THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH

TOOLKIT FOR WALES

OXFAM

CONTENTS

TOOLS FOR A SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD

Tool 1: Drawing the Household
Tool 2: OK/Not OK Timeline
Tool 3: Managing Wheel
Tool 4: Structured Interviews
Tool 5: Livelihoods Strategy Tool
Tool 6: Mapping Public Assets
Tool 7: Power and Influence Line
Tool 8: The Assets Pentagon
Tool 9: Livelihoods Ladder
Tool 10: Gender Awareness
Tool 11: Problem Tree Analysis
Tool 12: Identifying Livelihoods Solution

APPENDIX:
MONITORING TEMPLATES FOR
SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH

a)   Personal Development Portfolio
b)   Baseline Survey
c)   Guidance notes to Baseline Survey

SECTION ONE

FOREWORD

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) is a method of understanding the lives of people experiencing poverty and disadvantage. It is a participatory approach that is based on the belief that people experiencing poverty have abilities and assets that can be used to help them manage and improve their lives. It has been used extensively by Oxfam in Wales and beyond, and was brought to the UK by Oxfam and other international development organisations following extensive use in the Global South.

In the UK, Oxfam works closely with a number of partner organisations and has already supported them to apply the approach as a project delivery tool in London, North East England, the Peak District and Glasgow, as well as with a wide variety of projects here in Wales.

This Toolkit, and the approach it utilises, provides a systematic, proven approach to analysing and understanding poverty from a community and individual citizen centred perspective. It helps people understand and address their own poverty from a holistic, whole life perspective, rather than simply addressing in isolation the surface problem that a person has no job or appears to suffer from depression or has engaged in offending behaviour.

As well as the practical help it offers to individuals, the SLA brings a reality and a human face to the experiences of people living in poverty, which can broaden the understanding of local circumstances and subsequent solutions. It is also a useful tool in explaining how policy makers and others can inadvertently misunderstand poverty and as a consequence implement unhelpful and counterproductive policies to deal with it. It has an essential role in developing appropriate policy responses based on an insightful understanding of the strategies and choices people make on a daily basis in order to survive.

The SLA has significant potential to build on community level work already being undertaken by a range of third sector and statutory agencies and can offer a bridge between work supporting communities and support directed at individuals. It is therefore relevant for projects aimed at individuals, for projects aimed at families and also for projects supporting entire communities.

USING THIS TOOLKIT

The first four sections of this Toolkit explain what the SLA is, and how it can be used to understand the livelihood issues that individuals, families and communities are facing, and should be read to gain an understanding of the principles of the SLA. The appendices contain all the specific tools for undertaking SLA work, plus a range of monitoring templates that can be used to track an individual or family's experience of using the SLA.

Tackling poverty and disadvantage in Wales has been a major priority for different levels of government in Wales since devolution in the late 1990s. Initiatives on regional economic development, employability, community led development and child poverty have all been launched. One of the hardest lessons learned is that despite increased wealth over the UK as a whole, there is still a significant number of people who remain deeply rooted in poverty and disadvantage. The record of specific programmes and projects in tackling poverty at community, family and individual level is very mixed. Fundamental to the lessons learned from the more successful approaches has been an understanding of the needs of individuals experiencing poverty and a commitment to allowing their views to shape the nature of support services and community led initiatives.

Wales has a range of national and local initiatives and projects (notably Communities First) which give individuals, families and communities the opportunities to improve their livelihoods and tackle the priorities and issues which concern them. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach can complement and enhance this existing work by allowing practitioners to get beyond simple problem-oriented interventions to consider the holistic improvements that are within an individual or family's reach.

Oxfam has been using the SLA in Wales since 2006. It was first used in Riverside and Splott in Cardiff, initially as a research tool. It also subsequently developed as a practical tool for project delivery and used in communities such as Glyncoch in Rhondda Cynon Taff and Duffryn in Newport. Without exception, all of the project participants reported changes in terms of increased confidence and self esteem and increased personal and social networks. Another key finding from these pilot projects was that it was those participants who received intensive one-to-one support who made the most fundamental and transformative changes and had the most sustainable and far reaching outcomes.

The SLA is now used by many different projects as far apart as Rhyl and Newport, Caernarfon and Cardiff, Wrexham and Swansea. It is being used in urban areas, rural areas, large cities, small towns and villages, and with projects focusing on many different groups experiencing poverty, be they young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs), so-called problem families, people from particular Black or Minority Ethnic (BME) communities, refugees and asylum seekers, transient people, people in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs – shared accommodation), homeless people, people with drug or alcohol dependency and many others.

As well as offering help to individuals and their families in Wales, the SLA is also being used to work with community structures and service providers to help them make their work more sensitive to the needs of people experiencing poverty and disadvantage in Wales. More broadly, it is also helping spread the awareness that not everyone experiences poverty in the same way, whether because of their gender, ethnicity, language or another aspect of their background.

SECTION TWO

LIVELIHOOD ANALYSIS – HOW DO PEOPLE MAKE ENDS MEET?

The Sustainable Livelihood Approach was developed by organisations in the Global South and owes much to the work of Amartya Sen, the United Nations' Human Development programme and Robert Chambers' work on the "wealth of the poor" and participatory methodologies. He offers the following definition of a livelihood:

"A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation, and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and the long term."

There are two parallel strands to any SLA based project: firstly, building up a picture of the various livelihood strategies that people adopt, along with the level of assets they have as individuals and within their communities; and secondly, exploring whether these livelihood strategies link and relate to the wider institutions and policies that impact upon their lives.

The ways in which people combine their assets to support themselves and their families coupled with the decisions and choices they make within the context in which they live, are what determine their livelihood strategy and how they manage to get by.

Traditionally the experience of poverty and deprivation in Wales has been assessed using external tools such as the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD). The onus has been on external facilitators, consultants, academics, statisticians and policy makers to gather information and identify possible solutions to alleviate the problem.

This only provided a limited understanding of poverty and its effects. Focusing on a lack of assets draws attention to the negative aspects of people's lives and often fails to spot their strengths and potential.

In contrast, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach starts by looking at the day-to-day experiences of people's lives. It believes that in order to make ends meet people draw on a range of different assets depending on which ones are available to them. This will obviously vary with each individual, household and community.

For example some communities are fortunate in having a long standing community organisation which provides numerous services from childcare to lifelong learning opportunities and community development support. Some households are better resourced than others and many individuals are also fortunate to have strong social networks and family support.

R. Chambers and G. Conway (1991), 'Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st Century', Discussion Paper 126, London: Institute for Development Studies.

WHAT IS MEANT BY ASSETS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH?

The assets are divided into five categories and together these assets allow people to adopt different livelihood strategies in order to achieve their livelihood objectives.

These are:

Human assets:
Includes skills, knowledge, the physical and mental strengths needed to work and take up employment.

Social assets (or social capital):
Includes the social resources which people can draw upon: for instance, formal and informal relationships with family, friends and neighbours as well as networks such as forums, clubs and groups within the wider community.

Physical assets:
Includes decent housing, affordable transport, work clothes or equipment, basic white goods, a computer, a sewing machine, and so on (in more rural contexts, for example the work done by Oxfam with crofters in Scotland, this asset is known as "natural assets" and includes things like irrigation and access to water supply, tree cover and seeds available, and so on).

Public assets:
Also sometimes known as "place based assets", these include local public services, facilities and amenities such as resource and community centres, libraries, local organisations and various projects as well as the level of people's engagement, participation and involvement within community activities beyond their household and immediate family and friends.

Financial assets:
Includes earned income, savings, pensions, credit facilities, state (welfare) benefits, child maintenance received and so on.

A key principle of the approach is to recognise that these assets are all interlinked and need to be considered together as a whole in order to understand the best livelihoods strategies to employ.

KEY PRINCIPLES OF THE SLA

- Everyone has varying degrees of assets in their life. When combined they create a livelihood. However, for those with fewer assets a sustainable livelihood is not possible, leaving people vulnerable to internal and external "shocks". For example: if a household has few financial assets and also limited social assets (friends or family living locally), then a "shock", such as a cooker breaking down, may be very difficult to deal with.

- People with the least number of assets are more likely to be those who are most likely to experience social exclusion and discrimination, such as women, people from BME communities or people with disabilities.

- External government policies often focus only upon a single aspect of someone's life, such as their income or earnings. Other factors that also impact, such as family and caring responsibilities, are not considered. Policies which recognise the benefits of a "holistic" approach would be more effective in supporting people to make positive changes in their lives.

- The Sustainable Livelihood Approach uses positive language to uncover what would enable people to develop their potential and capacity within their existing assets and livelihood strategies.

CASE STUDY: BETHAN

Bethan was working full time when she met her partner (strong financial asset) after five years together, she had a baby but her partner wasn't interested in the child. Bethan developed severe post natal depression (reduced human assets) and took leave from work. Her partner also started drinking heavily and became abusive towards her.

After two years she left him (reduced social assets). Initially he paid maintenance for their child but after a while he gave up his job to avoid having to pay and as a result she and the baby lost their home (reduced financial asset). At first they stayed with relatives (social assets), until Bethan was re-housed by the council (public assets). She went onto income support for the first time in her life (public assets).

Now that the baby is one year old, she keeps depression at bay by getting involved in a local community project which gets her out of the house (social and human assets). She is keen to find work but doesn't want to rush into a low paid job which she feels may make her situation worse.

IDENTIFYING AND MAPPING THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT – POLICIES, INSTITUTIONS AND PRACTICES

In parallel with the identification of individual, household and community assets, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach also explores how organisations, policies and practices operating locally, regionally and nationally impact upon people's lives. People experiencing poverty in areas of social deprivation are often the subject of government programmes, along with a variety of other initiatives from across the voluntary, community and statutory sectors.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach provides a more in-depth understanding of this interaction through finding out and identifying the key policies, institutions, initiatives and practices that affect people's livelihoods within their neighbourhoods and communities.

Examples of relevant policy areas for a livelihoods analysis could include wage levels (including minimum wage levels), in-work and out-of-work benefit rates, economic development plans, regeneration initiatives or the decisions of businesses to either invest in an area or to close a large factory or branch. Mapping relevant institutions would be likely to cover local and national government bodies, major public services, welfare institutions and private companies.

In terms of the local context, questions to be investigated include:

- Where do people get their income? (e.g. benefits/job centre, bank, post office, employment hubs)

- Where do they spend it? (Where are the shops, leisure facilities, pubs?)

- Where does the money go? (Are the shops, pubs etc. locally owned – so that the money goes back into the local economy – or are they chain stores, larger companies and banks which take money away from the local community?)

Social, cultural and religious practices are also taken into account as they play an integral part to developing livelihoods that are either restrictive or enabling. For example, these practices can influence who has primary responsibility for childcare and who has control over particular assets. In addition, the potential opportunities and barriers that emerge from these interactions are identified and can be used to develop livelihoods that are more sustainable and secure.

POWER RELATIONS AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

A core principle of the SLA is the recognition of the diversity and power relations that exist within relationships, households and communities.

Identifying the assets and comparing the differences between men and women, or between people of different ages or different ethnic backgrounds, allows us to explore how these factors operate at different levels.

The evidence so far has found that at the household level there are always differences between who owns and who uses the assets to which (in theory) all household members have access. Uncovering these can help us to understand the underlying power relations within the household (for instance, if a woman cannot drive the household car, it will be of no use to her in accessing employment).

These differences need to be documented accurately in order to explore the different livelihood strategies that exist within households, relationships and communities. This means, for example, finding out who earns income and how it is spent, who owns the assets in the house, who has caring responsibilities as well as involvement in social assets.

Oxfam has a strict data protection policy and information should always be collected sensitively as many individuals are unable to, or may not wish to, reveal information freely in front of other members.

It is also relevant to ask how the above differences relate to the wider external context which is why a detailed mapping of the social and cultural practices is important. Gender expectations could influence the different roles between men and women. An example would be question of which parent is likely to care for or take time off work to look after a sick child, as this is an additional responsibility, the prospect of which can be a real barrier to taking up employment, as well as a cause of conflict within the family.

Recent research by the Fawcett Society, among others, has confirmed that women in the UK are far more likely to experience either a limited period of poverty or ongoing poverty as a result of the primary caring roles often ascribed to them. It is therefore crucial that community structures, service providers and policy makers understand how cultural dimensions affect livelihood strategies, and this is one of the key levels of analysis the SLA can provide, for example, through the Gender Awareness Exercise tool in the Toolkit.

Useful background information about the likelihood of discrimination against someone based on their gender, race, disability or other perceived differences is available from bodies such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Institute for Public Policy Research.
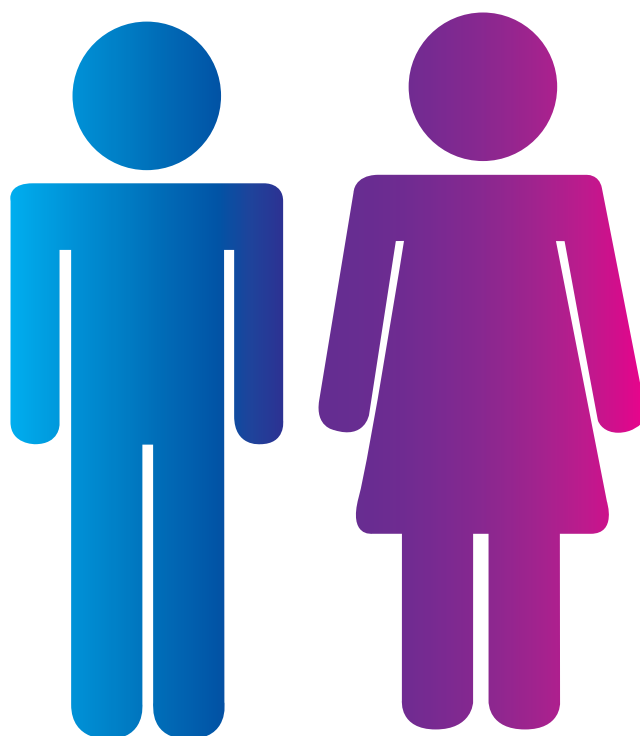
HOW DO INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES USE THEIR ASSETS TO MAKE A LIVELIHOOD?

Key assets in Splott and Riverside in Cardiff

In the original Welsh livelihoods project in Cardiff, Oxfam worked with South Riverside Community Development Centre and the Splotlands Credit Union to analyse the livelihoods of 46 people living in two distinct neighbourhoods in Cardiff. Residents of Splott are predominantly white and working class, with smaller pockets of minority ethnic communities including Gypsy and Traveller communities, Somalis and Eastern Europeans.

South Riverside hosts a large, predominantly Asian community, with residents of Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Afghani heritage, as well as people with Yemeni roots. Both areas are also home to a number of refugees and asylum seekers. The interviews were undertaken by staff and volunteers from the community organisation in each area, using the approach as a framework. The study identified key priorities for future work and also helped to build a closer relationship between the two community organisations, as they had not worked together prior to the project. The project found that the most important assets that contributed to people living in these areas improving their livelihoods were:

- **Human assets,** including skills in community development, small business set-up and the abilities needed to participate in vocational learning.

- **Social assets**: family networks constituted an important aspect of social capital, enabling people living in poverty to call on members of their extended family both for informal child care support and loans. However, non-BME women in Splott were much less able to call on help from their family for childcare support than members of BME communities in Riverside.

- In terms of **public assets**, regular and affordable public transport to key employment locations was identified as one of the most significant types of place-based capital.

- The most important **physical asset** was access to a home in a good state of repair with enough rooms to accommodate the whole household.

- As this study specifically targeted people experiencing poverty it is no surprise that for the respondents interviewed, **financial assets** were the weakest aspect of the livelihoods picture.

LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES

As described, people draw on their different assets to build an overall livelihood strategy which enables them to sustain their lives and the lives of their families.

Those who have assets in all areas will have strong strategies, probably with a number of back-up solutions should the primary strategy fail.

For example, if we consider a typical reasonably comfortable household, their asset base will be relatively strong with both adults in good health and possessing employable skills and experience (human assets). They own their own house and car (physical assets) and are both in well paid and secure work (financial assets). In addition, they have strong social networks (social assets) and have the confidence and knowledge to hold those responsible for public services to account (public assets).

Conversely those with weaker assets will often find more self-limiting ways to manage.

The case study on the right is a good illustration of this.

CASE STUDY: MEGAN

Megan lives in a rural area of Wales with her husband. Her only child emigrated to New Zealand, as there were very few opportunities locally for work after he left university. At the age of sixty she was widowed (decreased social and financial assets) and began receiving widows and state pension (increased financial asset). Her husband's life insurance paid off the mortgage (increased financial asset).

They had no real debts and she just about got by financially until her water tank broke and flooding damaged her home (decreased physical asset).

With Welsh as her first language, although insurance for the boiler was in place, Megan did not claim, as she was uncomfortable speaking English to 'officials' (decreased human asset) which her husband had always taken care of.

The area being isolated also meant that there were very few services or information provided locally (public assets). As she attempted to save to fix one thing, another would deteriorate and she eventually became ill (decreased human asset) and was unable to drive, which increased her isolation.

Eventually she was taken to hospital (public asset) and began to receive some help. They informed her of benefits she could claim and supported her through the language barrier issues (public asset).

Through an SLA based intervention, a home help was put in place (increased public asset) and her health situation is stabilising and improving.

This case study demonstrates how a shock to one asset (physical – a broken water tank) can often have a knock on, chain reaction effect leading to decline in other assets.

THE LIVELIHOODS LADDER

As a person's assets increase, they are better able to protect themselves from shocks and their vulnerability decreases. The idea of the "livelihoods ladder" was developed as a way of understanding these transitions.

As a person builds their asset base, their position on the ladder moves up, but if they subsequently lose assets they risk falling back down the ladder.

It may be useful when using the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach to identify the appropriate benchmarks that help determine the transitions between the different rungs on the ladder and thus make it easier to categorise households.

For more detail on how this could be done, see the Livelihoods Ladder and Verifying the Findings tools in the Toolkit. In a nutshell, though, the ladder is structured as follows:

Accumulating	Life is going well – the household owns and controls an increasing range of assets and can cope with a range of shocks.	✓ Livelihood ✓ Sustainable
Adapting	Life is OK – the household owns and controls some assets, especially financial, but is not accumulating and has potential vulnerability to major shocks, for example loss of employment.	✓ Livelihood ✘ Sustainable
Coping	Getting by – the household can cope with minor shocks but not major ones. There is often either a total or partial reliance on benefits and while household members may work, they usually do so informally.	✘ Livelihood ✓ Sustainable
Surviving	Life is a constant battle – the household is extremely vulnerable to both minor and major external shocks and is likely to be in debt with few social or personal assets.	✘ Livelihood ✘ Sustainable

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THINGS GO WRONG?

As well as individual events, there are also broader situations and changes that are beyond the control of individuals, households and communities.

Examples include: demographic and population changes, shifts in the national and global economy (for example, recession and deindustrialisation) as well as changes of government, although their significance will vary greatly over time and place. In SLA analyses, these are known as "trends".

At the same time, it is often major life events such as bereavement or the loss of a home or a job that can have the most obvious impact on individuals and their households. These are known as "shocks". Initially the effects and impacts of shocks are not always realised and manifest themselves later on as smaller seeming shocks, with apparently minor things having significant effects. Very often, following a loss, people develop immediate coping strategies that get them through on a day-to-day basis without realising the serious longer term negative effects of those strategies. This is the very thing that using the SLA can help prevent or begin to mitigate against.

Again, the evidence from use of the SLA in Wales so far is that women are more vulnerable to these effects. As primary carers in many cases, they are expected to make alternative arrangements around these caring duties that often jeopardise their livelihood strategies (for example, causing them to give up their job) or by making them have to pay for care that they cannot afford. Likewise, although a relationship breakdown can be deeply traumatic for anyone, our research suggests that, for women, the impact can be especially great, particularly in terms of the knock-on effects on their other assets, as the following example illustrates:

CASE STUDY: SIAN

Sian, now in her 50s, is living on her own in rented accommodation.

She previously owned a house which she was able to keep after her first marriage ended. A short disastrous second marriage led to her having to give up the house and move into the rented house she is now in. Her health also deteriorated rapidly to the point where she has been unable to work for the last fifteen years.

She now has very few possessions and is demoralised by being constantly in debt. Through SLA analysis it is clear, however, that Sian does have a strong social network including links with the local church which she relies on for support in a variety of ways

COMMUNITIES TAKING ACTION / PLANNING FOR CHANGE

If used appropriately, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) can provide an ongoing planning and evaluating tool. Monitoring progress can provide the information we need to develop work to best meet the needs of participants.

Equally the issues we uncover during the lifetime of our work may lead to:

- Setting up groups who share similar experiences and can offer mutual support

- Lobbying and campaigning for changes/ improvements in local and public services

- Setting up a new group, project or initiative to directly deliver services to support the community

- Produce a written paper/report which can then be distributed to the relevant people to include local government, those involved in policy development and any other appropriate local, regional or national organisation.

CASE STUDY: SPLOTLANDS CREDIT UNION

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

CASE STUDY: WEST RHYL FIRST

Initial use of the SLA in West Rhyl revealed loan sharking, fuel poverty and poor housing to be the main barriers to a sustainable livelihood. This has influenced community action planning by local workers to direct their projects to tackle these issues and helped them decide which organisations and agencies they most need to attract as partners.

SECTION THREE

HOW DOES THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH WORK FOR INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES?

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach provides a systematic approach to first understanding and then taking steps against poverty. It is effective whether working with an individual, a family or a community. Mainstream research on poverty has often tended to view people living in poverty as a group of passive individuals all in need of the same type of help. By contrast, use of the SLA reveals that people are in fact often already in possession of assets which can help them start to overcome the problems in their lives and are very capable of making rational decisions and choices about their lives. At the same time, the SLA also helps identify those problems and barriers which are institutional or policy-based, and so also focuses efforts on what can be changed in an individual's life as well as what cannot.

The SLA and this Toolkit do this using the following method:

- Starting from an individual or family's everyday experience, using tools such as the Assets Pentagon, Drawing the Household or the Management Wheel, the SLA builds up a picture of their existing assets and livelihood strategies – in other words, how they get by.

- It then actively involves people in coming up with their own potential ways of using their assets to improve their situation, for example using tools such as the Livelihoods Strategy tool or the Problem Tree Analysis tool.

- The SLA then explores how existing service provision, or lack thereof, impacts on the individual or their family using tools such as the Power and Influence Line or the Community Mapping tool.

- Stressing the importance of interacting with these policies and institutions in order that they promote the agenda of people experiencing poverty, as well as seeking ways to support people to achieve their livelihood goals, and building where possible on their existing assets, the SLA then makes use of tools such as the Livelihoods Ladder or the Verifying the Findings tool to identify the ultimate livelihoods solutions available.

The result is a Personal Development Plan for each individual or family (for example, see the monitoring templates in Appendix II of this Toolkit) that respects individual's views and encourages their participation in finding their own solutions.

Below is a small sample of the outcomes achieved by participants in Wales to date:

- Improved ability to access relevant public services

- Increased ability to make and keep appointments with service providers

- Taking up both informal and formal learning opportunities

- Improved ability to make decisions

- Leaving an abusive relationship

- Improved ability to manage finances and budget

- Improved ability to control one's emotions and deal effectively with personal anger and frustration

- Improved parenting and caring skills

- Improved relationships within the home

- Increased engagement with their child's education

- Taking up work experience

- Taking up employment

CASE STUDY: CASSIE

Cassie was initially attending counselling sessions.

The counsellor referred her to the Sanctuary in Wales project. The responsibility of taking care of three young children alone was overwhelming. Bringing up the children alone had taken its toll on her life. She was emotionally drained and physically tired. She did not have time for herself or to think about what she might want to do to improve her self worth and self esteem.

Initially, when I explained what the project had to offer her, she could not believe that such support was available. The fact that childcare provision would be covered made her come alive. She became interested and willing to take the opportunity of improving herself and engaging in the community.

We explored her areas of expertise and interest, the skills and talents she already had. Since she had already acquired a degree qualification from her country of origin and spoke fluent English, I suggested she might take up the ESOL [English for Speakers of Other Languages] training that the project offered. Her initial reaction was 'maybe not'. But when she learnt that the training was to start the following week, she relished the opportunity of meeting with adults and being useful to the community. This also gave her a chance to have time for herself, away from the children.

Attending the training sessions in Cardiff was a great challenge for her but she was committed to it. She feels more confident and useful. She has hopes for the future and is ready to enter into training in the next academic year.

"I have twin babies who I love to bits and enjoy taking care of, but I also sometimes got overwhelmed and wished I could get to do something useful, but I thought that was impossible till I met the SLA worker I got the breather I craved and am now equipped to teach. This experience has definitely added value to my life and opened my mind to possibilities."

HOW DOES THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH WORK FOR GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS?

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach differs from traditional methods of anti-poverty work because it examines people's lives as a whole, rather than focusing on just one aspect, such as their employment situation.

This makes it suitable for working with groups of individuals as well as one-on-one use (see the case study from Glyncoch, opposite). Its holistic approach, however, also makes it suited to developing the abilities of organisations to better meet the needs of people experiencing poverty.

- Tools in the Toolkit such as Drawing the Household or the OK/Not OK Timeline can be used by organisations to better understand the individual people they work with.

- Others, such as the Assets Pentagon or the Structured Interviews tool can even be used by organisations themselves to analyse the effectiveness of their services for people experiencing poverty.

- All of the tools are suitable for use in a group situation, with the equipment needed for each one listed at the start of this Toolkit.

From our experience this process will not only lead to better quality information, but will directly empower individuals and groups and the wider community will benefit as a result.

It will encourage residents to become active citizens in their communities, better equipped to deal with difficulties and mobilised to address them through increased understanding, knowledge and improved relationships with service providers.

Using the SLA will benefit community groups and service providers by giving them a better understanding of how to engage the most marginalised people, including socially isolated people who do not engage with traditional community structures or services.

WHO IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

- This Toolkit is intended for use by anyone, whether a professional or a volunteer, who works or would like to work with individuals, families, groups or communities experiencing poverty in Wales.

- This Toolkit will also be relevant for policy makers and academics interested in increasing their awareness and finding out more about practical ways of conducting research and contributing to policy development on poverty. It is free to use and the tools may be adapted by you to fit your local circumstances.

WHERE AND HOW HAS IT BEEN USED?

- Oxfam is working closely with a number of partner organisations and is supporting them to apply the SLA in over a dozen areas across Wales. As well as the help provided to individuals and families, these projects have supported peer mentors to explore the lives of people living in their communities and then to turn the learning into action both in the community and changing the policies that affect people's lives.

CASE STUDY: Using the toolkit to identify individual and collective barriers

As a young single mother, Amina* was struggling to cope with having a baby to care for without the support of family or friends close to her. She didn't know where to go to for information about the services she could access, and felt isolated and excluded from participating in mainstream activities. Since attending the SLA women's group meetings and using the various tools, she has been able to identify and explore assets that are available that she could further make use of, such as free access to learning and skills offered by community services such as the library. As she put it, "it's something that gets you thinking about your day-to-day life and you start to think about the people that come in and out of your life and the effect they have on your livelihood". In the months since joining the SLA project, she has attended interviewing skills training, a parliamentary training workshop and signed up at her local college to take up a course of study with the hope of going on to university. Now she says she is ready to meet with policy makers to raise issues that affect her as a single mother as well as other women in the group, such as the high transport cost and the poor childcare support for women with young children.

*Not her real name

CASE STUDY: The Sustainable Livelihood Approach as a group exercise

As part of a contract with Oxfam Cymru, Community Development Cymru conducted a pilot exercise to test the application of certain SLA tools to a group work setting. The exercise was run in with Glyncoch Communities First in Glyncoch, an estate of some 1,600 houses built in the 1950s and 1960s about two miles from Pontypridd. The estate is included in the Communities First programme and the local coordinator was enthusiastic about using the SLA both as a means of increasing participation in their work and in making it more sensitive to the needs of those living in poverty. The purpose of the exercise was to improve the quality of professional intervention on the estate by increasing understanding of what it was like to live there and how people made the best life they could. This worked well, and suggested that the SLA's emphasis on existing assets (as opposed to the things people lack), as well as its view of poverty, not as a criticism of the individuals concerned, but of the social injustice that allows poverty to continue to exist in a wealthy society, works well in group situations.

CASE STUDY: Brokering a new service for young refugees and asylum seekers

Oxfam has been working in partnership with both Oasis Cardiff and the Prince's Trust (formerly Fairbridge) over the past 3 years. Oasis works to support and develop the integration and inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees into their local community. It provides services for individuals and communities using the SLA. The Prince's Trust works with 13 to 30-year-olds who have struggled at school, have been in care, are long-term unemployed or have been in trouble with the law. Its Fairbridge Programme offers an individually tailored personal development programme combining one-to-one support and group activities. Oxfam identified that young people who were participating in the livelihoods project at Oasis were not able to access many of the mainstream services offered to the wider community. Having provided training on how to engage BME young people in 2011, Oxfam also identified that the Fairbridge Programme was facing barriers in trying to provide its services to BME young people. A dialogue between the projects was arranged by Oxfam staff. A proposal of how the two projects could work together was drafted and an initial exchange of good practice and activities started. The first joint access course for BME young people took place in October 2012. Through completing the access course, all of the participants are now eligible to go on to the full range of Prince's Trust workplace skills programmes – and all six participants have signed up for further courses, setting themselves on the road to a sustainable livelihood.

SECTION FOUR

SUMMARY

In numerous communities in Wales, there are strong networks, groups and organisations who have, over the years, played a significant part in the regeneration of disadvantaged communities. As a result, many grassroots community organisations, individuals and groups already possess a wealth of information and understanding of social exclusion and disadvantage.

In such areas, the Sustainable Livelihood Approach does not therefore "start from scratch" but rather builds on information which is already known.

However, it is important to note that in order to undertake this work successfully and to use the SLA and its Toolkit in a meaningful way, a particular approach is required. This approach will already be familiar to community development workers because it strives to enable individuals themselves to begin taking control of their lives in ways that are comfortable and appropriate to them, but there are several points worth emphasising in detail:

WHAT INFORMATION WILL THE TOOLKIT PROVIDE?

- A realistic, holistic picture of the day-to-day existences of people living in a community. The relationship and in-depth understanding this builds up can then be used as a basis for coaching and mentoring individuals to make decisions about their livelihood.

- An increased understanding for individuals and families of their strengths, assets and capabilities, how they manage the livelihoods they have, the sustainability of those coping strategies, and the alternative strategies available to them.

- The identification of the external assets and resources within the wider community that impact on their lives and which may also need development to allow them to move up the livelihoods ladder.

WHAT CAN IT BE USED FOR?

- Helping marginalised individuals and families to move up the livelihoods ladder, reduce their dependence on state benefits and other services, thereby keep themselves out of crisis through preventative action.

- Developing a sense of commonality, cohesion and ownership of issues in marginalised communities through the exchange and collation of information and identification of existing facilities and help for developing other initiatives.

- Helping service providers understand the impact of particular policies at the local level within communities and how the information collated could be used to bring about positive change.

- Helping community structures identify what opportunities exist to increase their own influence in local decision making processes by involving particularly socially isolated, marginalised people in local decision making processes in increased numbers.

WHO CAN UNDERTAKE THE WORK?

- Community workers, volunteers and community activists and other individuals across professions and within the community, as well as peer mentors who have themselves recently experienced poverty and its associated trends and shocks.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING AND SUPPORT

It is important that every user of the Toolkit is clear about the objectives and principles of the SLA. A different range of training, both informal and formal, needs therefore to be provided depending on the experiences of those involved. It is particularly important that:

- The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach itself is clearly understood.

- Individuals have the relevant communication and interview skills to engage with individuals, families and communities.

- Issues around confidentiality, boundaries and trust are respected.

- That the process is non-judgmental.

- People are enabled, encouraged and are listened to throughout.

- Strengths are built upon, not taken for granted.

- Everyone's experience is valued and included in the information gathering.

- We recognise when outside assistance is required. Whilst working using the SLA, practitioners may develop strong relationships with individuals and they may be privy to deeply personal information. Being able to use the Toolkit is not the same as being a counsellor or trained advisors, and if participants wish to address many of the issues affecting their livelihoods, other appropriate sources of support will need to be found by them or for them.
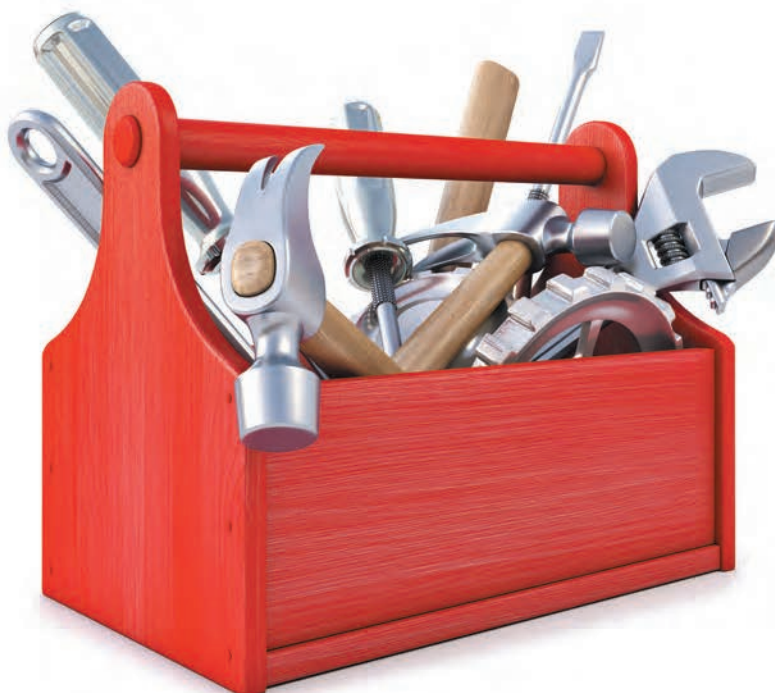
TOOLS FOR A SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD

INTRODUCTION

The tools used in this Toolkit have been developed specifically for use in livelihoods projects, whilst others have been adapted from Toolkits for participatory and gender based community research. It is recommended that at least some of these tools are used in a livelihoods project, as it has been found that they are an important way of enabling participants to engage actively within the process.

Some of these are designed to be used with individuals and households, whereas others are more suitable for group work. Similarly some are intended for collecting information (data collection) either about household assets and livelihood strategies or about the external context (policies, institutions and practices). Others are able to help analyse and verify information and planning possible actions following a livelihoods project.

Visual aids and diagrams have been included and these can be copied to provide handouts for individuals and group work sessions. These will also help to ensure that the process is as accessible as possible, with both facilitators and participants taking an active role. Different exercises will appeal to different people, so hopefully by using more than one, participants will be actively involved in the process. Also, by approaching the issues from different angles, a more detailed picture of their situation can be built. Notes can be made on the handouts by either the facilitators or the research participants and an earlier diagram can be referred to if more details come to light later in an interview.

CONTACT US

Please feel free to contact Oxfam Cymru should you need further information
or wish to order a copy of this Toolkit.

We would also welcome your feedback and comments
on the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and this Toolkit.

Oxfam Cymru
Market Buildings
5 - 7 St Mary Street
Cardiff CF10 1AT

Telephone: 0300 200 1269

Email: oxfamcymru@oxfam.org.uk

Web: www.oxfam.org.uk

OXFAM

TOOLS FOR A SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD

1. DRAWING THE HOUSEHOLD

2. OK/NOT OK TIMELINE

3. MANAGING WHEEL

4. STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

5. LIVELIHOODS STRATEGY TOOL

6. MAPPING PUBLIC ASSETS

7. POWER AND INFLUENCE LINE

8. THE ASSETS PENTAGON

9. LIVELIHOOD LADDER

10. GENDER AWARENESS EXERCISE

11. PROBLEM TREE ANALYSIS

12. IDENTIFYING LIVELIHOOD SOLUTIONS.

OXFAM

1. DRAWING THE HOUSEHOLD

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

THIS TOOLKIT LOOKS AT:

Collecting information on households

Purpose of tool: To document and illustrate the movement of people within and around the household. Also provides a good ice breaker for beginning a session.

OUTCOMES (What we are looking for)

- The material and non-material support that the household receives

- Social networks of trust and reciprocity (e.g. the extended family may provide informal child care, or a good friend may lend money in a crisis)

- The differences between men's and women's interactions, both within the household and outside of it

- Any common trends across interviews

Equipment: House shape template, marker pens, cut out figures (optional)

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

Approach: Using the house template, ask the participants to describe who comes in and out of their house each day and where they go, starting with the people who live in the household all or most of the time. Next add in anyone else who regularly visits the house or whom household members regularly visit

e.g. grandparents, close neighbours, extended family, key friends, and place these people close to the house shape. Next add other people who are in contact with the household e.g. doorstep lenders, council workers, health/community workers, councillors, etc. These can be placed a little way from the house shape.

Best Practice: Ideally participants should be encouraged to lead the process, and to mark the information on the template themselves, leaving the researcher able to prompt and to ask questions as they rise. If this is not possible the facilitator can ask them to describe the process and fill in the diagram for them, checking that they've got it right.

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

What to expect: These interactions help illustrate how a livelihood is constructed. Conversely, a participant may have very few such networks and relationships and/or may access very few public assets.

Warning Sign: This can suggest that they are struggling to sustain themselves and are in surviving mode.

Potential strengths of the Approach: It documents the current survival strategies and social supports that a family can draw upon.

As a consequence the SLA provides an understanding of the wider context and rationale for some of the decisions undertaken by participants in a way that traditional welfare/ employment or needs based assessments might not.

OXFAM

2. OK/NOT OK TIMELINE

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

THIS TOOLKIT LOOKS AT:

Collecting information on households

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

OUTCOMES (What we are looking for) The impact that various life events have had upon people's livelihood assets over time. For example, the break-up of a relationship may have reduced financial assets but lead to increased social and human assets upon relocation out of the area.

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

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

Approach: Make sure that the participant chooses the starting point of the timeline. A horizontal line is then drawn across the page as the 'timeline', with the start time on the left and the present on the right.

Approximate dates for key events in the participant's life can then be added onto the timeline, with drawings and quotations to fill it out. Then ask the participant to draw a line on the paper with a different coloured pen, moving above and below the timeline to mark periods of time when they were 'ok' or 'not ok'.

Quotations and pictorial references can be added to give depth to what is written on each line. You can also cross-reference this chart with the information provided on the house tool, again to build up a more complete picture of the person's life.

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

The facilitator also needs to consider the different effects that these events have upon men and women:

Who gained and who lost out in any changes?

Remember that you are also looking for trends across households in this respect.
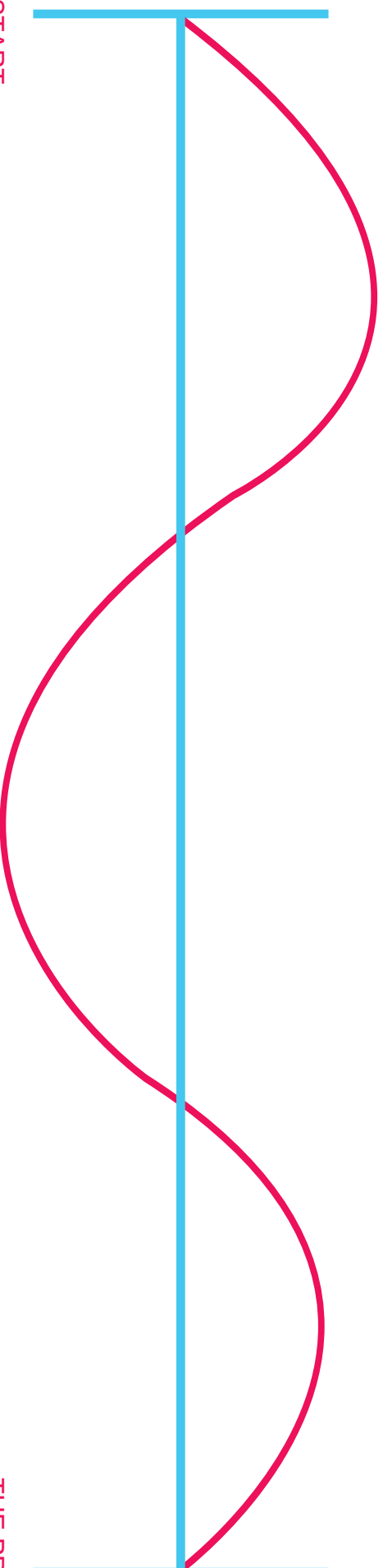
REMEMBER!

Look for links between assets – did gaining one asset (e.g. the gaining of a human asset through achieving a qualification) have an impact upon other assets?

OXFAM

THE START

THE PRESENT

Meets
Janine
1995

Baby
Born
2005

Made Redundant
2007

Moved House
2009

3. MANAGING WHEEL

Collecting information on households ✓

Collecting information on policies, institutions and processes

Reflection ✓

Verifying and action planning ✓

THIS TOOLKIT LOOKS AT:

Collecting information on households

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

OUTCOMES (What we are looking for)

- The coping strategies that households use to help them manage their household finances on a low income.

- How they deal with crises, and who they can turn to for support.

- Additional sources of income e.g. informal or casual work, market stalls etc.

Equipment: Pens, flipchart paper or managing wheel template.

How to Use: Start with a photocopy of the managing wheel (or draw them on flip chart paper), and explain that you want to understand how the household manages financially. The wheel is divided into 7 sections, each one indicating a day of the week. Ask the participant to fill in each day with details of what money comes into the house (e.g. wages, income support, child benefit, borrowing), and where is it spent (e.g. weekly shopping, bus fares, fuel tokens). Include any additional information that emerges during the conversation, for example, 'Monday – trip to Lidl (further away than Asda, but cheaper)'.

There may also be events which occur monthly or even annually and these can either be added onto the wheel with qualifying statements, or onto the edge of the sheet with descriptions of frequency. Again this is intended to be a participatory tool so interviewees should be encouraged to fill in the template for themselves if they are willing to do so. Different members of the household can use different coloured pens to fill in the same diagram.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- Who goes shopping? Who decides what to buy?

- Do you get help from family or neighbours? Do you do anything for them in return?

- Are there days of the week (or month) when there's no money left? What do you do then?

- How do you budget for expensive items (e.g. school uniform), and special occasions (e.g. Christmas)?

- What happens in emergencies e.g. if the cooker breaks down or you lose a purse?

REMEMBER!

Some of the issues raised on the managing wheel might provide opportunities for follow-up questions, e.g.' What company is the loan with?' 'Who does the baby-sitting?' Check out how often particular events happen 'How often in the last month have you had no money left three days before payday?'

OXFAM
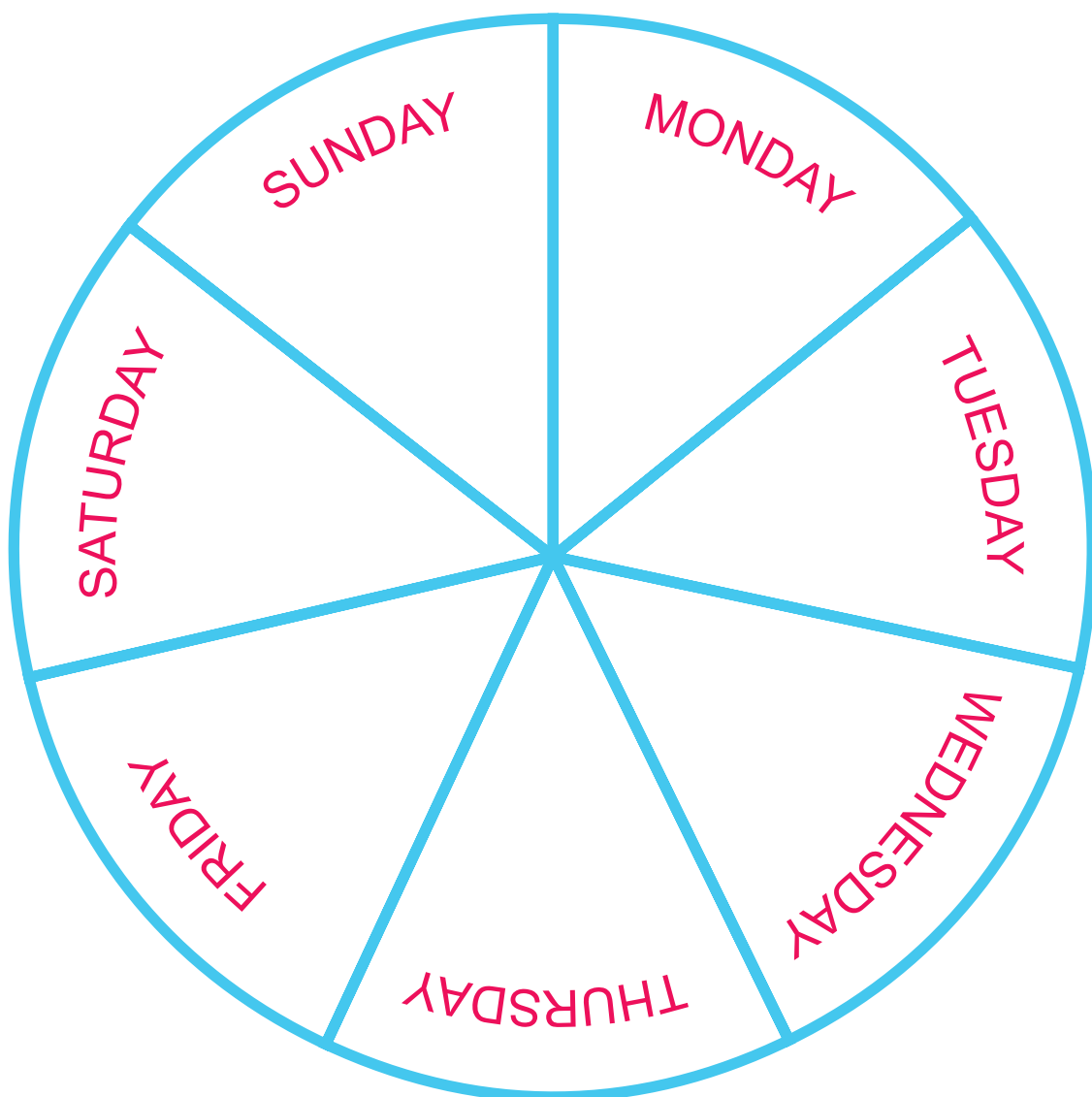
4. STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Collecting information on households ✓

Collecting information on policies, institutions and processes

Reflection ✓

Verifying and action planning

THIS TOOLKIT LOOKS AT:

Collecting information on households

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

OUTCOMES (What we are looking for)

- People's asset base and the way they make use of the assets they have available to them.

- Detailed information that has not been covered by the other exercises, e.g. the names of debt companies or local services

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

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

It is important to ask questions that relate to all assets, although you are likely to have already covered some of the issues in the earlier exercises.

You may also decide to focus in more depth on a particular asset, if for example, this relates to a particular community issue or area of your work. We have included some examples of questions

used in previous projects, which you may be able to adapt to your own situation. If you want to create your own questions then you should think about them carefully and test them out with colleagues / volunteers.

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

OXFAM

INTRODUCTION

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

PUBLIC ASSETS

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

SOCIAL ASSETS

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

PHYSICAL ASSETS

- What sort of accommodation do you live in?
- Who owns your property? If the participants own the property ask if it really means that one member of the household is responsible for the mortgage or other forms of payment?
- How much of your weekly/monthly income is spent on the mortgage, rent, etc. (e.g. half/quarter/all?)
- What sort of transport do you use, and what for?
- Which member/s of the household own and/or use these vehicles?
- Do you own any equipment that you use to bring in extra income or favours from people you know (eg sewing machine, lawn mower, DIY tools)?

HUMAN ASSETS

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

QUESTIONS – FINANCIAL ASSETS

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

5. LIVELIHOODS STRATEGY TOOL

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

THIS TOOLKIT LOOKS AT:

Collecting information on households

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

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

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

Strengths: 'The things which you use to help you get by', e.g. helping out with childcare, informal work, friends/social networks, the local community centre, church and your own resilience and resourcefulness. 'Sally's mother has the kids on Friday and Saturday evenings, so I can work in the pub' 'I have a stall at the car boot sale once a month and earn a bit of extra cash from that'.

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

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

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

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

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

OXFAM

STRENGTHS	BARRIERS

6. MAPPING PUBLIC ASSETS

Collecting information on households ☐

Collecting information on policies, institutions and processes ☑

Reflection ☐

Verifying and action planning ☑

THIS TOOLKIT LOOKS AT:

Collecting information on policies, institutions, and processes

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

OUTCOMES (What we are looking for)

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

- The resources that people make use of in the community.

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

Equipment: Flipchart paper and different coloured marker pens.

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

They should then draw arrows to show how often and how far they travel to get to these places. The thickness of the arrow should denote the frequency of the interaction and the length of the arrow should denote its distance. Different colour pens can then be used to jot down a comment beside each symbol to show whether it either helps or hinders them in building a sustainable livelihood ('getting by'), and their thoughts or feelings about it.

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

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

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

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

OXFAM

7. POWER AND INFLUENCE LINE

Collecting information on households ✓

Collecting information on policies, institutions and processes ✓

Reflection

Verifying and action planning ✓

THIS TOOLKIT LOOKS AT:

Collecting information on households

Collecting information on policies, institutions, and process

Verifying and action planning

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

OUTCOMES (What we are looking for)

- Have your initial mapping processes covered the key organisations that local people see as responsible for the decisions that affect their quality of life.

- What areas if any have you missed out in your intitial mapping

- How much do local people know about the policies and institutions that impact on their lives. For example many local people who are active within their communities in Wales are not aware of the existence of local strategic partnerships (LSP) the governments mechanism for including people in regeneration.

Equipment: Post-it notes, flipchart paper and marker pens.

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

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

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- Who are the organisations and individuals that make decisions in the local area?

- Who are the organisations and individuals that hold power at a national level?

- Have you heard of _____? (Insert the name of a local/national organisation/ MP, etc.) If not, what do you think they do?

- How does that organisation affect you in your daily life?

OXFAM

HIGH LEVEL OF POWER

CANNOT

EASY TO

INFLUENCE

INFLUENCE

LOW LEVEL OF POWER

8. THE ASSETS PENTAGON

Collecting information on households	☐
Collecting information on policies, institutions and processes	☐
Reflection ✓	
Verifying and action planning ✓	

THIS TOOLKIT LOOKS AT:

Reflection

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

Equipment: photocopies of the assets pentagon, interview transcripts or notes and copies of the exercises completed with each household, flip chart paper and marker pens.

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

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

OXFAM

FINANCIAL

HUMAN

SOCIAL

PHYSICAL

PUBLIC
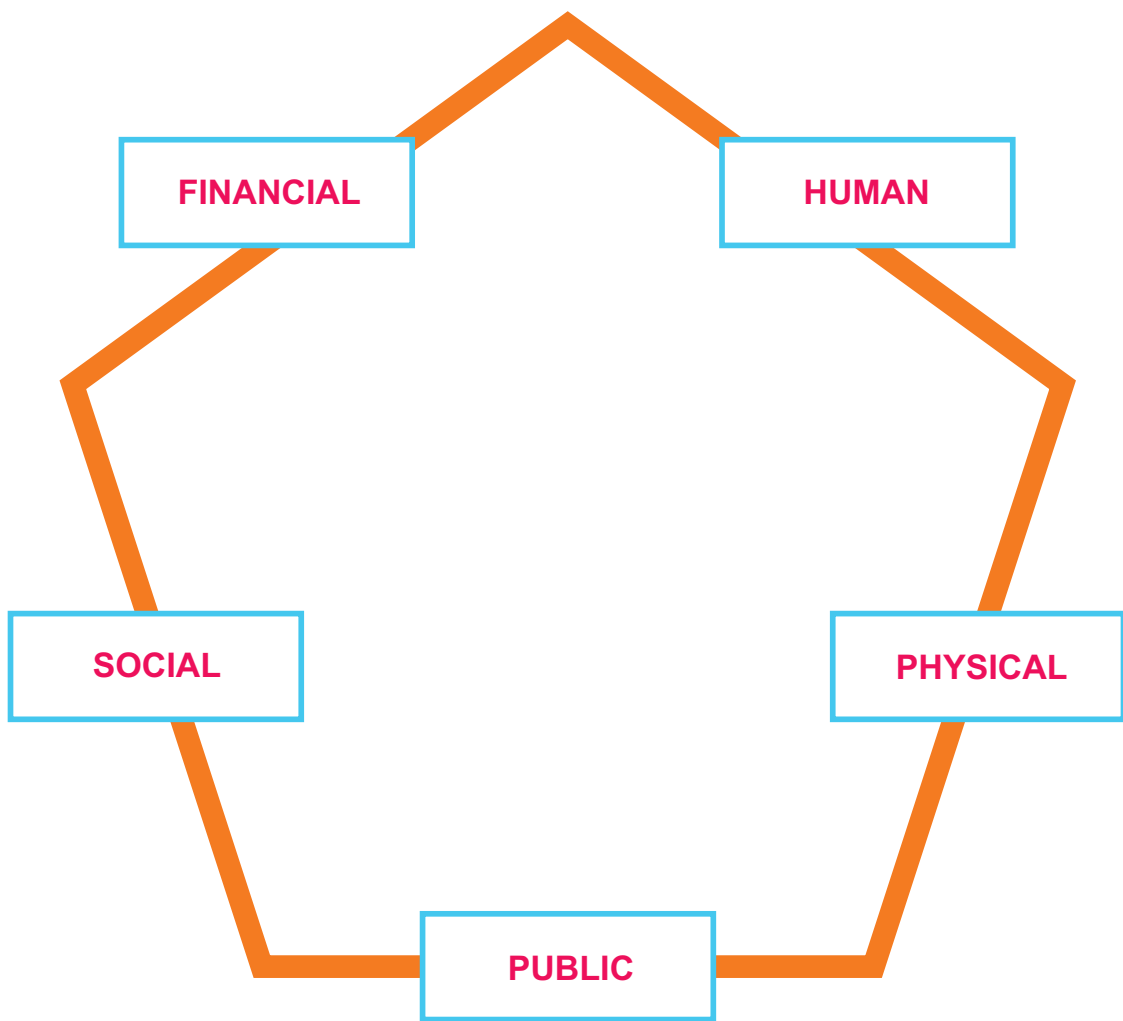
9. LIVELIHOODS LADDER

Collecting information on households	☐	Collecting information on policies, institutions and processes	☐
Reflection	✓	Verifying and action planning	✓

THIS TOOLKIT LOOKS AT:

Reflection

Verifying and action planning

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

Equipment: A photocopy of the livelihoods ladder template for each interview

How to Use: This exercise follows on from Tool 8, and continues the process of analysing the information you have collected from the participants in your livelihoods project.

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

Ideally this exercise follows on from the assets pentagon, but if not make sure that each member of the group is familiar with the interview material.

Look at the different assets that the household can draw upon and the barriers that they face, discuss in the group where on the ladder they would best be positioned and make notes on the chart to explain the reasons for your decision.

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

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What are the barriers that are keeping the participant low down the ladder? What might help address these?

- What risks and vulnerabilities do they face? Would moving up the ladder increase these vulnerabilities? How could this be addressed?

- How do external policies, institutions or practices affect household movement up or down the ladder?

OXFAM

ACCUMULATING Livelihood ✓ Sustainable ✓	
ADAPTING Livelihood ✓ Sustainable x	
COPING Livelihood x Sustainable ✓	
SURVIVING Livelihood x Sustainable x	

10. GENDER AWARENESS EXERCISE

Collecting information on households ☐

Collecting information on policies, institutions and processes ☐

Reflection ☑

Verifying and action planning ☑

THIS TOOLKIT LOOKS AT:

Reflection

Verifying and action planning

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

Equipment: Facilitators' and participants' stories, newspaper cuttings.

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

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

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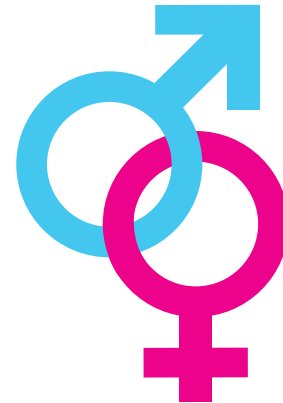
QUESTIONS TO ASK:

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

- What kind of barriers do men and women face?

- Who has assets?

- Who owns what (property, vehicles, etc.)?

- Who makes decisions?

- Who gains and who loses?

OXFAM

11. PROBLEM TREE ANALYSIS

Collecting information on households ☐

Collecting information on policies, institutions and processes ☐

Reflection ✓

Verifying and action planning ✓

THIS TOOLKIT LOOKS AT:

Verifying and action planning

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

Equipment: Post-it notes, flipchart paper and marker pens.

How to Use: This tool should be used to work with project participants and key stakeholders to plan actions to respond to the findings of your livelihoods project (it therefore follows on well from the prioritisation exercise at the end of Tool 10).

Before the meeting starts the facilitator prepares a piece of flip chart paper with a drawing of a tree.

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

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

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- Does the tree represent reality?

- What are the economic, political and socio cultural dimensions to the problem?

- Which causes and consequences are improving, and which are getting worse? Which are the most serious? And the most urgent?

- Which causes and consequences are easy to tackle? What possible solutions might improve the situation?

- How could a policy change help address a cause or consequence, or create a solution?

- What criteria are important to us in thinking about a way forward?

- What decisions have we made, and what actions have we agreed?

OXFAM

12. IDENTIFYING LIVELIHOOD SOLUTIONS

| Collecting information on households | ☐ | Collecting information on policies, institutions and processes | ☐ |
| Reflection | ☐ | Verifying and action planning | ✓ |

THIS TOOLKIT LOOKS AT:

Verifying and action planning

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

OUTCOMES (What we are looking for)

- Any interventions must be practical, manageable and realistic.

- They can be achieved through changing existing services, working in partnership, or creating new ones.

- The influence of external factors and how local people might be affected by top down decision making and policy directives.

- That participants begin to get an understanding that there exists the potential for change in their personal and community life.

Equipment: Flipchart and marker pen

How to Use: Display the Asset Pentagon and the Power & Influence line (Tool 7) where they are clearly visible to the group.

Prepare a table on a piece of flip chart paper, with four columns and six rows. Write the top five issues identified through the assets analysis and prioritisation exercise in the left hand column, and write top, middle, bottom (or national, regional, local) at the top of the other three columns. For each possible barrier or weak asset area, ask the group to identify organisations that could take action or policies that need to change in order to address the issue.

Write each possible action on a post it and decide where it fits – is it a local action that could be taken by local people and community groups, or does it require a regional or national policy change?

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

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

OXFAM

APPENDIX: MONITORING TEMPLATES FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD APPROACH

CONTENTS

OXFAM

A) PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO

1. YOUR DETAILS

Name:

Photograph:
(NOTE: only if participant would like to include one of themselves)

[PLUS ANY OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION YOU WISH TO COLLECT]

2. COMPLETED BASELINE QUESTIONNAIRES
(NOTE: please include all filled-out Six Quick Questions and King/Queen of the Castle forms here)

3. RECORD OF ACTIVITIES
(NOTE: please include details of Sustainable Livelihood tools used by participant plus any other courses / groups / events attended by participant here)

Date	Activity	Comment

4. EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES / SCRAPBOOK

(NOTE: Include any results from the use of the Sustainable Livelihoods Toolkit here, plus any other materials the participant would like to include – these can be invitations, pictures, links to any attachments accompanying this portfolio, such as audio recordings, and any other evidence you have of a participants' progress from your own monitoring systems)

5. PERSONAL REFLECTIONS / DIARY

(NOTE: Include any reflections the participant wishes to make on their personal development during the project, feelings or thoughts they would like to share or things they would like to do in the future as part of the project)

DATE   ENTRY

6. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

NAME:

PLAN NUMBER:

DATE BEGUN:
DATE REVIEWED:
DATE CLOSED:

MY ASSETS:
(e.g. from SLA Toolkit Analysis)

① ....

② ....

③ ....

④ ....

FUTURE GOAL

POSSIBLE BARRIERS

ACTIONS AGREED (+DEADLINE)

GOAL REACHED?

OXFAM

SIX QUICK QUESTIONS – BASELINE SURVEY

I. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Have you been on any training, education or courses in the past six months?

YES   NO

If YES, please list them here:

....

....

....

2. Are there any other events or groups you have attended during the past six months that have helped you with your skills or confidence?

YES   NO

If YES, please write them in here:

....

....

....

II. COMMUNITY

3. Thinking back over the past six months, how many times in a normal week did you meet other people in the community socially?

....

4. Over the past six months, how many organised community activities have you taken part in?

....

III. LOCAL SERVICES AND GROUPS

5. Please write in the name of the following public services in your area, then rate them by putting a tick in one of the boxes for each one:

1=Terrible / 2=Bad / 3=OK / 4=Good / 5=Excellent / NU=Never Used It / NH=Never Heard Of It!

a) .... (Council/housing office)

1	2	3	4	5	NU	NH

b) .... (Debt/financial/other advice)

1	2	3	4	5	NU	NH

c) .... (Park or other leisure facility)

1	2	3	4	5	NU	NH

d) .... (Jobcentre Plus)

1	2	3	4	5	NU	NH

e) .... (GP surgery)

1	2	3	4	5	NU	NH

f) .... (Public transport provider)

1	2	3	4	5	NU	NH

g) .... (Courses/training provider)

1	2	3	4	5	NU	NH

h) .... (Counselling/mental wellbeing service)

1	2	3	4	5	NU	NH

i) .... (Childcare provider)

1	2	3	4	5	NU	NH

6. Are there any other local services you would like to rate? If so, please write them in here.

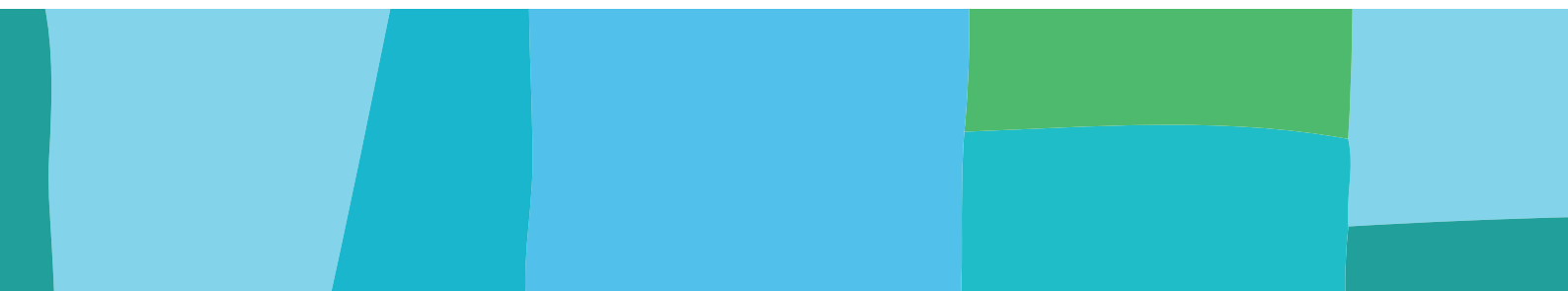Name of service: .... Your rating (1-5) ....

Name of service: .... Your rating (1-5) ....

Name of service: .... Your rating (1-5) ....
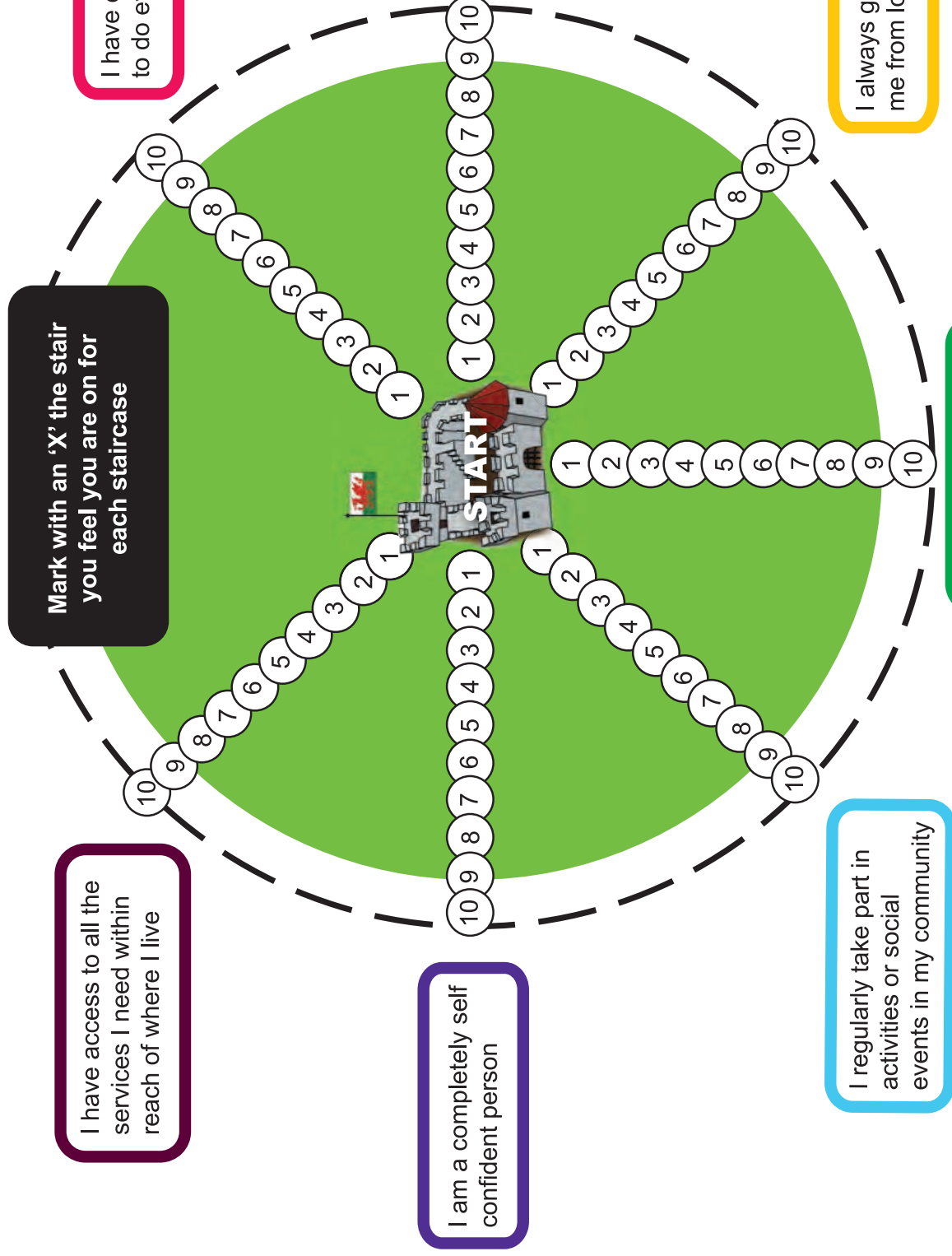
IV. ANY OTHER COMMENT

And finally: have you got any other comments you would like to make or questions you would like to see answered? If so, please write them in here:

KING/QUEEN OF THE CASTLE– BASELINE SURVEY

YOUR NAME

DATE COMPLETED

OXFAM

Mark with an 'X' the stair you feel you are on for each staircase

I have enough money to do everything I want

I feel able to join any of the community groups or organisations around here

I always get the right help for me from local service providers

I have all the skills I need to get on in life

I regularly take part in activities or social events in my community

I am a completely self confident person

I have access to all the services I need within reach of where I live

START

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

SIX QUICK QUESTIONS

I. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Have you been on any training, education or courses in the past six months?

- Please list any suggestions that you or the participant feel are relevant, noting the provider (if known), the name of the course and the outcome (qualification or certificate or skill learnt).

2. Are there any other events or groups you have attended during the past six months that have helped you with your skills or confidence?

- Please list any suggestions that you or the participant feel are relevant, noting the name of the group or event, the location, provider and the outcome (what the participant feels the result of attending was for them).

II. COMMUNITY

3. Thinking back over the past six months, how many times in a normal week did you meet other people in the community socially?

- An exact figure may be entered here if known, but an approximate figure per week (or per month or per six months) is also fine.

4. Over the past six months, how many organised community activities have you taken part in?

- Again, if you or the participant are able to arrive at an exact figure then great, but an approximate figure will also suffice.

III. LOCAL SERVICES AND GROUPS

5. Please write in the name of the following public services in your area, then rate them by putting a tick in one of the boxes for each one:

- For the first set of surveys, the names of the services being rated will need to be written in by you in the spaces provided; once a list of services has been established from the first sets of survey data, a bespoke version of this question will be produced for your specific project.

6. Are there any other local services you would like to rate? If so, please write them in here.

- These can be any type of service you like. Please continue list or use Any Other Comment box if the participant wishes to rate more than three other services. Each additional service should be rated 1-5 as above, or NU/NH if not used/not heard of.

IV. ANY OTHER COMMENT

As well as for listing additional services and ratings, this box may be used to make any comment on the survey (either the Six Quick Questions or the King/Queen of the Castle sections), its content, its results or anything the participant wants to say about the SLA process.
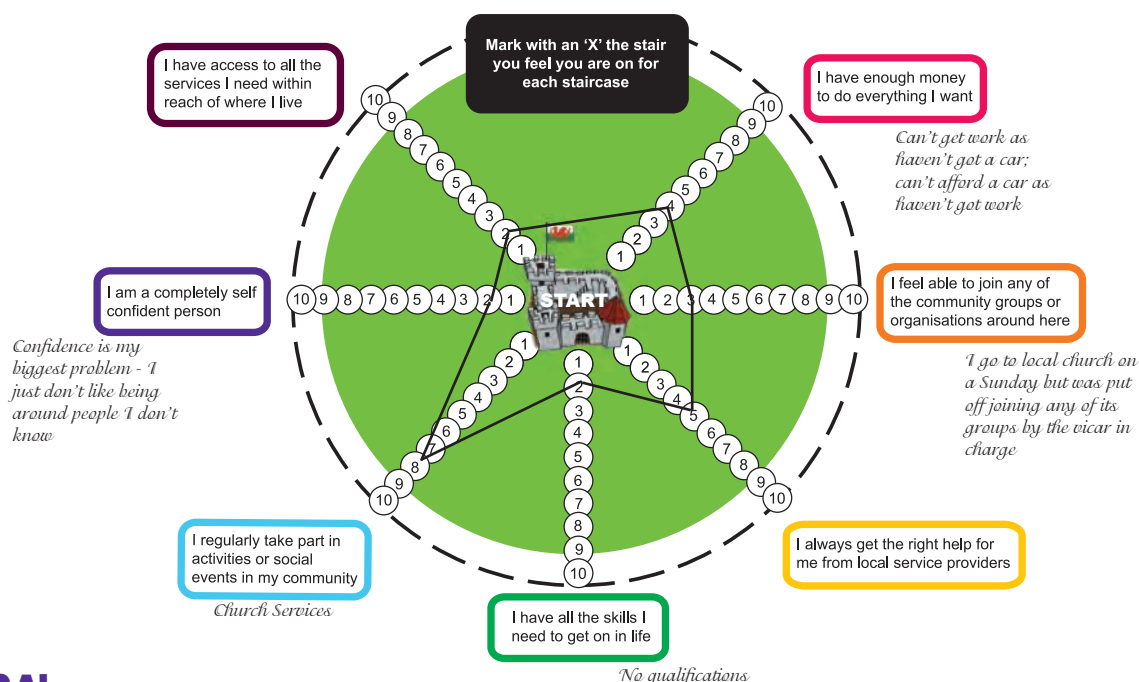
KING/QUEEN OF THE CASTLE

The aim of the King/Queen Of The Castle tool is to record a participant's journey from the castle keep, which stands for their existing assets, towards becoming a true queen or king of the whole castle, looking out from the outer walls over all of the elements that make up their sustainable livelihood.

To use the tool, discuss the goal represented by each platform with the participant, then help them mark the step on the staircase they feel they are currently on in relation to each goal. Please do this until every staircase is marked.

As with the Assets Pentagon exercise from the Sustainable Livelihoods Toolkit, the points each participant is at in each direction may then be joined up to make a visual representation of their progress to compare to future baseline surveys. Any additional comments you or the participant would like to make may be written by the relevant goal – adding comments is completely optional though.

An initial completed example might therefore look something like this:

GENERAL

This baseline survey (the Six Quick Questions plus the King/Queen of the Castle tool) must be completed in full as soon as possible after the participant starts using the SLA, as well when they leave, and every six months in between. The original must be kept in the participant's Personal Development Portfolio in a secure locked filing cabinet at your project.

If you have any questions, comments or would like any further guidance about the baseline survey, you can contact Oxfam Cymru at:
Market Buildings 5-7 St Mary St, Cardiff CF10 1AT or on 0300 200 1269.