutional profiles, focus groups may also bring together groups of individuals that are not connected by their livelihood strategies but rather by their roles, responsibilities and relations with particular institutions -- for example, office-holders in particular organizations, or the members of a particular association or club, or people who are subject to a particular set of rules because they all belong to a particular clan or tribe.

For more structured, visible institutions, focus group discussions can be set up involving the members of those institutions or organizations – office-holders, decision-makers – and those who are affected by institutions or who use the services they provide. For example, if the institutional analysis is focussing on the local agricultural extension service, separate focus group discussions might be organized with the administrators and managers of the service, field extension staff, local leaders and the farmers for whom the service is supposed to provide services. Each focus group might concentrate on different sets of issues illustrated in the checklist. The involvement of a range of stakeholders will allow these institutions to be understood from multiple perspectives.

Institutions, or processes, that are less visible and more associated with the establishment of norms of behaviour or "rules of the game" may require a somewhat different approach. Discussion might focus on actual events or hypothetical situations and on people's reactions to those situations.

Structured surveys

Questions that will contribute to the institutional profiles can also be included in any structured surveys carried out as part of the investigation. Clearly only some aspects of institutions can be easily included in household level surveys, such as questions regarding membership, attendance and contacts with different institutions.

When the team members come to the institutional profile phase of their investigation, they can draw out this information and use it to add quantitative data to their profiles. Limited structured surveys can also be carried out directly with institutions to collect key information about their functions, membership and activities. These will generally be more appropriate for looking at organizations and institutions with clear structures, objectives and activities rather than processes.

Venn diagrams

During key informant interviews and focus group discussions, Venn diagrams provide a simple, visual technique that can help to focus discussions on particular institutions, their relationships with one another and their membership. They are useful for identifying key local institutions, particularly visible institutions with well-defined membership and spheres of activity. They can also provide a means of representing the key institutions in a community and so introducing those institutions selected for more detailed profiles "in context".

Life histories, narratives and stories

The accounts of local people of past events provide a rich source of material for investigators about what institutions really do (as opposed to what they are supposed to do). Local people and key informants can be asked to "tell the story" of a particular event or change in the community. They should then be left to recount that story as far as possible in their own words, with care being taken to record what they say and how they say it. Often, the peculiar turns of phrase used by people will provide important clues to how they regard the roles of the institutions involved, and these phrases need to be recorded as faithfully as possible. (Obviously, the collection of these life histories and narratives

BOX 6 – *TENURE NICHES* : FOCUSSING ON LAND TENURE, A COMPLEX INSTITUTION

A tenure niche is "a discrete area of land within the landscape defined by application to it of a specialized set of tenure rules" (Bruce *et al.* 1993). The same individuals and households often hold different parcels of land under different tenures, and this is commonly because they hold the parcels of land for different uses in different tenure niches. Not all community members may have the same rights within different niches. The space covered by tenure niches may vary seasonally; for example when, after the harvest, household fields become "common-land" where all community members can let their livestock graze on crop residues. In swidden systems, tenure niches may move. Tenure niches may overlap when there are distinct tenure regimes for two resources that physically overlap, as when tenure of trees is defined independently from that on land. In this case, the concept of tenure niches may also be adapted to be applied to forested areas (tree tenure) or to water bodies (sea tenure).

So, how to identify tenure niches? The main tool for finding out about the physical properties of a community's natural resource base and their linkage to tenure niches and agricultural activities is through participatory resource mapping (described in the community profile, Module 2). But tenure also determines the distribution of benefits (and duties) of resource use. As "tenure" is too broad as an institution to be analyzed through the type of questions presented in Module 4, this can only be explored through more in-depth investigation at household level. Certain tenurial arrangements can be analyzed through the household surveys, such as sharecropping, or annual leases of land for cultivation. To find out more about tenure niches, the household survey results can be supplemented with some in-depth semi-structured interviews at household level, following the typology of livelihood strategies established on the basis of Module 3. It is important to recognize that land and land-use rights may be held at individual (men, women), household and community levels.

BOX 7 – UNDERSTANDING COMMON PROPERTY: A FORM OF INSTITUTION THAT MAY BE DIFFICULT TO "CRACK"

An important aspect of understanding the linkages between household livelihood strategies and local institutions is evaluating the role of common property institutions. Interactions among kinship groups of unequal social status are nested in historical power relations, and the priority rights for some lineages are largely the consequence of who occupied the land first. Common property resources can be extremely important to the poorest rural population groups (including ethnic minorities), who may be landless and/or enjoy only limited and precarious access to natural resources. These groups suffer the most from inadequate legal definition and protection of common property resources - for example, herders who need to move to find adequate pastures for grazing, or "forest-dependent" peoples. Local institutional arrangements that offer a certain degree of tenure security with regard to common property resources are often a key component in the livelihood strategies of the poor. Through the use of the methodological tools offered in the Guidelines, it is possible to uncover the importance in local livelihoods of common property, but additional "probing" may be necessary to achieve an understanding of the dynamics and prospects of common property resources under the pressure of demographic changes, corporate outside interests, market liberalization, individual land titling, privatization, decentralization, globalization, etc. To understand priority rights of access and ownership versus use rights in common property resources, it is advisable to construct short local settlement histories, starting with when, by whom and how a given village or hamlet was founded (this can be done through key informant interviews with elders). Then, the process illustrated below can be used to develop institutional profiles for specific common property resource use arrangements.

needs to be carried out by investigators who understand the local language.)

The types of events that these accounts can focus on include:

- natural or man-made disasters;
- particular changes in the local environment;
- the stories of particular activities, individuals or households;
- episodes of civil unrest.

Conflict analysis [1]

The analysis of conflicts in the community, or between communities, can be particularly useful in helping the investigators to understand the role of local institutions and their relations with different groups of households. Conflicts will often shed light on different people's claims over access to resources and productive assets and especially on how those claims are motivated or enforced through various local institutions. They may also make it clear which resources are most important, and the networks of power and influence that surround those resources will often illustrate relations of power in society at large. Conflicts may also reveal much about how social groups organize themselves, how interest groups are formed and split up and the different priorities of those groups.

It also shows how the working of institutions is influenced by power relations, and how official rules, laws and procedures can become political instruments. Different villagers may seek support from different institutions to advance and substantiate their claims over access to resources. For example, in the case of land, these may be "modern" ones ("All land belongs to the State"); "traditional" ones ("Land parcels are assigned by the Chief"); or "religious" ones ("He who revives the land, it shall be his").

A historical analysis of conflict situations will often help investigators to understand how institutions have changed and what effects that may have had on households and their livelihood strategies.

The conflict situations to be analyzed should be chosen based on the results of the investigations of household livelihood strategies (*Module 4*). A simple process for carrying out a conflict analysis might include:

1. Start by defining "conflict" – what is it about? how did it start? who is involved? how long has it being going on? A timeline can be used with key informants to try to locate the beginning of a conflict and to trace its

[1] In part, adapted from Appendini and Nuijten 1999.

history and evolution. A flow diagram can be used to portray its root causes and to elaborate a "conflict tree".

2. Define the stakeholders and analyze their different interests and concerns in relation to the conflict. A stakeholder matrix can be used for an analysis of stakeholders and stakeholder positions or interests that revolve around a given development issue. An example of a stakeholder matrix is given in the following table.

Table 15 – Matrix Analyzing the Interests of Stakeholders in Different Aspects of a Coastal Area Development and Conservation Project in Malatuk

	Stakeholders in the Project				
Different areas of concern of the project	**Ministry of Environment**	**Local fisheries cooperative**	**Swamp fishers / shrimp seed collectors (settled)**	**Swamp fishers / shrimp seed collectors (migratory)**	**Private sector/ entrepreneurs**
Shrimp farm development	Significant (provides income for the project via licensing arrangements	Potential role in marketing produce (not yet defined)	Very significant (creates higher demand for shrimp seed)	Mixed or insignificant (creates higher demand for shrimp seed but diminishes access to mangrove areas currently used)	Very significant (potentially high return on investment, opportunities to expand into processing and marketing)
Biodiversity protection	Significant to the project's/ Ministry's objectives	Significant (reseeding the ranges helps preserve biodiversity)	Very significant (preserving natural resources, more possibilities for diverse activities, protecting local environment)	Significant (preserving natural resources, more possibilities for diverse activities)	Not significant
Tourism promotion	Very significant	Significant (opportunities for diversification of activities)	Significant (opportunities for livelihood diversification)	Insignificant	Very significant
Social development aspects	Significant (ecological awareness raising)	Significant (is one of the cooperative's objectives)	Significant (contact with the outside world)	Insignificant (are afraid of threat to their identity and lifestyle)	Significant for children

Process documentation

With some institutions, it may prove very difficult to achieve a proper understanding of how they function within the scope of a short-term study of this kind. Where the investigation of local institutions is being carried out as part of an on-going programme of development work, the investigating team may decide on an alternative approach involving the monitoring of institutional processes over a longer period. This can allow the team, or the organizations it is working for, to observe institutions and their functioning in practice and often leads to a far better overall understanding of how they work.

This process-oriented approach, described by Mosse (1997), can be used to focus on institutional issues from a variety of points of view. The team might decide on a particular institution and arrange for key players in that institution to

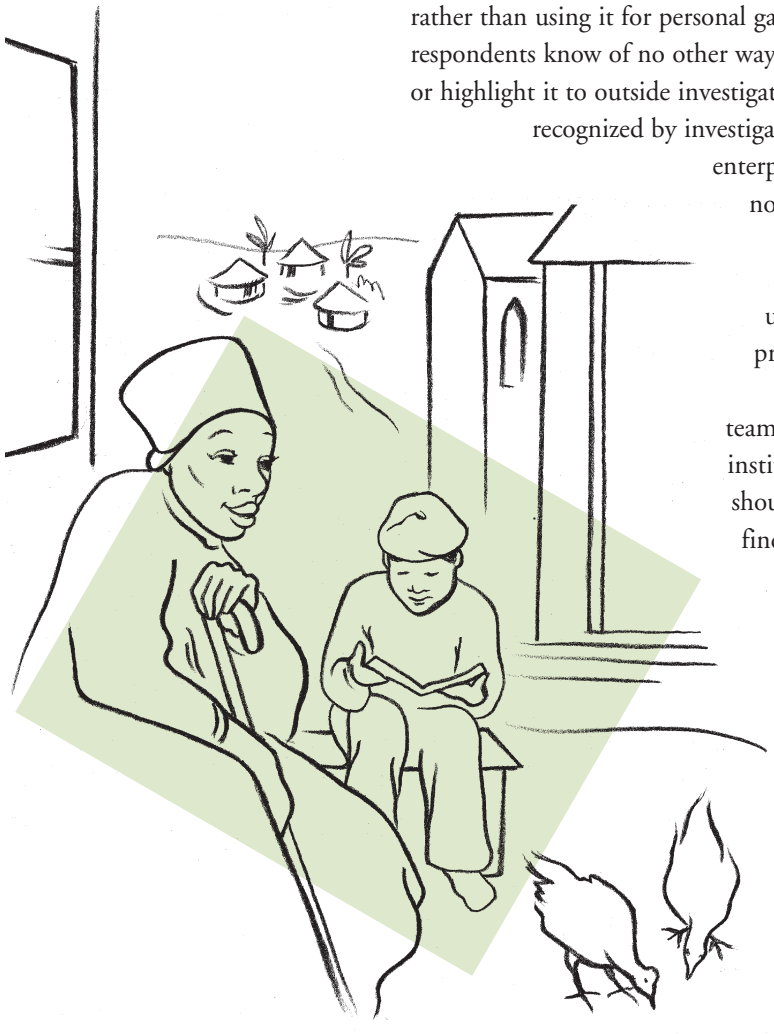
be contacted a regular intervals in order to review different aspects of the institutions in question. The sort of issues discussed might be:

- changes that have taken place;
- particular events that have involved the institution;
- decisions that have been made;
- activities undertaken;
- sanctions imposed;
- the views and perceptions of members of the institution or other people affected by its activities or decisions.

Alternatively, the team may choose to focus on a particular set of resources, on a particular set of people or on a particular set of rules or regulations that it wishes to understand in more detail. The team can then establish a system for collecting information about the decisions, rules and institutional actors surrounding those resources on a regular basis over time.

Checking on the invisible attributes of an institution

Even the most thorough of institutional profiles can miss some of the more invisible attributes of institutions. For example, in some cultures, it may be considered normal and necessary to share individually earned wealth and success with family and friends rather than using it for personal gain. If this is "the way things are done" and local respondents know of no other way of conducting their lives, they may not mention it or highlight it to outside investigators. But if this "rule of the game" is not recognized by investigators, efforts to promote sustainable private enterprises may quickly run into problems if earnings are not reinvested in businesses but used to cement social relationships within the kin group and community. So how can the investigators try to understand these aspects of local institutions and processes in the short time available to them?



The checklist below aims to help the investigating team check on some of these invisible aspects of institutions. For each institution identified, the team should pose these questions. Often investigators will find the answers from the responses to their original checklist for the institutional profile. But this can be regarded as a double-check on possible invisible aspects of those institutions that they may have not have thoroughly analyzed or that they may have missed completely. Often, by this stage of the investigation, teams may not have the time or resources available to go into these areas in more detail, but this checklist can at least help to identified gaps and encourage the team, or the users of the output of the investigation, to set up mechanisms in the future for finding out about these issues more thoroughly.

Table 16 – Checklist for the "Invisible" Attributes of Institutions

VALUES

- How does the institution represent values or norms that are common to its members, or to the community at large?
- What are those values?

IDENTITY

- Do any particular social groups identify closely with the institution?
- Does the institution play a role in forming or preserving the identify of that social group?
- How does this identification affect the way in which the institution or its members act?
- How does it affect the sustainability and effectiveness of the institution's actions?
- How does it affect the relations between this institution and other institutions, both locally and at higher levels?

INCENTIVES AND MOTIVATIONS

- Do the members have any incentives (economic, social, cultural, etc.) or motivations (political, familial, cultural, etc.) for participating in a particular institution?
- How do these incentives or motivations affect the way in which they participate?
- How are these incentives or motivations realized?
- How do these incentives or motivations relate to existing or past social obligations?
- How have they changed over time and why?

CHANGE

- What is the potential and capacity for change in a particular institution? what changes have taken place in the past? how did they take place? who or what promoted them?
- What role has the institution played in determining change in the neighbourhood/village/community in the past?
- What role could it play in the future?
- In the existing situation, how is the institution likely to change in the future?
- How do different members and participants think it will change?
- How would they like it to change?
- How can they influence that change?

INDIVIDUALITY

- What room is there for individual initiative in the institution?
- How is individual initiative accommodated or encouraged by the institution?
- Is such initiative limited to certain members or participants of the institution?
- Has this changed in the past and how could it change in the future?

LEADERSHIP

- How is leadership established within the institution?
- What role do the personal characteristics (e.g. charisma) and leadership skills (e.g. clear speech) play?
- How has this changed compared with the past?
- How do the leadership skills and style affect the success or failure of the institution?
- How important are the following for establishing leadership in the institution:
  - political power
  - patronage networks
  - family and kin relations.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

- Is the institution part of, or linked to, another bigger institution?
- Are there other smaller institutions that are part of, or linked to, this institution, either formally or informally (for example, are there sub-committees, or kin and communal linkages that are typical of the members of the institution)?
- How do these linkages affect the institution?

Questions like these can help the team to understand aspects of the institutions it has identified that may not be immediately obvious from the initial investigations.

4. Outputs of the investigation of local institutions

In order to be useful to decision-makers, such as project managers or elected officers, the profiles need to be presented in a way that highlights several key areas:

- what are the most important features of institutions?
- what are their links with other institutions?
- who are the key stakeholders in institutions?
- who is affected by institutions?

There are many ways in which this information can be presented. Diagrams showing the relationships between institutions, or between different parts of the same institution, can be useful. Flow diagrams or decision trees can usefully illustrate the way in which decisions are taken or activities carried out within an institution. But diagrams can usually only illustrate one particular aspect of an institution. They need to be used in the context of a more complete picture of institutions. Tables, such as those shown on the following pages, can be particularly useful for presenting such a complete profile of an institution. They can also help the team to cover all the relevant aspects of the institutions and keep track of the information that has been collected which illustrates the different features identified. They also show clearly how the team has arrived at the conclusions about the institutions it is investigating.

As a starting point, the tables take different institutions identified by the investigating team during the course of the community and household livelihood profiles. This tight focus on institutions ensures that the various aspects of those institutions are covered thoroughly. Understanding the ways in which these institutions are linked to different livelihood strategies is addressed in *Module 6,* but it is important that the various groups of people that are affected by the institutions being analyzed are identified so that investigators have a clear starting point when they come to look at these linkages.

The steps developing the tables are as follows:

1. Start by looking at a particular institution identified as being of importance during the community or household livelihood profiles (in the cases presented, a variety of institutions of different types are given as examples).
2. For each of these institutions, the table reviews key features that the team may have uncovered. These features are divided according to the three sets of attributes used to structure the checklist at the beginning of this module – the relative visibility and invisibility of the different aspects of the institution, the objectives and activities of the institution, and the inclusiveness or exclusiveness affecting the membership and participation in the institution.
3. In the first column, under each of these sets of attributes, key features of the institutions in question, or key bits of learning that the team may have uncovered, are listed.

4. In the next column, the consequences of each feature are noted. These might include particular rules, regulations or sanctions that the institution produces, it might be a particular form of behaviour by members of the institution, or it might be failures and successes in achieving institutional objectives.
5. Next, any other institutions that are involved or affected by that particular feature are noted.
6. In the following column, the ways in which this interaction between institutions takes place are recorded.
7. In the fifth column, the key stakeholders within the institution who are concerned with this feature are listed.
8. Finally, the people affected by this feature are also noted. This is particularly important as it will help investigators move on directly to the process described in *Module 6* where the precise linkages between the institution and the livelihoods of different groups of people will be elaborated.
9. As in the tables described in *Modules 3 and 4* , further columns can be added to note down precisely which tools have been used to investigate each of these features and the form in which information is available to illustrate each of these points.

A key feature of this procedure for building up a profile of the institution is that it focuses attention on different aspects of the institution and then analyzes them in detail. There will often be overlap between the points entered in different rows of the table – for example the consequence of certain invisible features of an institution may be a particular type of activity that also appears lower down the table. But these overlaps can help to highlight some of the internal dynamics of the institutions in question.

Some of the elements in different columns will require much more detailed description and analysis than might be possible within the format of a table, but the table can provide a reasonable overview of key institutions and point readers to more detailed descriptions of important features, such as conflicts, or historical developments, that cannot be easily contained in the table itself.

In the examples of institutional profiles, three very different kinds of institution are looked at. Table 1 creates a profile of a very visible formal organization – a Fisheries Department. Note that in this example, because the focus is on a particular village (Baraley from the imaginary Malatuk case study), the Fisheries Department is looked at from this community's point of view. Table 2 looks at a very different, less visible and much more informal institution – the kinship relations between a particular group of people in this same village. Table 3 covers another visible institution – a particular type of savings group in the village.

Note that the issues identified in the first column of all these tables closely follow the key areas identified in the *Checklist for the Institutional Profile* suggested in *Section 2* of this module. Also note that, for some institutions, and particularly for organizations, some additional information regarding the size of the institution, the numbers of people involved, the resources controlled and other basic quantitative data would also be important for completing the institutional profile.

Table 17 – Institutional Profiles – Baraley Village

Key institutional attributes	Consequences	Institutional stakeholders involved
"Visibility"/"invisibility" – legality/legitimacy, formality/informality, level/geographic coverage		
■ formal legal status – low legitimacy compared to local institutions	■ More consideration of traditional institutions involved in fisheries among local people	■ Fisheries Department staff
■ formal structure of department mirrors local social structure	■ Most department staff from *estanio* households	■ Fisheries Department staff
■ coverage - no local branch office in Baraley.	■ support to fisheries in Baraley limited; ■ formal enforcement of fisheries regulations limited	■ District Fisheries Officer – transferred local fisheries extension officer to another village
"Practical" / "normative" – capabilities / willingness, mandated /ad hoc objectives and activities, actual / future activities		
■ fisheries extension officer covers large area with limited resources	■ limited presence of fisheries department in Baraley; ■ visits to village usually to address problems	■ Fisheries Extension Officer
■ Department sees itself as "protecting" fishing communities' interests	■ focus on ensuring flow of benefits to fishing communities	■ Fisheries Department senior staff ■ Fisheries Ministry
■ multiple mandated objectives	■ conflicts between mandates – fisheries development, data collection, enforcement of fisheries regulations ■ Fisheries Department not trusted locally ■ more faith among fishers in traditional fisheries management institutions	■ Fisheries Extension Officer ■ district fisheries staff ■ Fisheries Ministry
■ rigid operating procedures and bureaucracy	■ unable to react quickly to changing needs of fishers	■ Fisheries Department staff ■ Fisheries Ministry
■ activities in Baraley mostly data collection and fishing licensing	■ Fisheries Department regarded as purely administrative body by local people in Baraley ■ fisheries management functions not recognized	■ Fisheries Department staff ■ fisheries data collectors
"Exclusive" / "inclusive" – membership and participation, conditions / contributions, actual and "non-working" rules, decision-making, leadership		
■ official policy of implementing projects and programmes through progressive "contact" fisher households	■ mostly wealthier, *estanio* fisher households involved in fisheries projects and programmes; ■ benefits of fisheries department activities almost exclusively for *estanio* households	■ Fisheries Department staff ■ Fisheries Ministry
■ Fisheries officers in district office mostly from *estanio* households	■ Most contacts between Fisheries Department and fishers are with *estanio* households	■ Most Fisheries Department staff
■ no contact with women	■ no government support to post-harvest activities carried out by women ■ fisheries regulations enforced ignoring possible impacts on women who fish ■ no data on women's fishing activities collected	■ Fisheries Department staff – mostly male ■ Fisheries Extension Officer – male

Fisheries Department

Other institutions affected or linked	How affected or linked	Who impacted
■ traditional owners of fishing rights (*estanio*) ■ traditional fishing captains	■ informal control of fishing rights and traditional management mechanisms still strong and not challenged by formal system	■ traditional owners of fishing rights (+++) ■ traditional fishing captains(++)
■ traditional owners of fishing rights (*estanio*) ■ traditional fishing captains	■ traditional status quo supported or not challenged by formal institutions	■ traditional owners of fishing rights (+++)
■ Agricultural Extension Department	■ local agricultural officer sometimes asked to perform fisheries duties	■ local fishers in Baraley (-)
■ Agricultural Extension Department	■ provides resources for extension activities ■ low priority given to fisheries	■ all fishers in Baraley (-)
		■ *estanio* fishers (++)
■ traditional controllers of fishing rights ■ local fishing captains	■ local systems of control of fishing rights still strong in Baraley ■ fishing captains highly respected and influential locally	■ local fishers (+) ■ *abaduk* fishers – no recourse for grievances (--)
■ traditional fishing captains	■ more important as source of information	■ fishing captains (+)
■ traditional fishing captains	■ regarded as main source of knowledge and expertise on fisheries	■ fishing captains (+)
■ relations between *estanio* and *abaduk* households	■ power relations favouring *estanio* households strengthened	■ *estanio* fishers (++) ■ *abaduk* fishers (-)
■ relations between *estanio* and *abaduk;* ■ fisheries projects and programmes.	■ power relations favouring *estanio* households strengthened ■ benefits of existing and past projects mostly for *estanio* households	■ *estanio* fishers (++) ■ *abaduk* fishers (--)
■ women fish processing groups	■ women's processing groups financing men's fishing operations not taken into consideration when fisheries programmes formulated ■ women processors suspicious of government support to fisheries	■ women fish processors (--) ■ processed fish dealers (--)

Table 18 – Institutional Profiles – Baraley Village

Key institutional attributes	Consequences	Institutional stakeholders involved
"Visibility"/"invisibility" – legality/legitimacy, formality/informality, level/geographic coverage		
■ strong traditional leadership among *estanio* households	■ conflicts between *estanio* households rare and dealt with internally ■ village leadership dominated by *estanio* households ■ community leadership protects the interests of *estanio* households	■ village elders"from *estanio* households ■ traditional village headman ■ formal village administration
■ legitimacy of rights to leadership among *estanio* households largely accepted	■ no real challenge to the status quo (either among *estanio* or *abaduk*)	■ *estanio* leaders
■ *estanio* families who founded Baraley control rights of access to most and best farming and fishing areas	■ access of most farmers and fishers to productive land or fishing grounds dependent on relations with *estanio* households ■ more and more land coming under *maraney* arrangements – rights controlled by absentee *estanio* landlord living in provincial capital – use in return for informally agreed services by locally-resident relative ■ rights of local land users, particularly *abaduk,* precarious – encourages poor management ■ resource degradation commonly blamed on *abaduk* and outsiders	■ *estanio* leaders
■ network of kin relationships extends outside village to neighbouring areas and provincial capital	■ increasing flows of resources to and from urban areas ■ *estanio* family and community interests no longer purely local	■ *estanio* households
"Practical" / "normative" – capabilities / willingness, mandated /ad hoc objectives and activities, actual / future activities		
■ traditional obligations to help relatives and other *estanio* households in times of need	■ strong system in place to deal with times of crisis ■ individual gains tend to be spread among family – discourages enterprise	■ all *estanio* households
■ loyalty to the interests of the family highly valued norm among *estanio* households	■ traditional meetings of elders of *estanio* kin groups decide on contraventions and sanctions among their own groups	■ all *estanio* households
■ resources involved in these obligations growing – more *estanio* households migrating to cities, involved in business and politics	■ obligations within *estanio* community now include finding jobs, providing funds for new businesses in town ■ flows of cash involved in obligations increasing – purely rural based *estanio* households with limited cash resources regarded as "2nd class"	■ all *estanio* households
"Exclusive" / "inclusive" - membership and participation, conditions / contributions, actual and "non-working" rules, decision-making, leadership		
■ network of obligations and responsibilities includes all *estanio* households	■ strong sense of community and common interests among *estanio* households	■ all *estanio* households
■ decision-making within *estanio* kin groups exclusive preserve of male elders	■ women's participation in decision-making very limited	■ *estanio* elders
■ *estanio* kin groups share almost exclusive control of resource access and community-level decision-making	■ non-*estanio* households, *abaduk*, clearly excluded from control of resource access and decision-making mechanisms in Baraley ■ little commitment among *abaduk* to community objectives	■ traditional village head ■ heads of *estanio* lineage groups ■ fishing captains

Kinship Links between Estanio Households

Other institutions affected or linked	How affected or linked	Who impacted
■ local judiciary ■ local government administration ■ local government services	■ few disputes involving *estanio* households arrive to local courts (compared to other communities) ■ needs and priorities of Baraley village always communicated to government agencies through *estanio* leadership	■ *estanio* households (+++) ■ *abaduk* households (--) ■ local traditional leaders (++)
■ *abaduk* leaders ■ local *roscas* ■ religious associations ■ local temples	■ very limited scope to acquire legitimacy ■ occasionally given special grants by leading *estanio* leaders for social purposes	■ *rosca* members(+) ■ local priests and temple-goers (+)
■ Provincial Land Reform Agency	■ land reform measures nominally implemented in Baraley but effectively ignored	■ *estanio* households (+++) ■ *abaduk* households (---)
■ Urban business community ■ provincial government ■ National government		■ all community members ? (+ / -)
■ government food-for-work programmes	■ food-for-work programmes for disaster relief have weakened reciprocal obligations among some poorer *estanio* households ■ food-for-work seen as alternative to informal ties to wealthier households	■ all *estanio* households (+++)
■ formal institutions of all kinds	■ interests of the family often take precedence over law and larger community	■ all *estanio* households (+/-)
■ provincial-level political system	■ Jobs in district-level government offices now sought after through *estanio* relatives in provincial capital	■ wealthier *estanio* households (++) ■ village as a whole? (-/+)
		■ all *estanio* households (+++)
■ *roscas* of women's groups	■ male elders try to direct how savings and credit from *roscas* should be used	■ men in *estanio* households (++) ■ women in *estanio* households (--)
		■ all *estanio* households (+++) ■ *abaduk* households (---)

Table 19 – Institutional Profiles – Baraley Village

Key institutional attributes	Consequences	Institutional stakeholders involved
"Visibility"/"invisibility" – legality/legitimacy, formality/informality, level/geographic coverage		
■ originally based on traditional village "chit funds" run by women in community	■ well-accepted and strong basis in community ■ widely used to finance ceremonies and weddings in the community ■ with changes in formal status, some households have continued with their old chit funds rather than participate in new *roscas*	■ women from leading households in the community (usually wives of elders and traditional village heads)
■ 8 years ago given official mandate and formal constitution	■ increased bureaucracy ■ increased importance of literacy for management of organizations ■ bigger role for elite groups with education ■ higher profile ■ increased access to resources from formal credit institutions	■ women in *roscas;* ■ husbands of women *rosca* members
■ increasingly influenced by party politics and local interest groups	■ support confined to agriculture. as corresponds to priority of most households: no innovative activities, youth discouraged	■ traditional village leadership; ■ local politicians
"Practical" / "normative" – capabilities / willingness, mandated /ad hoc objectives and activities, actual / future activities		
■ high level of commitment and self-management by local people	■ widespread commitment to maintaining *roscas*	■ traditional village leadership
■ mandated objectives recently established for local development, particularly in agriculture	■ fewer resources available for original social expenditure and relief for households in difficulty ■ new mandate for *roscas* not based on consensus among *rosca* members	■ formal village leadership
■ traditional objectives maintained side-by-side with new mandate for *roscas*	■ some resources still made available for social expenditure and relief for households in difficulty ■ consensus among *rosca* members regarding *rosca* objectives and activities different from formal mandate	■ *rosca* organizers and members
"Exclusive" / "inclusive" - membership and participation, conditions / contributions, actual and "non-working" rules, decision-making, leadership		
■ meetings held in village chief's house: informal and generally inclusive	■ good participation by members; ■ strengthens standing of village leader in the community	■ traditional village leaders
■ *rosca* members are formally all women	■ at least nominally maintains primary role of women in controlling the resources of *roscas* ■ men see it as "discrimination"	
■ covers most households in the community who are regarded as trustworthy	■ a small number of the poorest households are excluded because not regarded as trustworthy	■ traditional village leaders
■ decision-making regarding use of *rosca* funds increasingly influenced by development agenda from outside the *rosca*	■ funds more frequently invested in agricultural activities (rather than social expenditure like weddings or relief for households in difficulty) ■ priorities of men increasingly taking precedence over priorities of women	■ traditional village leaders

Rocas (Rotating Savings and Credit Associations)

Other institutions affected or linked	How affected or linked	Who impacted
■ traditional reciprocal self-help arrangements	■ funds from chit funds could feed into these self-help systems ■ help to poorer households was regarded as a "good thing"	■ most village households (++)
■ Rural Development Department ■ local rural banks	■ given mandate to encourage, support (and interfere with) *roscas* ■ rural banks instructed to hold savings of *roscas* and provide loans to groups through *roscas*	■ *rosca* members (+/-)
■ village government ■ local rural banks	■ opportunity to gain access to and influence over significant flows of resources	■ local officials (++) ■ *rosca* members (--)
■ village government; ■ gender roles	■ debate over functions of *roscas* encouraging more participation by women in village discussions	■ women in the community (++)
■ Agricultural Extension Service ■ local rural banks and agricultural development bank	■ *roscas* as contact point for extension activities ■ banks formally required to channel 20% of their funding to development through *roscas*	■ local farmers (+) ■ *rosca* members (-/+)
■ Rural Development Department	■ regarded as a threat by many *rosca* members	■ *rosca* members (++)
		■ *rosca* members (+) ■ village leaders (+)
■ gender relations	■ one area of decision making in community where women's role is "protected" by mandate	■ female *rosca* members (+) ■ husbands of *rosca* members (-)
■ relations between *estanio* and *abaduk*	■ most of poorer households are *abaduk*	■ poor households (-)
■ local government departments	■ *roscas* seen as useful contact points for mobilizing local communities for development work and channelling development funds	■ female *rosca* members (-/+) ■ husbands of *rosca* members (++)

THE MALATUK STORY – DOING THE INSTITUTIONAL PROFILES

Musa and the team complete their investigation of the livelihoods strategies by drawing up a set of tables, based on those suggested in the FAO Guidelines. For each key livelihood strategy, they identify the people involved and the institutions that influence it. In many cases, they identify several institutions that seem to play a role in one livelihood strategy. At first, they worry that this will complicate their task when they come to doing the institutional profiles. But when they review their livelihood profiles, they realize that the same institutions appear over and over again, making it is easier than they expected to identify a few key institutions and processes that seem to dominate.

They draw up a list of these institutions and develop a checklist of institutional issues which they then try to apply to the institutions they have identified, answering the questions based on what they already know. They realize that they already know how to answer a lot of these questions and now need to go into a little more depth about how these institutions function.

As a starting point for their institutional investigation, they decide to make use again of their community-level focus groups, made up of people involved in particular sets of livelihood activities. They organize to meet with them in order to validate the impressions formed so far of the key local institutions they have identified. These validation sessions generate an interesting range of new information and helps the team to sharpen its focus. The discussions are particularly useful in helping the team to come to terms with some of the less tangible, invisible institutions in the three communities.

Based on these discussions, they refine their list of the different institutions which they need to develop detailed institutional profiles. They identify the gaps in the information they have about those institutions and develop a work plan for contacting key informants to help them understand those institutions in more depth. The team members are aware of the possibility that these informants may represent only the local elite. So they decide to add extra interviews about talk about institutional issues with informants from the most marginalized sectors of village society.

The investigators arrange to split up and visit the different communities in order to contact the key informants they have identified but arrange to meet again after a few days to review their findings. Musa hopes that after this initial period looking at a broader range of institutions in the three communities, the team will then be able to concentrate its efforts on understanding institutions that are likely to be particularly relevant for the work of the MPAP.

The range of institutions that they have identified based on their work so far is quite broad and varies significantly from village to village. In Baraley, they have identified a complex range of land tenure arrangements that they need to understand in more detail, as well as a bewildering array of fisheries and water tenure institutions. They have also identified the importance of the relations between the long-term residents in the village, the *estanio*, and the newer settlers, the *abaduk*. Many of these institutions seem to overlap and intertwine, but each of them needs to be understood fully.

They already have considerable information about different land and water tenure arrangements, but they choose a group of people for a focus group discussion to review what they have found and go into it in more detail. They use copies of their community maps from the community profile as a starting point for their discussions and then analyze the importance and extent of different tenure arrangements using matrix and ranking exercises. For each arrangement they develop historical profiles, which proves particularly revealing as they highlight the important changes that are underway in the area.

Talking about the relations between *estanio* and *abaduk* is more difficult and more sensitive. They start by talking to key informants from each group but always feel that they are getting only one side of the story. Interestingly, they make the most progress during a focus group discussion on fisheries tenure arrangements where both *estanio* and *abaduk* swamp fishers are present. It is when both of these groups end up complaining about some of the recent changes in fisheries management practice in the area that some of the most interesting information about *estanio-abaduk* relations comes out.

It becomes clear that, from the point of view of people involved in the fisheries and given that almost all rights are controlled by *estanio* families anyway, the issue of whether fishing rights are controlled by *estanio* or *abaduk* is less relevant than whether those people are good managers or not. Good managers are regarded as those who invest time and resources in looking after the fish, maintaining fishing areas and controlling the amount of fishing done. Most of these good managers seem to be locally based whereas many of those regarded as poor managers are people who have migrated to the city and seem to consider their control of fishing rights simply as another source of income. Their investment in the fishery is usually minimal and they take no direct interest in how the fisheries are conducted.

This discussion highlights another "nested" feature of institutions in Baraley that the team had not fully appreciated to date – the divide between urban-based and rural-based community members. This new understanding is confirmed by an interview with an NGO worker in the nearby District town who provides an interesting outsider's perspective on the situation. It becomes clear that this urban-rural divide is an important factor that influences the way many local institutions function. As well as fisheries rights, it is affecting land tenure, the arrangements by which people have access to land and the terms of employment for people working in the community.

In Cosuma and Yaratuk, the situation is equally, if not more, complex. The team has to look at institutions governing the

allocation and control of agricultural land, rivers, swamps, mangroves, beaches, wasteland and the sea. These coastal villages seem to have had more population movement, and this has resulted in a complex "layering" of local institutions originating in different areas and among different groups of people. In addition, market connections with urban centres seem to have a far greater influence here, and so these need to be looked at and understood as well.

Among the key areas they look into in more detail in Yaratuk are the relations between the "*masleyarih*" they had identified during their community profile and the surrounding community. From their livelihood profiles of this group, they already have a good understanding of which institutions interact with the different activities that they use to support their livelihoods – for example the governance arrangements in the mangrove swamps where they fish, rules and regulations affecting the use of swamp resources, the informal rules affecting their interaction with local people, their complete lack of participation in any forms of local consultation or decision-making. The investigators feel that they still need to better understand the details about how each of these institutions affects their livelihoods. They decide that a good tool to uncover some of these would be to construct a small set of life histories of different masleyarih households to try to understand the impacts. The team approaches the masleyarih in the early afternoon in the swamp and spends the rest of the day and evening with this group.

They discover that the social stigma attached to this group of people – obvious from the way they are generally referred to by people in surrounding communities and even by local officials – is partly due to their origins. Among their ancestors are former slaves and captives whom the colonial regime had also exploited as free labourers for the construction of the railroad track that connects Malatuk with the country's capital. They are now seasonal migrants who take up the lowest-status jobs to survive, and it is this type of itinerant livelihood has become known by the name of "*masleyarih*". The people engaged in "*masleyarih*" work are referred to with this (derogatory) term, are excluded from traditional mutual aid arrangements and do not enjoy access rights to land or water. Rather, they are "tolerated" within village boundaries as long as they are able to play useful roles. Their supply of fish and shrimp seed to fishponds provides an important service which most local people are unwilling to undertake because of the difficult nature of the work, the harsh environmental conditions of swamps, the poor water supply and the risks of disease.

Talking to the *masleyarih*, they recognise the importance of investigating several institutional concerns in more detail, such as land tenure and access rights to other natural resources, and traditional mutual aid arrangements. Through the community profile, they know about the importance of kinship relations and patronage networks in land tenure. It has also become clear that good-quality land is becoming increasingly difficult to access and that, in recent years, land conflicts have multiplied. The *masleyarih* have been encroaching on certain plots of land, claiming that since that land formally belongs to the state and no one is using it, they are entitled to do so.

Ravi convinces the team to carry out a short conflict analysis of the most recent of these confrontations involving the *masleyarih*, to deepen its investigation of land tenure institutions. By talking to the individuals who were involved in that conflict, the team finds out that most land belongs to the three families who descend directly from the founders of the settlements today known as Baraley, Cosuma and Yaratuk. Most of the landowners are in fact absentee agriculturalists, and there exist a number of institutional arrangements by which they let others use "their" land. Under the most common of these, the user(s) pay the owner(s) three-fourths of the agricultural produce from their land. As this practice is formally forbidden under national law, it is concealed and therefore talked about reluctantly. The *masleyarih* did not denounce this type of arrangement to the district commissioner, because they know that she too descends from one of the three founding families and is unlikely to side with them in their request for land rights.

The reluctance of the *masleyarih* to approach local institutions is confirmed when the team decides to talk to the council of elders in the village to get its perspective on the issue. The members of the council claim that if they had been approached by the *masleyarih* with their case – which they had not –they would have been willing to try to help them to gain some kind of temporary land-use rights.

The discussions with the *masleyarih* prompt the team to look a little more carefully at land tenure issues in Yaratuk and Cosuma. Dewi takes the lead on this. She decides to use, as a starting point, a recent programme involving the Provincial Land Commission and a local NGO that has looked specifically at ways of regularizing land and water rights in the province. As an approach she applies the process documentation method, as she feels that at this stage in the investigation, getting people to "tell the story" of this programme will probably be the most revealing way of getting at the issues involved.

Dewi begins her documentation trail by talking to villagers who have mentioned their involvement in this regularisation programme during the field work. She soon realizes that it would be better for her to first get from government staff a more complete overview of what appears to be a pretty complex programme, so she makes an appointment with the Provincial Land Commissioner of Malatuk. After being briefed by the Commissioner about the programme, Dewi asks for his permission to interview some field staff, and also for another appointment with him in four days time, when she thinks she'll have a clearer picture to act as a basis for their discussions.

Dewi's comparisons of the information she was given by the field staff, the official documentation from the Commission, the NGO's records and the team's own data from their institutional profiles of land tenure arrangements reveal some interesting grey areas and new aspects of the institutions involved that they had not identified before. For example, there are major discrepancies in the

figures from different sources regarding the number of agricultural plots in all three villages. It turns out that the Land Commission, in an attempt to speed up the process of surveying land for the programme, introduced an incentive scheme for their land surveyors that rewarded them according to the number of plots surveyed. Perhaps not surprisingly, this encouraged many of the Commission's field staff to over-report the number of plots. Rather more worryingly, their figures and land tenure information are used for planning all donor-funded development interventions in Malatuk, and Musa knows that the MPAP project is already using these figures for their project planning activities.

The team members meet up to pull together their information and incorporate it into their institutional profiles. Dewi recounts her story about the land and water rights programme, and this drives home to the team how there might be complications and grey areas of some of the institutions they have analyzed. But Musa encourages them to start the process of compiling the institutional profiles and to worry about possible gaps later.

The task initially looks daunting. They have collected information about a wide range of institutions and some of the tables they develop for complex institutions, like "land tenure arrangements", seem enormous. Dewi's findings about the official information on land tenure encourages the team members to think about some of the institutions they have looked at to identify the incentives that participants in those institutions have. They eventually agree that the question of incentives is really part of the "practical / normative" axis of their institutional diagram, as it effects people's capability and willingness to achieve the objectives of the institution. But they realize that they have not always looked specifically at the issue of institutional incentives during their analysis. So, for some of the key organizations that they have already dealt with, they go back to their profiles and try to add this dimension to their analysis.

The process of developing these profiles is quite lengthy, but the team members realize that by the end, they have a very complete picture of the key institutions. They are aware that there are bound to be some institutions or aspects of institutions that they will have missed or not understood completely, but they feel they have a good basis for going on to defining which linkages between institutions and livelihoods are really important and need to be addressed by the project

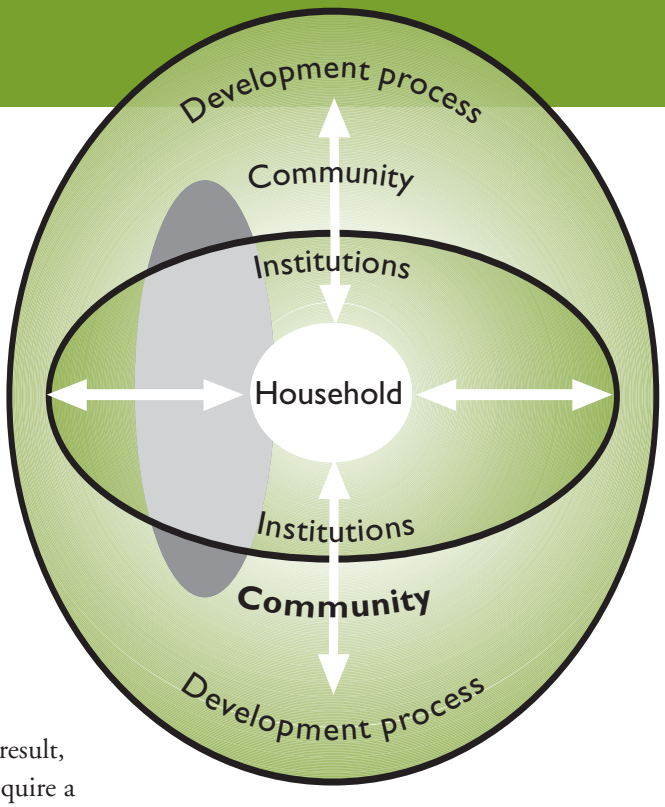
It takes them another day and a half to complete all their institutional analysis, but Musa feels that the time has been well-spent as she can already see how most of their work for the subsequent linkage profiles has already been done.

In addition, Musa and the team are particularly satisfied about the relationship they have managed to establish with the communities where they have been working. Several local people have commented on the fact that, while they may have experienced different surveys and studies conducted by projects or research institutes in the past, this is the first time that they have really been given the opportunity to sit down with the research team to talk about what the team is doing and what its findings are. Ravi and Diana are particularly enthusiastic about the use of focus group discussions as a basic part of the investigation. They feel that these discussions have created a sense of ownership among local people of the information and learning that the investigation has generated.

The team's discussions of the methods it has used leads Musa to recall the interest that the monitoring and evaluation cell of the project had expressed in the study. She decides that, during the next part of the study she should try to get them involved to see whether they might be able to build on the study team's experience to set up appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the project.

module 6

ANALYZING AND UNDERSTANDING LINKAGES



The definition of the linkages between livelihoods and institutions is the most important output of the investigation described in these guidelines. However, most of the information required to develop these linkage profiles will have been carried out during the previous stages of the investigation – the community profile, the household livelihood profiles, and the institutional profiles. As a result, this final step in the investigative process should not require a great deal of additional collection of information. Taking the different livelihood assets and activities identified in the household livelihood profiles described in Module 4, and the groups impacted by different institutions identified in the institutional profiles described in Module 5, investigators should already have the starting point for analyzing in more detail how the livelihoods and institutions are linked. The other information that has fed into their work so far should also be sufficient to define the different aspects of these linkages that could be significant for development work in the future.

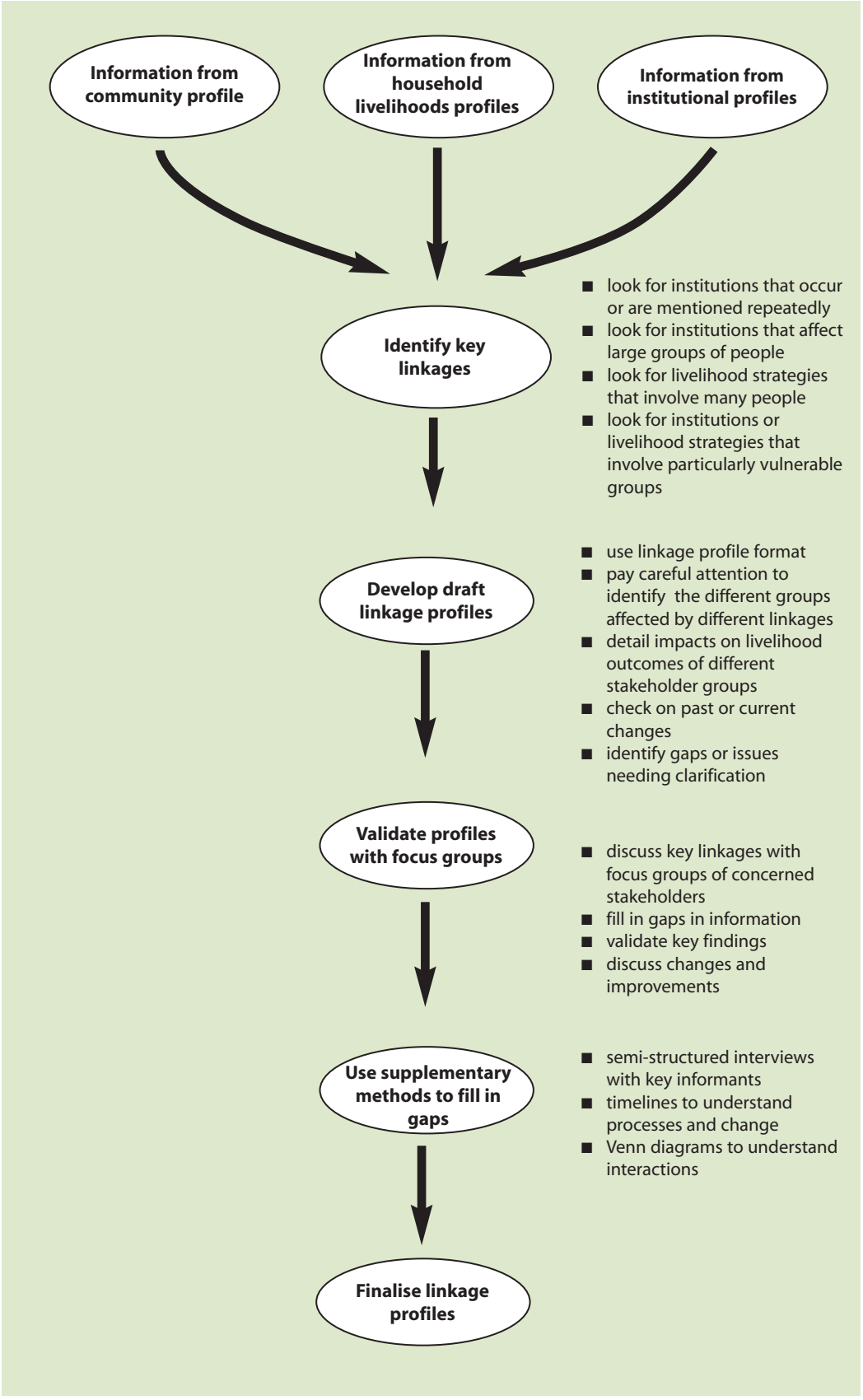
Further field work does play a role at this stage of the investigation, but it is likely to be in the form of discussions with groups of respondents and with representatives of different stakeholder groups and communities, to validate the conclusions that the investigating team has developed.

This module presents some approaches that can be used to identify, analyze and understand linkages, ending with a look at the "vertical" relationships between local institutions and higher- level policies, institutions and processes as these affect livelihoods.

1. The process for developing linkage profiles

An overall process for developing the linkage profiles is shown in Figure 10. This process assumes that sufficient information has already been generated from the community, livelihood and institutional profiles. If this preliminary work has been completed thoroughly, the principle challenge facing investigators should be to decide what information is relevant and which linkages are of real importance for their investigation.

Figure 10 – Suggested Process for Linkage Profiles



2. Identifying "key linkages"

A study following the guidance offered so far in these guidelines, even if carried out in only one community, could produce an enormous number of potential linkages between the livelihoods of local people and the local institutional environment in which they live. The first task facing the investigating team will be to decide which of these linkages is actually significant for the purposes of its study and the development interventions that they may generate. Ideally, investigators should analyze all the linkages they have identified and assess their relative importance in order to arrive at an "unbiased" conclusion about which of them significant and needs to be addressed by future action. In practice, the time and resources necessary to carry out such an undertaking may not be available. However, the criteria that investigators will need to use for assessing the relative importance of different linkages will remain essentially the same, whether they are being used to carry out a global assessment of all the linkages identified or a "quick and dirty" filtering of different linkages so that the team can focus its time and energy on those that seem likely to be most important. The "weight" given to different criteria will depend, to some extent, on the context in which the study has been carried out and the objectives that have been set for the investigation by the project or programme of which it is part.
The different criteria listed below will always play some role in the selection of what constitutes a key linkage.

1. Frequency with which a particular linkage occurs or is referred to

   Particular linkages that are mentioned again and again by respondents, whether directly or indirectly, during the course of the investigation probably represent important linkages. There may be considerable "subjectivity" in this importance – for example, if there has been a case of a local person being unjustly accused of illegally cutting firewood the week before the study takes place, it is probable that the linkages between forestry conservation regulations and the livelihoods of firewood collectors will be repeatedly brought up, even if it is the first time that such a problem has ever occurred.

2. Number of different livelihood strategies affected by a particular institutional linkage

   A particular institution may affect a large number of livelihood strategies and therefore have general importance for the community or area as a whole. A micro-credit programme might have made financial resources available for people to invest in a wide range of different livelihood activities. If this programme were referred to in conjunction with many different livelihood strategies, it could probably be assumed to represent a "key linkage". If people engaged in a number of different livelihood strategies involving natural resource use all complain about increases in local taxes imposed on resource users following the decentralization of government to the local level, it is reasonable to assume that there is an important linkage between "decentralized local government" as an institution and local livelihoods. Some institutions may be so pervasive in

local society that they influence practically all livelihood strategies in one way or another. Dowry or bride-price is a good example of an institution (which may or may not be strictly local) that can represent such a significant influence on the resources available to a household that it will affect any activity undertaken by that household both before and after the marriage of the family's offspring.

3. Number of people affected by a particular institutional linkage

   In some cases, the number of people affected by a single institutional linkage may be more important than the diversity of livelihoods affected by a particular institution. For example, traditional customs regarding the passage of land rights from one generation to the next may only directly influence one or two livelihood strategies involving agriculture and agricultural labour, but in a society that is predominantly agricultural this could constitute a major linkage that affects most households in one way or another.

4. Number of poor or vulnerable people affected by a particular linkage

   Particularly where an investigation is being carried out in the context of a poverty elimination or alleviation programme, the importance of a particular institutional linkage is liable to be measured in terms of how it affects on the poor or those who are vulnerable to poverty. However, even where the poverty focus of a programme is not explicit, the relative poverty of those affected by linkages between institutions and livelihood strategies should always be taken into consideration when identifying which linkages are important. Many institutional linkages may have apparently relatively "minor" impacts on some livelihood strategies, but these "minor" impacts may be disproportionately important for poorer households. In other cases, particular linkages may have very different impacts on the same livelihood strategy depending on the relative poverty of those involved. For example, domination of marketing arrangements for fish by combined fish buyers, money-lenders and dealers in fishing supplies may reduce the benefits from fishing for some fishers - they may be forced to sell at set prices to a particular buyer when they have sufficient mobility and capacity to absorb risk that they could take advantage of a more competitive market. But for poorer fishers, ties with a fixed buyer may represent a significant source of security, enabling them to "pass on" some of the risks inherent in fishing to the buyer, in exchange for a poorer price when catches are good and a dependent relationship that may offer limited prospects for long-term livelihood improvement.

   If a sample survey has been carried out as part of the investigation, the team members should be able to make some quantitative estimates regarding the criteria above. But if they do not have precise numbers regarding, for example, the number of poor affected by a particular linkage, they can make an estimate based on the information they do have and then validate their estimates with local people later in the process of developing linkage profiles.

3. Developing draft linkage profiles

Once these key linkages have been identified, the team can use the information it has already collected to develop a set of draft profiles for these linkages.

There are several ways in which these can be approached.

1. Starting from a particular group of people

   This will perhaps be the most common way of starting a linkage profile, as it focuses attention on the people at the centre of the investigation and will help investigators to analyze linkages through their eyes. These groups of people need to be carefully defined so that the precise linkages that affect different groups can be made clearly. For example, agricultural labourers could be taken as a starting point for the linkage profile, but care would be required to see whether there are different linkages that affect different types of labourers in different ways – such as male labourers, female labourers, children, etc. In this case, investigators might need to pay attention to breaking the groups of people into more distinct interest groups.

2. Starting from livelihood strategies

   The starting point for a linkages profile could be a particular livelihood strategy (such as fishing or agricultural labour). Where a particular strategy is seen to be important for a large number of different people and to have particularly complex institutional linkages, this could be a good approach. It will enable the team to systematically analyze all these linkages and understand how they effect the different groups of people involved in that livelihood strategy.

3. Starting from livelihood assets

   Where particular assets that make up or contribute to the livelihoods of people are a focus for concern, these could be taken as a starting point as well. For example, if the findings of the study so far suggest the need for a detailed analysis of the linkages between water for irrigation, the livelihoods that are de pendent on it and local institutions, water for irrigation could become the starting point.

4. Starting from institutions

   The institutions themselves can also be taken as a starting point for the linkage profiles. This can allow the team to assess in detail the different range of livelihoods and groups of people that a particular institution might affect in different ways.

The tables below show how these linkage profiles could be developed systematically.

Table 1 deals with households engaged in a particular form of fishing activity and belonging to a particular social group. Focussing on the main activity that defines this particular group, as in this case, has the advantage of allowing investigators probably to concentrate on a relatively limited number of institutions that are connected in some way or another with that particular activity. The disadvantage of this approach is that it limits the livelihoods of those people to that particular activity, when in actual fact their livelihoods will consist of much more. However, in certain cases this focus on a particular activity could be useful.

In Table 2, the starting point is a particular social and gender group and a range of different activities and assets used by that group for its livelihood. This approach places the people involved firmly at centre stage and may be particularly important where poor and vulnerable households are involved. The main

Table 20 – Linkage Profiles – Baraley Village

Livelihood assets or activities	Institutions affecting them	Household members impacted	How those institutions affect them
Access to information about fisheries regulations	Fisheries Department	Men, youth	■ Fisheries Extension Officer not accessible to provide information ■ Fishers often involved in "illegal" fishing activities through lack of knowledge of regulations
	Traditional fishing captains	Men, youth	■ In absence of "official" information, fishing captains establish "regulations" – sometimes correct, sometimes not
Access to best fishing grounds in deeply flooded areas of swamp	Traditional control of fishing rights by *estanio* households	Men, youth	■ Access to fishing grounds entirely dependent on relations with estanio holders of rights and their fishing captains ■ Preference in participation in fishing teams given to relatives of rights owners and *estanio* fishers
Access to flooded agricultural land for fishing	Traditional control of land by *estanio* households	Men, women, old people, youth, children	■ Most agricultural land controlled by *estanio* households ■ Increasing "fish pits" in agricultural land to concentrate fish during declining flood period and use for irrigation during dry season ■ Increasing restrictions on previously open-access fishing in flooded areas
	Legal status of fisheries resources in flooded land	Men, women, old people, youth, children	■ Status not clearly defined leaving room for increasing exclusion of those dependent on a "common" resource

disadvantage of this approach is that it can become overly complex if all the different elements in a particular group of people's livelihoods are taken into consideration. Investigators have to use their judgement to establish which activities are sufficiently important to be fully analyzed for their institutional linkages.

Table 3 starts the linkage profile from a particular institution and the various features and attributes of that institution (taken from the institutional profile) and then goes on to analyze the different livelihood strategies and assets affected and the people impacted by these effects. This approach is obviously recommended where clearly important and influential institutions have been identified and there is a need to fully understand the depth and breadth of their influence on people's livelihoods. The complexity of some institutions will generate very sizeable tables with many possible livelihoods linkages.

Abaduk Swamp Fishing Households

Impacts on household livelihood outcomes (+++……..---) Frequency of impact	Changes affecting this linkage	Hopes, fears, aspirations, expectations for the future
--- Fishers subject to heavy fines or confiscation of gear for fishing in fisheries reserve area Occasional – when controls take place	■ Fisheries Extension Officer moved from Baraley to other village ■ Fisheries reserve in nearby swamp introduced without local consultation or information	■ Fisheries Extension Officer posted in Baraley
+/- Fishers have to "trust" version of fishing captain Usually effective and trustworthy	■ Different fishing captains have different "versions" of where the boundaries of fisheries reserve located	■ More, and better, information available locally ■ More information available to traditional fishing captains
-- Exclusion from fishing team can mean serious reduction in earnings during peak fishing period Affects main source of cash income and relations with possible "patron" – source of loans, security	■ Some traditional fishing rights owners bringing in fishing crews from outside the area to harvest fishing grounds ■ More exclusion of local abaduk fishers	■ Rights to some (smaller) fishing grounds reserved for local fishers ■ Improved skills and access to alternative livelihood activities ■ Better access to land for farming
--- Significant reduction in access to fish for food during flood season and source of cash income Direct impact limited to flood period, but extra cash earned from floodplain fishing (particularly by women and children) also used to pay for school fees and uniforms – reduction could have longer-term impacts	■ Increased value of floodplain fish leading to restrictions on fishing on privately controlled flooded land ■ Unofficial "ownership" of fish resources in flooded areas being increasingly claimed to concentrate fish in "fish pits"	■ Clarification of rights to fisheries in flooded areas ■ Support from village authorities to maintain access to floodplain fisheries ■ Reservation of specific floodplain areas for "open-access" fishing
--- Significant reduction in access to fish for food during flood season and source of cash income Direct impact limited to flood period, but extra cash earned from floodplain fishing (particularly by women and children) also used to pay for school fees and uniforms – reduction could have longer-term impacts	■ Unofficial "ownership" of fish resources in flooded areas being increasingly claimed so that fish can be concentrated in "fish pits" (also increasing in number)	■ Clarification of rights to fisheries in flooded areas

Table 20 (continued) – Linkage Profiles – Baraley Village

Livelihood assets or activities	Institutions affecting them	Household members impacted	How those institutions affect them
Dry fish processing	Fisheries Department	Women	■ Fisheries department focuses entirely on men's activities ■ No support or training on fish processing ■ Frequent losses in dry fish processing
Agricultural labour during dry season	Traditional control of land by *estanio* households	Men, women, youth	■ Employment as agricultural labour dependent on relations with land-owning *estanio* households ■ Traditionally, *estanio* labourers favoured over *abaduk* ■ Increased urban migration by *estanio* youths has increased labouring opportunities for *abaduk* households

Table 21 – Linkage Profiles – Cosuma Village

Livelihood assets or activities	Institutions affecting them	Household members impacted	How those institutions affect them
Household services – sweeping, child-care – in exchange for vegetables and fruit	Obligations within community to help old and destitute by giving them work	Elderly women and dependents	■ Guarantee of minimum access to saleable goods to generate some income
Sale at fish landings of vegetables and fruit	Local market for goods offered	Elderly women and dependents	■ Limited marketing outlets in the community ■ Sale of goods at the fish landing site traditionally regarded as low status and demeaning for women ■ Creates a "niche" for the very poor ■ Goods often exchanged for low-value fish then resold within community
	Roscas	Elderly women and dependents	■ Local *rosca* has financed setting up of small shop run by women – diminished demand for goods sold by old and destitute ■ Elderly widows "too poor" to join *roscas*
Collection and sale of cane and swamp grass for basket-weaving	Open-access to resources in swamp areas	Elderly women and dependents	■ Ensures easy access to resources for livelihood

Abaduk Swamp Fishing Households

Impacts on household livelihood outcomes (+++……..---) Frequency of impact	Changes affecting this linkage	Hopes, fears, aspirations, expectations for the future
-- Impacts on income controlled by women – used for household, food and education of children Losses, particularly during rainy season	■ Improved fish drying techniques and technology introduced by Fisheries Department in other areas ■ Market for "traditionally" dried fish declining	■ Fisheries Department training local women in improved fish drying techniques ■ Female Fisheries Extension Officers – easier contract with women about fisheries issues
- / ++ Previously agricultural labouring jobs precarious Over last 5 years significant improvement in opportunities – some *abaduk* able to enter share-cropping agreements Important during dry season as alternative to fishing	■ Change in crops to irrigated rice during dry season ■ Increasing demand for dry season agricultural labour ■ Declining number of *estanio* agricultural labourers	■ Easier access to share-cropping, leasing or rental agreements for land ■ Livelihood strategies more evenly balanced between agriculture and fisheries

Destitute Widows

Impacts on household livelihood outcomes (+++……..---) Frequency of impact	Changes affecting this linkage	Hopes, fears, aspirations, expectations for the future
++ Almost only source of cash income for some elderly widows Depends on availability of surplus goods in households where women work	■ Declining inclination to help old and destitute – resources too limited, people more self-centred	
+++ Almost only source of cash income for some elderly widows Seasonal – only really viable during peak fishing seasons – 3-4 months per year	■ Arrival of small-scale vendors by motorbikes at fish landings – more goods at cheaper prices ■ Declining demand for produce offered by local traders on the beach	■ Access to capital to set up fixed shop ■ Self-help group or *rosca* specifically for elderly widows
-- Has seriously affected viability of petty trading by poor widows *Rosca* shop functioning all year round.	■ Range of goods offered by *rosca* increasing	■ Access to capital to set up fixed shop ■ Self-help group or *rosca* specifically for elderly widows
++ Important additional source of income Important complement to petty trading during the dry season	■ Recent legislation to control use of wetlands has made cane and grass cutting illegal without a license	

Table 21 (continued) – Linkage Profiles – Cosuma Village

Livelihood assets or activities	Institutions affecting them	Household members impacted	How those institutions affect them
	Department for the Environment	Elderly women and dependents	■ Introduced legislation to limit the use of materials from wetland areas ■ Introduction of licenses not affordable for elderly collectors ■ Previous collection areas closed off – collectors forced to travel further – not possible for older women
Basket-weaving	Gender roles in community – basket-weaving is women's work	Elderly women and dependents, other women in the community	■ Defines a specific livelihood activity exclusively for women ■ No competition (until recently) with men ■ Important forum for discussion and exchange of ideas with other women
	Markets for traditional baskets	Elderly women and dependents, other women in the community	■ Previously guaranteed market for baskets for fish transport and sale ■ Introduction of plastic and Styrofoam fish boxes – market for baskets reduced

Table 22 – Linkage Profiles – Yaratuk Village

Key features and attributes of the institution	Household livelihood strategies or assets affected	How this feature of the institution affects them	Who is impacted
Visibility – fish buyers are resident in the community and very "visible"	■ Fishing and fish processing ■ Fish buying	■ Multiple roles in supporting fishing activities – besides marketing, supplies of inputs, cash advances, emergency loans	■ Fisher households ■ Female fish processors ■ Fish buyers
	■ Use of ice	■ Ice readily available in the community	■ Fisher households ■ Fish buyers
			■ Female fish processors
Legitimacy –integral part of community – well-accepted	■ Fishing and fish processing	■ Conflicts over fish sales rare ■ Fish marketing handled by dealers	■ Fisher households ■ Fish buyers' households
Participation – ties to different buyers tend to favour kinship links	■ Fishing and fish processing ■ Fish buying	■ Marketing links based on trust and mutual benefit	■ Established fisher households ■ Fish buyers' households

Destitute Widows

Impacts on household livelihood outcomes (+++……..---) Frequency of impact	Changes affecting this linkage	Hopes, fears, aspirations, expectations for the future
--- Older women forced to leave and abandon activity – not able to travel long distances Reduction in income Affects earnings throughout year	■ Increased commitment by government to environmental protection ■ Lobbying by environmental groups (national and international)	■ Lifting of restrictions for local artisans for collection of materials in protected areas
++ Regarded as important means for the elderly to remain "in contact" with the community Generates both income (limited) and goods for exchange and barter	■ Market for hand-woven baskets in decline with appearance of plastic bags and boxes for fish	■ Limited options for traditional basket production ■ Seek alternative means of livelihood
-- Reduction in income Forced changes in livelihood strategies for basket weavers Competing for work in new fields with other social groups Impact throughout the year	■ Increasing demand for durable containers ■ Increased production of plastics	■ Disappearance of basket-weaving as a craft ■ For younger basket weavers, training in new skills ■ For older women, increased dependence on charity, community support mechanisms

Relationship between Local Fish Buyers and Fishers

Impacts on household livelihood outcomes (+++……..---) Frequency of impact	Changes affecting this linkage	Hopes, fears, aspirations, expectations for the future
++ Greater livelihood security Affects livelihoods throughout the year	■ Increasing presence of buyers from outside the community	■ Fishers (some) - opportunity to sell fish directly to wholesaler
++ Better prices, better quality	■ Increasing use of ice and demand for fresh fish	■ Fisher buyers - holding facility for iced fish
-- Demand for processed fish mainly local Affects livelihoods throughout the year	■ Diminishing demand for processed fish	■ Fish processors - training and technology for improved quality of processed fish
+ Fishers do not have to worry about marketing Particularly important during peak seasons	■ Attempts by external buyers to deal directly with fishers, leading to increasing disruption and conflict	■ Fishers – increased confusion over points of sale and prices ■ Fishers – increased choice over buyer
++ Important source of household livelihood security Affects livelihoods throughout the year	■ Increased buyers from outside eroding relationship based on kinship and trust	■ Fishers and fish buyers – increased confusion over points of sale and prices

Table 22 (continued) – Linkage Profiles – Yaratuk Village

Key features and attributes of the institution	Household livelihood strategies or assets affected	How this feature of the institution affects them	Who is impacted
		■ New fishers lack kinship links with buyers – terms of sale often disadvantageous ■ Less access to non-marketing support (at least until they are "trusted")	■ New fisher households
Relationship exclusively centred on fisheries	■ Fishing and fish processing	■ Fishers have little incentive or capacity to diversify their livelihoods	■ Fishing households
Capabilities – relationship between fish buyers and fishers provides "good service"	■ Fishing and fish processing ■ Fish buying	■ Fish handled well ■ Payments generally on time ■ Inputs for fishers available ■ Markets for fishers and supply for wholesalers guaranteed	■ Fisher households ■ Fish buyers' households
Flexibility – terms of relationship highly flexible	■ Fishing and fish processing ■ Fish buying	■ Terms of relationship agreed informally ■ Changes easily made to accommodate changing local conditions	■ Fisher households
		■ Terms of relationship agreed informally ■ Changes easily made to accommodate changing local conditions	■ Fish buyers' households
Incentives – high incentive on both sides to maintain relationship	■ Fishing and fish processing	■ Fishing as a livelihood made more secure and easier by relationship	■ Fisher households
	■ Fish buying	■ Fish buying as a livelihood made more secure and easier by relationship	■ Fish buyers' households

Relationship between Local Fish Buyers and Fishers

Impacts on household livelihood outcomes (+++……..---) Frequency of impact	Changes affecting this linkage	Hopes, fears, aspirations, expectations for the future
- Less livelihood security for new fishing households Affects livelihoods throughout the year	■ More new entrants to fishing ■ Relationships between fishers and buyers weakening	■ New fishers - alternative channels for fish marketing for new fishers
Livelihood security highly dependent on health of fisheries Little short-term impact but increasing pressure on fisheries could lead to long-term decline in fisheries livelihoods	■ Fishers diversifying fishing activities – long-term investments in aquaculture in coastal areas	■ Fishers - more support for livelihood diversification ■ Fishers - access to agricultural land
++ Attracts resources into local fisheries Benefits for both sides of the relationship Affects livelihoods throughout the year	■ Standards required for fish rising	■ Fishers - need for better fish handling at sea ■ Fishers - hope for training and technology for fish handling
+ / - Generally buyers absorb some of risks faced by fishers Changes due to "upstream" factors not always transparent Negative impacts, particularly during peak seasons – high fish supply and "glut" on markets	■ Patterns of demand in urban centres changing ■ Information on upstream demand not readily available to fishers	■ Fishers – better information about markets
+ / - Flexibility maintains relationship with fishers Can expose fish buyers to risk and losses Negative impacts, particularly during peak seasons	■ Growing reliance on "new fishers" perceived as growing risk by buyers	■ Fish buyers - limits to entry of new fishers to fisheries
++ / - Livelihood stability Reluctance to change or improve relationship Affects livelihoods throughout the year	■ Increased competition on fishing grounds with new technologies pushing fishers to "upgrade"	■ Fishers – access to loans for improved fishing technology
++ Livelihood stability Affects livelihoods throughout the year	■ Pressure to increase levels of investment could undermine local fish buyers' position (in favour of direct relations with urban wholesalers)	■ Local fish buyers – access to loans for supporting increased investment in fisheries

Table 22 (continued) – Linkage Profiles – Yaratuk Village

Key features and attributes of the institution	Household livelihood strategies or assets affected	How this feature of the institution affects them	Who is impacted
Objectives –multiple objectives for fish buyers	■ Fish buying	■ Fish buyers at the centre of a web of economic, social and cultural relations within community ■ High-status position	■ Fisher households ■ Fish buyers' households

During the development of these draft linkages, several issues need to be kept in mind that will help the team to identify gaps in its knowledge and complete the profiles effectively.

Care in identifying different groups affected in different ways by different linkages

In order to understand the linkages properly, it is essential that the different groups of people affected by linkages be defined as precisely as possible. This involves paying the maximum attention to possible differences in effects according to:

- Gender;
- Age;
- Ethnic group;
- Family or kinship group;
- Class or caste.

This will often complicate the analysis considerably, but it is vital if livelihood linkages are to be properly understood. Referring back to the community profile and the livelihoods profiles should help in this respect.

Clearly identify the impacts on the livelihood outcomes of these different groups

The actual end results or impacts of the different linkages on the outcomes experienced by different groups of people need to be identified as clearly possible. Where they are not yet clear, they can be noted down for discussion during the validation process.

Identify past and current changes

Understanding what changes have taken place in the past and what changes are currently taking place with respect to different linkages is required if the dynamic nature of the linkages is to be appreciated. Again, where these are not yet clear based on information from the community, livelihoods and institutional profiles, they can be discussed further during validation meetings.

Relationship between Local Fish Buyers and Fishers

Impacts on household livelihood outcomes (+++……..---) Frequency of impact	Changes affecting this linkage	Hopes, fears, aspirations, expectations for the future
+ / - Relations with fish buyer become more impersonal Fish buyer becomes a "patron" with more power – able to dispense new benefits Affects livelihoods throughout the year	■ Decentralization of political decision-making creating opportunities in politics for local people with high status	■ Fishers – maintenance of relations with fish buyers through involvement of family members
+ New opportunities to enhance power and influence Potential impacts on livelihoods throughout the year	■ Decentralization of political decision-making creating opportunities in politics for local people with high status	■ Fish buyers – diversification of livelihoods ■ Fish buyers – election to local government bodies

Recognize where there are gaps in the team's knowledge to date
The investigators need to be ready to admit that they may not have been able to collect all the information they need to fully understand the linkages they are looking at. Pretending to know is even more dangerous than not knowing at all, so it is important that gaps be admitted and recognized so that efforts can be made during validation to fill them, or to set up systems for filling them in the future.

4. Validating linkage profiles with focus groups

At this stage, a further process of validation of the findings of the investigation is important for several reasons.

Validation of investigators' identification of WHO is affected by linkages
The validation process needs to carried out with different groups that have been identified as those affected by different key linkages. The process of validating findings will allow investigators to ensure that their assessment of who is affected by different linkages is correct. This will provide an invaluable basis for future stakeholder analysis for possible development interventions that the investigation may generate.

Validation of investigators' "interpretations" of findings
Many features of the linkages identified between local institutions and livelihoods are likely to be subject to interpretation. Investigating teams need to compare their interpretation of what they have learnt with the interpretation of local people.

Validation processes as empowerment – building a relationship with the subjects of development
The process of validating information with the people who have provided that information is an empowering process. It ensures that the investigative process is not purely extractive and that local people can take ownership of the information

that has been generated. This can be particularly important for creating a solid basis for future work in the communities involved. If people feel they have participated in and contributed to the process of identifying what needs to be done, they will be far more likely to take ownership of and responsibility for the interventions and activities that follow. In addition, the process of reviewing learning together with people who are the "subjects" of that learning can help to establish a process of reflection about and constructive criticism of current conditions that can prove invaluable during later stages of development interventions. Validation processes can give local people the means to interact on an even footing with "outsiders" – whether they be researchers, investigators or project implementers – and to reflect critically both on their own conditions and on the processes and changes to which they are subject. The creation, early on in the project process, of an environment where the subjects of development can contribute key elements to the process of implementing development interventions can significantly enhance the effectiveness of those interventions.

Validation can be carried out with individuals, and there may some particularly sensitive issues that are best discussed with single key informants rather than with groups. But as a general rule, the validation process should usually be a group process. Representatives of the specific groups identified need to be gathered into focus group meetings and the findings relating to those groups presented to them in as clear a way as possible. In many cases, it may be possible to simplify the tables used to analyze livelihoods, institutions and linkages to help in presentations. But it may be more appropriate to use other visual techniques that can be more easily grasped.

The validation will usually need to be carried out on several "levels". One level is specific interest groups, defined by the differential impacts they experience or by their common interests in a particular form of livelihood strategy or institution. It may often happen that different individuals will participate in several group validation sessions that look at different sets of issues from different points of view.

At a higher level, some kind of community validation is also possible and even recommended, bearing mind that it is likely to create some level of expectation regarding what may follow. At the community level, a validation session can certainly provide an opportunity to identify some key issues relating to linkages between livelihood strategies and local institutions that everyone agrees upon and that might therefore become a useful entry point for subsequent development interventions.

An important element in an effective community validation session can be the involvement of local people to help with the presentation and facilitation of the discussion. Investigators may have already been able to identify specific individuals who are either regarded with respect by the rest of the community or who have been particularly interested in the investigation and seem to have a good understanding of the issues covered. "Handing over the stick" to local people can help to make discussion freer and the whole process less intimidating for those participants not used to taking part in meetings.

The limitations of community-level validation meetings need to be recognized. No matter how participatory the facilitation methods used, and no matter whether local people are actively involved in the presentation, there will always be some

community members who do not feel at ease in the environment of a large group and will not contribute actively to the proceedings. Often these will be the poorest and most vulnerable groups in the community who, if they come at all to such meetings, will generally assume that, because they are poor and vulnerable, nobody is interested in hearing what they have to say. Facilitators in such meetings can try to draw out such groups, but they may have to accept that they are unlikely to contribute much in that environment and they may need to be approached as a separate group in different circumstances.

5. Supplementary methods to fill in the gaps

Discussions held as part of the validation process may bring up new issues, new linkages and even new institutions that the investigative team feels it needs to look at. More likely, there are likely to be specific issues that require more detailed understanding. Within the time and resources available, the team may decide to collect further information regarding these issues.

At this stage of the investigation, some of the most useful approaches are likely to be:

- Timelines to assist in more detailed analysis of the changes and processes going on within institutions and in their relations with people in the community;
- Key informant interviews with specific respondents who have specialized knowledge of aspects of the institutions that have been seen to be not fully understood.

Perhaps most importantly, at this stage, the investigators will need to take stock of those aspects of the linkages between institutions and livelihoods that they feel they cannot fully understand or describe in the context of the study they have undertaken. Based on the validation process, the team should be able to identify potential mechanisms which will allow them, or the agencies they represent, to establish a regular contact with the communities they have worked in and continue the process of learning about institutional processes within those communities in the future.

In particular, if the investigation and validation process has been facilitated effectively, local people should become accustomed to using a set of communication tools – maps, timelines, diagrams of various sorts, matrices and tables to analyze information – that can become a means of communicating new learning in the future. This can form a critical part of a continuing process of assessment, reflection, monitoring and evaluation that can use the focus groups as regular reference points. Both specific interest groups and community-level groups can become the basis for future participatory monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Through these mechanisms, investigators will have the opportunity to continue the process of learning about institutional-livelihood linkages as their work in the communities continues.

THE MALATUK STORY – ANALYZING AND UNDERSTANDING LINKAGES

Once they have completed the institutional profiles, Musa and the team spend two full days simply trying to put the information they have collected in some kind of order. The tables they have used throughout the study have helped them to remember what types of information they have collected about different aspect issues, but they still have an enormous amount of data to sift through and make sense of.

Once they feel confident that they can put their hands on more or less all the different pieces of learning they have accumulated, they sit down to tackle the final set of analysis for their investigation – the profiles of the linkages between local institutions and household livelihood strategies. Musa suggests that they start the process off working all together to "brainstorm" a format for these profiles. The FAO Guidelines provide some suggestions, but Musa has already noticed that, for some of the linkages they have identified, the tables suggested in Module 6 of the guidelines may need to be developed upon further.

Right away, the team gets into a lengthy discussion about whether it is better to analyze these linkages taking the institutions as a starting point or the household livelihood strategies. There are clearly advantages and disadvantages to each approach – Dewi feels that it would be better to start off from the institutions, while Ravi and Diana are strongly in favour of starting with specific livelihood strategies. Daniel suggests that they might try out both approaches to see which works best. So they decide to do their first two "linkage profiles" as a team to try to sort out how they might best be done.

So that they can compare approaches, they decide to look for an institution and a livelihood strategy that seem to be linked. From their work in Cosuma, they identify a local institution - the milk and dairy cooperative – and a group of people involved in a set of livelihood strategies that they know are linked to this institution – poor female-headed households. This immediately leads Musa to raise a question – are they looking at groups of people that have common strategies or at specific strategies? They decide to focus on the group of people to see how this works.

Dewi takes the lead in the profile dealing with the cooperative as an institution. From their institutional profiles, they have a list of "key attributes" of the cooperative, which they place in the left-hand column of the table. They group these attributes in the same way that they are grouped in the institutional profile – first, they put down the various features relating to the "visibility and invisibility" of the organization, then its objectives and activities, and finally the "inclusiveness and exclusiveness". For each of these "attributes", they note which specific livelihood activities or strategies are affected by it, what the effects are and who is impacted.

For example, from their institutional profile of the cooperative, they know that the regular meetings held for cooperative members are seen, by some cooperative members, as too frequent and having a negative effect on the time they have available for other activities. This is particularly true for the better-off farmers who participate in the cooperative. For most of them, raising livestock for milk is just one of a range of agricultural activities they are engaged in. This "negative impact" of the one aspect of the cooperative – its regular meetings – on one group of cooperative members – better-off farmers – gets noted in the respective columns of the linkage profile table.

But for some other cooperative members, notably poorer women involved in very small-scale livestock raising, these meetings are very important in several ways. They help them to understand the workings of the cooperative; they provide a regular means for many of these women to meet and exchange news, views and experience; and they also provide perhaps the only forum where these women feel they can air their views. Starting from the same attribute of the institution, this different linkage involving a different group of people is noted down in the same way.

The team uses the very approximate scoring system suggested in the FAO Guidelines to give some idea of how important the impact of some of these different points is to the groups concerned. Ravi and Dewi point out that they actually have some data from their community and livelihoods profiles that can help them to quantify these impacts more precisely. In their table they include a reference to this data and where it can be found so that, in their final write-up, they can fill out the details as an addition to the table.

When they move on to looking at the dynamic aspects of these linkages and the changes that have taken place in the past and are taking place now, the process becomes a bit more complicated. They eventually decide that they need to add several extra columns to the ones suggested in the FAO Guidelines to cover all the different aspects of these changes thoroughly. Besides just noting the changes taking place, they decide to indicate what impacts these changes have had, how important those impacts are, whether they are changes that have taken place in the past or are going on now, and whether there are other institutions involved in these changes. This effectively adds another table, but the team decides that, particularly when they are dealing with an institution as a starting point, it is important to include these factors.

For the cooperative, this is particularly important, as changes in the economic policy of the government and the withdrawal of subsidies have had a very significant effect on what the cooperative can and cannot do, and has impacted on the livelihoods of some of the cooperative's members very significantly. The increase in fodder prices that followed the withdrawal of subsidies particularly affected many female-headed households, most of whom have no land but raise two or three milk cows, which represent one of their only sources of regular income. As there is practically no common property land in Cosuma that is suitable for grazing, these women had been

particularly dependent on subsidised fodder in order to continue this activity.

As a response to this change, new institutional arrangements have developed in the village whereby women no longer own the milk animals, but they rear them and look after them on behalf of their owners. They take the animals to graze on their owners plots, and in exchange for this service they get to keep all the milk they produce. Once the animals reach reproductive age, the women also get to keep the first of their offspring, whilst the other offspring and the animals themselves are returned to the owners. It seems that this cattle-rearing arrangement among households has always existed as a local institution, but has recently become very important to the very poor.

Once the team members are satisfied with this first linkage profile, they try looking at one of the groups they have already mentioned in the profile, taking them as the starting point of the analysis. After placing female-headed households involved in livestock raising at the top of the table, they list a series of activities that they know these households are involved in – clearly livestock raising, but also agricultural labour, firewood collection and sale, seasonal fishing in flooded areas – and also some particular assets that they depend on for their livelihoods – the local grain supplier who provides subsidised rice rations, the local health centre, the well where they fetch water.

For each of these, they identify institutions that influence, or are influenced by, these activities or assets, what these influences are, and who in particular is impacted by them. What quickly becomes apparent is that, while the "institutional approach" used before helped them to understand the complex influences that particular institutions could have on many different groups of people and livelihood activities, this "livelihood approach" helps them to understand better how the many different strands of people's livelihoods are combined and how the influence of one institution can change the relations of a household with another institution.

As they discuss the different approaches they have used, it becomes increasingly apparent that both are necessary and it is largely a question of deciding where one is more appropriate than the other. Even here, it is clear that the two approaches will often overlap and there will be considerable repetition, but Musa feels that this is unavoidable and is not necessarily a bad thing.

At this point, the team splits up, with each person taking the responsibility for completing a set of linkage profiles about groups or institutions that she or he has been involved in investigating. Altogether they have about 30 linkages for which they have decided they need to develop profiles. Taking institutions and livelihoods as different starting points, they find that some of these linkages end up being incorporated into one "profile", but they still produce a pretty impressive range of tables. Once they have completed them all, each team member presents a profile to the rest of the group and incorporates comments and criticisms as far as possible.

The whole process of developing these "draft" profiles takes several days, but at the end the team members agree that it has provided them with an excellent way of taking stock of what they had done during the study. Generally, everyone feels very satisfied. Musa calls their attention to the final column in the linkage profile tables in the FAO Guidelines, the one dealing with "hopes, fears aspirations and expectations". So far, they have not attempted to include this area, although they have considerable information about what local people feel can and should be done to improve conditions. But Musa now focuses their attention on the fact that, at the end of the day, the MPAP will want the team not just to tell a story but to make recommendations about how the project should act in the future in dealing with local institutions. This brings the team back down to earth as they realize that they do not really have a systematic means of drawing out "recommendations".

It is Diana who suggests that maybe the best way to do this would be to go back to the various focus groups they have talked to in the different communities and, while validating the conclusions that the team has arrived at – something they planned to do anyway – they could also initiate a discussion about what to do about those conclusions. This prompts Musa to recall again the interest of the Monitoring and Evaluation Cell of the project in her work, and she decides that it is time to get them involved. She is worried about the time available to them. Carrying out another round of visits to the communities will definitely take them longer than the time given to them to complete the study, and Musa does not want to go to the Team Leader to ask for an extension when she knows that they have already been lucky to get the amount of time they have already had for the investigation.

As they discuss their options, Daniel makes the point that one of the most important findings from the investigation, at least for him, is that the people in the communities they have visited mostly have very clear ideas about what needs to be done to make things better. He suggests, half jokingly, that maybe they should get the communities to present the results of the studies to the MPAP staff. Musa is momentarily taken aback but, as she turns the idea over in her mind, she thinks that she might be able incorporate their validation exercise, the presentation of key findings and the engagement of the monitoring and evaluation specialist into one "event".

She explains to her team members how they might be able to involve staff from the project to come down to the communities to take part in the validation sessions. That way they will be able to hear about the key issues directly from the people concerned, talk with them about possible future courses of action for the project and see how the focus group mechanisms that they have initiated during the investigation could become contact points for the project. The Monitoring and Evaluation Cell could also take part to see how these groups could be replicated in other project areas and become a key mechanism for community participation – something Musa knows the monitoring and evaluation specialists are still struggling with. By the end of the process (which would correspond more or less to the end of the time available for the

investigation), sufficient people within the project would have been "informed" about key findings for a workshop to be held within the project in which the outputs could be presented and feed directly into the planning processes for project activities that the Team Leader is anxious to get underway.

Musa hopes that this strategy might win her and the team some extra time to complete their write-up of the report. She decides to propose this to the Team Leader. She gets the team to work out a schedule for the validation procedure and a basic format that the meetings at focus group and community level might follow. She approaches some of her colleagues in the project to sound out their availability and their reactions to the idea. There is some skepticism about the usefulness of the approach, but she also encounters a significant level of enthusiasm among some of the technical specialists, who feel that they have been sitting too long in the provincial capital and have not yet had any real opportunity to get out in the field and engage with local people.

Musa presents her idea to the Team Leader, at the same time reviewing what the team feels are some of the really important findings it has come up with and showing him the sort of outputs that the team has produced so far. The Team Leader is enthusiastic. He immediately calls in the head of the Monitoring and Evaluation Cell and asks him to cooperate in planning the validation meetings with Musa and the team. A meeting of the whole project team is organized a few days later, at which Musa is asked to present more or less what she has presented to the Team Leader to the project staff. Musa gets Ravi to come along and divide the presentation with her and field some of the questions regarding the practicalities of carrying out these validation meetings.

When the Team Leader suggests that the project staff should cooperate with Musa, there is some grumbling that this will disrupt ongoing activities, but the reaction is generally positive, as people can see how this could provide a far more solid platform for planning their activities than the various technical assessments that they have carried out so far. The Team Leader also commits himself to come to at least one of the communities to look at the validation proves himself.

Ravi voices some concern that these village meetings might turn into a "circus", as he puts it – he is worried that the presence of a lot of new "outsiders" will intimidate people and make it difficult to carry out a meaningful discussion. So it is agreed that there should never be more than six people altogether from the project at any one meeting and that new "visitors" should spend some time in the communities before the meetings take place in order for their presence to be "assimilated" by local people. They decide that they will have three people from the investigative team and three other project staff members in each community.

They have some problems deciding how to split up the team for these meetings. In the end, they decide that Musa and Ravi should take part in all three communities as they are likely to be the ones who continue to work in the project throughout its lifespan. In addition, in each community, one of the team members who took part in the field work will accompany them. Dewi is no longer available in any case, as she has had to return to the university, so Daniel and Diana take turns working with Musa and Ravi in different communities. With two extra people from the MPAP in each village, this means that they form a team of five people for the validation process in each community.

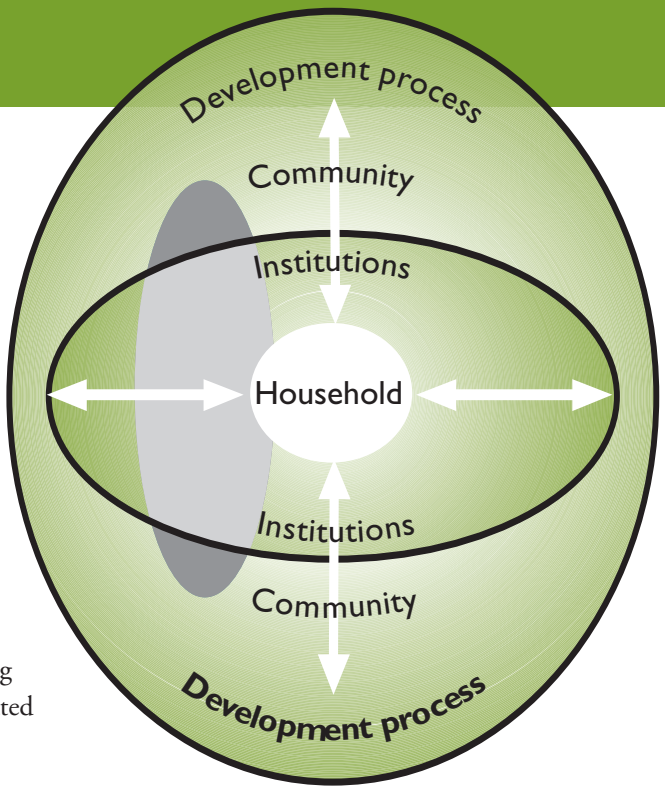
When it comes down to Musa's colleagues from the project making themselves available, the initial enthusiasm seems to slacken off a little. In the end, Musa gets one senior staff from the Monitoring and Evaluation Cell, who decides to come to all three communities. They then suggest that two technical specialists from the most relevant technical disciplines come and take part. In Baraley, the project's specialists in agricultural extension and the fisheries join the team. For Yaratuk, the fisheries specialist stays with them and is joined by the marketing specialist, while in Cosuma the experts in food crops and aquaculture take part.

Musa is able to get some of the other extension specialists in the project team to cooperate in preparing these meetings, and they provide some valuable suggestions about how to get the findings of the investigation across to people in a clear and easily understood way.

The meetings prove a great success. In Cosuma, where the community has already experienced several studies by outside researchers in the past, the local leaders and the community are astonished to see the team return, since, as they say, "we never know what happens to all that information that gets collected". It is quite a new experience for the "findings" of the study to be brought back to them for discussion. In Baraley, the arrival of more new faces causes a considerable stir and it proves quite difficult to keep meetings with focus groups small, as everyone always wants to join in. The team members are forced to spend an extra day there to allow the excitement to die down a little so that they can hold their meetings with the specific groups of people whom they want to talk to.

The responses to the linkages that the team presents are mixed – there is always some disagreement about the priorities that the team has assigned to different institutional linkages, but, from Musa's point of view, the most important thing is that the presentation generates a great deal of discussion and a whole range of interesting suggestions about what could be done.

These are all put together and become essential inputs for the planning process of the MPAP.



1. Reviewing the outputs

The "objective" of the investigation as described so far has been the development of the outputs described in the previous module: profiles of the specific linkages between local institutions and household livelihood strategies. But the process leading to the generation of these profiles will have also generated a series of other outputs, all of which could play an important role in supporting development activities.

These outputs could include the following information:

- profiles of the communities involved;
- profiles of the principle livelihood strategies undertaken by different groups of people in the community and the features of the groups involved in those strategies; and
- profiles of the key institutions in the community.

In addition, there would also be a series of "processes" set in motion by the investigation that can be regarded as important outputs. Many of these outputs will vary according to the way in which the study has been implemented and the relationship that the team has been able to create with the communities during the study, but they might include:

- a network of contacts and key informants in the communities studied;
- groups within the communities accustomed to interacting with outsiders and undertaking analysis of local conditions with them;
- knowledge of, and ability to use, some communication and facilitation tools to analyze local conditions;
- critical awareness and understanding of the issues addressed by the investigation;
- potential channels linking local people with investigators so that learning can continue;
- potential channels for setting up a two-way flow of information between outsiders (project, programme, agency) and local people; and
- interest in and willingness among local people to address the issues identified during the course of the investigation and to improve the relationships between local institutions and household livelihood strategies.

These outputs can be regarded as potentially important, as they can be used as a basis for setting up project activities that are rooted in the community and empower community members, as well as for addressing the key issues in terms of institutional-livelihood linkages that the investigation has identified.

2. Feeding the outputs into the project cycle

Investigations of these linkages are most likely to take place as part of the "diagnostic" process, where development agencies are trying to understand local conditions so that they can decide what to do. But these investigations could be used not only at the beginning of a project but at the different stages shown in Figure 11.

Diagnosis

The outputs of a study of linkages between local institutions and household livelihood strategies would obviously add a very significant layer of understanding to an overall diagnosis in a community, or an area, before beginning to plan development interventions. By looking at these issues during the diagnostic phase, investigators can help project planners build a more complete picture of the situation in which they are intervening. This will give them the possibility of addressing a more complete range of interlocking development issues rather than fragments of the picture. This can be of critical importance as these issues are usually intimately interlinked.

Feasibility

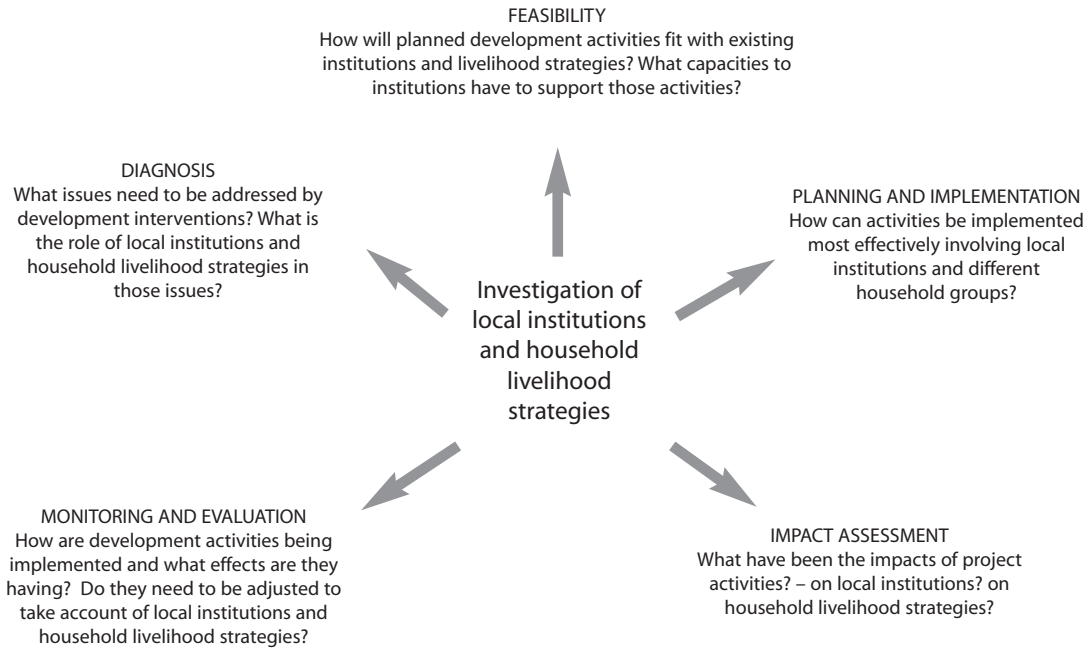
Where the diagnostic phase of a project has already been undertaken, a more focussed study of this kind could be carried out to investigate the feasibility of specific development interventions that have been identified as possible solutions to local problems.

For example, a diagnostic study may have identified soil run-off in upland farming areas as a key problem that needs to be addressed by future development work. Various soil management measures could be proposed to deal with this problem, but a study of institutional linkages could significantly improve the understanding of how these measures are likely to be received among local people. A study of this type might reveal that the current lack of proper soil management is not due to "ignorance" but due to the land tenure arrangements that discourage any extra investment in land for which tenure is precarious or ambiguous. Increased migration by male household members might be leaving more responsibility for agricultural work to women, whose existing workloads make additional soil management tasks impractical.

Planning and implementation

These linkage studies could also contribute concretely to the practical issues of planning and implementating project activities. Where projects and programmes expect local institutions and organizations, such as NGOs, local government bodies or community organizations, to play a role in the implementation of

Figure 11 – Feeding the Outputs into Different Stages of the Project Cycle



development interventions, the existing roles, objectives and capacities of these institutions need to be carefully assessed. Likewise, existing relationships between these institutions and household livelihoods would need to be fully understood in order to assess how changes in the role, capacity and size of these institutions might affect people who currently depend on them in one way or another. The participatory elements in the study would be of particular importance here. Local institutions would need to be involved in assessing their own capacities, skills and objectives to see to how they can be joined with those of other development agencies involved in new projects or programmes.

An example might be where local NGOs are expected to take on a role in a natural resource management project. Clearly, most NGOs would welcome the opportunity to participate in any project that can bring resources into their organization. But the roles and functions expected of them in such a project might be very different from those they are used to performing. The process of carrying out an investigation of this kind in the area, involving those NGOs in an analysis of what they do, their relations with local people and their livelihoods and the possible implications of major changes in their activities, could clarify, both for the agencies involved and the NGOs themselves, how realistic such expectations might be.

Monitoring and evaluation

The process of carrying out a study of this kind can produce many opportunities for establishing mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating on-going project activities. If local people are properly engaged in the investigation and play an active part in identifying and planning project activities, their capacity to monitor the implementation process should also be greatly strengthened. The process of

carrying out the investigation together with local people will also lead to the identification of appropriate indicators that can easily be monitored in the future.

For example, the investigation might reveal that the most important criteria applied by local people to measure the effectiveness of a system for credit provision are not related to the quantity of money received or even the interest rates charged, but rather the timeliness of credit availability and flexibility in repayment schedules. This could significantly change the way in which the success of a new credit scheme might be measured, at least from the point of view of the intended beneficiaries.

Impact assessments

An assessment of the impacts of local institutions on household livelihoods could also make an important contribution to an evaluation of a project or programme that has already finished. Even where a project has not specifically targeted institutions, it may well have had unexpected effects on the institutions in the area where it has been implemented. This can be especially true of local informal institutions and, in turn, this could have affected people's livelihoods.

For example, a project that has worked on the dissemination of techniques to ensure better utilization of fish catch might have achieved a significant reduction in what were regarded as "losses" from the catch on the beach after landing. An investigation of livelihoods and institutions might well discover that many of these losses were part of an informal "welfare" institution within the community through which small amounts of low-value fish were left for elderly people and children from poor households to collect in return for small services. These "discards" may have constituted a small but important source of income or exchange for these households. Quite unintentionally, efforts to "improve production" may have undermined an important social institution within the community.

3. Feeding the outputs into different levels of the development process

The outputs of the investigation also have relevance at a variety of different levels in the development process. In these guidelines, the principle focus has been on a development project or programme seeking to use the investigation to improve the process of project design. But this represents only one possible level at which the investigation's outputs could be useful.

The sorts of contributions that an investigation of linkages between local institutions and household livelihood strategies might make are likely to be quite different at different levels. At the household and community levels, for example, the outputs of the study will be heavily dependent on the sort of process used to implement it – the data produced may be of limited direct usefulness to poor farmers, but if they have had the chance to discuss the findings with investigators they may have been stimulated to thinks about local conditions in a new way and this could help in changing people's attitudes, their capacity for analysis and their willingness to work for change in the future.

Some of these different uses of outputs of the investigation are reviewed below and illustrated in Figure 12.

Household

The process of getting households to analyze their own livelihoods can encourage them to identify, for themselves, weaknesses and ways that they could improve their situation. Households may have "poor" livelihood outcomes because they are not fully using their existing resources and capacities or they are combining them in a way that does not realize their full potential. By taking part in an analysis of this, people's understanding of where those weaknesses lie can be be improved and help them to decide on better strategies for them and their families.

As well as these possibilities for improved strategies, the household livelihood profiles should help to clarify the distinct needs and priorities of different groups, particularly different age and gender groups.

Proper involvement of households in the investigation will also be empowering, especially where the investigation pays attention to identifying the poorer groups in communities and treats them as a separate interest group with particular problems and potentials. During the course of the investigation, opportunities may arise for different groups of "poor stakeholders" to get together and discuss common problems, and this can give rise to new opportunities for organization among those who are normally excluded from any form of organization at the community level.

Community

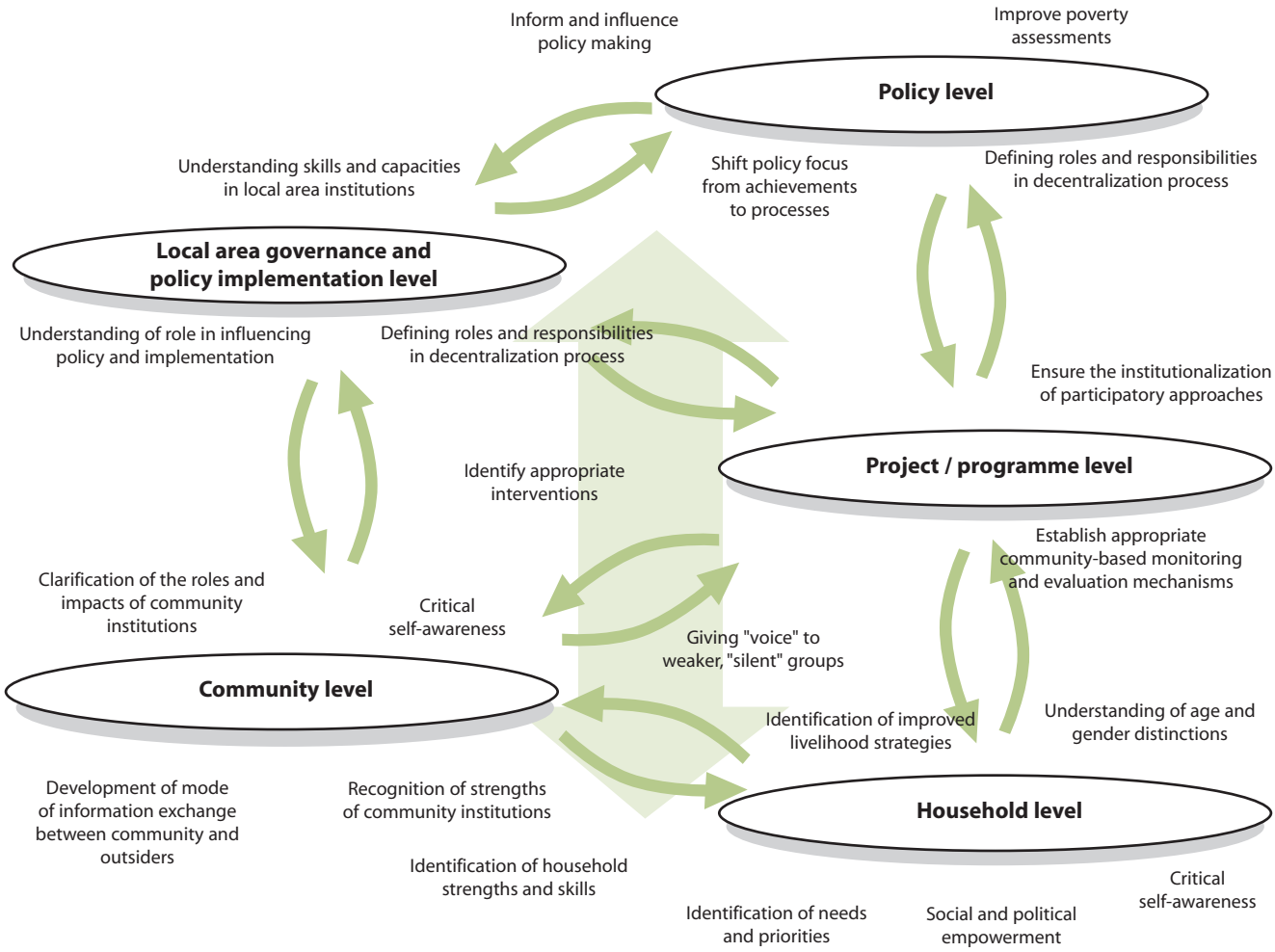
The community as a whole may use the investigation as an opportunity to reflect on what they do and how they live. The ability of a community to do this constructively will depend on its history, its internal dynamics and the leadership of the community as a whole and the various interest groups within it. But often there are few occasions and few stimuli for communities to undertake such a process, and the impetus provided by outsiders coming to undertake a study of this kind can be very positive.

In particular, an output of such a study that can be directly beneficial to the community can be a recognition of the strengths of certain community-level institutions, especially informal networks of mutual assistance and support to the poorer sections of the community. This can enhance the respect that people have for their own institutions and increase local interest in preserving those that are positive and important to them.

Where decentralization of decision-making and political power is taking place, participation by the community in an investigation of this kind can help to give voice to groups within the community that are not used to expressing their needs and priorities. The process of getting local people to critically analyze the institutions around them and how they are affected by them can give those who normally have little influence on community affairs "something to say".

Particularly important at the community level will be the clarification of the roles and impacts of different institutions, including those that are specific to the community, those that are "local" and those that influence the community from the outside. This clarification can be essential to help projects or programmes adjust their plans for institutional development by understanding the priorities that

Figure 12 – Feeding the Outputs into Different Levels of the Development Process



people associate with the performance of institutions at the local level. This may help outside agencies to change or even abandon their plans for institutional development where they see opportunities to strengthen or "add value" to existing institutions rather than create new ones.

Project or programme

Clearly, the type of investigation described in these guidelines is most immediately aimed at improving projects or programmes by enhancing their understanding of local institutional environments and their interactions with the livelihoods of households living in those environments.

A better understanding of local institutional networks will not only help projects and programmes to identify how different activities might feed into these networks, it will also clarify the position that a project or programme itself is likely to assume within that network. An important implication of the understanding of livelihoods outlined in Module 1 is that political relations need to be explicitly

understood and addressed – development activities that intervene in the livelihoods of people can no longer be regarded as "neutral"; they will affect political and power relations between different groups in complex ways. The role that a project may assume needs to be well understood before it begins its interventions.

The potential for setting up mechanisms that will allow better monitoring and evaluation of the activities of a project or programme have already been mentioned. This element can constitute an important output of the investigation and can have impacts on the successful implementation of development activities.

Provided the investigation is carried out with the use of participatory approaches in the field, it can also ensure that these approaches become more "institutionalized" within the project. Once the "norm" of exchange of information and discussion of learning has been established with local people, a demand for the continuation of such approaches is more likely.

Local area governance and policy implementation levels

This level may be particularly important from the point of view of adjusting the ways in which government or regional institutions interact with local communities. The understanding of local-level institutional relationships and the ways in which local people view those relationships can help this level to adjust the ways in which institutions are structured and the ways in which they attempt to implement policy directives coming from higher up.

With the trend towards decentralization, this level is of increasing "formal" importance, although, in reality, it has always been essential: it is often at this level that the "intentions" of policies and national institutions are transformed into "reality" on the ground. In many cases, limited capacity at this level has often meant that policies have little impact at the ground level. In other cases, the influence of priorities at this level, whether personal, political, economic or socio-cultural, has meant that policies are transformed quite dramatically during the process of implementation. For example, a policy intended to ensure the distribution of staple foods to the poorest sections of society may become transformed, at this level, into a means of distributing political and economic patronage through a network of local commercial interests.

Investigations of linkages between institutions and household livelihood strategies are liable to identify many possible linkages that go from the local (i.e. community) level up to this intermediate level. Inevitably, problems may arise in defining where the "local" sphere ends and broader regional or national interests begin. But these are key linkages that will need to be understood and which the outputs of the investigation will be able to contribute to significantly.

This is particularly true because, just as the intentions of institutions and policies are often transformed at this "implementation" level, so the opportunities for making changes in the effectiveness of institutions in supporting household livelihoods are also significant. Changes in attitude at this level among those involved in planning and implementing the activities of institutions can have major impacts at the ground level, even when policy or institutions higher up the scale are not particularly supportive.

In particular the institutional profiles generated by the investigation can help agencies and institutions at this level to understand their own skills, capacity, formal and informal objectives, and help to identify areas that can be changed.

Policy

The outputs of the investigation may also be able to influence, directly or indirectly, the decisions and processes that generate policy and direct some of the larger institutions that affect people at the local level.

An awareness of the complexity of local-level institutions, and the ways in which policy intentions are implemented locally, may lead policy-makers to a more realistic understanding of what they can achieve through policy decisions. This can encourage policy makers to focus on the definition of processes rather than activities, targets and implementation issues that, in any case, will often be directed more by local-level concerns than by the intentions of national-level policy makers.

A deeper understanding of local institutions will also feed into processes of decentralization and identify, for policy makers, some of the key areas that need to be addressed within the decentralization process. For example, the relationships between formal institutions responsible for the governance and regulation of natural resource use and local informal systems of resource allocation may be fundamental in deciding how to allocate powers and rights over natural resources during the process of decentralisation.

Investigations of this kind could make a particularly significant contribution to poverty assessments carried out nationally or locally. An understanding of how policies and institutions interact with the livelihoods of the poor can make a particularly significant contribution to informing national policy and improving its focus on the poorer sections of society.

4. Examples of the use of outputs

The cases below illustrate how the learning generated by an investigation of this kind might be used in practice in different situations.

Understanding the institutional context of an NGO credit scheme

If an NGO is planning to initiate a micro-credit scheme in a given rural area, there are typically several questions to which at least preliminary answers should be sought before starting development activities. To begin with, the project designers should investigate if there is a sufficient demand for credit to ensure steady participation in the initiative, and low rates of repayment default. This issue should be explored at the various levels where some secondary information may be available (for example in the offices of the local government administration, with provincial-level line agencies, or with local NGO offices).

But it may be more complex than first thought, because existing figures and other data on finance in the countryside usually cover only the formal banking sector. Yet loans may also be supplied by informal credit and savings associations, which are better placed and equipped to understand local norms of social reciprocity and build upon these. Such associations are therefore able to apply "peer pressure" on repayments; that is, their members "monitor themselves". As it is their own money that is being lent and re-lent, it is in the interest of each of their members to check-up on those who have been taking out loans, making sure they are willing and able to repay them, and do so on time.

Local people may prefer this type of arrangement to a formal bank loan for several reasons. First of all, normally no collateral or guarantors are needed and poorer borrowers may fear the risk of losing their already limited assets if they default on a formal bank laon. Bank repayment schedules are often not well coordinated with the seasonal pattern of agricultural activities (loans that need to be paid back after three or six months do not leave enough time to harvest and sell the produce, at least not at a good price). The transaction costs of bank loans may be higher, as the bank could be far away and difficult and expensive to get to. Literacy skills and background information may be required for completing a loan application and dealing with other paperwork. Procedures for obtaining formal loans may be relatively slow compared to informal sources making it difficult to ensure that money is available at critical points in the agricultural cycle, such as buying seeds for sowing or pesticides for dealing with pest attacks, or hiring additional labour promptly to deal with weeding and land preparation before the rainy season.

Information generated by an investigation of linkages between household livelihood strategies and local institutions should help those designing the credit scheme to understand locally existing financing channels for agricultural and other income-generating activities, how these channels work, whom they tend to benefit and who is excluded from them. This would allow for more solid targeting of micro-loans and tailoring conditions for disbursement to local norms, needs and capacities, increasing their likelihood of viability, sustainability and success. It would also ensure "doing no harm", by not undermining existing institutions that are functioning well. This points to one of the most fundamental questions: should the NGO initiative support existing informal arrangements (financially, technically, logistically, legally, etc.), or should it be implemented completely separately from those arrangements; that is to say, should new local groups be created to channel the loans?

If institutional profiles are compiled for all informal savings and credit arrangements, and linkages profiles for different types of livelihoods as they relate to these savings and credit arrangements, they will be a very important input to solve this question on a case-by-case basis. The profiles may be based on key informant interviews with some of the office holders of the informal associations, such as their presidents, chairpersons, treasurers, secretaries and so on. These may be compared to the key informant interviews carried out with community leaders, to understand the different expectations of members of savings and credit associations compared with the expectations of the community at large. The institutional profiles of different credit sources should also help to identify those local institutions that provide small credit for productive activities and those that provide "instant loans" for expenses such as funerals, medical charges, school fees, etc. The "entry point" for developing institutional and linkages profiles may vary according to whether or not the NGO micro-credit scheme will be designed to include a fixed "menu" of economic activities or if these are left completely open for the participating communities to decide.

If the NGO scheme is considering working with women's savings groups, it will need to understand the objectives of potential group members for the increased income generated through savings. By asking them what livelihood activities are

most important to them and why, it will be possible to arrive at a picture of where women get their present income (if any) from, what they use it for and if they can decide on its use independently from their husbands or from other household members. The next step would be to trace, through the linkages profiles, the relationship between existing livelihood activities and the role that the women's savings groups might play in them. The way in which the development activities that the NGO plans to support may affect the lives and livelihoods of the women's savings group members and their families will become clear. If poverty reduction is a prime objective, the livelihoods- and institutional profiles for the women's savings groups must look into the wealth status of their members, and a decision may be taken on the necessity of forming new local groups to support the poorer women in the communities.

By putting side by side the community, livelihoods, institutional and linkages profiles, the designers of the women's savings groups component of the NGO micro-credit scheme will be able to make better judgements about the institutional as well as some of the operational dimensions of their planned initiatives. In particular, they will be better able to target their 'beneficiaries' or 'clients' because they will have a much clearer idea about who they are. They will be better able to understand what impact the development initiatives they are planning are likely to have on local livelihoods, because they will have a much clearer idea about how and why these change over time. Similarly, they will be in a position to provide more flexibility in the management of the micro-funds, and possibly delegate the monitoring and evaluation of activities to the micro-credit groups themselves, decreasing costs while increasing members' commitment and their local legitimacy. Ultimately, this will contribute to learning lessons for the promotion of development goals such as women's emancipation, and increased economic and political participation.

Understanding the "rules of the game" influencing marketing cooperatives

Marketing cooperatives have often been established as means of helping small producers to achieve economies of scale for the bulk purchase of inputs and for producing in sufficient volumes to access wholesale marketing outlets. But cooperatives have often performed poorly for a variety of reasons. The future members have often not been consulted prior to the establishment of cooperatives, leading to low levels of commitment, conflicting sets of expectations and priorities among the membership and lack of understanding of the cooperatives' objectives and management mechanisms. The situation has often been made worse by efforts to keep cooperatives alive artificially though direct and indirect subsidies aiming at counterbalancing unattractive terms of trade in agriculture.

With the increasing reluctance, and inability, of governments to continue subsidizing uneconomic cooperatives, many have collapsed and those that have survived have had to adapt to a competitive environment. A basic requirement for survival has been the ability to minimize costs and overcome the problems of access to information, poor communications and lack of infrastructure that rural cooperatives often face. But it is also clear that cooperatives have been more sustainable where the membership is linked by bonds of trust, similar values and

life styles, and relationships that are not purely economic but also social and supported by networks of mutual support, respect and solidarity.

These social relationships are part of the "social capital" described as one of the livelihood assets in Module 1 of these guidelines (see the Annex for a possible definition, and Marsh 2002, the companion volume to the present Guidelines dealing with policy, for more details). Understanding the 'stock' of social capital within cooperatives or among the potential membership of proposed cooperatives is therefore very important. Where that social capital is weak, the development of successful cooperatives may depend on finding ways of increasing it, or, at least, to avoid eroding it. Clearly this is a particularly important issue for projects aimed at local institutional development. Ideally, such projects should start off by analyzing the local institutional environment in which they are going to be implemented, by selecting and investigating, for example, a cooperative that is struggling with the marketing of its members' produce. By making it the subject of an institutional profile, many of the strengths and weaknesses concerning the way in which its members relate to each other will emerge, and this will give a rough indication of some of the stock and the origin of the social capital of its members. Especially important in "measuring" social capital are not only the horizontal types of interactions, but the contact that takes place vertically between 'ordinary' members and leaders, as well as other decision-makers and, if applicable, the cooperative and its 'parent' organization at a higher level of administration and management.

These interactions often reflect existing networks of political patronage, or of clientelistic exchanges that appear 'exploitive' to outsiders. Such relationships may be rooted in local history - population movements, warfare, conquest, or simply settlement patterns and mechanisms of barter and sale between population groups. Often these relationships do not "make sense" from a purely economic (profit-maximizing) point of view, but they may have become institutionalized as "the way things are done" through the strong ties that have bound population groups to each other over centuries. These codes of conduct may lead to less immediately tangible benefits, such as free assistance in times of need, and may be valued very dearly by farmers, who must minimize the risks they take under uncertain climatic conditions. This points to a 'trade-off' for development agencies between not interfering with such inequitable trade arrangements (and leaving the "stock" of social capital intact) and attempting to set up new 'rules of the game' and marketing channels with other, possibly non-local, stakeholders (thereby attempting to bypass negative social capital and to create new social capital).

Several different aspects of what cooperatives do and processes they are involved in would need to be understood. The interactions that take place outside of the cooperative, such as its economic relationships in the marketplace, should be investigated step by step. The market itself can be characterized and analyzed in its various forms, for different agricultural products and at different times during the agricultural season. The relationships and transactions between different stakeholders in the cooperative would also need to be analyzed. In doing so, the economic and non-economic advantages that the members of a given cooperative draw from having joined it (or from deliberately not having joined it) will become clearer, which can in turn provide a solid basis for a more detailed investigation of

the functions of the cooperative in the livelihoods of different types of households. The livelihoods and institutional profiles can be used to arrive at a better understanding of precisely this role, and it will soon appear where, if at all, any possibilities of 'leverage' for outside interventions may exist.

For example, it may emerge that cooperative membership is automatically expected from anyone cultivating a field located within a certain larger area of land, in which case there is no self-selection of members. This has effects on several institutional attributes; for example, it will be difficult to bring peer pressure to bear. Or, some of the members of the cooperative have joined it in the first place for reasons other than to help them with their production and marketing activities, and therefore these members do not feel ownership over its operations or the way in which it is run and do not attend meetings. Or else, it may emerge that women members take on the burden of both agricultural production and marketing, but are neither part of, nor consulted by, its board of directors in the decisions that affect it, while their husbands insist on not leaving the cooperative because they find in it a source of camaraderie, prestige and status. In the former cases, lending institutional support to the cooperative is clearly not a desirable direction to pursue unless its membership criteria, mode of decision-making, activities and management can be modified and accountability be built in, whilst in the latter case to work with women producer groups directly may be a preferable development opportunity.

In sum, by putting side by side the community, livelihoods, institutional and linkages profiles, it will be possible to arrive at a better understanding of the marketing strengths and constraints of a given cooperative. In particular, from the profiles a picture will emerge of the dynamics within this cooperative (or of the lack thereof), so that development initiatives seeking to reach beyond what "meets the eye" can be formulated. That is to say, these initiatives can be designed in a more innovative and cultural- as well as context-specific manner because they are informed by a detailed investigation of the role that the marketing of produce through the cooperative plays in the livelihoods of different individuals, households and stakeholder groups. Possibly, defunct or only marginally successful cooperatives may thereby be revitalized by taking into account the social capital, or the lack of social capital, of its members, which would contribute to establish for these same local institutions a more central position in the lives and livelihoods of their members, by increasing local ownership and self-determination.

Community empowerment in mobile (transhumant) pastoralist communities

In dry or semi-dry regions where cattle raising is an important livelihood activity, development programmes aimed at community empowerment have sometimes worked exclusively with settled people. Yet, in these areas there are normally groups of "transhumant" pastoralists, who shift between different grazing areas according to season, who do not live in fixed villages, are not always visible in official statistical information such as agricultural and population censuses, and may thus be overlooked by governments and donors. While projects with livestock development components have sometimes attempted to improve the livelihood activities of rural herders, including migrating groups, this has often been the task

of technical experts with a background in the natural sciences, first and foremost veterinarians. As a result, the social local institutions that sustain the cattle-raising activities of transhumant population groups have not always been taken into account, let alone been understood or used as an "entry point" for interventions.

This means that the starting point for understanding the linkages between the livelihood elements and local institutions of transhumant pastoralists will usually be significantly "lower" than for other groups. If short on time, analyzes should focus on what is probably the single most important institution in pastoral activities based on the use of natural resources – that is, land tenure. The tenure "niches" that different groups of people occupy or exploit within the targeted geographic area need to be characterized through the use of a number of investigative tools. The latter include focus group discussions with both settled and transhumant pastoralists and key informant interviews with the leaders of pastoralist institutions (where these exist) or traditional authorities of particular population groups. Information extracted from the interviews can be used to draw up institutional profiles for different tenure niches and linkages profiles on the relationships between different livelihood elements and the norms and regulations that govern the use of pastoral resources.

One of the difficulties that even NGOs may encounter working with transhumant pastoralists has to do with their often highly complex systems of regulating access to natural resources, especially access to fodder or grazing grounds and water. Together with key informants, mapping exercises may be carried out that differentiate between use rights – permanent, temporary, priority, secondary, tertiary, seasonal, etc. – and management (or 'stewardship') rights and duties. This may be important for two reasons: poverty alleviation and sustainable natural resource management. The poorest pastoralists are not likely to enjoy the same rights as the richer pastoralists, and to prevent the over-exploitation of rangelands, some of the flexibility that is provided by the dual functions of owning as well as controlling the resources themselves, and controlling the access to the flow of those resources, must be preserved.

Key informants can help map the resources to which transhumant pastoralists have access, starting with the cattle "corridors" through which they move their animals across other people's land to reach fodder and watering points. It is then possible to describe the different use rights that exist in the area under investigation, and to point out to the local administration just how important a recognition of these temporary claims and multiple land use systems

is for the sustainability of local ecosystems and for rural development. A recognition of the role of transhumant pastoralists in preserving natural resources and in providing "services" to farming communities (manure, livestock products, such as milk and meat, bullocks for animal traction, ecological knowledge for range management, etc.) would go a long way towards giving them more visibility and "voice" in relation to the sedentary government structures in which they are normally not even represented.

Another of the difficulties that any 'outsiders' – whether government, development agencies or NGOs – working with transhumant pastoralists encounter has to do with the problems arising from the mobility of these groups. Projects aimed at empowering them as part of the wider settlements to which they are 'attached' for administrative purposes have sometimes involved attempts at increasing their participation in community affairs and their inclusion in democratic decision-making processes. In these cases, a first obstacle to be overcome lies with the definition of the constituency of transhumant pastoralists, and how to be able to inform them on local matters at any point in time. Likewise, the provision of veterinary services to these groups (for example, as part of important national vaccination campaigns) is challenging. To address such issues, an option to pursue is that of strengthening the self-reliance of transhumant pastoralist groups, and a good vehicle for doing so is to concentrate on the development of their institutions. However, to do so requires information on several attributes of these institutions, which can be retrieved by developing institutional profiles; for example, if membership is "by birth" into a given population group, or if it is "by animal ownership", this will have certain implications on how to approach institutional development.

The institutional and livelihood profiles compiled for different transhumant pastoralist groups will shed light on some of the opportunities for including them in a project component, as well as the difficulties that might be faced. For example, if the planned activities include political support through advocacy with government and donor institutions, information is needed on the important environmental and social service functions provided by transhumant pastoralists, which can be extracted from the institutional and livelihoods profiles. Alternatively, if the planned activities include economic support through bridging gaps in marketing, information is needed on their current mode of production and sales, as well as the balance between livestock products that are consumed and those that are sold, which can be extracted from the livelihoods, institutional, and community profiles. If the planned activities include technical support from the Animal Health Department through training of itinerant veterinarians, information is needed on the migration patterns of animals and herders, which can be extracted from the mapping exercises of herd movements and tenure niches, as well as from the institutional profiles on certain customary and modern range management practices.

By putting side by side the community, livelihoods, institutional and linkages profiles, it will be possible to arrive at a better understanding of the livelihoods of transhumant pastoralists, and this information can be used to design programmes aimed at the empowerment of such population groups. Policy decisions regarding the livestock sector (for example, how to fight the overstocking of cattle) will

benefit from the understanding gained during the investigation, as planned development initiatives may include a component that would seek to halt the degradation of local natural resources by providing appropriate support to certain range management institutions and the livelihoods that they sustain. Experience in organizational development has shown that for local institutions to flourish and evolve, a few years may be necessary during which time their particular attributes, dynamics and initiatives are closely monitored and actions taken upon these observations; the institutional profiles elaborated would provide a sound basis to couch such work in a coherent and continuous framework.

Developing a strategy for informing and influencing policy on natural resource management

Local-level projects aiming to develop improved forms of natural resource management often encounter obstacles because national policy on natural resources does not allow flexibility in the forms of and responsibilities for management. Particularly where potential has been identified for building on the strengths and experience of local people in managing the resources on which they depend by setting up more community-based management mechanisms, national-level policies that concentrate responsibility for natural resource management within central institutions will often undermine any efforts to introduce effective changes.

An effective analysis of how these policy elements at the national level affect the decision-making processes of local people could represent an essential element in influencing policy makers to relinquish some of their control.

The traditional reaction of many development programmes in the past has been to regard policy as a "given", a factor outside the control of the project that may or may not be supportive of the project or programme's objectives but, in any case, cannot really be changed. An essential part of the interpretation of "livelihoods" presented in Module 1 of these Guidelines is that the range of factors that include political, as well as institutional, issues cannot be ignored but needs to be addressed explicitly in order to achieve development goals. While the task of bringing about policy change may seem beyond the capacity of single projects, it can be approached systematically so that the measures needed in order to cause change can be at least identified and, eventually, partnerships formed with other organizations or groups in order to attempt to push for change.

Part of this approach could be based on the institutional profiles carried out as part of the investigation and would serve to identify very clearly the roles and responsibilities of different institutions and individuals in the policy-making process so that efforts to bring about change within that process can be targeted and focussed. The tables below indicate how this could be made a relatively systematic process.

The first step would be for those involved in the project – in this case, project staff and their "clients" from the communities desiring a greater degree of local autonomy in the management of their natural resources – to develop a clear vision of what change they would like to see taking place. This also means being clear about what the results of that change might be. In the case of the community pushing for local control of natural resources, they would need to think through clearly **what** the concrete benefits of this change would be and **who** would benefit.

These would constitute the **objectives** of their efforts to influence policy. In the case given below, they might decide that their key objectives are to improve the livelihoods of local people and empowerment of the community, as this is what they think local management of natural resources will contribute to.

Policy change

What are we trying to achieve? (objectives)	How will we know if we've achieved it?	What needs to change in order to achieve it?
■ Improved livelihood outcomes for local people ■ Empowerment of local communities	■ Quantity (income, food availability, expenditure) ■ Quality (well-being, satisfaction, sense of security, empowerment) ■ Time	■ Policies ■ Institutions involved in formulating and influencing policy ■ Processes that lead to policy being formed ■ The people concerned

(Based on work by Campbell, IMM Ltd.)

Next, based on information from the institutional profile, the major "policy stakeholders" need to be identified. A "policy stakeholder" would be anyone with a role in formulating or influencing policy and also those who are affected by it. A policy change that we wish to bring about may negatively affect other people in some way, and these effects need to be taken into consideration.

Policy stakeholders

Who needs to be influenced or changed?	What is their role in the policy-making process?	What is it that needs to change?
■ Politicians	■ Informer	■ Attitudes
■ Bureaucrats - national and local	■ Influencer	■ Knowledge
■ Private-sector groups and local elites	■ Decider	■ Skills
■ Interest groups – NGOs	■ Implementer	■ Behaviour
■ Policy networks		
■ Academics		
■ Grassroots groups/organizations		
■ The electorate		
■ Bilateral partners		
■ International organizations		

A careful identification of where in the policy process each of these actors operate is also important. This can be combined with the identification, using information from the institutional profiles of the institutions to which these figures belong, of what incentives or forces are likely to influence them to change.

Policy process and influencing factors

At what stage in the policy process do they operate?	What incentives or forces are likely to influence them?
■ Knowledge generation/research	■ Political pressure from powerful figures
■ Agenda setting	■ International pressure/persuasion
■ Option identification	■ Bilateral pressure/persuasion
■ Prioritization of options	■ Bureaucratic pressure
■ Policy formulation	■ Evidence from action in the field
■ Policy legitimization	■ Private sector pressure
■ Planning for policy implementation	■ Interest groups e.g. NGOs
■ Review and evaluation	■ Policy networks
■ Review and adjustment of policy and policy implementation	■ Revenue generated
	■ Opportunities to extend networks of political patronage
	■ Academic evidence
	■ Grassroots pressure/persuasion

Institutional profiles could highlight how the priorities and incentives that dictate current natural resource management policy are focussed on the revenue generated from these resources, rather than the desire to conserve them for future generations. Often, conflicting sets of priorities will be present between different institutions engaged in resource management and between different levels within those institutions.

The explicit identification of these conflicts would enable development workers to draw up a more targeted strategy for bringing about changes in policy measures and processes to facilitate the changes at the grassroots level that they wish to promote.

Strategy for policy change

What factors will affect efforts to bring about change?	What do we need to do?	What resources are required?	What are the wider policy implications?
■ Past policies	■ Generate evidence	■ Time	■ On other policies
■ Policy complexity	■ Inform	■ Money	■ On policy implementation
■ Institutional constraints	■ Disseminate information	■ People	■ On resources
■ Feasibility	■ Facilitate discussion	■ Linkages/ alliances	■ On other institutions
■ Patronage	■ Build consensus		
■ Rent seeking	■ Combine forces and form partnerships		
■ Cost	■ Lobby		
■ Consensus			

The completion of this matrix for informing and influencing policy, making use of the information on institutions collected during an investigation on linkages, and complemented with further investigation of the higher-level policy-making institutions involved, would give stakeholders in the project a clearer picture of what action needs to be undertaken to bring about policy change.

THE MALATUK STORY – USING THE INFORMATION

By this stage, Musa finds herself wondering when the "investigation" she and her team have undertaken is going to end! The line dividing the investigation from ongoing project activities seems to be getting less and less clear. When the team get a chance to discuss what has taken place after their final round of validation meetings, they agree that the fact that no one has really commented on the study yet is mainly due to the fact that they are too busy taking action based on the results – and they decide that this probably indicates that the investigation has been a "success". They realize that what they have produced reaches beyond the rather simplistic inventory of livelihoods and institutions that the MPAP Team Leader probably had thought they would submit to be used mainly as background for the planning of different sub-projects. The investigation has certainly provided a fairly exhaustive list of important linkages between livelihoods and institutions in the project area, but Musa has taken care to point out to her colleagues that there is considerable variation even among the three communities they have visited – the range of institutions they have covered can hardly be regarded as definitive for the whole of Malatuk.

The team members take stock of what they feel can, and should, actually be done with the outputs of their investigation. They are particularly pleased that the participation in the final round of village-level validation by the monitoring and evaluation cell seems to have born immediate fruit. The monitoring specialists are already in the process of completely reorienting their monitoring of the project to be based on regular meetings with contact groups at the level of communities and specific stakeholder groups involved in different project activities. This mechanism is going to take time to evolve, but already in Baraley, Cosuma and Yaratuk the basis for this mechanism been set and the project is remaining in contact with local leaders and stakeholder representatives. This, and the wealth of information that the team has collected on these three communities, is also encouraging the project to initiate some pilot activities in these communities.

The team has also been asked to help the monitoring group within the project to develop a short investigative "format" that would allow a much quicker assessment of communities, livelihoods and institutions that could be carried out prior to establishing these monitoring mechanisms over a far wider area. Daniel and Diana voice their concern that these groups might end up being regarded as just a means for the project to go in and "extract" information from the communities with a minimum amount of work. They are not sure that all their colleagues have really appreciated the importance of "two-way communication" in these meetings – there have to be opportunities for consultation and discussion, not just the accumulation of data for monitoring project activities.

As they begin working on this new study format, they decide to make this point very clear from the beginning. They emphasize that in these abbreviated studies, the emphasis should be, above all, on building rapport and getting local people used to using certain tools and approaches to exchanging information with project teams, rather than on accumulating information – the process is going to be much more important than the output. When it comes to explaining this to the monitoring and evaluation specialists, they run into some resistance, as there is considerable pressure to come up with clear quantitative parameters for monitoring the project as quickly as possible. But they manage to persuade the unit to take time to allow the mechanism they intend to set up to "generate" indicators that local people feel happy with and that reflect their priorities rather than the needs of purely administrative and bureaucratic needs of the project donors.

This "process output" from the investigation gives the team particular satisfaction, as it seems to suggest that they have at least gone about the study the right way. But they quickly realize that if they thought they could simply produce the findings of their investigation and leave it to others to turn these into suitable plans for interventions, they were mistaken. Ever since they completed the field work, they have been bombarded with requests for "suggestions and recommendations" about what the project should actually be doing. Although the team members have discussed all kinds of possible future interventions during their study, they haven't sat down and formalized these into a set of recommendations. They decide to take time to do this – not least to make sure that they are not all recommending different things to different people.

Musa requests the Team Leader to let the team spend two more days to develop some clear recommendations. The Team Leader suggests that they take an extra day and also "appraise" the various proposals that have already been made for project activities in the light of their findings.

One of the most important proposals that they look at is the suggested project support for a credit programme for small and marginal producers in the province. The justification for this proposal is that small-scale producers, particularly in agriculture and fisheries, have practically no access to formal credit largely because of their lack of collateral and because of the limited presence of banking institutions below the district level. The proposal is a little confusing because, at the same time as saying that people "lack access to credit" it also states that they are being "exploited" by moneylenders who give credit at "exorbitant" interest rates. The proposal has suggested a pilot scheme in three districts, including the area around Cosuma and Yaratuk, where the project would work with local banks to set up a system to bring credit down to the village level and develop mechanisms to make credit to small-scale producers viable.

Based on their findings, the team feels very strongly that this credit component to the project needs to be completely restructured. The team's investigation has shown how widespread existing, informal channels of credit really are, and the team members note that, in their discussions with local people about what changes

they would like to see, formal credit is hardly ever mentioned except by a few local entrepreneurs. Local buyers-moneylenders, known as *kiloh*, are generally highly respected figures who are a fundamental part of local social and economic networks. They have identified a few cases in which local people seem to be actively exploited by these figures, but they seem to be the exception rather than the rule. They highlight a comment made by several of the *masleyarih* in Cosuma: " …if only we had our own *kiloh* we would have far fewer problems".

Looking at the key attributes of these *kiloh* as an institution laid out in their institutional profiles, the team realizes that many of the most important features that people value in the *kiloh* as a credit source simply cannot be replicated by formal credit channels – flexibility in terms and repayment, little or no formalities involved, no requirements for collateral, and, from the point of view of poor producers in remote villages, no real risk of "default" as the lender has no incentive for "bankrupting" the borrower as he depends on them for the produce he markets. It seems to be relatively stable relationship that satisfies the needs and priorities of both parties involved. Looking at the situation from the overall "development" perspective, this credit relationship is rather limited – it will never be able to handle significant inflows of new resources to local enterprises and so could be regarded as a "limit" to growth, but the idea of trying to replace it seems misguided.

The *roscas*, or informal savings groups, that are present in all the villages that the team visited and are, reportedly, fairly ubiquitous throughout the province, seem to offer an alternative mechanism that could be strengthened without upsetting current relationships and balances. The team recommend that the ways in which these savings groups function should be looked at in more detail, with a view to seeing how they could be built up as "receiving mechanisms" for credit made available by the project. The team recommend caution in not "falsifying" these local institutions that have been born out of very local needs and may have difficulty in adapting to new demands and larger flows of funds. But they feel that it is well worth looking at.

They also recall that the banking system is currently so "distant" from rural communities – almost no one in any of the teams meetings or discussions ever even mentioned "the bank" as an institution that played a role in his or her life – and apparently so poorly adapted to the delivery of rural credit that alternative mechanisms for channelling funds to the grassroots level should probably be looked at. One hopeful alternative is the District Development Funds that have recently been established as part of the decentralisation process and that are intended to fund local development initiatives. So far, the resources allocated to these funds by central government have been intended as grants for rather vaguely defined "development projects", but the team feels that they could be developed as sources of credit to local-level groups such as the *roscas* . Clearly it will be a major task to set up the mechanisms at the district level to administer these as credit mechanisms. However, the team feels that the process of doing this could also significantly strengthen the capacity and legitimacy of local government structures that, until now, seem to be regarded by local people as "lacking teeth" because they have not yet been seen to dispense resources at the local level.

This proposal meets with a mixed response. The Team Leader thinks it holds great potential, but some of his project counterparts, particularly in the Department of Local Government, are skeptical, as they feel that setting up credit mechanisms is outside their departmental mandate and would complicate their lives significantly. The idea really takes off after the Team Leader invites Musa to take part in a meeting with some of the key department staff to talk about their capacity and what their role in the project should be. He asks Musa to facilitate an "institutional profile" of the Department of Local Government, similar to the ones they have done during their investigation but carried out directly with members of the institution. From this process, the official mandate of the department to "facilitate and promote measures to ensure the flow of development resources to local communities" is recognized, and this seems to provide strong justification for the proposed credit mechanism. Several of the staff in the department who seemed most skeptical end up becoming strong supporters of the idea, and the project is able to take the proposal forward.

Among the many recommendations that the team members produce, they are also particularly concerned about coming up with some concrete ideas for the *masleyarih* around Cosuma. During their investigations, they were told that these groups are in fact found in several coastal areas of the province. Nobody really knows how many of them there are, but a very rough estimate based on the *masleyarih's* own calculations suggests that there are at least 2 000-3 000 households belonging to this group throughout the province. In addition, there are reported to be increasing numbers of other "displaced" groups, both from within the province and from outside. These are often people displaced by the recurring natural disasters affecting the area. Over the last decade, they seem to have become an important issue. What is clear is that they represent some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the province and are desperately in need of some kind of support from local institutions.

From their investigation, the team is in a position to show that these people both benefit and suffer from the fact that they exist in a sort of institutional "limbo". On the one hand, they have been able to find a series of livelihood "niches" along the coast, taking advantage of the fact that there are resources there that, until recently, were subject either to open-access regimes or ambiguous sets of use-rights. This left opportunities for the *masleyarih* to exploit certain swamp fisheries that no one else was interested in, notably for the collection of fish and shrimp seed for aquaculture, and for the use of saline lands found in swamp areas along the coast where some marginal agriculture is possible. In fact, the *masleyarih* are regarded as "specialists" in reclaiming such lands and have been able to establish informal use-rights to some areas. Unfortunately, their success at exploiting these "niches" is also undermining the existence of those niches. The *masleyarih* are "adding value" to swamp areas, and as soon as that value is recognised by local residents, they tend to claim their "indigenous

rights" – often completely fictitious – so that they can take advantage of the work that the migrant community has done to make these areas productive.

Protecting the rights of the *masleyarih* without creating conflicts with local residents seems to require a combination of approaches. On the one hand, the livelihood strategies of the *masleyarih* and their specific skills in making use of the swamp areas in what seems to be a sustainable way, need to be protected and given official recognition. The team feels that the project can play an important role in helping local administration and institutions to make contact with these groups – something that has never happened before - and establish means of providing them with basic services and institutional support.

However, the team members also recognize that the key to strengthening the position of the *masleyarih* lies at the local level, within the communities on whose margins they live. They propose a programme to promote the inclusion of *masleyarih* representatives in community consultations. This can be linked with another of their key proposals, which is for local representatives, who are being given increasing powers under the decentralization process, to be trained as an essential part of their appointment to local government. They have noted that the process of decentralization has been severely inhibited by the lack of capacity, both among local administrators and among local elected representatives, to carry out the increasingly complex tasks which they are being assigned. The project can play an important role in developing and supporting a programme of training in local governance, part of which could specifically address the question of these migrant groups and how their rights and needs can be recognised and accommodated. The hope would be that this would begin a process of acceptance of these groups, beginning with a change in attitude among local leaders.

Side by side with these approaches to dealing with the problems of the *masleyarih*, the team also makes some more specific recommendations regarding local traditional institutions. The idea is to support certain traditional institutions through the project, on the condition that some of the institutional arrangements between the traditional and modern institutions be modified and that they can be monitored at low cost. Daniel and Dewi insist with the team on the point that a "legalization" of traditional institutions could undermine their effectiveness. These institutions seem to "work" because they have grown out of local tradition and express values that everyone agrees on but are not subject to the external pressures and influences that affect "formal", legally recognised institutions. Support from the project would not mean legalizing them, but, rather, "valuing" them.

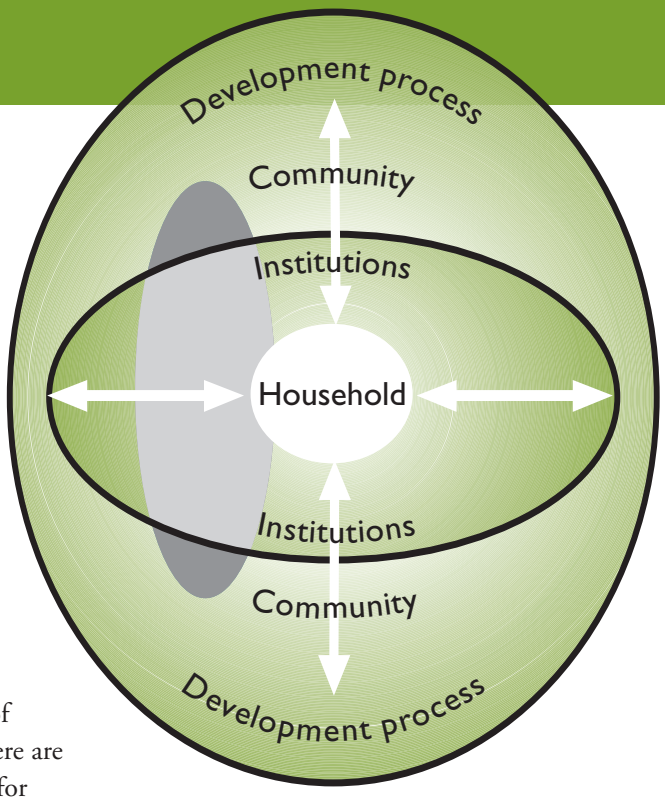
The team suggests that the councils of village elders, which play a dominant role in village affairs, be given an official mandate that should, at least initially, change as little as possible in the way they currently function. They should be given increased official responsibility over local natural resource management and conflict resolution, something that de facto they already exercise. At the same time, a mechanism would be established for ensuring that their deliberations and decision are closely monitored by district government and the District Commissioner, currently the key figure in the executive arm of decentralized government, who would have the power to overrule decisions taken by the councils or village heads. The idea would be to increase the exchange of ideas and experience between levels of government and establish a process that should eventually lead to changes based on experience and changing needs, but without forcing new responsibilities and roles on these village-level structures from the start.

As a means for local institutions to "learn" the new aspects of these relationships, the team members suggest that they could be used as a mechanism for implementing the MPAP itself. The district commissioner would have the ultimate responsibility over programme resource use and would have to ensure the equitable allocation of resources (technical advice, inputs, etc.) among all population groups – paying special attention to the *masleyarih*. But the project would also work directly, with the commissioner's approval, with village-level groups to implement specific programmes that they have identified, submitted to the district level for approval, and that have then been proposed to the project for funding.

Within two weeks of the submission of their recommendations, the various team members are so busy with helping their colleagues to develop activities based on their findings that they have already almost forgotten that they started out doing a two-month investigation. So when they are all called into the Team Leader's office one morning, they are all a little mystified. But he quickly sets their minds at ease by congratulating them for the quality of their work and thanking them for putting so much effort. He feels that the study has succeeded in giving the MPAP a direction it lacked before.

annex

WHERE TO FIND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



1. On household livelihood strategies

The increasingly numerous organizations adopting the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, on which much of the discussion of livelihoods in Module 1 is based, provide a rich resource for looking at a variety of different aspects of household livelihood strategies. Here are just some of the more important websites and sources for information on this.

www.livelihoods.org
The website of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) has a great deal of information on Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches, including theoretical discussions, guidelines for the implementation of SLA and a wide range of case studies and discussion groups about SL practice.

www.undp.org/sl
The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been at the forefront of the development of sustainable livelihoods approaches, and much of the documentation regarding this is available on the website.

www.iied.org
The Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods Programme of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) also has extensive literature and links regarding rural livelihoods. The institute has a long history of research in this area and has been at the forefront of developing appropriate research methodologies for looking at household livelihoods.

www.worldbank.org
The World Bank also has extensive literature available on livelihoods.

2. On local institutions

Some of the centres that offer resources, information and tools for looking at local institutions are listed below. There is some repetition from those mentioned above.

www.worldbank.org

The World Bank has undertaken several research programmes that have dealt with different aspects of local institutions and related topics. Documentation on the results of these studies and the methodologies used can be found on its website.

www.iied.org/forestry/tools

The Forestry and Land Use Programme of the IIED is in the process of developing a series of analytical tools ("Power Tools") for looking at policy and institutional issues, specifically concerned with forest governance but certainly more generally applicable. The set includes tools for conceptualizing and mapping policies and institutions, analyzing stakeholders, developing strategies for influencing policies and institutions, and means of looking at the rights, responsibilities, revenues (benefits) and relationships involved in institutions and policies.

3. Field methods

There is a vast range of resources available that can provide detailed information on many of the methods suggested in these guidelines for carrying out an investigation in the field. These methods are drawn to a large extent from the methods associated with participatory appraisal and participatory learning and action, but the sources below will also provide guidance on the application of the quantitative methods referred to.

While these sources can provide much useful information about carrying out participatory investigations in the field, the limits of secondary sources need to be recognised. Manuals or guidelines can be extremely useful for investigators and field workers who already have some experience and clear ideas about how to carry out an investigation. They can help to "remind" them of techniques or introduce them to new methods and approaches. But it is not possible for someone with no experience of field investigations to take a set of guidelines (including these guidelines) and expect to be able to conduct an investigation based only on what she or he reads.

Particularly for the participatory approaches to field investigation suggested throughout much of these guidelines, proper preparation is an essential element. This means that key members of the team carrying out the investigation should have either received training in participatory investigation and facilitation skills or have considerable experience of carrying out such investigations. This does not mean that team members should necessarily have already done investigations specifically looking at household livelihood strategies and local institutions. But they should have a good familiarity with the key field methods mentioned in the guidelines – semi-structured interview techniques, focus group discussions, visualization methods such as mapping and diagramming, as well as with quantitative survey approaches.

Ideally, any team carrying out an investigation like this should be "trained", in other words given time to focus on the methods it is going to use, consider various alternatives, practice them, adjust them and decide on a "best approach". During such training, access to some of the resources mentioned below can be extremely valuable. As many of these resources on field methods are available on the world-wide web, they are organized below according to the organizations that have produced them or the host websites where they can be found.

www.eldis.org
This website, hosted by the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK, has probably the most complete set of links currently available to web resources worldwide relating to development issues in general and to different methods and approaches for development work and investigation in the field in particular. Most of the sites mentioned here can be found through this site. The section on participation is particularly valuable for a wide range of web resources on field approaches.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

www.fao.org
Several departments within the FAO have produced useful documents providing guidance on methods, approaches and specific tools that can be used in a wide variety of field conditions. Many of these can be adapted for use during the investigation described in these guidelines. Some of the most comprehensive publications from different divisions of the FAO are mentioned below.

Sustainable Development

www.fao.org/sd/seaga
The Sustainable Development Department of the FAO has developed a very complete range of documentation on participatory approaches to field investigation as part of the SEAGA (Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis) programme. Information about the programme is available at the above web address. Documentation includes a series of Handbooks (field-level, intermediate and macro-level), and several guides about specific aspects of analysis of household livelihoods.

Community Forestry

www.fao.org/FORESTRY/FON/fonp/cfu
The Community Forestry Unit has numerous publications available looking at field methods. Some of the most useful include:

- Community forestry: rapid appraisal, 1989.
- The community's toolbox: the idea, methods and tools for participatory assessment, monitoring and evaluation in community forestry, 1990.

Participation Website of the Informal Working Group on Participatory Approaches

www.fao.org/Participation

This site provides a wide range of very useful online publications and materials describing different participatory approaches, methods and tools. Some of the most useful resources of the site include:

- Field Tools Database of participatory approaches, methods and tools, developed or applied by FAO and other organizations. Powerful search options help access detailed information on different methods and tools;
- Participation Library Database of FAO publications on participation in development;
- "Lessons Learned" articles reflecting experiences in applying participatory processes;
- Links to organizations and websites.

4. Complementary research programmes

The research programmes outlined below were being carried out at the same time (but in different countries) as the FAO Rural Development Division's programme on "Rural Household Income Strategies for Poverty Alleviation and Interactions with the Local Institutional Environment". Although they share certain research questions related to the institutional elements of rural households' livelihood strategies, they differ in several important ways.

Local Level Institutions (World Bank)

The World Bank's Local Level Institutions (LLI) Study is a cross-national study programme of local institutional landscapes that seeks to determine what makes some communities stronger than others in playing a positive role in their own development. The Social Development Department of the World Bank, with the Poverty Group, has conducted the LLI in three countries—Indonesia, Bolivia and Burkina Faso. In addition to the measures used in a study carried out in Tanzania (Narayan and Pritchett 1997), the LLI studies include more detailed qualitative information on service delivery issues, with subsequent quantification of these variables. Results from the studies demonstrate that the questionnaire items do in fact capture different dimensions of social capital at the household and community levels, and that certain dimensions of social capital do indeed contribute significantly to household welfare.

Main thrust of the LLI methodology:

1. Key informant interviews on community services, local economy/society/institutions;
2. Household group interviews on service quality, collective action / local institutions / development projects;
3. Interviews with leaders, members and non-members of most important institutions on the role and development of village institutions, main activities, relations with other institutions, strengths and weaknesses.

This was supplemented by secondary data collected at district level, and a household survey "aimed to capture households' actual participation in local institutions, their use of services, and information that identifies the welfare level of households and their coping strategies".

The LLI approach differs from the one proposed in the present manual in that it is based primarily on an exploration of household membership in local associations, making an important contribution to the objective and quantified measurement of the effects of such membership, but not emphasizing their "rules of the game", macro-policy context, power relations or intra-household/community differentiation/stratification.

For analytical purposes, the LLI classified institutions by affiliation and function, origin, type of organization (in-/formal), and degree of importance to the household (WB 1998, p.6).

- **D. Narayan and L. Pritchett,** 1997. *Cents and Sociability – Household Income and Social Capital in Rural Tanzania.* Policy Research Working Paper No. 1796. World Bank, Washington, D.C.
- **World Bank,** 1998. *The Local Level Institutions Study: Program Description and Prototype Questionnaires.* Local Level Institutions Working Paper No. 2, Social Development Department, World Bank, Washington, D.C.

More recently, a further study called the Local Level Institutions and Social Capital Study has been carried out in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Full reports on this work, along with the methodologies used, are available on the World Bank website.

The Initiative on Defining, Monitoring and Measuring Social Capital (World Bank)

To advance the definition and measurement of social capital, to help advance the theoretical understanding and the practical relevance of this concept, to improve monitoring of its stock, evolution and impact on development, the Social Capital Initiative (SCI) was started in October 1996 with a triple goal:

1. to assess the impact of social capital on project effectiveness;
2. to demonstrate that outside assistance can help in the process of social capital formation; and
3. to contribute to the development of indicators for monitoring social capital and methodologies for measuring its impact on development.

Project proposals were selected on the basis of their perceived ability to test two hypotheses:

I. The presence of social capital improves the effectiveness of development projects; and
II. Through select donor-supported interventions, it is possible to stimulate the accumulation of social capital.

The broad formulation of these hypotheses was intentional so as to make possible a wide array of interventions and monitoring methodologies. In addition, since one of the goals of the project is to encourage different approaches to the measurement and monitoring of social capital, innovation in methodology was a

prime consideration for project selection, as was the ability to obtain results within a two-year time horizon.

The (eleven) studies that constitute the empirical centre of the SCI examine, using a wide variety of qualitative and quantitative methods, the role that social capital can play in the provision of goods and services, the reconstruction or revitalization of social capital after conflict or political transition, rural development efforts, and enterprise development. Several activities were implemented by the SCI team to provide conceptual and bibliographical support to the research projects. These include conceptual work about the notion of social capital, the development of a "tool" to measure social capital (SCAT, the Social Capital Assessment Tool), micro- and macroeconomic literature reviews, and an annotated bibliography. Final papers were completed by the research teams in preparation for the final event of the Initiative, a working conference entitled "Social Capital and Poverty Reduction", held at the World Bank on June 22 – 24, 1999.

Main thrust of the SCI methodology (following SCAT, taken from Krishna and Shrader 1999):

1. Community profile, which integrates participatory qualitative methods with a community survey instrument to assess various dimensions of community-level social capital, including community assets identification, collective action, solidarity, conflict resolution, community governance and decision-making, institutional networks, and organizational density;
2. Household survey, which includes a 39-item battery on structural social capital and a 21-item battery on cognitive social capital, field tested as a stand-alone instrument or as one that can be incorporated into ongoing survey research;
3. Organizational profile designed to delineate the relationships and networks that exist among formal and informal institutions, integrating semi-structured interview data with a scoring system for assessing organizational capacity and sustainability.

The SCI approach differs from the one proposed in the present manual in that it is based primarily on social capital as an (innovative and welcome) "entry point" to poverty reduction, rather than on an assessment of the ways in which the local institutional landscape is linked to household (members') income-generation, in support of which social capital (social cohesion) is but one variable to consider, and which leaves policy options relatively open.

- **Krishna and E. Shrader,** 1999. Social Capital Assessment Tool. Ppaper prepared for the conference on "Social Capital and Poverty Reduction", held at the World Bank in June.
  www.worldbank.org/poverty

LORPA (CDR Denmark)

The Local Organizations and Rural Poverty Alleviation (LORPA) research programme of the Danish Centre for Development Research was established early in 1996. LORPA's thrust is "in analysing and assessing the role and capacity of different types of local organizations to bring about poverty reduction, the research

programme is concerned with both their technical and their political capacities […]" (Webster 1998: 7). The study of the conditions necessary for local interventions to address the programme's poverty reduction objectives brought to the fore the following main research needs, which circumscribe the programme's parameters:

1. the need to understand how different forms of state-local relations affect and shape the conditions for a rural development strategy with a strong pro-poor dimension and to what extent a democratic orientation for this development is necessary or feasible;
2. the need to understand the role of identity and identity formation (ethnicity, gender, religion, occupation, etc.) as a basis for collective action amongst the rural poor and as a basis for developing more sustainable local institutions generally. A particular focus should be upon the role of institution formation/reformation in markets central to particular groups of the poor, e.g. irrigation, land, credit, agricultural labour;
3. the need to theoretically assess local institutions' relationship to the poor, in comparison to other institutions, particularly the degree to which different local institutions can better facilitate the poor's mobilization and participation in development;
4. the need to further develop the analysis of the role of national and international institutional actors in the generation/denial/control of 'political space' to local organizations through their advocacy of specific policies and use of particular development discourses, and the different types of political space that their activities can give rise to.

At the methodological level, LORPA has sought to contribute to the drafting of inter-disciplinary fieldwork strategies including a number of mapping exercises, beginning with organizations and organizing practices, and poverty. The approach differs from the one proposed in the present manual in the scope, sequencing and timeframe of research, and the prime focus and unit of analysis: "poverty" (LORPA) rather than "income-generating activities" (at household level) constitutes the interface at which the linkages between households and institutions are assessed. It must be added that LORPA includes a much larger number of researchers (and topics) who are left with ample margins for manoeuvre, with a comparative basis being assured by the information needs listed above. (An example drawn from the work of LORPA has been adapted and included in Module 6.)

- **N. Webster,** 1998. *Introduction* in N. Webster (ed.), *In Search of Alternatives: Poverty, the Poor and Local Organisations.* Prepared for the Centre for Development Research workshop on Local Organizations and Rural Poverty Alleviation (LORPA), Tune, Denmark, Aug., Working Paper 98.10. **www.cdr.dk**

GAIL (IUED Geneva)

The *"Guide d'Approche des Institutions Locales (GAIL)"*, a "Guide on how to approach local institutions", presents a methodology to study local actors in the rural context. GAIL targets formal local institutions and organizations,

concentrating on those directly linked to local government. For analytical purposes, the "Guide" defines local government broadly to include all local institutions fulfilling certain tasks accruing to local government (production and management of goods, public services or of general interest), be they or not conferred the legal status to do so. Thus, issues such as legitimacy, willingness and capacity are explored, and the way in which these relate to local-level administration, local organizations (e.g., village committees, farmers coops, etc.), and community institutions (e.g., a lineage, or the "village"); the latter are either community institutions by birth ("communautés d'appartenance") or community institutions by choice ("communautés d'adhésion").

- **J.-P. Jacob *et al.*, 1994.** *Guide d'Approche des Institutions Locales (GAIL): Methodologie d'etude des acteurs locaux dans le monde rural.* Itineraires, Notes et Travaux No. 40, Geneva: IUED/SEREC.
  www.unige.ch/iued

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Those involved in programmes and approaches to working with the poor have become steadily more aware of the importance of understanding not just the people they want to work with, but also the social, cultural and political context in which they live.

In particular, the importance of the role of local institutions has been increasingly recognized. Many development efforts with the poor have failed or proved to be unsustainable because they have not fully understood these institutions and the way that they influence the livelihoods of the poor. New institutions set up to support the poor have often proved inappropriate or have been undermined by existing institutions that were either not recognized by relevant stakeholders or poorly understood.

Participatory approaches to development, including those commonly grouped under terms such as PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) or PLA (Participatory Learning and Action) have done much to improve the ways in which development workers learn about local conditions and identify the poor, as well as understand their strengths and the constraints they have to overcome. But less attention has been paid to ways of understanding the local institutions that shape the environment in which poor people live.

These guidelines aim to fill this gap and help development workers improve their understanding of the role of local institutions. What is it they do? Who exactly do they serve and how? How do they change over time? How can they be strengthened and made more equitable? How can they be made more accessible for the poor?

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