Oxfam Cymru: Response to the UK Government, Department for Work and Pensions consultation on the *Work, health and disability green paper: improving lives*

15 February 2017

Name: Rachel Cable
Organisation: Oxfam Cymru
Email: oxfamcymrupac@oxfam.org.uk
Telephone: 0300 200 1269
Address: Oxfam Cymru, Market Buildings, 5/7 St Mary Street, Cardiff CF10 1AT

1. Introduction

Oxfam works with others to overcome poverty in three ways:

- by developing projects with people living in poverty that improve their lives and show others how things can change;
- by raising public awareness of poverty to create pressure for change; and
- by working with policymakers to tackle the causes of poverty.

For further details about Oxfam's work, see www.oxfam.org.uk/.

We believe our programming work in Wales provides a unique practice-based perspective on this agenda. Our response will address areas in which Oxfam Cymru can provide specialist comment and whilst our expertise is borne largely from our programme work, the arguments and suggestions set out in this response can be scaled up, or localised as appropriate, for delivery. As the consultation paper notes, the devolved administrations are important partners in this work, particularly because of their responsibilities for health and other related policy areas.

It is worth noting the context in which this Green Paper sits. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in in-work poverty across the UK, and Wales is no different. Wales has a particular issue with low pay, and House of Commons Library figures show that nearly a quarter of the Welsh workforce is paid less than the Living Wage[1]. Further to this, Wales has the third highest percentage of people on zero hours contracts at 2.8% (40,000 people)[2]. Across the UK we know that over half of those living in poverty last year were in households with at least one working adult.[3] For work to be a sustainable route out of poverty, work must pay. Oxfam Cymru recognises that the UK Government's aspiration of "building a country that works for everyone" is not an overnight task, and not one that will be fixed with a single programme or intervention, and that the change needed requires a significant culture shift, and time.

[1] Half of jobs pay less than the living wage in part of Wales, Trade Union Congress, February 2015
[2] Supplementary LFS Data on zero hours contracts, Office for National Statistics, September 2015
[3] Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2014, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, November 2014

2. Key messages

- Embedding a 'Sustainable Livelihoods Approach[4]' can help people manage and improve their lives, ultimately help to lift them out of poverty for good.
- Training DWP staff in the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach would help to ensure the service fully understands the lived experiences of its users, and therefore be better placed to provide the tailored support needed – reducing the need for sanctions and enhancing people's ability to find and stay in work.
- To ensure people starting new jobs can not only stay in them, but thrive in them, the quality of work on offer must be considered.

"*People are like a ball of wool, lots of different strands – money, housing, social life. It is important to not talk but listen to their story, like pulling out the strands and finding where the main problem is*"[5].

3. Livelihoods – setting the scene

Between 2012 and 2016, Oxfam Cymru delivered the Building Livelihoods and Strengthening Communities in Wales[6] project (hereafter 'Livelihoods Project') which piloted the use of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) working with different groups experiencing poverty and marginalisation.

The SLA is a method of understanding the experiences of people living in poverty and of analysing and changing the lives of people living in poverty and disadvantage. It is a participatory approach based on the recognition that all people have abilities and assets that can be developed to help them improve their lives. Oxfam has already supported community development organisations to apply the SLA as a project delivery tool across the UK. The SLA has also been used to help policy makers and service providers help people experiencing poverty in a more holistic, whole-life way. The SLA Toolkit[7] provides practical tools needed to help people address their issues in an effective and sustainable manner.

The Livelihoods Project activities included working with participants in a range of ways including: one-to-one support and guidance (with the SLA tools used as a starting point with); peer mentoring courses (to provide participants with the skills to enable them to support others); training courses and workshops (with many participants welcoming the opportunity to receive accreditation following completion of a course - some gained employment as a result of training provided, for example being able to renew licences required to work on specific machinery); excursions (opportunities for participants to visit places locally and further afield, aiming at broaden their horizons); volunteering; and other group activities. A Value Analysis[8] of the Livelihoods Project was undertaken, and was able to demonstrate a social return on investment of £4.43 for every £1 spent.

---

[4] Detailed in sections 3, 4 and 5.

[5] Quote from a Project Worker, Building Livelihoods and Strengthening Communities in Wales project, Oxfam Cymru, External Evaluation by Arad research, April 2016

[6] Building Livelihoods and Strengthening Communities in Wales project, Oxfam Cymru, External Evaluation by Arad research, April 2016

[7] The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach: Toolkit for Wales, Oxfam Cymru, July 2013

[8] Building Livelihoods and Strengthening Communities in Wales – Value Analysis: Report by Dr Leon Quinn, Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator, Oxfam Cymru, April 2016

Oxfam Cymru believes embedding the SLA across DWP service provision will help to improve services, as well as outcomes for service users.

4. **Chapter 1: 'Tackling significant inequality – the case for action'**

The SLA can be scaled up to deliver improved health and employment outcomes for people. The SLA was used during the Livelihoods Project, which benefited over 1000 participants, and partnered with nine organisations[9] who worked with individuals who are part of different marginalised groups in society, including people with physical and / or learning disabilities; young families, single parents and those with mental or physical health issues; geographically isolated and long term unemployed people; families with primary school age children; people from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities; young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs); older people refugees and asylum seekers; and people at risk of homelessness.

One of the main project outcomes was that 'Marginalised people will develop skills and build confidence to improve their livelihoods and life chances'. The external evaluation, conducted by Arad, showed that all participants and project workers interviewed believed there had been many and varied opportunities to develop skills. In many cases, the type of impact included 'hard' outcomes' such as skills improved through certified training (for example, manual handling and first aid), but also those 'softer' impacts relating to raised confidence and career aspirations amongst participants. There was recognition that, in many cases, the support provided through the project had acted as the very first step towards obtaining employment and had the effect of helping breakdown whatever barrier participants had in taking part more fully in training or employment or in their community. The external evaluation also identified synergy between the various types of impact the project had, for instance, a participant may have been supported into an employment or training opportunity, but often this would be accompanied by an increase in confidence or higher self esteem generally, increased awareness of where to seek help should problems arise, better time keeping, and a network of others to share experiences.

The Livelihoods Project comprised a diverse mix of projects and activities. The main commonality across the partners was the use of the SLA, as well an emphasis on providing intensive support, a flexible budget, the development of peer mentors, and the fact that the projects are targeted at certain groups. One example is the Caia Park Partnership in Wrexham which focused on people with physical and learning difficulties, and later expanded to all the areas' residents. In this instance, the Livelihoods Project worked with individuals with physical or learning difficulties, mental health problems and substance misuse issues, who were economically inactive, and looking to get back into work. Activities supported by the project included: manual handling, health and safety, IT, employability skills, budgeting; and individualised support – for example completing CVs and job applications, and completing benefits application forms.

During the one-to-one support and guidance, the SLA tools were used as a starting point, with participants identifying their assets to enable project workers to assist them in taking control of their life. By its very nature, one-to-one support can involve many hours of intensive support for the individual concerned, and if applicable, their family. Such support included identifying volunteering

[9] African Community Centre, Swansea; Caia Park Partnership, Wrexham; Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council and The Foryd Centre, Rhyl; DOVE Workshop, Banwen, Neath; Duffryn Community Link, Newport; Glyncoch Community Regeneration, Pontypridd; South Riverside Community Development Centre, Cardiff; Sylfaen Cymunedol Cyfyngedig, Caernarfon; and The Wallich Clifford Community, Ebbw Vale.

and job opportunities, determining relevant training, building self confidence and preparing participants for job interviews. One-to-one support enabled participants to build self-confidence and successfully obtain both voluntary and paid employment.

5. Chapter 2: 'Supporting people into work'

The evidence stemming from Oxfam Cymru's programme work shows that that key to supporting people back into work, and helping them sustain that employment, is taking a holistic approach – not only to the individual, but to their family and wider situation. An individual starting a new job may have knock-on implications for other family members, for example, tax credits may be affected, those who require care may need their situation reconsidered, and so on. It is often the case that an individual may face multiple barriers to employment – not only their own health and wellbeing, but that of their dependents. Key for many individuals is building confidence and self-esteem, in parallel to any skills development or training they may need. If an individual has been out of employment for many years, starting employment may be a huge cultural shift for them.

Jobcentre Plus staff can be better equipped to provide the right personal support at the right time for individuals by ensuring they are trained and equipped with the SLA tools. This would enable Job Centre Plus staff to: better understand people's situations and how they relate to finding and staying in work; understand the factors that create social exclusion and poverty and the impact that has on people's lives; increase awareness of both personal and organisational values, attitudes and behaviours which impact on frontline delivery; and consider the benefits of a holistic approach to support service users. The SLA toolkit provides the practical tools needed to help people address their issues in an effective and sustainable manner. The participatory approach is based on the recognition that all people have abilities and assets that can be developed to help them improve their lives. The toolkit should be a 'must have' for any work coach.

Oxfam Cymru has a valued relationship with the DWP, having partnered to deliver the Access to Work project from 2012 to 2015, which used the SLA to support single parents to move into employment or start their own business. Oxfam Cymru's Access to Work and Enterprise project ran from 2012 to 2015 and worked to support people holistically to be more resilient. The project worked with lone parents who had been affected by changes to the benefits system and made positive interventions to help people become more independent. The project included one-to-one mentoring and coaching, group learning sessions, volunteering opportunities, and a work-based learning programme at one of Oxfam's shops. Of the 90 people who took part in the project, results included: nine people got jobs; six passed extended awards in work based employment; 11 undertook work based learning placements; seven undertook voluntary placements; 11 undertook English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and essential skills; nine explored self employment and two are on the road to becoming self employed; 12 took up part time courses; one went to university; and more.

Using learning from this project, and insights from project partners about JCP, Oxfam and the DWP are currently working together in Wales to deliver interactive training to DWP frontline staff and managers in JobCentre Plus offices across Wales. This training project ultimately aims to help service users build more sustainable livelihoods. The project aims to embed an understanding of poverty within the DWP service across Wales, and it is an approach which could be replicated elsewhere in the UK. Through training and encouraging DWP staff to use the SLA at the commitment phase, service users can receive a tailored commitment that is appropriate to their personal circumstances.

Oxfam Cymru's hypothesis for the project is that a service that understands the lived experiences of its users will be better placed to provide solutions and support befitting their needs, thereby reducing the need for sanctions and enhancing the ability of service users to find and stay in work, and thereby to build more sustainable livelihoods.The project is being externally evaluated and we are keen to share these learnings with DWP when they become available. Anecdotal evidence shows positive feedback from JCP staff using the SLA Toolkit, and comments in the initial feedback collected from JobCentre Plus staff have included: "I will be using these tools in our peer support job club. I will also build this into my supporting claimants 45+ and with health condition Action Plans"; "All tools will be useful. Looking to develop more peer support groups and these tools will help develop sessions / delivery"; "[the tools] are extremely helpful in helping build a rapport and breaking down barriers"; "[the tools] help to build an individual's life picture, to provide the correct support either by myself or able to signpost. To build a picture of what is positive for the individuals"; and "I believe [the tools] are a pathway to developing my role as a work coach. Being in the community it will be knowing my customer and making sure the tool is relevant to them".

The SLA Toolkit provides a range of specialist tools which can be used by Work Coaches (and indeed are already being used by a number of Work Coaches across Wales). The key principles of the SLA are as follows:

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

In the SLA, these 'assets' are divided into five categories, and together these assets allow people to adopt different livelihood strategies. These are:

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

The key here is recognising that one size does not fit all, and taking each individual's case holistically is critical. The external evaluation of the Livelihoods Project demonstrated that the SLA has proved "*a suitable tool in providing structure to determine actions needed to improve individual livelihoods*". It described the SLA toolkit as providing project workers "*with a manageable approach to identify individual's assets and assist them in finding solutions*". [...] "*The flexibility of the SLA as a toolkit and approach, and being able to adapt and apply it as appropriate, supporting participants intensively at some times, and non-intensively at others according to their needs, is one of its key strengths*". The evaluation concluded with a number of recommendations, including that:

- The SLA should continue to be disseminated to service providers and adopted as a method for empowering individuals to secure a more sustainable livelihood; there is also potential for it to be used more widely, for example with schools and young people.
- It is important to continue to improve the livelihoods of those in marginalised communities through utilising a holistic approach to their situation. A key strength of the SLA is that by working holistically it uncovers the real issue or issues, not just the most obvious surface problem.

A number of Oxfam Cymru's partners have also reported positive working relationships with Jobcentre Plus. One example is that of the South Riverside Community Development Centre (SRCDC), where both the DWP and the SRCDC have recognised the value in investing in, building up, and maintaining strategic links to benefit both sides, to lead to positive outcomes for clients. This has manifested itself in a number of ways, including: the SRCDC team being involved in the design of a Jobcentre open day, which hosted different local organisations etc; and the SRCDC Director attending a number of JCP adviser team meetings, where he could share his experiences to inform the JCP team, helping to build advisers' confidence in knowing where to signpost clients – helping to reduce pressure on frontline staff.

In our experience intensive support, using the SLA, is a successful way of improving individual livelihoods. The Livelihoods Project partners have shared a range of anecdotal evidence which suggests that brief ten minute sessions with Work Coaches may not be adequate in all cases. The Work Coaches not only need a forensic knowledge of what services are available in the local area, but must also have first class 'people skills' to be able to build and maintain a trusting relationship with clients, so that they feel able to discuss their concerns, and not put off by 'officialdom', or intimidated by authority. A number of Oxfam Cymru's partners have also suggested deeper consideration of the style and location of JCP services should be delivered, questioning whether 'formal' meetings with Work Coaches may be a perceived barrier, and that access points should not be threatening (or perceived to be threatening) for people. Many claimants may find it beneficial to be linked in with a whole range of services in their local area, including statutory agencies and third sector groups, and Work Coaches must feel confident in understanding what's on offer and what's most appropriate for the individual in question. Supporting a claimant to navigate a complex web of support is important.

6. **Chapter 4: 'Supporting employers to recruit with confidence and create healthy workplaces'**

The consultation paper explores how employers can be 'supported to establish good practices and supportive workplace cultures'. Last year, Oxfam Scotland published a new piece of research into decent work for low paid workers[10]. The report presents research findings about the priorities for 'decent work' for low paid workers and their current experience of the workplace. The research produced a ranked list of 26 factors which research participants deemed to be most or least important to make work 'decent'. The top ten priorities identified by the participants were:

1) Decent hourly rate – an hourly rate or salary that is enough to cover basic needs such as food, housing and things most people take for granted without getting into debt;
2) Job security;
3) Paid leave – paid holidays and paid sick leave;
4) Safe environment – a safe working environment free from physical or mental risk or harm;
5) Supportive manager – a supportive line manager;
6) Fair pay to similar jobs – being paid fairly compared to similar jobs;
7) No discrimination – a job in which there is no discrimination because of who I am;
8) Purpose and meaning – work that provides a sense of purpose and meaning;
9) Regular hours – regular and predictable working hours; and
10) Support after absence – appropriate support to return to work following absence due to injury or ill health.

Evidence shows that the experience of work is not only about the level of income derived from it – it is the quality of work that matters too. As the Oxfam Scotland report highlights, "while there is strong evidence that unemployment is bad for health, it is also increasingly clear that poor quality work seriously undermines health" [...] "There is also evidence to suggest that moving from unemployment to a low quality job results in a decline in an individual's mental health".

[10] Decent Work for Scotland's Low Paid Workers: A Job To Be Done, Oxfam Scotland and the University of the West of Scotland, September 2016

To ensure that people starting new jobs can not only stay in them, and thrive it them, it is worth stressing the responsibilities on the employers, as well as those on the employees. For those who have been out of work for some time, the employer should ensure that induction sessions are appropriate, including ensuring employees understand their contract, and the agreement on both the employer's and employee's side, and what is expected of them, as well as their employment conditions and rights and so on. As outlines in the Oxfam Scotland decent work paper, the participants emphasised "the importance of a manager who supports their staff to do well, is appreciative when employees do good work, and who understands both the personal and work-life needs of employees". Themes around respect, acknowledgement, and good communication from managers also featured heavily. The focus group participants ranked having a supportive line manager as fifth most important in making work 'decent'. Managers must take responsibility for helping new employees settle into what may be a 'new norm', for example, employees should be informed about how to cope with work if a crisis unfolds at home, rather than perhaps defaulting to calling in sick.

Developing a decent work culture in the workplace could be a key preventative step to avoiding unnecessary absence or sickness. We know that different groups of people have differing experiences of work. As the consultation paper rightly assesses, "...the right type of work is good for our physical and mental health and good health and support helps us in the workplace". As it set out in the recommendations of the Oxfam Scotland report, this is an opportunity for government to work together with employers to design tailored programmes which address the different issues faced by different groups within the labour market, and crucially, do not force people into jobs which are not suitable or sustainable for them.

7. Gender

Evidence shows that right across the world, women are more likely to be poorer than the average. This is true in the UK and in other European countries. We know that there is a strong gender dimension to the face of UK poverty and inequality. Women continue to be over-represented in low paid, part time, insecure and temporary work. Women's position in the labour market means they are less likely to be in 'decent work', and are concentrated in sectors that offer little chance of progression. On top of this, women's voices are often absent in decision making roles in government and public bodies, resulting in 'gender blind' policies. Oxfam Cymru is concerned at the absence of any reference to gender in the Green Paper, particularly as the evidence is clear that women's place in the labour market is less favourable than men. The development of new policy in this area should be undertaken through a 'gender lens' to ensure that the specific challenges faced by women are taken account of and acted upon. Women who are most disadvantaged in the labour market need specialist support to build and develop their networks to support sustainable routes out of poverty.

Oxfam commissioned a discussion paper to evaluate the employability support currently available to women in the UK[11]. The paper highlights that there is now a broad acceptance that the sector understands how to get people into work – but not how to ensure that work moves people out of poverty. The paper explores a 'Work in Life' approach, which places employment (and employment support) in the wider context of an individual's life. It requires that interventions are designed, and measured, not just on the delivery of job outcomes but also whether they support a transition out of

[11] Work In Life: How an anti-poverty approach to employment support could be transformational for women, Oxfam Policy & Practice, August 2016

poverty. Those who are most disadvantaged in the labour market need specialist support to build and develop their networks to support sustainable routes out of poverty. The UK system of benefits and mainstream services for jobseekers appears largely gender neutral. Women and men are eligible for the same benefits on the same terms; however, in reality they have different experiences of seeking work. Women may find it hard to engage in the way the system expects, and their position in the labour market is different. There are established markers of labour market disadvantage, and a growing body of evidence that says these should be taken into account when designing services.

8. Policy development

Oxfam Cymru is willing to meet with DWP officials to discuss this response in more details, and provide further information if required.

OXFAM CYMRU

THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH

TOOLKIT FOR WALES

CRONFA LOTERI FAWR
BIG LOTTERY FUND

ARIENNIR GAN Y LOTERI
LOTTERY FUNDED

OXFAM

Oxfam is a registered charity in England and Wales (No: 202918) and Scotland (No: SCO 039042). Oxfam GB is a member of Oxfam International.
Printed on recycled stock. Produced by Slicker Designs.

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.

INTRODUCTION
TACKLING POVERTY AND DISADVANTAGE IN WALES

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).

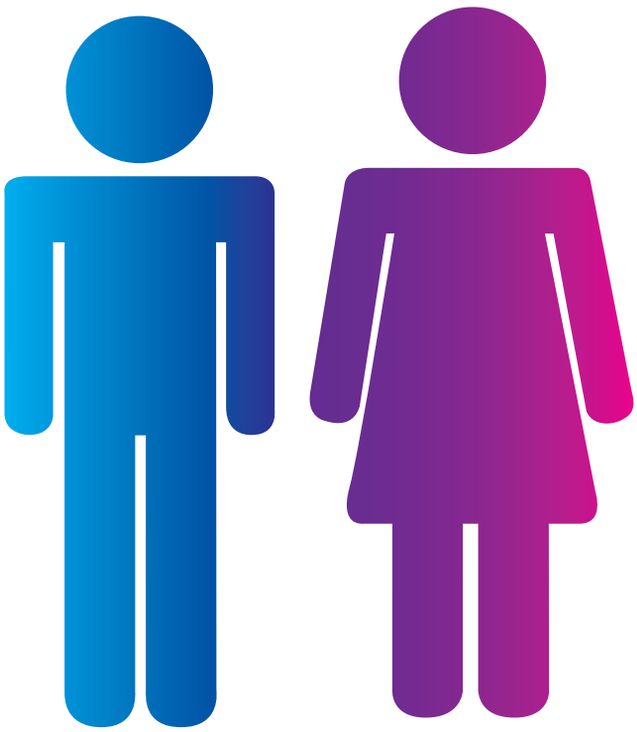
These differences need to be documented accurately in order to explore the different livelihood strategies that exist within households, relationships and communities. This means, for example, finding out who earns income and how it is spent, who owns the assets in the house, who has caring responsibilities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

This document was written by Oxfam Cymru.

Oxfam would like to thank the many individuals who have shared their experiences of working poverty with us. Some names have been changed. Some quotes and case studies have previously been published in other Oxfam papers. All quotes and case studies relate to experiences reported in the past two years.

For further information on the issues raised in this paper please e-mail ukpoverty@oxfam.org.uk.

The information in this publication is correct at the time of going to press.

Oxfam's work in the UK: Oxfam works to overcome poverty in the UK in three ways. We develop projects with people living in poverty to improve their lives and show how things can change; we raise public awareness of poverty to create pressure for change; and we work with policy makers to tackle the causes of poverty. For more information visit www.oxfam.org.uk/uk

www.oxfam.org.uk

Published by Oxfam GB under ISBN 978-1-78077-371-1 in July 2013.

Oxfam GB, Oxfam House, John Smith Drive, Cowley, Oxford, OX4 2JY, UK.

Oxfam is a registered charity in England and Wales (No: 202918) and Scotland (No: SC0 039042). Oxfam GB is a member of Oxfam International.
Printed on recycled stock. Produced by Slicker Designs.

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:

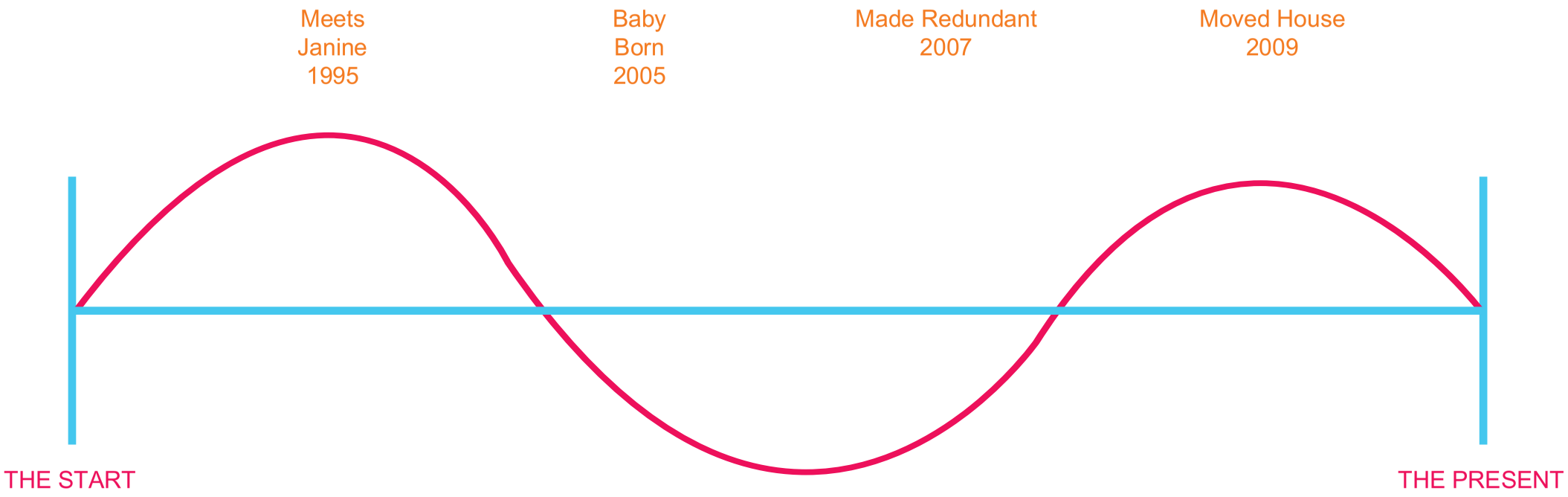
Who gained and who lost out in any changes?

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


Meets
Janine
1995
Baby
Born
2005
Made Redundant
2007
Moved House
2009
THE START
THE PRESENT

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.

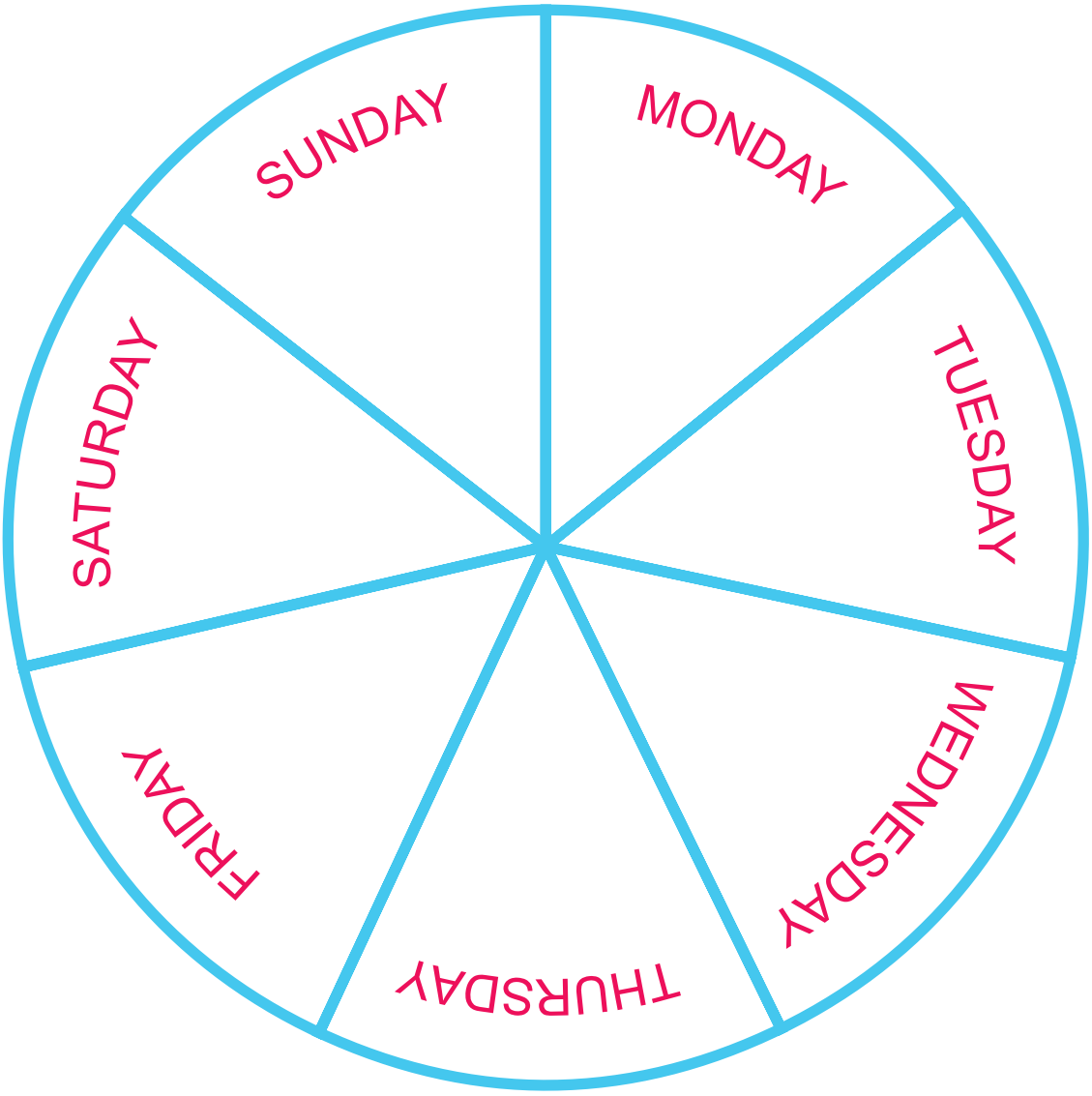
QUESTIONS TO ASK:

- 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


SUNDAY
MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY
FRIDAY
SATURDAY

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.

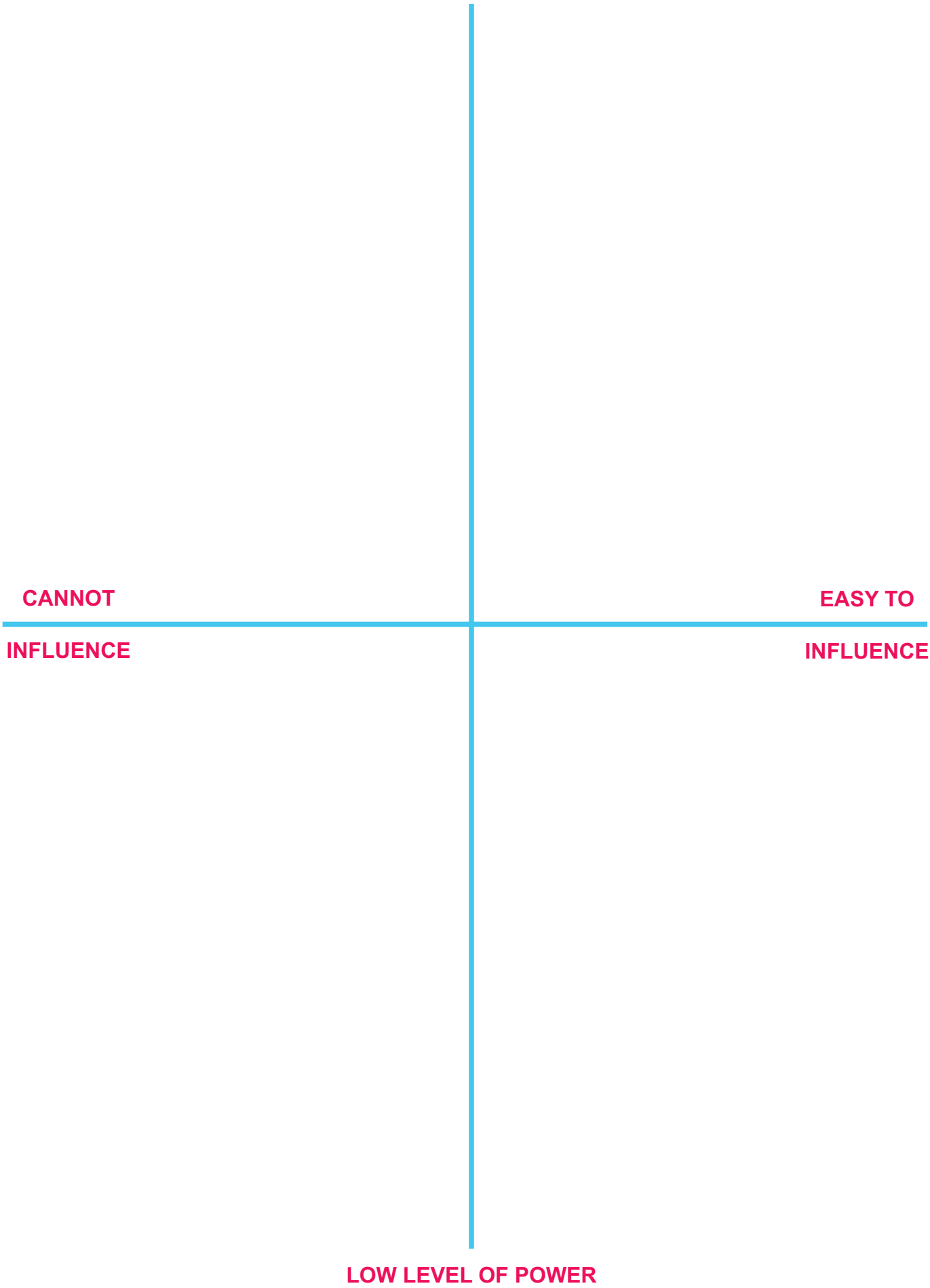
How to Use: Ask participants to write down (on post-it notes) the names of government bodies, decision-making organisations, local service providers or any other local groups they know of which have the resources and power to set local agendas and make decisions. (They may find it easier to think of 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
INFLUENCE
EASY TO
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

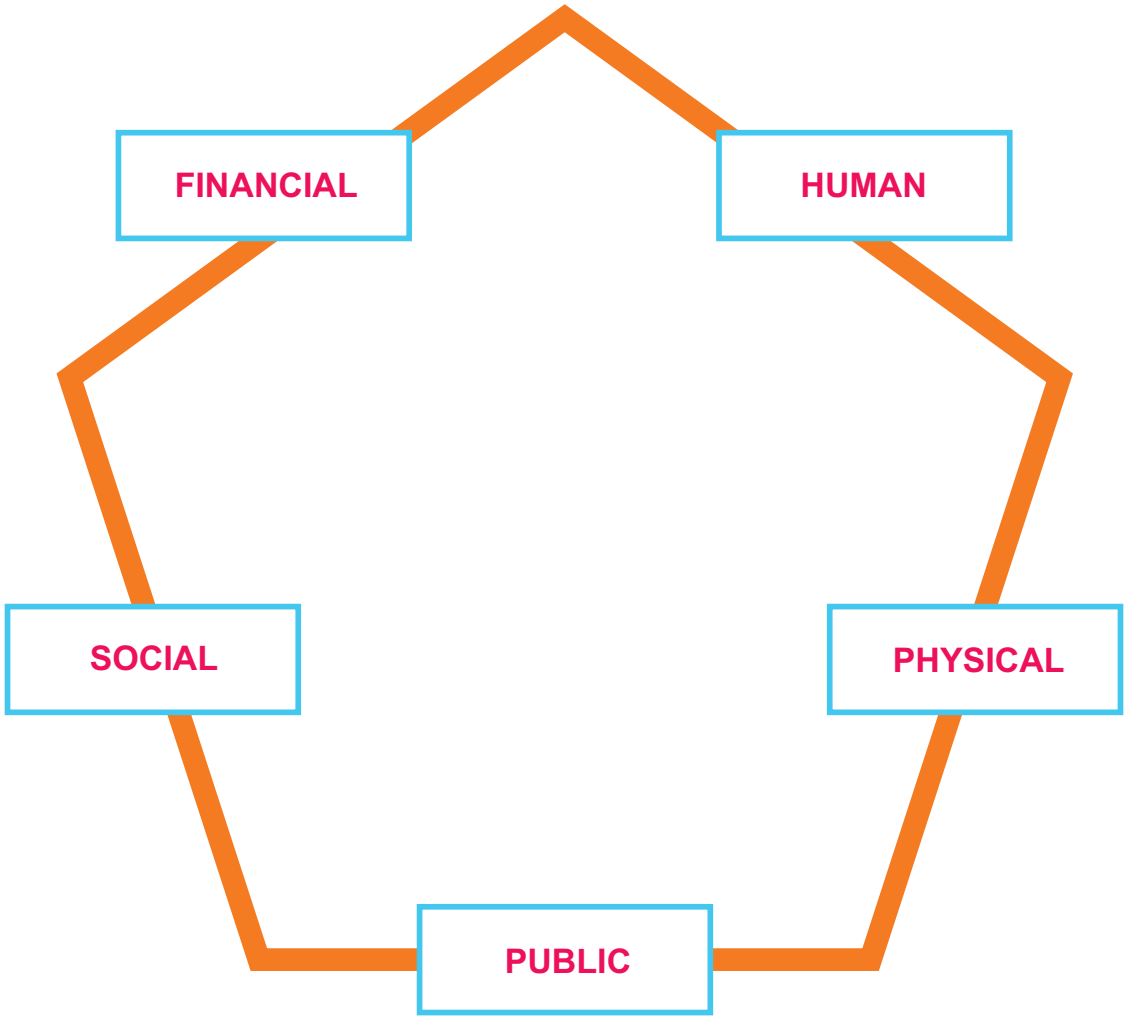
Purpose of tool: To begin to analyse the household interviews and exercises, drawing out information about each of the five assets and documenting that systematically. It can be used with a group of peer researchers or by a single researcher.

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) .....

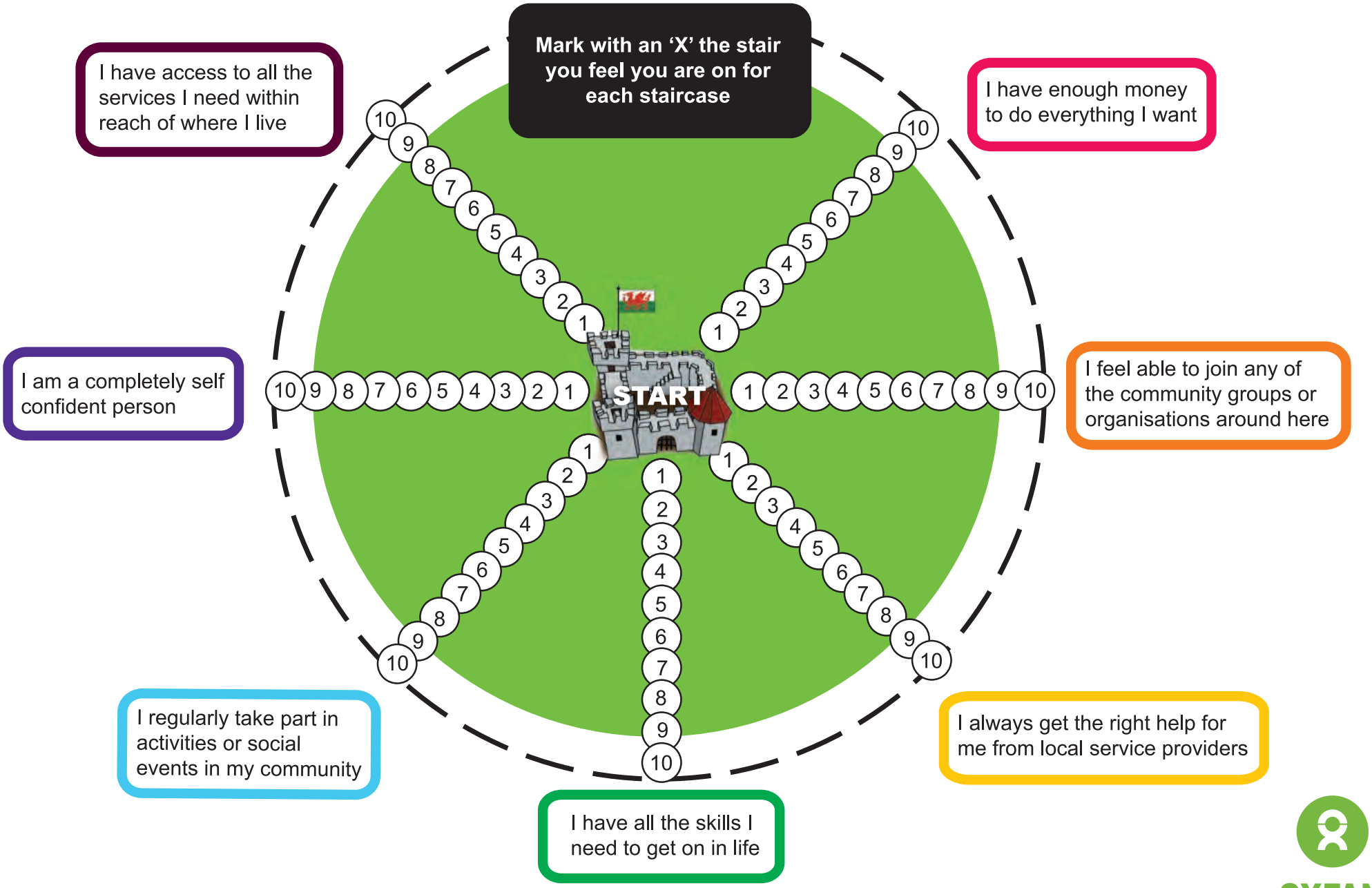
IV. ANY OTHER COMMENT

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:

YOUR NAME

KING/QUEEN OF THE CASTLE– BASELINE SURVEY

DATE COMPLETED



OXFAM

C) GUIDANCE NOTES TO THE BASELINE SURVEY

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.

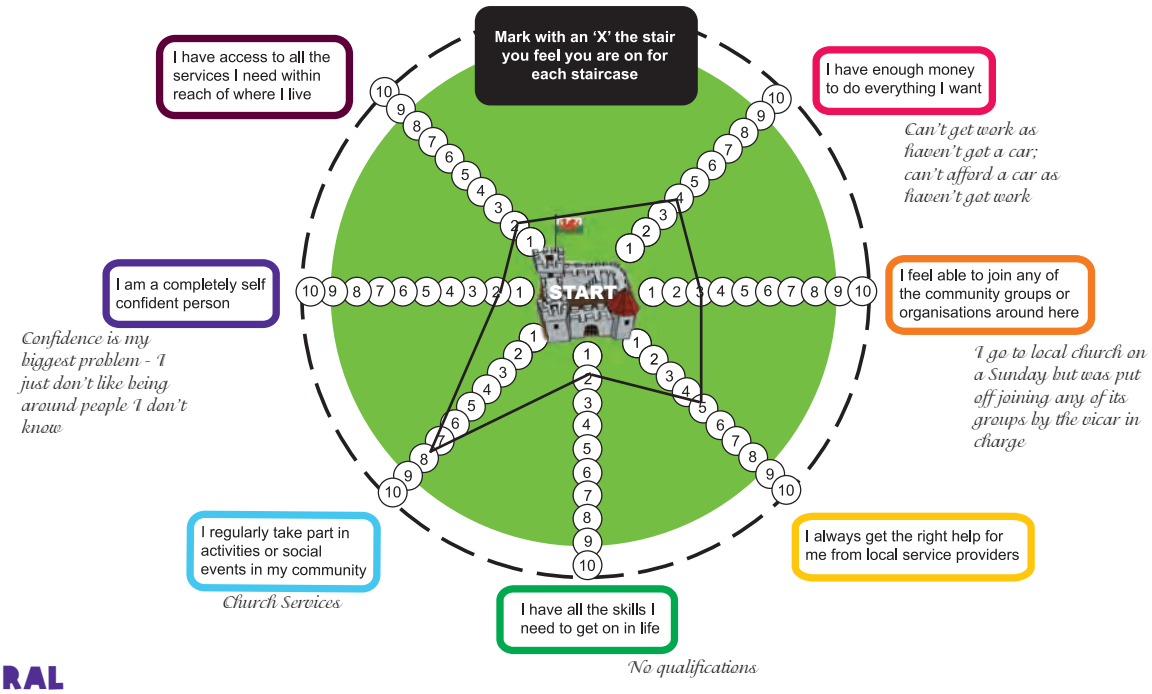
KING/QUEEN OF THE CASTLE

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.

Building Livelihoods & Strengthening Communities in Wales

External Evaluation

April 2016

Arad Research

www.aradresearch.com

Contents

Executive Summary

This is a summary of the evaluation undertaken by Arad Research which includes key lessons, recommendations for others doing similar work, and policy recommendations for service providers and decision makers.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Building Livelihoods and Strengthening Communities in Wales Project (hereafter the Livelihoods Project) has worked with marginalised people and communities across Wales, using Oxfam's Sustainable Livelihoods Approach to help individuals and families maximise their assets and abilities in order to tackle poverty. Oxfam Cymru, supported by the Big Lottery Fund (Wales) and Unilever, co-ordinated the three year project between September 2012 and February 2016, working with the following partner organisations:

- **African Community Centre**, **Swansea** (refugees and asylum-seekers);
- **Caia Park Partnership, Wrexham** (people with physical and/or learning disabilities);
- **Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council & The Foryd Centre, Rhyl** (older people aged 50+);
- **DOVE Workshop, Banwen, Neath** (geographically isolated and long-term unemployed people);
- **Duffryn Community Link, Newport** (young families, single parents and those with mental or physical health issues);
- **Glyncoch Community Regeneration, Pontypridd** (families with primary school-age children);
- **South Riverside Community Development Centre, Cardiff** (people from black and minority ethnic [BME] communities);
- **Sylfaen Cymunedol Cyfyngedig, Caernarfon** (young people not in education, employment or training [NEETs]);
- **The Wallich Clifford Community, Ebbw Vale** (people homeless or at risk of homelessness).

THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) is a participatory approach focusing on people's lives as a whole. Complementing the approach is a variety of practical tools to support its implementation. The SLA identifies people's abilities and strengths by dividing an individual's assets into five areas:

Human assets	Education & skills, health
Social assets	Family, friends, neighbours, groups
Public assets	Local services, facilities and amenities
Financial assets	Wages, benefits, loans
Physical assets	Housing, vehicles, work equipment

"People are like a ball of wool, lots of different strands – money, housing, social life. It is important to not talk but listen to their story, like pulling out the strands and finding where the main problem is."

Project worker

PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

Over 1,000 beneficiaries participated in the Livelihoods Project in total (Table 1 presents some of the project's achievements).

Table 1: Key targets and achievements of the Livelihoods Project

Project activity/ outcome	Target	Number achieved
Beneficiaries receiving intensive support	527	494
Beneficiaries receiving other support	345	629
Beneficiaries reporting new skills and confidence	1091	636
Beneficiaries more involved in community activities	344	648
Beneficiaries accessing more/better services	460	489
Beneficiaries who have measurably improved their livelihood	575	306
Peer mentors trained	114	109
Beneficiaries gaining paid employment	n/a	94

Project activities delivered included the following:

One-to-one support and guidance was provided by all partner organisations, with the SLA tools used as a starting point with participants. This involved working with individuals holistically as project workers assisted participants in taking control of their lives. By its nature this one-to-one support involved as many hours of intensive support for the individual participants as necessary, however and whenever that support was needed.

"With other agencies you are just a number, part of a system; with Livelihoods the relationship has time to develop."

Project participant

Peer mentoring courses were available for participants from all partner organisations to provide them with the skills to enable them to support others within the project and in the wider community. The training was delivered as a pan-Wales group, providing opportunities for peer mentors to develop a network with others which they found valuable. The confidence participants developed as a result of the peer mentoring training resulted in them not only mentoring others but also organising and running activities for the project and strengthening the links between the partner organisations and their community.

Training, courses and workshops were made available to all participants, with many welcoming the opportunity to receive accreditation following completion of a course. The type of training provided was determined by the requirements of the participants and delivered at the project bases or local colleges. The content of courses varied; asylum-seekers and refugees valued being able to improve their English skills; other participants benefited more from a gentle introduction to training and education through craft or cookery sessions. Some gained employment as a result of training provided, for example being able to renew licences required to work on specific machinery.

Excursions were organised via the Livelihoods Project, providing opportunities for participants to visit places locally and further afield, aiming to broaden their horizons and allowing them to get to know one another in a different environment.

"I don't go into town really so [a group restaurant visit] was something new".

Project participant

"Cycling with Pedal Power (cycling charity on a Livelihoods trip) helped to break down cultural barriers and for some families the trip to Barry Island was their first ever visit, [...] it was their first time using public transport and many said that they would never have been able to do the trip themselves."

Project worker

Volunteering has been an important activity for all of the partner organisations. In some instances participants have been able to volunteer and support the delivery of the project directly following training they have received, for example teaching English, peer mentoring other participants and supporting individuals with job searches. Others have volunteered in the wider community.

"We have had a lot of opportunities through the project that we didn't know existed [...] – do something in the community three or four times a week".

Project participant

Other group activities emerged during the course of the project as participants proposed training, workshops and other initiatives such as gardening, running and knitting groups.

"The group meet every week, providing participants with structure and 'knitting therapy'. The Livelihoods participants are supported by volunteers who pass on their skills and provide support, with members drawn from across three different south Wales valleys".

Project volunteer

PROJECT OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The project broadly achieved its outcomes and activity targets, providing valuable opportunities for project participants. Over 1,000 participants received support across the nine areas. As shown in Table 1, slightly fewer participants than anticipated received intensive support, due in the most part to participants' preferences: some participants dipped in and out of the project's support rather than engaging on a linear basis, or engaged primarily to deal with a specific pressing issue, such as a job loss, sanctioning, reduction in benefits or other immediate crisis situation. This higher than anticipated

demand for non-intensive support affected the numbers achieved in other target areas, with fewer participants worked with intensively that anticipated, and therefore fewer than anticipated reporting gaining new skills and confidence, or measurably improved livelihoods. Other targets, particularly those relating to greater community involvement and access to services, were not affected by this, and were actually exceeded.

The project also had four intended outcomes, as follows:

Outcome 1: Marginalised people will develop skills and build confidence to improve their livelihoods and life chances

- All participants and workers believed that there had been many and varied opportunities to develop skills.

- Participants received focused training such as English language skills, health and safety and food hygiene, and were also able to access other courses such as mindfulness and craft workshops.

- Project participants felt training opportunities were important for their future, with some securing employment as a direct result of the training received.

- Peer mentoring within the project to support others has provided individuals with valuable skills and experience and improved their confidence.

- When combined with practical support (such as arranging and/or covering the costs of transport, arranging training, access to a computer and training in IT), the overall support has had the effect of helping break down whatever barrier participants had in taking part more fully in their community or in training or employment.

- Projects collected baseline and follow-up data from participants on all aspects of their livelihoods (e.g. money, access to community groups and access to services). This evidence showed that an average overall improvement of 15.9% was made by baselined participants.

"If it wasn't for [the project worker] I wouldn't have any self-purpose, don't know where I'd be. [The project worker] is my rock, she knows me, everything was falling apart until I met her."

"I was stuck in the house but now I have more confidence, I know where to come for help if things are bad."

"[The project is] helping my health and my mind, and communication".

"Without [the project] I'd be back in there [prison] now."

Project participants

Outcome 2: Marginalised people from different backgrounds will be more involved in community activities

- All local projects have addressed involvement in community activities, with examples ranging from: parents being supported to establish and run a toddler group, family fun days, opportunities for participants to visit places they would not otherwise have done, support to attend tenants' meetings, a running club, starting a cinema club for local older people, gardening and allotment groups, and establishing and running a women's chat group.

- Many participants volunteered within the project and their local community.
- Groups facilitated by the project brought project participants and other community residents together to follow shared interests.
- Volunteers from the local community also said their involvement with the project had positively impacted upon their mental health.

"They've all been to a residents meeting to say their piece. They'd never have done that before [Livelihoods]."

Project worker

Outcome 3: Community groups will have a better understanding of the needs of different people and groups in their neighbourhoods and how to meet them

- More than 100 community structures reported better understanding of the needs of marginalised people.
- More than 50 service providers noted at least one change to their service and attributed this to the project.
- The partner organisations delivering the Livelihoods project built on existing links with their communities – the intensive and flexible provision under this project enabled them to deepen their knowledge of their communities and work with new participants who would not otherwise have engaged or sustained their engagement with the support available.

"The biggest thing is that the project has created a community that supports each other, and can talk to each other."

Project participants

Outcome 4: Marginalised people will say that they receive more and better services that meet their needs

- Participants noted that their health and well-being improved as a result of the support received directly from the project worker and the other participants, including accompanying them to meetings where necessary.
- The project enabled a local need for people to support one another in informal settings to be fulfilled.
- Some participants noted that they are now better informed and able to support others.
- Referrals between different agencies ensured participants received the most suitable advice and support to their needs.

Focus group participants reported that they now tell others where to come if they need help and that they feel knowledgeable: "The project has given us the knowledge to help other people. It has been enlightening".

Participant focus group

Additional, wider impacts of the project included:

- Volunteers from the local community supporting the project reporting improvements in their wellbeing.

- Project participants becoming more involved in their local communities via volunteering the project has initiated and as a result improving the local environment.

- Successful outcomes for the project in obtaining external funding for some activities and roles, such as the Knit & Natter group in Ebbw Vale, or Tiny Tiddlers and Games Night in Glyncoch, has meant new initiatives are becoming embedded independently of the project. Indeed the Knit and Natter group is now supported by funding from the Big Lottery, Halifax and Sainsbury's.

KEY LESSONS

1. The SLA has proved a suitable tool in providing a structure to determine actions needed to improve individual livelihoods.

2. The flexibility of the SLA as a toolkit and approach, and being able to adapt and apply it as appropriate, supporting participants intensively at some times, and non-intensively at others according to their needs, is one of its key strengths.

3. It can take time for project workers to establish a relationship with the local community so this needs to be built into any planned interventions or projects.

4. Supporting project participants via one-to-one personalised guidance and support resulted in improvements in well-being, confidence and the sustainability of their livelihoods.

5. The flexibility of individualised support has been a major factor in the success of the project; despite being very time-intensive for workers to offer, this type of support is crucial for any project seeking to address the livelihoods issues of marginalised people.

6. Peer mentor training results in increased confidence and development of skills benefiting not just the individual but the wider community as well.

7. Working with other partner organisations such as Jobcentre Plus and Communities First has enabled individuals to be signposted to appropriate support, but many marginalised individuals require more than signposting – for example, needing workers to actually accompany them to meetings and appointments if that signposting is to succeed.

8. Access to appropriate transport and the provision of accredited training courses is crucial for people as they aim to improve their situation and move into work.

9. Networking between the partner organisations across Wales convened by Oxfam has strengthened project delivery.

10. SLA project workers provide a strong and important link between the many different agencies that individuals access for support; they can be the "friend that knows stuff", especially in relation to how services work, that marginalised people often lack in their support networks.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation has highlighted a number of benefits of using a range of SLA methods and tools to engage and work with marginalised people. In conclusion, it makes the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1: The SLA should continue to be disseminated to service providers and adopted as a method for empowering individuals to secure a more sustainable livelihood; there is also potential for it to be used more widely, for example with schools and young people.

Recommendation 2: It is important to continue to improve the livelihoods of those in marginalised communities through utilising a holistic approach to their situation. A key strength of the SLA is that by working holistically it uncovers the real issue(s), not just the most obvious surface problem.

Recommendation 3: Funders need to recognise the significance of flexible funding arrangements when seeking to improve the livelihoods of individuals in marginalised communities. Assets-based analyses of marginalised people's problems are only of value if accompanied by creative, assets-based solutions, as those problems rarely fit neatly into the one thematic area (be it housing, training, employment, debt, substance misuse or any other area), which is usually all any particular service for marginalised people can help with.

Recommendation 4: Minimum participation numbers required by some learning providers to deliver in isolated areas should be more flexible if opportunities are to improve for those living there. For projects to be truly accessible, an 'outreach' element should be included for those communities lacking adequate transport options.

Recommendation 5: Projects supporting marginalised groups should strive to secure continuation funding for SLA-based work, as without this vulnerable people are left without support; there are no other projects that combine an assets-based approach with the ability to also provide bespoke, assets-based solutions and the kind of personal support, up to and including the 'handholding' often needed for marginalised people to be able to begin to implement and access those solutions for themselves.

Recommendation 6: Oxfam should disseminate learning from the project as widely as possible, so that providers can ensure that any future interventions aimed at addressing the needs of marginalised people identify and respond to those needs in a flexible and holistic manner, providing more intensive and bespoke provision where required.

1. Introduction

Arad Research was commissioned by Oxfam Cymru to undertake an evaluation of the *Building Livelihoods and Strengthening Communities in Wales* project (the 'Livelihoods Project').

The Livelihoods Project was a three year project running from September 2012 to February 2016 and funded by the Big Lottery Fund, Oxfam and Unilever. The project worked with nine communities across Wales using the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (see section 2.2 for further details). Oxfam Cymru worked in partnership with nine partner organisations in marginalised communities across Wales to deliver the project, with those organisations specialising in working with particular disadvantaged groups in their local area. The partner organisations and their target audiences were:

- African Community Centre, Swansea (refugees and asylum-seekers);
- Caia Park Partnership, Wrexham (people with physical and/or learning disabilities);
- Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council and The Foryd Centre, Rhyl (older people aged 50+);
- DOVE Workshop, Banwen, Neath (geographically isolated and long-term unemployed people);
- Duffryn Community Link, Newport (young families, single parents and those with mental or physical health issues);
- Glyncoch Community Regeneration, Pontypridd (families with primary school-age children);
- South Riverside Community Development Centre, Cardiff (people from black and minority ethnic [BME] communities);
- Sylfaen Cymunedol Cyfyngedig, Caernarfon (young people not in education, employment or training [NEETs]);
- The Wallich Clifford Community, Ebbw Vale (people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness).

This evaluation has assessed the operation and delivery of the project and the extent to which the project achieved its intended outcomes. Key lessons and recommendations for service providers and decision makers that have arisen from the experience of the project and its participants are also presented.

EVALUATION AIM AND METHODOLOGY

The principal aim of this evaluation has been to review the extent to which the project achieved its intended outcomes, with a view to informing agencies working in similar fields to plan their future services. The methodology applied included desk research of Oxfam documentation, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach documentation, and project monitoring reports. Fieldwork involved one-to-one interviews and focus groups with project participants in the nine project areas, and consultations with project staff.

The focus groups and interviews with participants were structured around a number of topics such as participants' motivations for becoming involved and the types of support and activities received and any changes experienced since taking part. The interviews with project workers focused on the activities delivered, their impacts on individuals and the local community, and potential sustainability of activities. Others consulted included Oxfam Cymru representatives, other workers at partner centres and a small number of other agencies involved with supporting project activities such as volunteers, Jobcentre Plus and Careers Wales. Annex 1 provides more detail.

This final report presents findings from the fieldwork undertaken during October and November 2015 as the project was drawing to an end.

2. Design and Delivery

The first part of this chapter provides some background to the project and then presents an overview of the different project elements delivered in Wales.

2.1 Project Initiation

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) has been an important tool in international development since the early 1990s, being a dominant feature of initiatives delivered by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DfID) and development organisations, such as Oxfam, to alleviate poverty and improve people's lives. Oxfam GB first used the SLA internally as a staff development tool, and externally as an approach to support community development. The approach examines people's lives as a whole and starts from their strengths, assets and resources rather than their needs, from what they have rather than what they lack. Box 1 provides an overview of the SLA.

2.1.1 Testing the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach with communities and organisations

Its first application in Wales in 2007 was focused on identifying community responses to people experiencing debt. Oxfam Cymru worked with South Riverside Community Development Centre and Splotlands Credit Union in Cardiff to explore how people survived and what the organisations could learn from this about communities' coping mechanisms to ensure more sustainable livelihoods for people locally. In 2009, Community Development Cymru adapted an SLA toolkit to fit the Welsh context, resulting in the SLA Toolkit for Wales, which allowed Oxfam Cymru to pilot the SLA to a wider group of organisations.

Based on this initial work, Oxfam funded a small project in 2009 with partners in Cardiff and Newport, as well as the Trussell Trust and Community Development Cymru, to look further at the potential of the SLA as a community development tool. This project highlighted the need for policy responses to poverty to take into account the different types of resources and connections between individuals. It found that these elements were important in gaining an understanding of how people live, and in determining the most appropriate approach to ensure a sustainable livelihood – in other words, the SLA also had potential as a tool to help individuals, not just community groups or organisations.

BOX 1

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA)

The SLA is a method of understanding the experiences of people living in poverty. It is based on Oxfam's experience that people experiencing poverty have abilities and assets that can be used to help them manage and improve their lives. The SLA is a participatory approach focusing on people's lives as a whole and contains a variety of practical tools to support its implementation[1]. The SLA identifies people's abilities and strengths and aims to help people improve and manage their lives using an asset-based method to empower individuals and communities to achieve a sustainable and fulfilled future. SLA divides an individual's assets into five areas.

Human assets	education and skills • health
Social assets	family • friends • neighbours • groups
Public assets	local services • facilities & amenities
Financial assets	wages • benefits • loans
Physical assets	housing • vehicle • work equipment

Project workers attended SLA training at the beginning of the project and proceeded to use the toolkit to support individuals as well as facilitating group sessions. Elements of the SLA toolkit were used by project workers, with some proving more popular than others in assisting them to support and provide guidance to participants. Whilst paper copies of templates were suggested as resources during sessions, some project workers found participants were not keen on paper-based exercises. As a result project workers used the tools without necessarily completing them on paper every time – as one project worker put it, 'always us[ing] the toolkit in my head'. Some of the tools from the toolkit favoured by project workers and participants included:

- OK/Not OK Timeline
- Structured Interviews
- Mapping Public Assets
- The Assets Pentagon
- Livelihoods Ladder

Project workers welcomed the toolkit at the outset of building relationships with individuals as 'it helps you see the person in totality' to gain a picture of who they are.

2.1.2 Working with individuals

Based on this insight, Oxfam made a successful application in 2012 to the Big Lottery Fund in Wales for the Building Livelihoods & Strengthening Communities in Wales project to examine whether the SLA could work with individuals nationwide. Working with the nine partner organisations outlined in Chapter 1, project workers were recruited and the project set out to offer intensive and non-intensive personal support through activities such as developing personal development plans; supporting participants to get help from other

[1] Oxfam. 2013. *The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach: Toolkit for Wales*. Available at: http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-sustainable-livelihoods-approach-toolkit-for-wales-297233

services; accompanying participants to meetings with service providers; offering participants emotional support; support to become involved in social activities; or help to find or get to a job, work experience or volunteer placement. In short, whatever help a person might need to make their livelihood more sustainable. The project has also provided livelihoods support for community groups, peer mentoring opportunities, networking, learning and sharing experiences, and support for service providers to improve their work with individuals.

2.1.3 Funding the Livelihoods Project

The Livelihoods Project was co-ordinated by Oxfam Cymru and supported by the Big Lottery Fund (Wales) and Unilever between September 2012 and December 2015, with a short extension to March 2016 to allow for an underspend caused by the lack of project activity in the project's first quarter. The total project budget was £1,108,881. This was made up of £842,775 funding support from the Big Lottery Fund over the three years, supplemented by some other sources, as set out in table 2.1. This modest budget covered the salaries of a part time worker in each of the nine organisations and running costs.

Table 2.1 Funding of the Building Livelihoods and Strengthening Communities in Wales Project

Donor	Total
Big Lottery: People and Places	£842,775
Oxfam	£177,404
Unilever	£88,702
Total	£1,108,881

Source: Building Livelihoods and Strengthening Communities in Wales Project Plan

2.1.4 Setting aims, objectives and targets

The Livelihoods Project was designed using Oxfam Cymru's experience of delivering previous SLA projects in Wales. It was set up to 'investigate a new approach to supporting those who are socially excluded and most in need across Wales'[2], with 'each livelihoods worker [facilitating] sessions with individuals and groups in which they reflect on their own situations and identify their strengths and capabilities so that they become their own 'agents for change''. The targets agreed are set out in Table 2.2. Oxfam Cymru and its nine partners recorded progress and achievements regularly via monitoring reports and evaluations. Table 2.2 also collates the achievements of the project against its different indicators.

A project steering group met quarterly to review progress and regular network meetings took place at the different project locations across Wales attended by participants from all partners.

[2] Oxfam Cymru (2011) Building Livelihoods & Strengthening Communities: Project Plan 2012 – 2015

Table 2.2: Targets and achievements of the Livelihoods Project

Project activity /outcome indicator	Target	Number achieved
Beneficiaries receiving intensive support	527	494
Beneficiaries receiving other support	345	629
Community structures receiving support	81	89
Peer mentors trained	114	109
Service providers trained	63	71
Beneficiaries reporting new skills and confidence	1091	636
Beneficiaries more involved in community activities	344	648
Beneficiaries accessing more/better services and attributing this to the project	460	489
Beneficiaries who have measurably improved their livelihood	575	306
Beneficiaries gaining paid employment	n/a	94
Community structures reporting better understanding of the needs of marginalised people	69	111
Service providers who can cite at least one change to their service and attribute this to the project	68	58

Source: Building Livelihoods and Strengthening Communities in Wales Project - Big Lottery Fund Monitoring.

The Livelihoods Project set itself four intended outcomes (see also chapter 4):

- Project Outcome 1: Marginalised people will develop skills and build confidence to improve their livelihoods and life chances.
- Project Outcome 2: Marginalised people from different backgrounds will be more involved in community activities.
- Project Outcome 3: Community groups will have a better understanding of the needs of different people & groups in their neighbourhoods and how to meet them.
- Project Outcome 4: Marginalised people will say that they receive more and better services that meet their needs.

2.1.5 Wales context

The Welsh Government's commitment to social justice and equality of opportunity is driving forward the priority in Wales to tackle poverty by prioritising the needs of the poorest and

aiming to protect those most at risk of poverty and exclusion[3]. The Welsh Government's Communities First Programme for tackling poverty and social disadvantage in the most deprived communities has worked through local partnerships since 2001 and continues to provide funding to narrow education, skills and health gaps across Wales[4]. However, the National Assembly for Wales' Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee's Inquiry into Poverty in Wales: Poverty and Inequality (2015), were 'deeply concerned' at the 'Welsh Government's lack of progress in reducing poverty, particularly given its long-term commitment and investment in the issue'.[5] The Committee highlighted the Welsh Government's approach of focusing on 'treating the symptoms of poverty rather than the root causes' as a concern. With the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* striving to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales[6], the Welsh Government continues to emphasise the importance of tackling poverty, but progress is yet to be clearly evidenced.

This review of the work of Oxfam Cymru and its partners in implementing the SLA in marginalised communities in Wales comes at an important time in addressing the needs of individuals and communities who require support to maximise their assets and abilities to tackle poverty.

Project worker

The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
'People are like a ball of wool, lots of different strands – money, housing, social life'.

It was important to *'not talk but listen to their story, like pulling out the strands and finding where the main problem is'*.

2.2 Overview of the constituent partner projects

The Livelihoods Project comprises a diverse mix of projects and activities. There are commonalities across the nine partner organisations, notably the use of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach to underpin the project, the emphasis on providing intensive support, the development of peer mentors, and the fact that the projects are targeted at certain groups.

The following provides an overview of the partnerships, key activities, participation numbers and feedback for the Livelihoods Project between September 2012 and February 2016.

[3] Welsh Government. 2012. *Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012-2016,* p. 1. Available at: http://gov.wales/docs/dsjlg/publications/socialjustice/120625tackpovplanen.pdf
[4] Communities First. http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/communities/communitiesfirst/?lang=en
[5] National Assembly for Wales. 2015. *Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee's Inquiry into Poverty in Wales: Poverty and Inequality*, p. 17. Available at: http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld10252/cr-ld10252-e.pdf
[6] The Act will require public bodies listed therein to consider the long term implications of decisions, work more effectively with people and communities, look to prevent problems arising and take a more joined-up approach.

2.2.1 African Community Centre

Location: Swansea
Participants: Refugees and asylum-seekers

The African Community Centre in Swansea provides a drop-in centre for the local community, supporting a wide range of ethnic minority people (including refugees and asylum-seekers) to participate in African or Caribbean cultural activities and to support people to integrate and participate in the local community, improve skills and move closer to the workplace. The Livelihoods project activities delivered over the duration of the project included:

- English classes, both formal and informal;
- Counselling;
- One-to-one support and guidance;
- Peer mentoring;
- Training courses;
- Volunteering opportunities.

The focus for training courses and workshops was determined following one-to-one sessions and group discussions with project participants. Examples of courses completed by participants included: Health and Safety, Food Hygiene, IT and Photography, with participants receiving certificates on completion. In some instances the training organised has been more focused on an individual's needs, for example completion of the CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), organised for participants who volunteered with the delivery of English classes at the centre, as well as enrolment on other courses in the locality, e.g. a 10 week sewing course. Seven participants trained as peer mentors, with some going on to be involved in the Swansea City of Sanctuary project and others supporting the project worker in delivering activities and mentoring participants informally. One–to-one support has included accompanying participants to the job centre, assistance with housing, and more focused job preparation via seeking out volunteering opportunities and mock interviews.

2.2.2 Caia Park Partnership

Location: Caia Park Estate, Wrexham
Participants: Focus on people with physical and learning difficulties, later expanded to all area's residents

The Caia Park Partnership has been in existence for some fifteen years and has grown to an organisation employing more than fifteen staff. Its centre is a hub for a range of services and projects for people of all ages including a community café, tenancy support, delivering youth clubs and mentoring to young people, family support, day-care for older people and a trading arm made up of a number of community enterprises (a day nursery, food co-op, crafts workshop, training etc).

The Livelihoods Project worked with individuals with physical or learning disabilities, mental health problems or substance misuse issues who are economically inactive and looking to get back into work. People tended to be identified and referred to the project through Caia Park's existing services, via the job centre or through word of mouth. Activities supported by the project included:

- Courses such as food and cookery, manual handling, health and safety, IT, employability skills, craft taster sessions and budgeting;
- Excursions to a museum, to visit another Livelihoods Project partner, to a food festival, and a meal together at a restaurant;
- Individualised support – for example making a link with tenancy support, referrals to counselling, liaising with social services, completing CVs and job applications, and completing benefits application forms;
- Making the link to other partnership projects such as a food bank and gardening on the allotment;
- Produced a Livelihoods recipe booklet;
- Support to attend residents meetings;
- Weekly drop-ins.

2.2.3 Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council

Location: Rhyl
Participants: Focus on ages 50+, later expanded to all ages

Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council's Livelihoods Project was delivered via the Foryd Centre in Rhyl and originally focused on people aged 55 and over, with many having lost jobs and were having to cope with the rise in the retirement age. However, it became apparent that all age groups face similar challenges and the project broadened to support all ages. Activities delivered included:

- Camping trip;
- Group support meetings;
- One-to-one support;
- Peer mentoring;
- Sustainable Livelihoods Approach training for service providers;
- Training courses.

Over the duration of the project more than 60 participants engaged with the support, and more have benefited from the 'drop-in' aspect and signposting to other agencies. One-to-one support was the main focus in Rhyl, with local agencies such as the Jobcentre Plus and Scope referring participants to the Foryd Centre. Courses delivered have included First Aid at Work (Welsh Ambulance) and mental health awareness courses – self-awareness, anxiety (Mind). The group decided to 'do something different' and organised a camping trip to Snowdonia. One individual completed training with the project and following a successful bid for funding is now employed supporting participants at the Foryd Centre with welfare benefit problems.

As a result of lobbying by the group, questions were raised in UK Parliament focusing on job seekers allowance and the hours required for job searching. The project worker intends to remain in post at the Foryd Centre from February 2016 on a voluntary basis for the short term while Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council seek a funding solution to be able to continue the project.

2.2.4 DOVE Workshop

Location: Banwen, Neath
Participants: Long-term unemployed living in a geographically isolated area

The Dove Workshop was established as a training and community centre in Banwen by local women in the aftermath of the miners' strike of the mid 1980's. It provides a range of learning, volunteering and work opportunities in the community and the centre itself is a base for a credit union, IT facilities, a library, community garden, day nursery, and community café.

The Livelihoods Project provided mentoring and support to those who were long term unemployed, economically inactive or in low paid unsustainable work. Project activities included:

- Drop-in sessions offering support;
- Family fun days;
- Support in using computers;
- Volunteering – through the link with Oxfam, a group volunteered at the five day Camp Bestival festival in 2015, gaining stewarding skills and new experiences.

Woodworking sessions became a regular activity and they were a linchpin for other support. They weekly sessions were regularly attended by a group of mostly men, and support was offered informally, and skills and confidence were built as a result. These workshops were linked to a community enterprise selling wooden crafts, so participants were able to see their products being sold too.

2.2.5 Duffryn Community Link

Location: Duffryn, Newport
Participants: Young families, single parents and those with mental or physical ill-health

Duffryn Community Link works with economically inactive and unemployed vulnerable families in Duffryn, Newport. The project was originally delivered in partnership with Duffryn Infant School and involved parents through the school's 'nurture' group (a programme for children who struggle to engage in learning). Over time the project expanded to work with more families who received ongoing one-to-one support to find solutions to their problems and overcome challenges. Some joined the project as a result of referrals from probation or social services, communications with the school and 'word of mouth'. All the participants

have children, a small number have grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Personal referrals increased as the project became more established; participants were aware of newcomers to the area and were pro-active in welcoming them. This was particularly important for those without family or friends in the area. Project activities included:

- Allotment club;
- Christmas parties;
- Courses and workshops;
- Day trips for families;
- Facilitating a food bank;
- One-to-one support and peer mentoring;
- Running club;
- Volunteering.

Many activities supported the local community, with participants volunteering their time gardening at a local sheltered housing complex and organising a cinema club and parties for local older people. There have been family trips during the school holidays to Porthcawl, Barry and Margam Park. Ideas for activities and training were decided upon by the project group. Twenty families on low incomes were originally supported, but when the group began organising a food bank, this rose to over 50 families. A broad variety of courses and workshops were delivered to the group: confidence building, cooking on a budget, criminology, first aid, food hygiene, health and safety, manual handling, mindfulness and painting and decorating. The project has provided a neutral location and opportunity to hold community meetings with the council and police to help address anti-social behaviour in the area. Working with the council, the group organised a clean-up to combat the increase in rubbish being dumped. Access to citizen's advice and probation services were also organised for participants and the project maintained a close link with social services.

2.2.6 Glyncoch Community Regeneration

Location: Glyncoch, Rhondda Cynon Taf
Participants: Families of primary school-aged children

The project was hosted by Glyncoch Community Regeneration which also works in partnership with other organisations such as Communities First. The Livelihoods project focused on vulnerable families experiencing poverty, and mainly worked with parents of primary-aged children (having identified a gap in provision for that group).

The Livelihoods worker provided one-to-one support, supported the personal development of participants and encouraged and supported activities such as:

- Courses – e.g.an accredited flower arranging course leading to an OCN in enterprise and sessions of work experience, first aid, English and Maths;
- Exchange visit to another Livelihoods Group;
- Excursions (e.g. to the seaside and the zoo);
- Hosting family fun events;
- Parenting programmes;

- Personal support for participants (for example finding volunteering opportunities with view to leading to work; liaising between the parent of an older child and a NEET worker, support with CV and interview skills);
- Supporting a new parent and toddler group;
- Supporting group of mums running a games night;
- Training to service providers (from the local authority, Jobcentre Plus, and other charities and third sector) in using the SLA toolkit.

2.2.7 South Riverside Community Development Centre

Location: South Riverside, Cardiff
Participants: Focus on black and minority ethnic communities, later expanded to all area's residents

The South Riverside Community Development Centre engages with people in and out of work, those on Job Seekers Allowance and asylum-seekers. Project activities have included:

- Allotments and gardening club;
- Courses and workshops (e.g. mindfulness, self-confidence);
- One-to-one support and guidance;
- Peer mentoring;
- Sustainable Livelihoods Approach training for stakeholders;
- Women's chat group.

A key element of the Livelihoods Project in Cardiff has been 'women mentoring women'. Peer mentors help with a job club at the centre, providing support to fill in application forms, develop CVs and improve interview technique. Networks with external agencies mean the project can support women meeting their individual requirements. Following successful peer mentor training a 'women's chat' group was established (February 2015); a number of volunteers could see that there was a need for a safe environment for women in the area to come together, and this was particularly important for Muslim women to be able to meet in a women-only environment. Since February the group's volunteer organisers have successfully arranged many different activities including knitting, keep fit, jewellery making, cooking on a budget and several day trips (Barry Island, Cosmeston Lakes and cycling with Pedal Power). The group also provided a safe environment for women to practice and improve their English language skills.

2.2.8 Sylfaen Cymunedol Cyfyngedig

Location: Caernarfon
Participants: Young people not in education, employment or training

Sylfaen Cymunedol Cyfyngedig was established in 2001 to provide work and training for young people and communities in some of the most disadvantaged areas in North West Wales.

The Livelihoods Project worked with economically inactive and unemployed young people aged 16-24 in the Peblig area of Caernarfon. During the first two summers the onus was on getting to know the young people and becoming a familiar face. Summer holiday activities were arranged such as a coasteering trip and quad biking. The majority of the work with participants has been personalised one-to-one support to help young people into training and employment such as:

- Accompany the young person on the first day of college;
- Attend multi-agency meetings;
- Carrying out job and course searches, arranging training;
- Developing interview skills;
- Ensuring that the young people can make it to a course or interview (e.g. by paying for the transport);
- Help with CV writing;
- Liaising with careers officers, college tutors and others;
- Support for the wider family, including help with grant application forms (e.g. Education maintenance forms).

2.2.9 The Wallich Clifford Community

Location: Ebbw Vale
Participants: Homeless people and those at risk of homelessness

The Wallich Clifford Community, Ebbw Vale, supports the homeless and those at risk of becoming homeless. Due to the individual focus of the services offered by the Wallich it was necessary for the Livelihoods project worker to approach local community organisations, such as health clinics, Jobcentre Plus, Communities First, Flying Start and Families First at the outset to establish participants. Project activities delivered included:

- Courses and workshops;
- Craft groups;
- Day trips for families and children;
- Knit and natter groups;
- One-to-one support;
- Working with Jobcentre Plus.

One-to-one support and guidance has been delivered at a variety of locations by the project worker; during Jobcentre Plus outreach sessions, at participant's homes, or while accompanying individuals out in the community. The project worker facilitated courses for participants such as mindfulness, cooking, budgeting, art therapy and learning about social policy.

3. Findings: Operation and delivery

This chapter presents detail regarding the activities delivered, including the numbers engaged and concludes by highlighting success factors identified during the evaluation. Feedback on project activities received from project participants is included along with feedback from project staff and other service providers involved. Mini case studies illustrate the experiences of some of the project participants. (Participant names have been changed to protect their identity.)

3.1 Activities and support provided

Project participants received bespoke support with no time-limit, no restrictions on how many times someone could access support, and no set agenda to achieve a target (e.g. find a job or go on a course) – just an aim to help the person move forward at their own pace to improve their livelihoods. As such one-to-one support was a key part of the delivery, which then sometimes led to training, group work, mentoring, volunteering and other activities.

3.1.1 One-to-one support and guidance

The nature and approach of the one-to-one support and guidance delivered by project workers varied slightly across Wales, reflecting the differing target groups for each location. The SLA tools were used as a starting point, with participants identifying their assets to enable project workers to assist them in taking control of their life. By its nature one-to-one support can involve many hours of intensive support for the individual concerned, and if applicable, their family. Such support included identifying volunteering and job opportunities, assistance with housing, determining relevant training, building self-confidence and preparing participants for job interviews. One-to-one support enabled participants to build self-confidence and successfully obtain both voluntary and paid employment, as mini case study 1 illustrates.

Mini case study 1

From voluntary cleaning to full time employment

A project worker discovered that Helen who was cleaning voluntarily for the organisation, held a Master's degree. Following support from project staff, Helen engaged in more voluntary work, both for the organisation and elsewhere. At the same time project staff helped Helen to develop her confidence to apply for jobs, including conducting a mock interview. Helen was successful in gaining work as a support worker and has since changed jobs, working full time for a much larger organisation.

Assistance with form filling to claim correct benefits and when applying for courses and employment also formed an element of the one-to-one support. Participants noted how they relied upon such support, '[the project worker] is my rock, she knows me, and everything was falling apart until I met [the project worker]'. Some participants recognised that they

had not been going out much before their involvement, with the project worker 'giving me an excuse to go out'. By the very nature of one-to-one support and guidance, it allows the project worker to provide bespoke guidance and signpost individuals to appropriate agencies to support their needs, as illustrated in mini case study 2.

Mini case study 2

One-to-one support

Following a job centre referral to the Livelihoods Project, John, an ex-offender on sickness benefit, was supported to engage with a Communities First programme to obtain qualifications. Following a number of successes, which also involved a work placement, the employer was impressed and offered John a job, who had been unemployed for almost 20 years. Working together, job centre personnel and Livelihoods' staff ensured John was able to access support and funding to be able to accept the job offer.

Project staff reflected on the value of one-to-one support as it 'helps to understand the issues beyond the surface'. However, it was noted by some project staff that fewer people overall were supported due to the length of time required to provide guidance effectively on a one-to-one basis.

3.1.2 Peer mentoring

A key part of the project's design was to incorporate an element of peer mentoring. This built on the existing informal mentoring already identified in many communities, and described as 'formalising what happens naturally'. Peer mentoring courses were made available in all project areas in order to train participants with the skills that would enable them to support others within the project and in the wider community. As a direct result of this training, opportunities emerged for individuals to help project staff with the running of activities or the introduction of new activities. The responsibility placed on the participants in this role was welcomed and once established, worked well. As the peer mentor training was delivered as a pan-Wales group, it allowed peer mentors to develop a valuable network with others. Participants' confidence also increased, allowing them to instigate other activities, such as a weekly women's chat group or help in an informal way within their community, as illustrated in mini case study 3.

Mini case study 3

Confidence gained from peer mentoring

Completing the peer mentoring course gave Isabella more confidence to talk to people and know the type of questions to ask that would help them. As a result of improvements in confidence, Isabella felt able to volunteer in a charity shop and reflected that 'as you meet people you are asked to say things and make friends and this gradually builds confidence'.

Along with the establishment of new groups, peer mentors also took on individual 'clients' in a job club, providing support to complete application forms, develop curriculum vitaes and practice interview techniques. Project workers saw peer mentors as ambassadors and advocates who were able to see the potential of others in their community.

Peer mentors (and some other participants) also took part in the regular network meetings that took place at different locations across Wales. The network meetings provided an opportunity to share project experiences and deliver training. Examples of sessions during the network meetings included: Mindfulness, the Modern Welfare State, social media campaigns and Welsh Assembly engagement training.

Mini case study 4

Route to peer mentoring

Dave initially came to the Livelihoods project looking for help finding work in construction. After starting the SLA with his Livelihoods worker, it became apparent there were more underlying problems at hand; Dave had also turned to drugs and alcohol and was effectively homeless, moving between the homes of friends and sleeping on their sofas. SLA analysis revealed that the cause of all these issues was due to not knowing if he had fathered a child; two years ago, he had been in a relationship, and his partner had had a child, but had said the baby was not his. This was what had sent Dave went off the rails, made him start drinking heavily, and left him sofa surfing. As the Livelihoods project helps both identify and find solutions to underlying problems like this, rather than just surface problems, such as a lack of employment, the project then supported Dave by negotiating with the mother of the child and paying for a paternity test. The result was positive - he was the father of the little girl, and from then on he was able to clean up his whole act. He became a peer mentor on the Livelihoods project, then completed a work placement with the help of the Livelihoods worker, and is now a full-time youth worker himself, helping others in a similar situation to the one he had been in when he first came to the project. In his words, "Since meeting my Livelihoods worker I've had so much help getting myself back on my feet. She's helped me to do loads of things I didn't know were available. The Livelihoods worker was the only person who could help. For me, services are better because I have more support to deal with the technicalities and difficulties of dealing with service providers. She's helped me in every way she can."

Source: Case study provided to Oxfam by partner organisation.

3.1.3 Training, courses and workshops

A wide variety of training opportunities were made available to all participants, including a jewellery workshop, the first aid at work qualification, a criminology course and mindfulness. The training and courses were delivered to groups at the project base with some individuals also receiving funding to attend local colleges and obtain more formal qualifications, such as the CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). These learning opportunities were facilitated by a variety of organisations including Mind, local colleges and once individuals were trained they facilitated the learning themselves. This was the case in the African Community Centre, Swansea, with English classes organised

by participants and at South Riverside, Cardiff participants, who drew on their own skills to run workshops for the group, for example cooking on a budget.

Many participants received certificates, for example in food hygiene and health and safety, which they felt were important to help them in the future, once they received their right to remain and/or were well enough to seek employment.

3.1.4 Excursions

For many living in some of the areas targeted by the Livelihoods project there are few opportunities to afford to take their families on trips. As a result, the Livelihoods project facilitated trips both locally and further afield, aimed at broadening the horizons of participants and to allow them to 'get to know one another in a different environment'. Such occasions varied from day trips to Barry Island and Weston Super Mare to a cycling trip with Pedal Power[7] in Cardiff, with others venturing to Snowdonia or Camp Bestival festival.

Examples: Broadening horizons

I. *Cycling with Pedal Power helped to break down cultural barriers and for some families the trip to Barry Island was their first ever visit, even though they had lived in Cardiff for many years – it was their first time using public transport and many commented that they would never have been able to do the trip themselves.*

II. *The idea to camp for a few days in Snowdonia originated from the group wanting to do something different – they were able to spend more time together: 'getting to the top of Snowdon was a highlight'.*

III. *By organising a volunteering trip to Camp Bestival festival 2015, individuals gained valuable work experience, bonded as a group and were able to visit a different part of the UK, which for a few was a new experience.*

3.1.5 Volunteering

Volunteering has been an important thread for all of the communities involved in the Livelihoods project. In some instances participants have been able to volunteer and support the delivery of the project directly following training, for example teaching English, peer mentoring other participants and supporting individuals with job searches. Others have volunteered in the wider community as a result of the introductions made during the project and the improved confidence they acquired as a consequence of the support received. Participants have gone on to volunteer for local charities and undertake community based initiatives, such as rubbish clearing and helping with the gardens of a local sheltered housing complex.

[7] Pedal Power is a Cardiff based charity that encourages and enables children and adults of all ages and abilities to experience the benefits of cycling.

3.1.6 Other group activities

Across the different projects many different group activities and courses were initiated according to the preferences of the group. Other regular group activities ranged from allotment club/gardening group to a running club and a knit and natter group, as discussed in mini case study 5.

Examples: Organising group activities

I. *A knitting group, raising money for charities, has been meeting in Ebbw Vale since 2011. A volunteer organiser and other knitters launched a group specifically for women linked to the Livelihoods project in 2015. The group of about 15 meet every week, including during school holidays, providing participants with structure and "knitting therapy". The Livelihoods' participants were supported by volunteers who passed on their skills and provided support, with members drawn from across three different south Wales valleys. The group successfully sourced funding for new equipment and trips from the Big Lottery, the Halifax and Sainsbury's. In Jan 2016, a sewing machine was sourced and 'make do and mend' classes are now being delivered. Trips to source materials and to visit Wonderwool, in Builth Wells, are also planned.*

II. *Gardening in the community and growing on an allotment have provided focus for some participants at South Riverside Community Development Centre and Duffryn Community Links. People meet regularly with some participants responsible for organising the group. After harvesting the produce, the group share in cooking a group meal.*

All projects addressed the diverse needs of participants, by offering parenting groups, organising family fun days as well as groups to help participants with job searches, application forms and providing advice for access to other service providers.

3.1.7 Work with partners and advocacy

Individual partner organisations and the project collectively have played an advocacy role in bringing to wider attention the challenging livelihoods of individuals in communities across Wales. For example, in Glyncoch, by using the SLA, unfair treatment by the Work Programme was unearthed. Case studies were then formed and were submitted as evidence to the Welsh Select Committee.

Oxfam Cymru is delivering a training pilot for the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) personnel, training staff located across Wales to use the SLA toolkit within their work. The pilot originated from feedback collected from the Livelihoods groups proposing suggestions to improve participants' communications and dealings with the DWP. As a result, the SLA provides the opportunity for DWP personnel to explore 'stepping into someone else's

shoes' and uses 'real life case studies' to develop a better understanding of the situations individuals face. Oxfam Cymru also attends DWP strategic board meetings.

Project workers also shared the SLA with other stakeholders, with one project worker suggesting the potential of taking the toolkit into schools for children who have difficulties.

3.2 Numbers engaged

Over 1,000 beneficiaries received support across the nine areas. As shown in table 2.2 slightly fewer beneficiaries than anticipated received intensive support, due in the most part to their preferences: many participants tended to dip in and out of the project's support rather than engaging on a linear basis. They sometimes engaged to deal with a specific pressing issue, such as a job loss, sanctioning, reduction in benefits or other immediate crisis situations. This higher than anticipated demand for non-intensive support affected the numbers achieved in other target areas, with fewer participants worked with intensively than anticipated, and therefore fewer than anticipated reporting gaining new skills and confidence, or measurably improved livelihoods. Other targets, particularly those relating to greater community involvement and access to services, were not affected by this, and were actually exceeded.

3.3 Success factors

The feedback received during the evaluation interviews was universally positive. The following provides feedback on the project activities from participants, project workers and others involved in delivering elements of the projects.

3.3.1 Engagement

Reasons for engagement with the Livelihoods project varied. In some instances individuals were referred via the probation or social services, job clubs or directly from Jobcentre Plus, via their child's school or they had discovered the group online. For others it was a recommendation by 'word of mouth' in the community or as a result of previous engagement with activities delivered at the partner organisation.

This varied nature – and levels – of engagement enabled the project to help those that fall between the cracks of other existing services and to work well with other services. Indeed, the SLA approach can add significant value to the other existing services and initiatives to not only help those that miss out on existing services but to also create a meaningful dialogue to better support those that don't: the SLA can act as a two way information resource to better support the beneficiary and better inform the service provider.

Mini case study 5

Helping those that fall between the cracks, Duffryn Infant School

The nurture group at Duffryn Infant School works with 12 of the most vulnerable children

in the school and as such works with 12 of the most vulnerable families. The nurture group teacher explained how the link with the Oxfam Livelihood Role enables her to signpost to support agencies, to better understand a child's background and to support the families.

As a result of working with the Livelihoods workers she has been able to,

- *Involve parents in all aspects of school life*
- *Become a more trusted teacher*
- *Enable parents to feel comfortable to come into school and share their problems/ask for help*
- *Help build resilience in families*
- *Model appropriate relationships to children,*
- *and given parents and families the ability to sustain their own livelihoods- jobs, courses, community activities*

The teacher explained how the link with Livelihoods works in practice:

- *Incident Day 1: A parent comes to the door, crying, shaking and distressed. Has just been verbally assaulted by a neighbour and threatened with physical violence in front of the children.*
- *Step 1: Invite parent into school, teaching assistant takes the child and younger brother to have breakfast.*
- *Step 2: Oxfam Livelihoods worker (project worker) contacted, on site within the hour. Takes parent to Forest Family Centre for a cup of tea and to talk about the incident.*
- *Step 3: Newport City Homes contacted by the project worker, mediator to be sent out this week.*
- *Step 4: Awaiting mediator, project worker is to attend the flat and talk to the neighbours to calm the situation.*
- *Step 5: An agreement was made to keep the living conditions calm and civil.*
- *Step 6: Letters of application written by school and project worker to move family from their home. Meanwhile parent referred to mental health team for assessment and counselling, put on Nurturing parent course and assisted with routines for children at home.*
- *Step 7 Success. Family moved, settled in their new house. Parent receiving regular support. Children happier.*

Source: Adapted from the presentation given at the end of Project event

3.3.2 Personalised approach

All participants recognised the value of the one-to-one support and guidance they had received, acknowledging the benefits of a focused personalised approach. The nature of the support varied depending on individual circumstances, for example support to solve problems with tax credit underpayments, searching for relevant training courses, chatting over a coffee and supporting a family with a local day trip. The advocacy role of the project worker was recognised and valued by participants as they valued them speaking up for people: “it is essential for people like [the project worker] to be there to speak up for people”.

Example: Feedback from participants

"If it wasn't for [the project worker] I wouldn't have any self-purpose, don't know where I'd be. [The project worker] is my rock, she knows me, and everything was falling apart until I met her."

"[The project worker] gives me an excuse to go out, and because she helped me I am helping others."

With other agencies "you are just a number, part of a system"; with Livelihoods the relationship has time to develop, there are mental health benefits – us coming together, companionship and importantly "not having people judge you, it's open to all, your voice is heard".

Before joining "I was alone, very nervous" and at home with "too much to worry about".

3.3.3 Flexibility

The flexibility of the project in allowing for participants to influence the nature of activities was also welcomed by all those consulted as the participants themselves, and workers, determined the activities according to local requirements. There was no set agenda and no particular restrictions as to timing or number of hours. For instance, at one project, an exercise class was proposed, at another a trip away for participants, while another offered more certified courses at the request of the participants. The importance of being able to complete training courses and receive certificates was also raised by participants: "they will help for the future". The importance of acquiring English language skills was raised by participants at the African Community Centre, Swansea, with communication noted as key as they wanted to settle in Wales.

This flexibility in the delivery was accompanied with a flexibility of funding and project workers explained how they were far freer to fund activities (such as trips, training, travel costs) than compared to other projects delivered in their locality

Mini case study 6

Funding freedom

Rhys was in his late 50s, living in the Valleys. He'd lost his job as a security guard when the firm went bust four years before and become long-term unemployed. He'd resigned himself to living frugally, allowing himself only £17 per week for food. He was referred to the Livelihoods project by a job centre worker as he had lost all his confidence. The first thing the Livelihoods worker did was start to rebuild this confidence by giving him 1-1 support to improve his employability skills (e.g. on interview techniques). As a result, he went for an interview, and then got successfully offered a job. Because the job was far away though, and the shifts at unsociable hours, he initially had to turn it down as public

transport wouldn't have been able to get him there. The Livelihoods worker again stepped in, organising a loan from Rhys' sister to buy an old car, funding the insurance for the car from her own budget and getting the job centre to agree to pay his petrol costs for an initial period of time. The worker also helped him access a foodbank to tide him over the gap between his benefits stopping and his first pay cheque arriving. Rhys has been in full-time work ever since, and as a result of the experience from the initial job far away, has now been able to find job with better hours closer to home, so he no longer needs any support or help with his travel costs at all. As he puts it, "I became fed up with never having any money and staying in. I can now buy some new clothes and go for a coffee with a friend. I'm not asking for much, am I?"

Source: Case study provided by project to Oxfam

3.3.4 Peer mentoring

Peer mentoring has meant participants have acquired new skills. At one group the success of the peer mentoring course resulted in the development of a women's chat group. For others completing the training "improved confidence" and provided them with the skills to help others in the community. For some the peer mentor training led on to other courses such as mindfulness and even employment.

3.3.5 Volunteering

The volunteering that some participants completed also benefitted their well-being and confidence. In some instances participants volunteered with project activity delivery, such as teaching English, with one participant noting that it "feels good, love being busy – so being busy helps me feel better". Another participant noted that volunteering in a couple of charity shops had helped improve their confidence and as a result positively impacted on the rest of the family –'if my son is happy, I'm happy". Participants also compared the changes that their involvement in the project activities had meant, with one reflecting that before she had attended the group she was "tied to the house" with "shopping the highlight of the week".

Feedback from participants
"I've gained confidence and skills, and I've done more in my forties than I've done in the rest of my life."

"We have had a lot of opportunities through the project that we didn't know existed […] we do something in the community three or four times a week."

"I've been on the estate for 30 years and done more in the past two years than in the rest of my life."

"Our livelihoods project goes above and beyond the group."

3.3.6 Livelihoods Workers

The project was delivered by project staff, generally appointed to work three days a week, and managed by the organisation in which they were located. The importance of the flexibility of the project was highlighted by all those consulted, as they reflected upon the importance of being able to adapt to an individual's needs and circumstances and tailoring the support needed. For some participants this was intensive support over a number of sessions, whereas for others it may have involved signposting to another agency. These referrals were viewed as successful as according to one project worker "each agency does something others can't do".

The one-to-one support and guidance "helps to understand the issues beyond the surface". However, it was noted by project workers that the time required to provide this support effectively meant that fewer people could be seen. The opportunities provided by the Livelihoods project have meant that organisations have been able to work with new people, those not ready to "sit in a class or join a group". Several of the workers commented that the level and type of support required "could have easily taken up a whole week". Despite this workload, up until the final three months of the project the project had 100% retention with its project workers.

3.3.7 Partners

The project worked in collaboration with other partners, and the rigidity of other services' funding compared to the flexibility of the Livelihoods project meant that the Project often funded the solution to the participant's livelihoods problems that other agencies could not, resulting in successful returns to work. In some instances there was a more formalised working relationship with referrals working between the Livelihoods project and Jobcentre Plus for example. At other times the relationship developed as a result of sourcing support for individuals or organising activities. For example volunteers supporting activities noted that their involvement had positively impacted upon their sense of well-being, with friendships developing across the group: "it changed my life, somewhere to go and meet other people".

The demand for courses and training was sometimes difficult to fulfil as some providers required a minimum number of participants and in some instances this was difficult to achieve. The flexibility of the Livelihoods project meant that access to all could be provided and "it is a shame more projects are not like it […] the Government are very caught up on the postcode", and this doesn't always reflect the needs of an individual or family.

Mini case study 7

Flexible funding

Joe had been out of work for nearly two years, a machinery licence needed renewing. The job centre was unable to fund the renewal, protective clothing or the bus fare needed for the one day course. Livelihoods funded the course and equipment (approximately £220 in total). Joe passed the course "with flying colours, gained a job and is still in full time employment".

4. Impact

This section focuses on the difference that the Livelihoods Project made. Each of the intended outcomes set out in section 2.1 are considered in turn. The section draws on the evidence presented in earlier chapters of this report and as such the evidence is drawn from participants and staff.

4.1 Intended Outcomes

The Livelihoods Project set out four intended outcomes, this section considers each in turn.

- Project Outcome 1: Marginalised people will develop skills and build confidence to improve their livelihoods and life chances.
- Project Outcome 2: Marginalised people from different backgrounds will be more involved in community activities.
- Project Outcome 3: Community groups will have a better understanding of the needs of different people & groups in their neighbourhoods and how to meet them.
- Project Outcome 4: Marginalised people will say that they receive more and better services that meet their needs.

All beneficiaries, staff and other service providers interviewed as part of this evaluation were very positive about the impacts on those who had been supported, especially in terms of helping those who would not otherwise be able or willing to engage with a more formal programme of advice or training. The evidence shows that the flexible, intensive SLA support makes a difference to the projects' clients and that the assets-based approach is one that enables workers to work meaningfully with the participants in order to improve their livelihoods and life chances

4.2 Project Outcome 1: Marginalised people will develop skills and build confidence to improve their livelihoods and life chances.

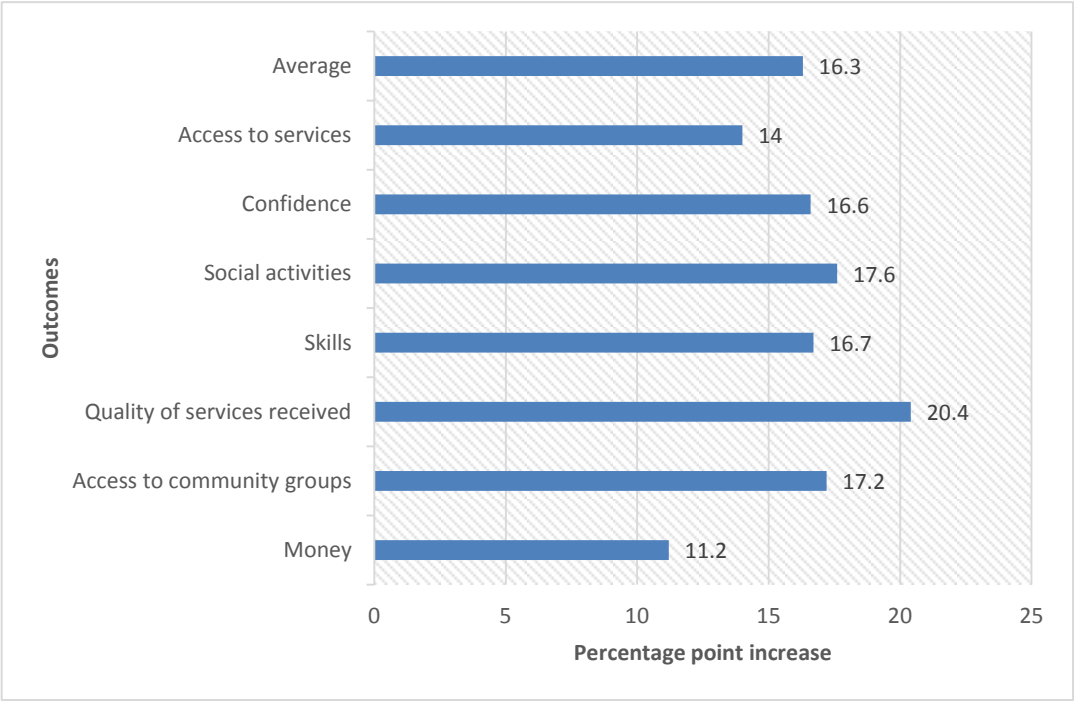
All participants and workers interviewed believed that there had been many and varied opportunities to develop skills. In many cases the types of impact included 'hard' outcomes, such as skills improved through certified training (for example manual handling, first aid and several others in Wrexham and entrepreneurship skills in Glyncoch), but also those 'softer' impacts relating to raised confidence and career aspirations amongst participants.

There was also recognition that, in many cases, the Livelihoods support had acted as the very first step towards obtaining employment,

> *Everyone knows they are welcome at the Job Club, 'it is very different to the library job club – have to be quiet there' it is not strict, 'ours is tea and biscuits and a cake if there is a birthday, the door is always open, people are approachable, not stand-offish'. (Cardiff focus group)*

The rationale of Livelihoods is that life chances are improved if people are supported intensively and that their lives are considered in the round. Quantitative evidence (in the form of pre and post questionnaires) collected by the project suggests that this was the case for a significant number of participants, with an average improvement in terms of livelihood sustainability of 16.3 per cent across all participants. Figure 4.1 presents percentage point improvements for the different outcomes since involvement in the project for participants across the nine partner projects, demonstrating that the biggest reported increase was in the quality of services received.

Figure 4.1. Outcomes for the Livelihoods Project participants.



Source: Oxfam Cymru's Building Livelihoods and Strengthening Communities Baseline Questionnaire data.

Qualitative evidence collected by the project and in consultations for this evaluation also suggests that livelihoods were improved. At the same time, however, caution should still be employed when drawing project-wide conclusions for several reasons, including that changes in livelihood sustainability may not be seen within a relatively short period of time. Participants also often did not actively 'enrol' on the Livelihoods project with a definite view to improving their livelihoods, but instead, because they had a specific problem that needed an urgent solution. Some participants also struggled to articulate or reflect on how their lives had changed.

Nevertheless participants and staff identified several outcomes such as the project improving the motivation and enthusiasm of their participants and participants developing several new skills including job searching, interview skills, communication skills, and dealing with professionals.

When combined with practical support (e.g. arranging and/or covering the costs of transport, arranging training, access to a computer and training in IT) the overall support had the effect of helping break down whatever barrier participants had in taking part more fully in their community or in training or employment.

Some of the workers interviewed noted that it was too early to see the full extent of the Livelihoods Project's impacts on participants, in the form of progression into employment or a new role, or a lessened vulnerability to crises etc. However, interviewees were clear that they perceived 'softer' impacts, such as improved confidence, better time-keeping, more knowledge about job searching, or a wider circle of friends, as prerequisites, to some of the more concrete indicators of improved life chances. It allowed projects to 'work with people who we weren't working with – people who weren't ready to sit in a class every week or who had more entrenched mental health issues' (Cardiff consultation). This suggests that there is synergy between the various types of impact, for instance, a participant may have been supported into an employment or training opportunity, but often this would be accompanied by increases in confidence or higher self-esteem generally, increased awareness of where to go for help should problems arise, better time-keeping, and a network of others to share experiences. In the shorter term there were more immediate and apparent impact on livelihoods, when the worker was able to support participants at a time of crisis. Several of the projects explained that their participants were being sanctioned (payments being reduced or stopped) by the job centre for not searching for work or being unable to travel to an appointment and yet did not have the skills nor the resources to resolve this. The project was able to support them in using IT and help them carry out job searches and with practical skills.

4.3 Project Outcome 2: Marginalised people from different backgrounds will be more involved in community activities.

All local projects have addressed involvement in community activities in their different ways with examples ranging from parents being supported to establish and run a toddler group, family fun days, opportunities to visit places they would not have otherwise have done, support to attend tenants meetings; starting a running club, starting a cinema club for an area's older people and establishing and running a women's chat group.

All of the local projects offered one-to-one sessions which in several cases led to participation in group sessions. These group sessions in turn were a first step towards a greater involvement in community activities. Furthermore, with the help of the Livelihoods Project's support, addressing a seemingly small yet crucial issue then released the participant's' time and effort (in practical and emotional terms) to address other home and life issues.

In a sense the new groups created were a community in itself, with a Foryd Centre participant explaining that the 'best thing' about the project was that it had 'created a community that supports each other, can talk to each other'. All projects had arranged trips for participants and these succeeded in broadening horizons. The Cardiff group for example

explained that a trip to the seaside at Barry Island broke down cultural barriers, and for some participants the trip was their first visit there even though they had lived in Cardiff for several years, and for some it was their first time using public transport, and they 'wouldn't have gone unless organised'.

In Wrexham the group celebrated the creation of a recipe booklet with a trip to a Chinese restaurant – for most of the participants it was their first experience of such a restaurant, as they 'don't go into town really so that was something new'. Another participant would not have been able to eat in front of others at the start of the project but was able to join in. In Wrexham too, one of the participants explained how the sessions and group work on a food theme had led her to 'volunteer to help others now' and was involved in a community garden and food cooperative.

The intended outcome of involvement in community activities was not as easy for all projects however. Sylfaen in Caernarfon targeted young people and found that opportunities for community activities for this age group were limited. Nevertheless the project hosted summer activity days for the young people and in a broader sense, the greater involvement of some of their young participants in college or other training could be viewed as a community activity.

4.4 Project Outcome 3: Community groups will have a better understanding of the needs of different people and groups in their neighbourhoods and how to meet them.

Many of the partner organisations delivering the Livelihoods project built on work which was already being delivered and which had already proved to be effective locally (and had been delivering under the previous Wales Livelihoods project). All projects were delivered by organisations working at the heart of their communities and the projects provided evidence to show that their delivery of Livelihoods deepened their understanding of the needs of people in their community. Workers explained how Livelihoods 'allowed us to work with people who we weren't working with previously', which in turn enabled projects to build relationships and 'make inroads to other parts of the community.

The role of the peer mentors in particular was influential here, with the projects gaining information from the mentors to help shape the design and delivery of the Livelihoods project and the organisation as a whole. One group further explained how Livelihoods had contributed to organisational learning, and that their experience of Livelihoods and working with people flexibly, intensively and using an assets-based approach influenced what kind of funding they would apply for in the future.

Projects were also tasked with working with other organisations and agencies to help them understand the needs of their clients. The projects approached this in their own way, with Sylfaen for example bringing service providers together to create an ongoing local partnership, that met quarterly and Riverside hosting a training event (designed by their peer mentors) for large employers to better understand how they could widen access and better engage with their local community.

A couple of the Livelihoods workers observed that although they had shared the SLA with colleagues in other organisations there was a limit to how far workers in other organisations could take on board any elements of the approach as they tended to have larger caseloads, less time with participants and specific targets to meet.

4.5 Project Outcome 4: Marginalised people will say that they receive more and better services that meet their needs.

The individual projects collected monitoring data and demonstrated that 489 participants accessed more or better services and attributed this to the project (slightly above the target – see table 2.2). Data collected by the nine projects in baseline and follow-up questionnaires demonstrated that the biggest change in livelihoods reported by beneficiaries since starting with the project was a change in the quality of services received (see figure 4.1).

The SLA is a good conduit for the improvement of services, as explained by one participant,

> *With other agencies 'you are just a number, part of a system' with Livelihoods the relationship has time to develop, there are mental health benefits, as coming together, companionship and importantly 'not having people judge you, it's open to all, your voice is heard'. (Cardiff focus group)*

One result of intensive support was a diversity of referrals to the projects and a raised awareness by participants of the range of support available to them. Links were made with Jobcentre Plus, the Home Office, colleges, the local council and others. The links with other service providers and the models of partnership working varied from area to area, reflecting the bespoke and locally-distinctive nature of the Livelihoods Project.

Another successful outcome for the project was obtaining external funding for further activities, such as the Knit & Natter group in Ebbw Vale, or Tiny Tiddlers and Games Night in Glyncoch. This has led to new initiatives to become embedded in the community and independently from the project.

5. Conclusions

Findings from this evaluation are encouraging, with participants, staff and wider partners extremely positive in their views concerning the delivery of the Livelihoods Project. A key strength of the project, contributors suggest, has been the flexibility and the way in which it has been able to intensively support in whatever way needed while taking into full account participants assets and circumstances.

Quantitative evidence of impact is also available, though it can only be early indications in a project of this nature where the effects may only be realised or become apparent over time as changes to livelihoods become embedded. Nevertheless, the evaluation has found evidence that participants report feeling less isolated, more engaged and have become more resilient.

5.1 Summary of findings

The SLA has proved a suitable tool in providing structure to determine actions needed to improve individual livelihoods. The toolkit provided project workers with a manageable approach to identify individual's assets and assist them in finding solutions. In some instances project workers used the tool kit in paper form, but the flexibility of the approach meant they applied the tools during discussions easily too.

The flexibility of the SLA as a toolkit and approach, and being able to adapt and apply it as appropriate, supporting participants intensively at some times, and non-intensively at others according to their needs, is one of its key strengths.

It can take time for project workers to establish a relationship with the local community so this needs to be built into any planned interventions or projects. Participants needed time to trust project workers as a result of being 'let down' in the past by different agencies and initially viewing the project as social services. SLA project workers provide a strong and important link between the many different agencies that individuals access for support; they can be the "friend that knows stuff", especially in relation to how services work, that marginalised people often lack in their support networks.

Supporting project participants via one-to-one personalised guidance and support resulted in improvements in well-being and confidence and the sustainability of their livelihoods. Project workers supported participants to determine appropriate training courses and referrals to other agencies needed. This resulted in the facilitation of a variety of training provision from certified courses to more workshop based experiences.

The flexibility of individualised support has been a major factor in the success of the project; despite being very time intensive for project workers to offer, this type of support is crucial for any project seeking to address the livelihoods issues of marginalised people. Project workers were generally employed for three days a week working with a small number of

beneficiaries due to the intensive nature requiring extended periods of their time. However, in some instances support required was minimal and once an individual had been signposted to the relevant agency they no longer required support. Access to appropriate transport and the provision of accredited training courses is crucial for people as they aim to improve their situation and move into work.

Peer mentor training resulted in increased confidence and development of skills benefiting not just the individual but the wider community as well. Trained peer mentors supported the delivery of the project for some organisations, the skills acquired meant individuals were confident to support others via activities such as Job Clubs. They also applied the skills within their communities, supporting individuals and signposting others to relevant service providers.

Working with other partner organisations such as Jobcentre Plus and Communities First enabled project workers to signpost participants to appropriate support, but many marginalised individuals require more than signposting, for example, needing workers to actually accompany them to meetings and appointments if that signposting is to succeed. Referrals to the Livelihood project from other agencies also meant individuals were able to receive personalised support other agencies were unable to deliver. Project workers often acted as advocates and provided participants with the knowledge and confidence to improve their situation.

Networking between the partner organisations across Wales has strengthened project delivery, and the regular all-Wales meetings enabled learning and good practice to be shared between workers and participants.

5.2 Recommendations

The research has highlighted a number of benefits of using a range of SLA methods and tools to engage and work with marginalised people. It has been a valuable tool.

Recommendation 1: The SLA should continue to be disseminated to service providers and adopted as a method for empowering individuals to secure a more sustainable livelihood; there is also potential for it to be used more widely, for example with schools and young people.

While many projects were able to build on existing partnership, the project has helped reinforce and advance links between partners tackling poverty in local areas. Many projects explained that there was potentially a high demand for the type of support provided (and the limit on their numbers was one of capacity not demand).

Recommendation 2: It is important to continue to improve the livelihoods of those in marginalised communities through utilising a holistic approach to their situation. A key strength of the SLA is that by working holistically it uncovers the real issue or issues, not just the most obvious surface problem.

Recommendation 3: Funders need to recognise the significance of flexible funding arrangements when seeking to improve the livelihoods of individuals in marginalised communities. Assets-based analyses of marginalised people's problems are only of value if accompanied by creative, assets-based solutions, as those problems rarely fit neatly into the one thematic area (be it housing, training, employment, debt, substance misuse or any other area), which is usually what any particular service for marginalised people can help with.

The success of, and continued need for, a source of intensive, flexible bespoke support has raised the question of how partners and other funders can most effectively prioritise provision.

Recommendation 4: Minimum participation numbers required by some learning providers to deliver in isolated areas could be more flexible if opportunities are to improve for those living there. For projects to be truly accessible, an 'outreach' element should be included for those communities lacking adequate transport options.

Recommendation 5: Projects supporting marginalised groups should strive to secure continuation funding for SLA-based work, as without this vulnerable people are left without support; there are no other projects that combine an assets-based approach with the ability to also provide bespoke, assets-based solutions and the kind of personal support, up to and including the 'handholding' often needed for marginalised people to be able to begin to implement and access those solutions for themselves.

The variety of activities delivered through the Livelihoods Project, tailored to address individual assets and needs, has been seen as a success factor. Projects were designed in such a way as to enable lighter touch or more intensive support as required.

Recommendation 6: Oxfam should disseminate learning from the project as widely as possible, so that providers can ensure that any future interventions aimed at addressing the needs of marginalised people identify and respond to those needs in a flexible and holistic manner, providing more intensive and bespoke provision where required.

Annex 1: Methodology

The methodology applied included desk research of Oxfam documentation, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach documentation and project monitoring reports. Fieldwork involved one-to-one interviews and focus groups with project participants in the nine project areas and consultations with project staff.

The focus groups and interviews were structured around a number of topics such as participants' motivations for becoming involved in the project; the types of support and activities and what has changed since taking part. The interviews with project workers focused on the activities delivered, their impacts on individuals and the local community, and potential sustainability of activities. Others consulted included two Oxfam Cymru representatives, other workers at partner centres and other agencies involved with supporting project activities and volunteers. A summary of those interviewed for each of the partner organisation is listed below.

Project	Project worker/s	Participants
African Community Centre (Swansea)	1	6 (3 male and 3 female)
Caia Park Partnership (Wrexham)	2 (current and former)	7 (3 female, 4 male as a group); 1 male individually.
DOVE Workshop (Banwen, Neath)	1	5 (4 male, 1 female)
Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council (with the Foryd Centre, Rhyl)	1	6 (1 male and 5 female)
Duffryn Community Link (Newport)	2 (job-share)	10 (all female)
Glyncoch Community Regeneration (Pontypridd)	2 (current and former)	3 (2 female, 1 male)
South Riverside Community Development Centre (Cardiff)	1	6 (1 male and 5 female)
Sylfaen Cymunedol Cyfyngedig (Caernarfon)	1	2 male and 1 female parent.
The Wallich (Ebbw Vale)	1	3 (1 male and 2 female)

BUILDING LIVELIHOODS AND STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES IN WALES

Value Analysis: Report

Dr Leon Quinn, Monitoring & Evaluation Coordinator, Oxfam Cymru

Introduction

Oxfam Cymru's Building Livelihoods and Strengthening Communities in Wales project, or the Livelihoods project for short, began in September 2012 and ran to the end of February 2016. Its aim, in common with the aim of Oxfam in general, was to help overcome the causes of poverty and suffering, to be achieved by: developing projects to improve the lives of people in poverty; raising public awareness of poverty to create pressure for change; and working with policymakers to tackle the causes of poverty.[1]

In order to achieve this aim, the Livelihoods project utilised Oxfam's unique Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, or SLA. An approach to livelihoods development first used in Oxfam's work in the Global South, the SLA works on the following key principles:

- People centred – the approach supports people to achieve their own sustainable livelihoods; goals are set by participants, not workers.
- Holistic – the approach recognises the multiple influences, actors and strategies constituting people's livelihoods; the solutions it offers are not limited to just financial aspects or one particular type of help.
- Dynamic – the approach seeks to identify and support patterns of positive change: it prescribes no set programme, instead following each participant's individual needs.
- Reinforcing – the approach builds on the assets that people already have and recognises everyone's inherent potential; it assumes nothing, and that nothing is impossible.
- Sustainable – the approach is economically, environmentally and socially focused; the support it provides is intensive when needed, less so when not; beneficiaries can dip in and out as required and be supported at different intensity levels at different points.
- Transformative – the approach seeks to bridge the gap between the macro and the micro, between individuals and organisations and the policies and institutions that affect them, providing a pathway for wider economic and social development for all.

[1] See 'Building Livelihoods & Strengthening Communities in Wales: Project Plan 2012 – 2015' (Oxfam GB), p.5.

With the help of its bespoke SLA Toolkit for Wales, the Livelihoods project embodied these principle in the activities it offered throughout its three-and-a-half year lifetime, either on a one-to-one basis with participants or in a group setting. The support it provided to marginalised people fell under five main headings:

- Intensive personal support to individual project participants on an ongoing basis – this included emotional support and handholding (accompanying the participant to meetings or groups), as well as practical support around livelihoods-related issues such as work, finances, mental or physical wellbeing and so on.
- Providing other support, such as signposting, information, training or help with a specific one-off problem, to participants with less intensive needs.
- Providing training and support for project participants to become peer mentors and community advocates in their local areas.
- Providing training and support for community structures and service providers to increase their understanding of, and ability to meet the needs of, marginalised people in their communities.
- Providing evidence-based monitoring, evaluation and learning for use by Oxfam, project partners and anyone interested in tackling the wider causes of poverty in Wales.

The project was delivered in partnership with other voluntary organisations, rather than directly by Oxfam itself. The nine partners across Wales for the project, and the main groups they worked with, were as follows:

- African Community Centre, Swansea (refugees and asylum-seekers);
- Caia Park Partnership, Wrexham (people with physical and/or learning disabilities);
- Denbighshire Voluntary Services Council & The Foryd Centre, Rhyl (older people 50+);
- DOVE Workshop, Banwen, Neath (geographically isolated and long-term unemployed people);
- Duffryn Community Link, Newport (young families, single parents and those with mental or physical health issues);
- Glyncoch Community Regeneration, Pontypridd (families with primary school-age children);
- South Riverside Community Development Centre, Cardiff (people from black and minority ethnic [BME] communities, refugees and asylum seekers);
- Sylfaen Cymunedol Cyfyngedig, Caernarfon (young people not in education, employment or training [NEETS]);
- The Wallich Clifford Community, Ebbw Vale (people homeless or at risk of homelessness).[2]

[2] While each project had certain communities of interest it mainly worked with as detailed above, its Livelihoods services were not restricted to members of these groups, and open to all residents in the area of

A final external evaluation report from Arad Research outlines the general achievements of the project over its lifetime, and provides detailed statistics relating to the project's outputs and outcomes, as well as extensive qualitative feedback from participants and project workers outlining its methods, successes, challenges and learning points.[3]

This report, by contrast, assesses the project in one very specific respect only: the amount of value it has generated, or will generate, as a result of the activities it pursued during its lifetime. Wherever possible, this report seeks to avoid duplicating content from the general evaluation report, however, where necessary, some information is repeated in order to provide the necessary context for this report to be able to be read as a standalone document.

Context

The Livelihoods project took place in nine of the most deprived communities in Wales, and achieved the following headline results, as detailed in its external final evaluation:

Figure 1: Livelihoods project key outputs and outcomes

Project activity/outcome indicator	Number achieved
Beneficiaries receiving intensive support	494
Beneficiaries receiving other support	629
Peer mentors trained and supported	109
Community structures receiving support	89
Service providers trained	71
Organisations reporting a higher understanding of, or ability to meet, the needs of marginalised people	111
Number of organisations who can cite at least one change to their service and attribute it to this project	58
Participants reporting new skills and confidence	636
Participants involved in greater numbers of community activities	648
Participants accessing more or better services	489
Number of participants who have measurably improved their livelihood	306

benefit of each partner project.

[3] See http://www.oxfam.org.uk/cymru or contact Arad Research at http://www.aradconsulting.co.uk / 029 2044 0552 or Oxfam Cymru at oxfamcymru@oxfam.org.uk / 0300 200 1269 or for a copy of this report.

These outcomes were achieved despite large numbers of project participants lacking the kind of traditional means of improving a livelihood that non-marginalised people would take for granted. For example, a large number of participants were asylum seekers; asylum seekers are not allowed to take up employment or start a business. Over a third of participants had a disability, or many others had unpaid caring roles which effectively shut them out of the labour market in their local area. More broadly, the heavily oversubscribed nature of the project – the project's original target number for beneficiaries over its lifetime was less than two-thirds of the final total achieved – hints at the wider context within which the project's value should be set.

There were three particular threats identified in the original analysis for the project, and all related to this context in one way or another:

- Partner organisations' financial sustainability in very challenging times.
- Reform in welfare legislation.
- Low number of jobs available due to a weak economy.[4]

The first threat had already materialised at the very start of the project, with one partner having to take the decision to wind itself down as another of its projects lost funding. While a new and financially sustainable partner was found relatively quickly, leading to only a short delay in delivering the project in that area, these problems were indicative of the poor financial climate the project operated in throughout its lifetime.

Similarly, in relation to the second and third threats identified above, it was of course not the project's role to measure the socio-economic progress or otherwise of the areas it works in, nor to pass judgement on the effects of welfare reform on the people it worked with. Nevertheless, like the canary in the mine, because of the work it did, and the breadth it did it in, the project inevitably amplified up what was happening on the ground, and the voices that came through the project spoke mostly of things around them getting worse rather than better, as the following list of quotes from just one focus group of participants for the project's mid-term evaluation showed:

- *"[The] council offices are now only opened once a week."*
- *"With the cuts, more services for the elderly are being closed."*
- *"Council houses are damp and in disrepair. Tenants report what needs doing to their houses and flats but have to wait months or longer for it to be fixed. Sometimes things don't get fixed at all."*
- *"The local free school bus was stopped and then the prices of the buses were raised so parents have found it a struggle to pay for this extra cost."*
- *"The council are going take away concessionary passes from older people. This will mean they could become isolated as many of them rely on their bus pass and can't afford to pay for travel from their pensions."*
- *"[A]nything that isn't mandatory has been scrapped by the local council due to budget cuts."*
- *"I think the reason things are worse in general is because there is just no money in the area."* [5]

[4] Building Livelihoods & Strengthening Communities in Wales: Project Plan 2012 – 2015' (Oxfam GB), p.32.
[5] See Building Livelihoods & Strengthening Communities in Wales: Mid Term Evaluation Report (Oxfam GB),

Case studies, of which the project generated almost 200 in its lifetime, likewise exposed many contextual changes for the project and its participants. Almost exclusively, these were changes for the worse. From struggles with heating and energy costs, or the growth of zero hours contracts, to the effects of the bedroom tax and other welfare changes, as well as the problems of sanctioning leading to destitution and the massive rise in foodbank use, it was clear that things were generally getting worse, not better. This had a direct impact on the project, as workers saw increases in demand for the project's services as a result, for example, as cuts to library services led to many more people coming to Livelihoods projects in need of help to access the internet to do their job searches.

Despite all of this, however, it was also clear from the project evidence that not quite everything, everywhere was getting worse. In one South Wales project area, for example, participants saw things more positively. As one put it, *'[t]here are more opportunities – they are there if you want them"*.[6] Or as another participant from the same area commented, *'[w]e got a new community centre that has encouraged more people to come. They are offering more courses now, though people need to be supported intensively to come to those courses'.*[7] Indeed, one North Wales participant neatly encapsulated how things could get both better and worse at the same time:

> *'Some services are worse because of cutbacks but some services are getting better too. I volunteer with [one] where we deal with substance abuse and homelessness. The services offered there continue to get better and include counselling, hot meals, needle exchange, social services, showers and lots of other help. We have also set up a support group.'*[8]

Perhaps the most closely relevant comment of all though, in terms of the context for the Livelihoods project, was made by another North Wales participant. As they observed, *'[a]lthough services are worse in a lot of ways I feel that I can access them a lot better than before because of the help I have'*. Or, as another participant put it, *'for me, services are better because I have more support to deal with the technicalities and difficulties of dealing with service providers'*.[9] In other words, service provision was a two-way street – the success of a service depended not just on what it could, or could not, offer, but also on what assets the participant had with which to access and make use of it.

So, while the context for the Livelihoods project undoubtedly formed one of the main challenges to it during its lifetime, the project itself, and the outcomes it was trying to achieve by working with both individuals and organisations, simultaneously formed a challenge back to that very context. As a result, even in the circumstances it was operating in, it was still possible for the project, and its participants and workers, to create value.

Whatever the *prima facie* achievements of the project noted in the table above, however, in order to put these achievements in context, it is necessary to go a stage further beyond the outcomes of the project, and quantify the actual value that those outcomes were or will be able to demonstrate. The cost of the Livelihoods project was just over £1.1 million over its

---

p.5.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid, pp.5-6.

9 Ibid, p.6.

3.5 year lifetime in terms of input costs. Without translating its outcomes into a format which would allow comparability within a wider context, such as that of other projects or approaches for improving the livelihoods of marginalised people, the case for the effectiveness of the Livelihoods project, and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, would be no further advanced than at the project's outset.

In relation to that wider context, the most widely understood framework for establishing something's comparable value is of course in notional pounds and pence. Oscar Wilde had a character in one of his plays complain as early as the late 19th Century about people who knew *"the price of everything and the value of nothing"*.[10] Unless a project, or an approach, can demonstrate its value, it will always risk being judged not on the quality of its outcomes, but instead on the one number that can be attached much more easily to just about any project: its price. It is within this final, very specific context that this value analysis takes place.

Methodology

Value analysis comprises three different types of value: fiscal, economic and social. When combined, these three types of value allow the overall value of a project, including its cost/benefit ratios and Social Return on Investment, to be assessed.

- Fiscal value derives from savings that would ordinarily accrue to the state. For example, 94 participants on the Livelihoods project who had previously been claiming out-of-work benefits gained employment as a result of their involvement with the project. Those participants therefore no longer required the same level of state financial support as they had previously been getting, as those benefits were replaced by wages, or by wages plus in work benefits (such as Working Tax Credit), which represented an overall fiscal saving.

- Economic value is created by savings or benefits that, though they do not accrue to the state because they result from things the state would not ordinarily be paying for, are nonetheless still of clear economic benefit. Volunteering, and the activities of volunteers, is a good example of this. Other examples might include the additional taxes paid by participants who had increased their incomes with the help of the project.

- Social value comprises the wider savings to the individual and society, particularly in terms of what it would cost society to provide the same outcome for that individual simply by increasing their income alone. Social value draws in particular on a technique known as the Wellbeing Valuation Approach, which takes large sample datasets, such as the British Household Panel Survey, or the Crime Survey for England and Wales, and uses them to calculate the effect of a particular outcome, be it gaining employment, regular volunteering or a general increase in confidence, on a person's wellbeing. This allows previously unmeasurable value to be quantified in a consistent manner, based on individuals' actual reported experience.[11]

[10] O. Wilde, Lady Windermere's Fan (Methuen, 1917; first published London, 1893), Act III, Scene I, available at http://www.gutenberg.org/files/790/790-0.txt [accessed April 2016].

[11] For further information on the Wellbeing Valuation Approach, see L. Trotter et al, 'Measuring the Social Impact of Community Investment: A Guide to using the Wellbeing Valuation Approach' (HACT, 2014),

In talking about these three types of value, the above definitions draw heavily upon the work of two organisations in particular. The first is the Treasury-led New Economy project, and its unit cost database. The project, which draws together more than 600 unit cost estimates that can be used to calculate the benefits of delivering proactive services and the potential savings in reactive costs that can be achieved, draws together the work of a number of different UK government departments, particularly in relation to fiscal and economic value.[12] The second is the HACT (Housing Associations Charitable Trust) Social Value Bank, created by HACT with the former Cabinet Office senior economist and head of cost-benefit analysis at the Department for Work and Pensions, Daniel Fujiwara (now at the London School of Economics). The Social Value Bank is the source of the social value element of this value analysis report, and therefore indirectly its use of the Wellbeing Valuation Approach noted above.[13]

In terms of general principles, this report also draws upon the work of Social Value UK, particularly insofar as it follows the cardinal rule the organisation shares with HACT and the Social Value Bank. In the words of its guidance, that rule runs as follows:

> *"Do not over-claim: only claim the value that organisations are responsible for creating. This principle requires reference to trends and benchmarks to help assess the change caused by the activity, as opposed to other factors, and to take account of what would have happened anyway. It also requires consideration of the contribution of other people or organisations to the reported outcomes in order to match the contributions to the outcomes."*[14]

Or as HACT themselves put it in their guidance for using the Social Value Bank:

> *"Particular care should be taken not to overclaim. The framework includes the option to apply an average measure of deadweight, i.e. the people whose wellbeing would have improved even without your activity, but you should take care not to inflate or overestimate your impact."*[15]

In the spirit of only claiming for the project the value that the project itself has been responsible for creating, this value analysis therefore applies the following qualifiers to the initial values derived from the sources outlined above, in order to arrive at its final values:

- Deadweight – or what the participant would have achieved by themselves, left to their own devices. In accordance with the principle of not overclaiming, this value analysis applied a minimum deadweight of minus 25% to all outcomes, meaning only a maximum attribution factor of 0.75, or 75%, could be applied to any given beneficiary, which was then reduced further by anything up to minus 100% depending on the case history of each participant.

---

particularly pp.10-13.

[12] For further information on the New Economy Unit Cost Database, see http://neweconomymanchester.com/our-work/research-evaluation-cost-benefit-analysis/cost-benefit-analysis/unit-cost-database [accessed April 2014].

[13] See http://www.hact.org.uk/social-value-bank for further information on the HACT Social Value Bank [accessed April 2014].

[14] J. Nicholls et al, 'A Guide to Social Return on Investment (The SROI Network, 2012), p.97.

[15] Trotter et al, p.18.

- Discounting – another set percentage applied to all outcomes, discounting takes into account the preference for value now (for example, in the form of the money invested in the programme) versus value (be it fiscal, economic or social) received in one or more years' time. The standard Treasury Green Book rate of minus 3.5% per year or part year subsequent to the first year has been applied to all outcomes in this value analysis.[16]

- Dropoff – another set percentage, this is applied to all outcomes lasting more than one year, in order to account for the way an outcome becomes less valuable over time. For example, if a beneficiary of the project went on a training course and increased their confidence as a result, the effect of that confidence boost would be greater three months after the course than it would be two or three years down the line. In line with Cabinet Office guidance, a dropoff rate of minus 10% per year or part year subsequent to the first year was applied to all outcomes in this value analysis.[17]

- Attribution – related to deadweight, this factor allows for the role of other organisations to be included in an assessment of outcome value. While there were relatively few instances where a participant's outcomes were wholly ascribable to a combination of their own efforts and the efforts of another organisation outside of the Livelihoods project, in those more common instances where another organisation or project did play a supporting but significant role, a factor of anything up to minus 50% was taken off the base attribution factor to take into account this external contribution.

- Duration – the average length of each participant's outcome(s) as recorded in the project's ongoing monitoring; while the standard maximum timeframe in most cost-benefit analyses or social return on investment studies is five years, this study applies a lower one, as 3.5 years is the maximum length of time for which its outcomes evidence is available, with the average length of a given outcome for the project as a whole at 3.23 years.[18]

- Substitution – substitution is a qualifier applied to finite goods, in other words, those outcomes where one person gaining them may result in another person losing them. While most of the outcomes generated by the project did not fall under this category, for those participants gaining employment, and therefore potentially displacing another job applicant from employment in doing so, a standard substitution range of either minus 10% or minus 20% was applied, depending on the nature of the employment gained.[19]

---

[16] 'The Green Book: Appraisal and Evaluation in Central Government' (HM Treasury, 2011), p.26.

[17] See A. Berry and C. Holden, 'Final Evaluation of the Family Employment Initiative' (Ekosgen/Coalfields Regeneration Trust, 2011), p.20.

[18] Where only incomplete information regarding duration of benefit is available, either because the benefit had not yet been lost by the project's end or because the participant left the project, the total duration for each project has been applied (3.5 years in the case of all projects but the Wallich, plus 3.2 years for the Wallich, which as a replacement project started slightly later than the other eight partner projects).

[19] D. Greenberg et al, 'Improving DWP assessment of the relative costs and benefits of employment programmes' (DWP Working Paper No. 100; Policy Studies Institute on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions, 2011), p.1. Note that substitution rates can vary widely, depending on the local labour market and the nature of the intervention affecting it (see, for example the tables on pp.16-17 of the Greenberg paper),

In relation to methodology, it is also important to note that the references to the value created by the project that follow are references to the notional cost savings or other value generated by the project, rather than to actual cash savings or already accrued economic or social value. This is because in terms of cashability, change has to happen at a certain scale for it to translate into actual monetary savings. As noted earlier, while increasing employment was not a specific stated outcome of the Livelihoods project, 94 participants on the project nevertheless got jobs as a result of their involvement with it. However, this would not be enough change to allow the DWP to shut down one of its job centres, let alone make significant cost savings across the nine partner areas – partly for this reason, the DWP has now commissioned a further project with Oxfam Cymru, which seeks to embed the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach more widely among its staff across Wales and look at what its benefits might be if applied on a larger scale.

More broadly, no external organisation, least of all one with the resources of even a larger voluntary sector organisation such as Oxfam, can ever be in a position to calculate the exact effect a particular change will have upon another organisation's budgets; therefore any assessment of value created can only be an estimate based on average unit costs, be it in relation to input and opportunity value foregone or output and outcome value created. Ultimately, if a statutory organisation wants to know exactly what a separate voluntary sector project has saved them, that is something it will have to work out for itself, and even then, as the Treasury's own guidance observes, *"it is important to note that the estimation of cashable savings is imprecise: estimates of what is cashable will be approximate and based on negotiations between commissioners and providers rather than solely on a formula or calculation. Cost-benefit analysis, therefore, informs discussions around how far benefits are cashable; it is not a substitute for negotiation".*[20]

With these caveats in place, the value analysis that follows is an assessment of the value created by the Livelihoods project based on the individual case histories of each of the project's participants. As well as an assessment of the nine-partner project as a whole, figures are provided for each of the individual partner projects.

Results

The following table details the project by project results of the value analysis of the Livelihoods project:

hence that paper's suggestion that value analyses may instead simply caution the reader about the existence of possible substitution effects in relation to supply side programmes (such as the Livelihoods project) or include it as part of the sensitivity analysis – see p.21 of the Greenberg paper for further discussion of this. In order to err on the side of caution, however, and avoid any potential for overclaiming, this value analysis includes the substitution qualifiers outlined above in instances where participants have gained employment as a result of the project. (My thanks to Jeremy Nicholls at Social Value UK for drawing my attention to this source.)

[20] 'Supporting public service transformation: cost benefit analysis guidance for local partnerships' (HM Treasury / New Economy / Public Service Transformation Network, 2014), p.17.

Figure 2: Value analysis (fiscal / economic / social) - statistical breakdown by project:

PROJECT	COST PER PROJECT (INPUT AND OPPORTUNITY COSTS)	AVERAGE UNIT COST PER PARTICIPANT (INPUT AND OPPORTUNITY COSTS)	AVERAGE NUMBER OF YEARS BENEFIT	AVERAGE ATTRIBUTION RATE (INCLUDING DEADWEIGHT & SUBSTITUTION)	GROSS FISCAL VALUE (AFTER DISCOUNTING, DROPOFF & DEADWEIGHT / SUBSTITUTION / ATTRIBUTION)	GROSS ECONOMIC VALUE	GROSS SOCIAL VALUE	GROSS COMBINED FISCAL / ECONOMIC /SOCIAL VALUE	NET COMBINED FISCAL / ECONOMIC / SOCIAL VALUE	VALUE RATIO (PER £ INVESTED)
ACC	141663.56	1935.56	3.31	0.56	45081.80	87838.78	345324.91	478245.49	336581.93	3.38
Caia Park	136929.96	2139.53	3.19	0.55	74179.68	69945.64	670206.87	814332.19	677402.23	5.95
DOVE	140539.08	1579.09	3.47	0.53	7774.19	30142.59	594752.74	632669.52	492130.44	4.50
Duffryn	142361.00	1187.98	3.21	0.52	573995.37	51149.93	291267.66	916412.96	774051.96	6.44
DVSC	134571.88	1818.54	3.03	0.50	87632.49	69957.44	397642.83	555232.76	420660.88	4.13
Glyncoch	143468.68	1863.23	3.26	0.56	32495.36	83890.36	320149.04	436534.76	293066.08	3.04
SRCDC	145255.24	1750.06	3.41	0.54	21697.45	38600.53	550853.57	611151.55	465896.31	4.21
Sylfaen	132356.52	2005.40	3.15	0.54	131873.73	83320.81	405845.56	621040.10	488683.58	4.69
Wallich	130605.64	2464.26	3.02	0.55	62128.19	38811.60	363539.36	464479.14	333873.50	3.56
TOTAL (ALL PROJECTS):	**1247751.56**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**n/a**	**1036858.26**	**553657.68**	**3939582.54**	**5530098.48**	**4282346.92**	**n/a**
AVERAGE	**138639.06**	**1860.41**	**3.23**	**0.54**	**115206.47**	**61517.52**	**437731.39**	**614455.39**	**475816.32**	**4.43**

(N.B. All figures in this table, save average number of years benefit and average attribution rate, are expressed in £ sterling at 2014/2015 prices.)

The sections that now follow discuss the results above in terms of the different types of value created, and the reasons behind the variations and common trends to be found in these figures.

a) Fiscal value

Looking first at the fiscal value generated by the Livelihoods project, the first thing to note is that the project virtually paid for itself in terms of fiscal value generated alone. Given that opportunity costs are not included in any purely fiscal value analysis, as they are not costs the state would be paying for, the total fiscal value of the project by itself came close to outstripping the total input costs for the project of £1,108.881.[21] At the same time, there were significant variations between projects. This is because fiscal value, or conventional limited type cost-benefit analysis, tends to say more about what an organisation does than how well it does it.

To take the two projects with the highest and lowest total fiscal value generated, for example, Duffryn Community Link generated the most fiscal value of all the partner projects. This was of course partly a reflection of the excellent outcomes it achieved. It was also, however, in very large part because of the particular types of beneficiaries it mainly works with – young families and children with especially deep-seated and complex needs. Its participants are almost exclusively among those in society most at risk of requiring unusually cost-intensive state interventions, such as secure mental health accommodation, foster care or prison. In this sense, the project provided a good example of why the UK Government has been willing to invest so much money in its 'Troubled Families' initiative in England, which aims to target exactly those types of families with which the Duffryn project primarily works.

The project generating the lowest fiscal value, by contrast, was the DOVE Workshop in Banwen. This was not any measure of its effectiveness versus the other projects. Indeed, it had the lowest participant unit cost of any of the nine projects, as it was able to work with a slightly higher number of participants than the other partners. This was primarily because of its location within a particularly well-used existing community centre and the comparative geographical isolation of the project and its participants, which made accessing support elsewhere more difficult compared to other projects. Rather, the reason for the DOVE project's relatively low score in terms of fiscal value generated was that it provided a lot of welfare benefit advice to its participants, with the project often being the crucial factor in enabling beneficiaries to access state benefits, such as Jobseekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance or Personal Independence Payments, Educational Maintenance Allowance, Working Tax Credit and so on, to which they were entitled, but either not aware of or had been misadvised elsewhere that they were ineligible. Purely in terms of fiscal value, all of these interventions actually cost the state money rather than saving it, hence the low seeming overall value generated by this particular project; if a cost-benefit or value analysis only takes fiscal value into consideration, then its results can be very misleading.[22]

[21] The Livelihoods project was funded through a mixture of BIG Wales, Oxfam GB and Unilever funding – for the exact breakdown of input costs from these sources, see 'Building Livelihoods & Strengthening Communities in Wales: Project Plan 2012 – 2015', p.64.

[22] There is, of course, generally always a cost and/or benefit of one kind or another to somebody somewhere with any decision or non-decision of this kind taken. For example, someone who, for whatever reason, has been denied (say) Jobseekers Allowance, will have to find some other way of supporting themselves in its absence. This could mean turning to a foodbank a loan shark or payday lender, or even some form of crime to fill the gap in their income. All of these outcomes might or might not eventually end up

b) Economic value

In order to capture a project's full value, its economic and social value need to be taken into consideration as well. However, to calculate economic value, not only the input costs of the monetary contributions made by funders to a project, but also the opportunity costs of its participants – in terms of the potential value of the time given by them to take part in the project, which could have been used instead to gain other economic or social benefit – need to be included.

In accordance with the golden rule of not overclaiming, these opportunity costs were therefore factored into the value analysis by introducing a specific opportunity cost amount for each participant. This cost in turn reflected the average number of hours a participant would spend with the project, expressed in terms of the value of those hours at the level of the minimum wage (as that is what the overwhelming majority of participants would be working for). Those participants who also became peer mentors on the project, and who therefore had to complete specific skills training by the project before working with participants, also had their cost of their training and volunteering activity expressed as an opportunity cost based on average time spent working and training with the project. These costs were set at average median wage, rather than minimum wage levels, in order to reflect the more skilled nature of the activity undertaken.

In terms of the individual projects, there was less variation in terms of economic value than there was in terms of fiscal value, essentially because all the projects were operating in areas of relative economic deprivation. As a result, none had an obvious advantage in terms of a kinder economic climate compared to the others. It is also the case that the relatively close final levels of overall deadweight/attribution (which ranged between 0.50 and 0.58), something again unsurprising given the relatively similar constellations of agencies present in each partner area, were also a factor here.

At the same time, some variation was discernible, primarily as a result of the different levels of volunteering potential available to each partner projects. It is no coincidence that the project with the highest economic value generated was the African Community Centre project in Swansea, which worked primarily with asylum seekers who could not take up employment, and who therefore had more time to offer as volunteers. It is likewise unlikely to be a coincidence that the next highest economic value created was by the Sylfaen project in Caernarfon, which worked primarily with young people outside of full-time work or education, or that the third highest total was created by the Glyncoch Community Regeneration project, where the majority of participants were non-working parents with children who were in primary school during the day.

Overall, even with opportunity costs as well as input costs taken into account, the combined fiscal and economic value of the Livelihoods project comfortably exceeded its costs. It is, however, perhaps the single most basic tenet of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach that there are far more types of capital making up a person's livelihood than

---

costing the state something, for instance, through the cost of criminal proceedings or through greater levels of stress or ill health increasing future use of the NHS or the benefit system. However, these outcomes are too far down the impact chain to be readily ascertainable in a value analysis, especially as the removal of a state benefit like JSA might equally result in a participant turning to substitutes that cost the state nothing, such as informal family support or support from foodbanks run on charitable donations from private citizens. As a result, these more distant secondary or tertiary outcomes of this kind of benefits withholding are not included in this value analysis, unless there is a direct record of a participant turning to a particular state service, or avoiding turning to a particular state service, as a result of the project's intervention.

economic or financial assets alone. It is these other types of capital and assets, and the value that can be created through them, that require the social value generated by a project to also be taken into account, if the full value of a project's outcomes is to be assessed.

c) Social value

The Livelihoods project, and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach that underpinned it, identified four different types of capital in addition to conventional financial capital (wages, benefits, loans and so on) that together make up a person's livelihood. These additional types of capital were as follows:

- Human capital: Skills, confidence, knowledge, qualifications – what a person has in their head that can help them improve and sustain their livelihood.
- Physical capital: A house or flat, means of transport, work clothes or equipment – the things a person can lay their hands on to help improve and sustain their livelihood.
- Social capital: Family, friends, other networks – the people that a person has around them who can help them improve and sustain their livelihood.
- Public capital: Local services, community groups, leisure amenities – the public facilities open to all that can help a person improve and sustain their livelihood.[23]

These types of capital were the source of the project's specific outcomes, which were also the result of extensive consultation carried out with hundreds of individuals and organisations in each of the nine partner areas. The main forms that consultation had taken were as follows:

- Focus groups in each of the areas with beneficiaries and other stakeholders.
- Face to face one-on-one interviews with beneficiaries and stakeholders in each area.
- Telephone interviews with beneficiaries and stakeholders in each area.
- Detailed consultation processes with all partners, including staff and board members.
- General research using relevant quantitative statistics, surveys and other data.[24]

Four outcomes for the project were agreed as a result of that process:

- Outcome 1: Marginalised people will develop skills and build confidence to improve their livelihoods and life chances.
- Outcome 2: Marginalised people from different backgrounds will be more involved in community activities.
- Outcome 3: Community groups will have a better understanding of the needs of different people and groups in their neighbourhoods and how to meet them.
- Outcome 4: Marginalised people will say that they receive more and better services that meet their needs.[25]

[23] See 'The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach: A Toolkit for Wales' (Oxfam GB, 2013), p.7, available at: http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-sustainable-livelihoods-approach-toolkit-for-wales-297233 [accessed April 2016].
[24] 'Building Livelihoods & Strengthening Communities in Wales: Project Plan 2012 – 2015', pp.22-24.
[25] 'Building Livelihoods & Strengthening Communities in Wales: Project Plan 2012 – 2015', pp.70-71.

In keeping with this holistic set of outcomes, the monitoring for the Livelihoods project from its outset had measured the progress of its participants in terms of distance travelled in each of these areas using repeat baseline surveys.[26] This allowed the progress of participants with baselines to be mapped onto the wellbeing valuation scale that forms the basis of the HACT Social Value Bank, and therefore the social value created by the project to be measured.[27]

It is only when these figures are put alongside the figures for a project's fiscal and economic value that a complete picture of the value a project has created can emerge. So, for example, the Caia Park project, which scored only middlingly in terms of fiscal and economic value, was the single biggest generator of social value among the projects. In part this was a result of the slightly more intensive approach it took to supporting its participants compared to the other projects (hence it had the highest unit cost per participant, and also the joint second highest attribution rate). At the same time, intensivity of support offered was not the only factor in the amount of social value generated by a project; the DOVE Workshop project, for instance, which scored relatively low in terms of fiscal and economic value, was the second highest generator of social value, simply because of the overall effectiveness of the interventions it made in improving its participants' wellbeing.

Again, with the cardinal rule of not overclaiming in mind, it is worth noting here that only improvements in wellbeing of a certain magnitude were counted as instances of the project generating social value. The outcomes listed in the Social Value Bank are divided into valuable and non-valuable outcomes, and only those outcomes in the top part of the wellbeing scale (broadly speaking, the top third to quarter of values) are considered by it to

[26] The social value for the project was calculated using the following indicators in the HACT Social Value Bank (correlated for age band and non-London geographical area): EMP 1401 – Full-time employment; EMP 1402 – Self-employment; EMP1403 – Part-time employment; EMP 1408 – Regular volunteering; ENV1407 – Able to obtain advice locally; ENV1409 – Feel belonging to neighbourhood; HEA1401 – High confidence (adult); HEA1406 – Feel in control of life; and FIN1406 – Financial comfort. The non-employment indicators are independent from each other, (as based on separate outcomes), and therefore can be used together in any combination, as per the Social Value Bank guidance (see L.Trotter, pp.12-13). The employment indicators were mutually exclusive, again as per the Social Value Bank guidance, with a beneficiary only able to achieve one of EMP1401, EMP1402 or EMP1403 while with the project. All of these indicators were chosen on the basis of being a close match for the wording of the project outcomes against which progress was recorded in the baseline surveys. The only indicator which had no explicitly comparable wording in the baseline surveys was HEA1406, but the notion of control over one's life is particularly important to the SLA; it is never possible for it or any other approach to eliminate entirely these external shocks; instead, the SLA seeks above all to build up is a beneficiary's feeling of control over their life, so that when those external shocks do happen, they are more resilient and better able to cope with them, because of that feeling of control. For this reason, as the Social Value Bank has no exact indicator quantifying the general value of a sustainably improved livelihood in general (as opposed to contributory but separate subcomponents, such as confidence or access to services), HEA1406 was the most relevant proxy to use in order to capture the broader social value of a more sustainable livelihood and, as per the HACT guidance usable with any of the other indicators listed above.

[27] In ascertaining social value, this value analysis uses the values outlined in the HACT Social Value Bank and its accompany guidance – see L. Trotter, 'Social Value Bank: Practice Notes – Update 2014' (HACT, 2014). The only substantive aspect where the methodology used in this value analysis departs from this is in using the values – subject to the dropoff, discounting and duration calculations qualifiers above – across more than one year. The guidance for the Social Value Bank does not offer its own methodology for calculating these factors, as it is designed for simple forecast-type analyses of social value, rather than complex summative analyses, and therefore does not offer assessment of outcomes of more than one year's duration in its standard methodology. As its guidance notes make clear, however, "[t]his does not prevent you using the values in other impact valuation methodologies that do permit the use of informed judgements around duration and drop off" (see L.Trotter, p.5), hence its values and methodology still usable as the basis for the social value calculations in this report.

be eligible. This accords with the similar scale used in the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach: known as the Livelihoods Ladder, the scale splits outcomes into sustainable and non-sustainable distance travelled, with only outcomes within the higher ‘Adapting or Accumulating’ stages of the ladder (equivalent to a score of 70% or more in one of the types of capital outlined above) counting as valuable.

Nevertheless, even with these restrictions applied to the figures, it is clear from those figures that social value was the type of value which the Livelihoods project was able to create best of all. The only exception to this was the Duffryn Community Link project, which produced the lowest amount of social value among the nine partner projects and less social value than fiscal value overall. This illustrates one of the key points to emerge from this value analysis, namely that the more an organisation had to deal with short-term, emergency-type situations and crises in its work, the less social value it was able to generate in the longer term; it is noticeable that the other lowest generators of social value were the African Community Centre, where participants were particularly subject to emergency situations arising as a result of asylum claims being turned down.

d) Overall value

It is therefore not to belabour the point to underline again how important the context for all of the figures in this value analysis is. Its overall value figures should never be used by themselves in isolation to draw conclusions about the efficacy of the individual projects related to one another, or even about the efficacy of the Livelihoods project as a whole, for that reason. Nevertheless, the overall ratios are clear about one thing: the project more than paid its way in terms of value generated, with an overall net value ratio of 4.43. Or, to put it in other words, the Livelihood project generated £4.43 in fiscal, economic and social value for every £1 that was invested in it, meaning that with an overall average net value per project created of £475,816, the benefits of the project far outweighed its costs, even taking into account the frequently intensive and resource and time-consuming nature of the work it involved.

Sensitivity Analysis

As with any kind of value analysis, all of the above values are based at least in part on averages and assumptions, rather than exclusively on individual beneficiary level data. While this particular value analysis has been able to draw on the individual case histories kept for every participant on the Livelihoods project, and therefore has explicit supporting evidence for all its outcomes, including specific baseline survey data where relevant, it has still had to make some assumptions in its use of base unit costs, in order to then turn those outcomes into comparable figures across all nine projects as a whole.

As a result, it is important to subject those figures to a process of sensitivity analysis. Sensitivity analysis is a process whereby the main assumptions in a value analysis are varied, in order to see what effect the assumptions being over, or indeed under, optimistic would have on the overall value created by a project.

According to Social Value UK's guidance, it is particularly important to look at the following areas:

- Quantity of outcomes;
- Value of non-financial inputs;

- Assumptions relating to deadweight, attribution and dropoff;
- Financial proxies.[28]

As recalculating every assumption in a value analysis would be a task almost as time-consuming as producing that analysis in the first place, by convention sensitivity analysis looks only at the highest value assumptions made in each of the four areas, as any other over or underassumptions will by definition be of less significance. Sensitivity analysis therefore ultimately produces not a single net value ratio figure, but a net value range.

The following sensitivity analysis therefore looks at four areas noted above in turn:

1. Quantity of outcomes: number of beneficiaries with improved livelihoods

The majority of the outcomes for the project were binary, and therefore easily ascertained and recorded by workers – either a participant had found a job, or a volunteering placement, or they had not. This was not true of all outcomes though, particularly those relating to social value, where the distance travelled data used produced graded changes rather than binary ones. While the individual distance travelled in each aspect of a beneficiary's livelihood, for example in relation to community involvement or access to services, was a simple and therefore reliable calculation for a participant to make, the assumption inherent in taking the distances travelled in relation to each individual type of asset, and then averaging between them to get the overall amount of livelihood progress made, was more complex, and therefore is the factor subject to sensitivity analysis in this category. (Value generated from sustainably improved livelihoods was also the fourth single highest source of value for the project, after the three sources analysed in the financial proxies section below.)

The use of repeat baseline surveys to qualify all participants counting towards this outcome means that it is unlikely that the total number is an overestimate. However, if it was the case that the numbers had been overestimated significantly, for example, by 25%, then the overall value ratio for the Livelihoods project would drop to 4.24. If, conversely, the lack of repeat baseline data for some participants who left the project early meant that the total number of participants with measurably improved livelihoods was a 25% underestimate, the overall value ratio for the project would rise to 4.61.

2. Value of non-financial inputs: opportunity costs to participants taking part in the project

Opportunity costs used on the project were averages rather than actual hours spent with a given participant. Throughout the project, the desire to monitor as many elements of it as possible had to be balanced with the need for workers and peer mentors to be able to carry out their work without having to constantly spend time accounting for their time. The nature of livelihoods support in particular, with its unpredictable workload and requirement to be able to deal with crisis situations at short notice, makes it inherently unsuited to intensive input time monitoring. As a result, the project took the decision early on not to record the specific amount of time spent with each participant in records of activities, but instead to focus in its monitoring workload on capturing what was done and the outcomes that activity had.

As a result, the opportunity costs for participants – the largest non-financial input included in the value analysis – are based on an estimated average number of hours of involvement

[28] Nicholls et al, p.69.

with the project per (non-peer mentor) participant valued at minimum wage (as ordinary involvement with the project as a participant required no particular skillset, in contrast to involvement as a peer mentor). This average number of hours was set at 16 per participant, with the estimated lower averages for non-intensive participants who formed the majority of project beneficiaries offsetting the estimated higher averages for the minority of project beneficiaries who were intensively supported. Applying value analysis nonetheless, however, to allow for the possibility that these elements did not quite offset, the overall value ratio for the Livelihoods project would drop to 4.19 were the average number of hours required per participant actually twice this amount. If, conversely, the average number of hours required per participant was instead half the estimated amount, the overall value ratio for the project would rise to 4.56.

3. Assumptions relating to deadweight, discounting and dropoff: combined deadweight / attribution rate of all participants

As noted earlier, the discounting, dropoff and substitution weightings used in this value analysis follow standard national rates and methodologies, so are unlikely to be either over- or underestimates. The combined deadweight/attribution rates applied likewise follow or sometimes even exceed external standards, such those in the HACT guidance.[29] While the discounting, dropoff and substitution quantifiers are all uniform flat rates, the deadweight/attribution rate varies according to each participant's case history, and is therefore a more subjective quantifier. With an overall average combined deadweight and attribution rate for the project of 0.54 (or in other words, an average of almost half of the outcomes value for each participant ascribed to factors other than the project), and with the use of the Social Value Bank figures, which include an already built-in deadweight amount, for the social analysis the value analysis for this project is unlikely to have overestimated its attribution rate. Nonetheless, in the unlikely event that the deadweight/attribution rates for the project did prove to be overoptimistic by a factor of 25%, then the overall value ratio of the project would fall to 3.32. If, on the other hand, the existing deadweight/attribution rates proved to be a 25% underestimate, then the overall value ratio of the project would rise to 5.53.

4. Financial proxies: employment (average fiscal value of a previously workless participant entering work), volunteering (average economic value of volunteering per hour volunteered) and increased confidence (average social value of high confidence - adult)

Last of all, the proxies with the highest gross average value per annum for each type of value were the three above. The fiscal cost of a previously workless participant entering employment is derived from the Treasury/New Economy unit cost database, which gives a unit per participant saving using Department for Work and Pensions figures. This figure is then subjected in this value analysis to further qualifiers dependent on the particular participant's case history. So, for example, the value of the outcome is greatly reduced if it only relates to part-time, rather than full-time, work. Further reductions are also applied if the work is paid at a level that would require the participant to still receive in-work benefits such as Working Tax Credit. While it is therefore unlikely that the employment element of any of the partner projects' total value figures could be overclaiming, as the largest

[29] In applying a minimum minus 25% deadweight/attribution factor to all beneficiary outcomes, plus further minus quantifiers on a case-by-case basis, this value analysis actually goes slightly further than the minus 19% average across different outcome types suggested in the HACT guidance – see L. Trotter et al, p.12. The scale used is also in line with Homes & Communities Agency guidance – see J. Dancer, 'Additionality Guide - Fourth Edition 2014' (HCA, 2014), p.18.

constituent part of that value, it is important to note that if it did prove to be overoptimistic by 25%, the overall value ratio for the Livelihoods project would fall to 4.32. If, by contrast, the employment value created by the project turned out to underrepresent the final situation by 25%, then the overall net value ratio would rise to 4.53.

The conventional way of calculating the economic value of volunteering is to multiply the average amount of hours volunteered by the median average wage. However, the types of work that Livelihoods participants undertook in their volunteering were overwhelmingly activities like shop work, basic goods or craft production or other manual tasks that would attract only the minimum rather than the median wage if done on a paid basis. For that reason, in order to guard against any potential overclaiming, this value analysis uses the minimum wage as its proxy, rather than the median wage for Wales; if the median wage were used instead, the net value ratio of the project would rise to 4:69. The volunteering figures also assumed 8 hours volunteering per week (in order to balance out those who only volunteered one morning or afternoon a week with those who volunteered on a much more regular basis), and 38 weeks volunteering in any given year (on the assumption that a volunteer would be likely to take around twice the combined annual or sick leave of an employed person). If either of these assumptions proved to be overoptimistic, and therefore overestimating the value of the volunteering generated by the project by half, its net value ratio would fall to 4.23.

Finally, in relation to proxies, the highest value factor in terms of annual gross social value per annum was high confidence, which constituted on average £72,730 of each partner project's net value. This proxy is part of the Social Value Bank, and therefore derives from large scale national datasets (as discussed earlier) which are unlikely to be wrong. However, if the proxy did turn out to have overestimated the social value of high confidence generated by the project by 25%, the overall value ratio for the Livelihoods project would fall to 4.22. Underestimating the value of high confidence generated by the project by 25%, by contrast, would see the Livelihoods project's net value ratio rise to 4.63.

Overall, therefore, looking across all four areas of the sensitivity analysis for this project, the highest point in the net value ratio range is 5.53 and the lowest point 3.32, with the majority of values within the 4.19 to 4.63 range. Applying sensitivity analysis therefore suggests that the specific value ratio of 4.43 resulting from the value analysis as a whole is well within the likely range of outcomes for the project, even when subject to significant potential variations within its most important constituent factors.

Conclusion

One of the most acute observations made in relation to the process of quantifying a project's value comes from the Treasury's guidance document, '*Supporting public service transformation: Cost benefit analysis guidance for local partnerships*'. Its observation that*"[c]ost benefit analysis is not an exact science and its outputs are a guide to decision-making not a substitute for thought"* is an important reminder to any reader, or writer, of a value analysis such as this one.[30]

Indeed, although there are three definite types of value – fiscal, economic and social – of a project that can be quantified, it should not be left out of the thought process that there is also a further type of value, which cannot be quantified. This fourth type of value is the

[30] 'Supporting public service transformation...', p.11.

human value of an intervention, or, to express it in a less positive way, the human costs of doing nothing.

One of the Livelihoods project's participants in South Wales was Hauka, a young man from North Africa.[31] An asylum seeker, he had originally come to the project simply for some help improving his IT skills, anticipating the day when he would be granted refugee status and therefore allowed to work. His Livelihoods worker found him a course, but quickly saw through the use of the SLA that Hauka had other needs. Working with Hauka to establish and then find solutions to those needs, she found him with help with his English and his work preparation skills in general. Everything was going well, and Hauka had just completed his IT course, when out of the blue his asylum claim was unexpectedly rejected.

These kind of events – what the SLA refers to as 'external shocks', things like bereavements, loss of a job, illness, relationship breakdown and so on – can and do happen to anyone and everyone, and no approach or project can legislate them out of someone's life entirely. But what a project like the Livelihoods project – or an approach like the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach – can do is build up a person's resilience, so that when those external shocks do happen, they are in the best possible position they can be in to cope with them.

This is what happened with Hauka. The sudden rejection of his asylum claim was a severe external shock. All of the progress he had made in previous months in terms of confidence and wellbeing was knocked back. He was left destitute and sofa surfing, with no recourse to public funds. The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach, however, always focuses on what a participant can do, not on what they cannot, and the same goes for the workers that use it; Hauka's Livelihoods worker could not get his rejected asylum claim overturned overnight. But what she could do was help him apply for some emergency housing, which she did and he was successfully rehoused.

The cost of helping Hauka to the project was just over £2,300 for the time he was with it. Yet whichever type of conventional value you look at – fiscal, economic or social – because of the shocks he received, the value generated by helping him would appear to be zero. However, when you ask Hauka himself what the value of the project was to him, you get a different answer. Because the worker was able to find him housing that allowed him to stay in the city he now knows, rather than having to move somewhere far away, and because staying allowed him to continue with his classes, his friends and the support networks he has built up, rather than having to start again somewhere else from scratch, the value of the Livelihoods project intervention to him was anything but zero. For Hauka, as he put it, it was simply *"priceless"*.

These are the kinds of issues that emerge when a project's outcomes are subject to value analysis. Indeed, what value analysis demonstrates most of all is the enduring relevance of the debate Oscar Wilde's characters were having in *Lady Windermere's Fan* all those years ago; in reply to the assertion by the character who observes that price is not the same as value, his interlocutor counters that the other character is a sentimentalist, *"who sees an absurd value in everything and doesn't know the market price of any single thing".*[32]

[31] Names and identifying details have been changed or removed in accordance with the beneficiary's request for anonymity.

[32] O. Wilde, Lady Windermere's Fan, Act III, Scene I.

It will always possible to disagree about value, which is why there will always be the temptation for many to reach for the easier, if much less revealing, metric of price. The success of the Livelihoods project, and its validation of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach upon which it is based, provides strong evidence that price is not the same as value, and that providing intensive support, however expensive it may seem compared to less intensive approaches, can create great rewards further down the line. The Livelihoods project has blazed a trail in its three-and-a-half years; now it remains to be seen how many others projects working with marginalised people will follow its example.