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ANALYSING POLICY FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

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CONTENTS

SUMMARY

The sustainable livelihoods (SL) framework has now been widely adopted, tested and adapted. There is an emerging consensus among users that, while it provides a valuable way of structuring micro-level studies of livelihoods, it gives little practical guidance on how to link the findings of such studies with macro-level issues and in particular, with policy analysis. As a result, there remains a wide gap between bottom-up livelihoods analysis and top-down policy analysis, with the findings of the former generally being seen as too context-specific to guide policy-making, and the findings of the latter generally being seen as too highly-aggregated to reflect the complexity of livelihoods. This report argues that it is possible to use the SL approach as a starting-point for bridging this gap, but that doing so requires three elements which have so far been lacking: a model of the interactions between policy and livelihoods, which is consistent with the SL framework; a clearer understanding of the role of social and political capital within the framework; and an approach to policy analysis, structured to ensure that it can both draw on and feed into SL analysis. In presenting and discussing an outline of each of these three elements, the report draws on the academic social capital and policy process literatures, as well as on lessons from recent experience of using the framework in applied research. Theoretical discussion is, however, kept to a minimum, since the principal intention is to provide a practical guide to identifying entry points for policy-focused interventions to promote sustainable livelihoods. Detailed guidance for application of the concepts discussed in the report to SL-focused policy analysis is presented in the Annex, structured around a checklist of key questions and illustrated with case material from studies carried out by the IDS Sustainable Livelihoods Programme in Ethiopia and Mali.

1 INTRODUCTION

The complex of ideas, principles and analytical tools which has been labelled the 'Sustainable Livelihoods Approach' has acquired an extraordinary prominence in development thinking and activity within a very short time.[1] A number of different 'SL approaches' have emerged (Ashley and Carney 1999: 9), but most rely on analytical frameworks which owe a significant debt to the version developed by the IDS Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (Scoones 1998) and subsequently adopted in slightly modified form by the UK Department for International Development (DFID 2000). As bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental development agencies have struggled to operationalise the SL approach, attention has increasingly focused on the potential of analysis based on the framework to guide engagement with policy issues. In the process, a number of stumbling-blocks have become evident, leading some users to question the value of the SL framework as a vehicle for analysing the interactions between policy and livelihoods.

This report sets out to examine the challenges inherent in efforts to link bottom-up livelihoods analysis with the traditionally top-down business of analysing policy processes, and to propose a number of ways of responding to these challenges. Although the discussion engages with some of the issues confronted by attempts to apply the framework to analysis of the livelihood resources, strategies and outcomes of poor people in developing countries, it is not about livelihoods analysis *per se*. Investigation of livelihoods and the specific issues affecting their sustainability (on which there is a substantial and rapidly-growing literature[2]) is instead taken as given. The focus of this report is on the additional analytical processes that are necessary to ensure that the insights generated by such studies can be used to help decision-makers to identify entry points for policy-based interventions to promote sustainable livelihoods. This emphasis on applied policy analysis, oriented towards the design of interventions, determines the approach of the report. While it attempts to cover the essential theoretical ground with a certain amount of rigour, detailed discussion of the academic literature on each point raised is avoided wherever possible.

Sections 2 to 5 of the report explore the central issues that confront attempts to analyse the links between policy and the livelihoods of poor people, and between poor people themselves and the policy process. Section 6 emphasises the practical application of the concepts used, outlining a way of structuring policy analysis for SL which focuses on asking a number of key questions and using the answers to identify appropriate entry points for intervention. This is detailed further in the Annex, which outlines possible methodologies for addressing each question and illustrates the issues raised with case material from research carried out by the IDS Sustainable Livelihoods Programme in Mali and Ethiopia.

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[1] The popularisation of the concept of 'sustainable livelihoods' is generally attributed to a seminal paper by Chambers and Conway (1992), though as one of the authors of that paper has pointed out, the idea of 'sustainable livelihood security' as a desirable development outcome was first mooted by the Brundtland Commission (Robert Chambers, pers comm). However, the recent intensification of interest in the approach can be traced to initiatives undertaken in the second half of the 1990s by the NGOs CARE and OXFAM, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

[2] See, for example, Brock 1999, Carswell *et al.* 2000 and DFID 2000.

Since entry points for policy-based intervention may be located anywhere between the formulation of policy and its implementation and, since it is the way policy is implemented as much as its formal content which determines its ultimate effect on livelihoods, the definition of 'policy' used in this report is necessarily a broad one. The term is understood here to refer both to the determination of a course of public (that is, government) action and to the process of putting it into practice. Indeed, the translation of policy into practice is itself an inseparable part of policymaking, which has been described by Walt as '*a series of more or less related activities and their intended or unintended consequences for those concerned*, rather than a discrete decision' (Walt 1994: 41, emphasis in the original). 'Policy analysis', by extension, is used in this report to refer to investigation of both policy content and policy process, linked by an examination of the institutions, organisations and actors which influence policy measures from their formulation to the point where they impinge upon people and their livelihoods.

This approach is supported by much recent work on the policy process, which in emphasising the multiplicity of decisions, actors and interests involved has demonstrated that the world of policy is as complex and dynamic as the micro-level reality within which poor people themselves map out their livelihood strategies.[3] SL analysis, defined as the process of identifying the resources and strategies of the poor, the context within which they operate, the institutions and organisations with which they interact and the sustainability of the livelihood outcomes which they achieve, provides a way of picking a path through this complexity at the micro level. The aim of this report is to outline an approach to analysing policy which complements SL analysis both in its methodology and in its principles, with pride of place going to the principle that policymaking for sustainable livelihoods must necessarily be responsive to the perspectives and priorities of the poor themselves.

2 POLICY ANALYSIS AND THE SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS FRAMEWORK

A key strength of the SL approach is held to be its potential for 'linking the micro to the macro', that is, for establishing connections between local realities and the level at which policies intended to change these realities are formulated.[4] However, efforts to realise this potential face a number of significant obstacles. These derive above all from the fact that the analytical value added of the SL framework, in the various forms in which it has been adopted by researchers, NGOs and donor agencies, is most apparent at the micro level. The framework offers some pointers for efforts to translate micro-level insights into broadly-relevant policy recommendations, but little in the way of systematic support for such efforts.[5]

Policymaking depends on generalisations,[6] and generalising from SL research faces the same difficulties which beset other examples of what Booth *et al.* (1998) term 'contextual methods'. SL analysis is by definition

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[3] Keeley and Scoones, for example, emphasise that 'policy comes from many directions, and implementation can be as much about agenda-setting and decision-making as execution of decisions' (Keeley and Scoones 1999: 4).

[4] See, for example, Carney 1998 and UNDP 1998.

[5] See Brock 1999 for a lucid discussion of this issue.

[6] Sometimes in the shape of 'hard' conclusions from statistical analysis, but often in the form of 'stories' or 'narratives' which can themselves shape the design and use of supposedly objective forms of analysis (Keeley and Scoones 1999; Brock 1999).

'contextual' (since the specific context is an integral part of the framework), and its findings will therefore tend to bear out the general rule that there is a trade-off between accurately reflecting complex local conditions and generating data which can be easily aggregated and/or compared with information from other localities. Though some attempts have been made to apply the approach at larger scales of analysis,[7] it is no accident that most SL studies have been carried out at the district or locality level. Researchers may be able to demonstrate conclusively that a given policy has (or has not) influenced particular aspects of livelihoods at this level, but the context-specific nature of such findings means that any attempt to use them to suggest patterns at the regional or national level may be laid open to accusations of inadequate or biased sampling. Recent work on combining contextual and non-contextual methods has indicated some ways to overcome these difficulties, which are discussed in Section 6. Nevertheless, the challenges remain significant, and this has deterred the authors of many SL studies from even attempting to draw out the broader policy implications of their findings.

Faced with the difficulty of generalising about policy content, SL researchers have tended to opt instead for generalising about policy process. The implicit argument is that if findings are too nuanced or locality-specific to be used for policy-making, then the problem lies not with the findings (which accurately reflect a complex reality) but rather with the way in which policy is made.[8] According to this argument, the solution is therefore to ensure that policymaking takes adequate account of complexity and diversity, by moving away from closed and centralised approaches towards participation and decentralisation.[9] Those SL researchers who have tried to address policy issues directly (rather than taking the more common approach of simply noting that they represent a problematic area on which more work needs to be done) have therefore tended not only to emphasise process rather than content, but also to be prescriptive rather than analytical.[10]

Participation and decentralisation may be clearly desirable characteristics for policy processes, but an extensive literature has already documented the fact that they are also far from unproblematic, and that there is a need for a better understanding of what they mean in specific policy contexts. A prescriptive approach based on blanket recommendations that policymaking should be more participatory and decentralised fails to capitalise on the potential of SL analysis to provide insights into the current situation with regard to participation and decentralisation, as well as to aid identification of appropriate entry points for interventions to support more participatory and decentralised policymaking. In neglecting this potential, it lays SL analysis open to the charge that it is not only too specific to be useful on policy content, but also too general to be useful on policy process.

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[7]   See Turton 2000a,b for examples of SL analysis aggregated to the state and national levels in India and Cambodia respectively.

[8]   As Brock puts it, 'while the process of policymaking remains as closed as it often is, the utility of providing credible research findings which reflect local complexity may have a limited affect on policy making' (Brock 1999: 18).

[9]   Ashley and Carney, for example, have claimed that SL approaches can 'encourage a more people-focused approach to policy… This includes highlighting the need for broader consultation on policy issues, particularly with the poor' (Ashley and Carney 1999: 18).

[10]   Thomson (2000), for example, identifies 'general desirable characteristics of…SL-friendly development policy', and outlines what 'SL-friendly policy processes' would look like. Goldman (2000) emphasises the roles which different actors should play.

The purpose of this report is to argue that this need not be so, and to demonstrate that SL-focused policy analysis does have the potential both to generate widely-applicable findings about policy content and to guide the design of well-targeted interventions in the policy process. Realising this potential, however, requires analysts to combine a clear commitment to the core values and assumptions of the SL approach[11] with a frank recognition of the limitations of the SL framework itself (Figure 1) as a tool for understanding policy.

Figure 1 The sustainable livelihoods framework[12]
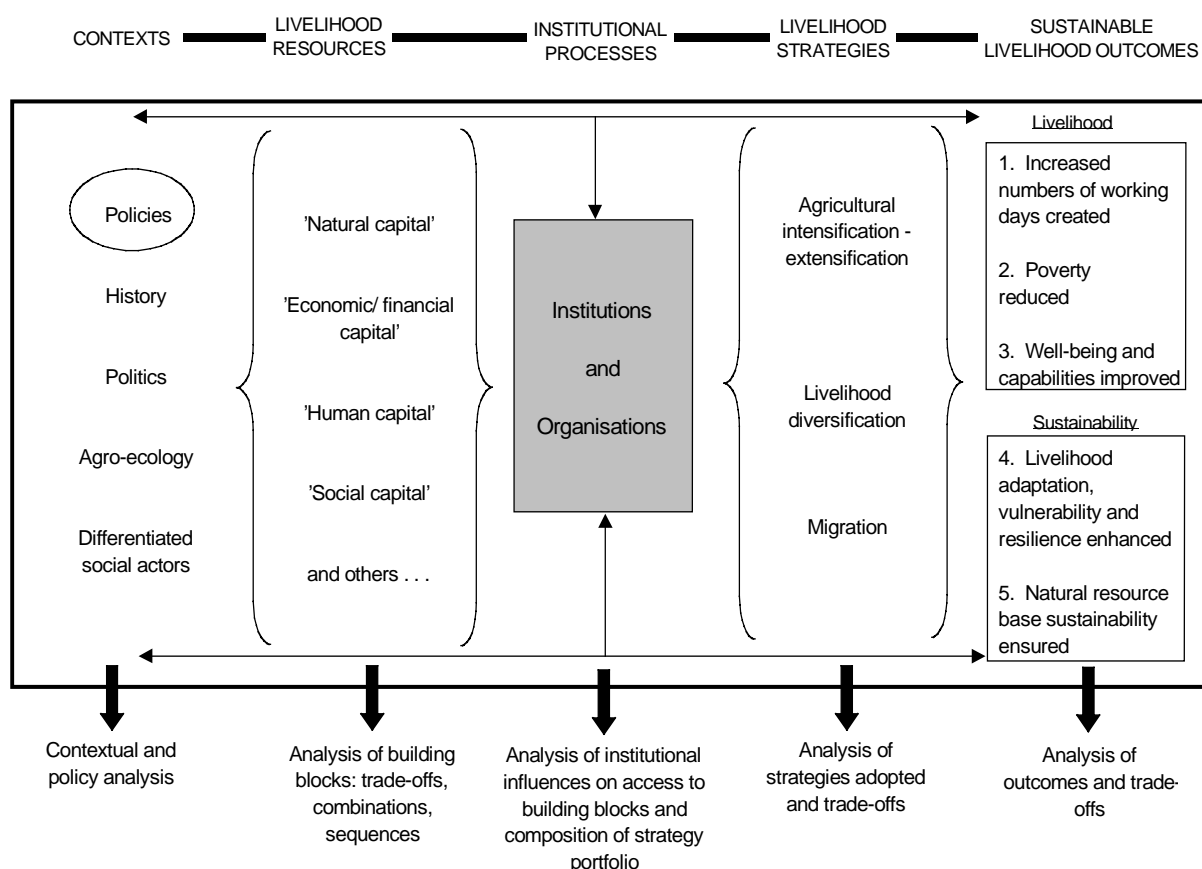
Analysis using the SL framework enables a disaggregated understanding of the resources available to, and the strategies pursued by, different individuals, households and social groups within a particular context. Policy is conceptualised as a part of this context (Scoones 1998, Goldman *et al.* 2000) or confined to the 'grey box' of factors which mediate the ability of different groups to pursue particular livelihood strategies, variously labelled 'Institutions and Organisations' (Scoones 1998), 'Transforming Structures and Processes' (Carney

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[11]   As summarised by Ashley and Carney (1999: 7), these centre on the assertion that poverty-focused development activity should be 'people-centred', 'responsive and participatory', 'multi-level', 'conducted in partnership', 'sustainable' and 'dynamic', as well as being 'underpinned by a commitment to poverty eradication'.

[12]   This is the original framework set out by Scoones (1998) and used to guide the research carried out by the IDS Sustainable Livelihoods Programme. Modified versions have been produced by (among others) Carney 1998; Neefjes 1999; Toufique 1999; Goldman 2000 and Nicol 2000, but these have generally involved changes of emphasis or terminology rather than removal or replacement of the basic elements of the framework.

1998), 'Policies, Processes and Structures' (Neefjes 1999) or 'Policies, Institutions and Processes' (DFID 2000).

Both approaches afford insights into the reality of policy as experienced by poor and vulnerable people, which are absent from the conventional policy analysis literature. This tends, by its very nature, to focus on the actions and motivations of policy élites and implementing agency bureaucrats, rather than the perspectives of those ultimately affected by policy choices.[13] Including policy in the list of powerful contextual factors which are beyond the control of local people highlights the remoteness of policy processes from the poor. Identifying policy as an element of the 'transforming structures and processes' which mediate people's livelihood strategies and access to resources, by contrast, draws attention to the fact that poor people are constantly interacting with institutions and organisations that belong to the world of policy, while emphasising that this interaction takes place amid a multiplicity of 'informal' structures and processes largely invisible to policymakers.

Valuable as these insights are, neither approach to incorporating policy into the SL framework offers much practical help in designing processes of analysis capable of guiding policy-focused interventions to support sustainable livelihoods. In fact, the framework's usefulness as a tool for policy analysis is constrained by three specific limitations. The first is that by including policy alongside other contextual or institutional factors, it fails to recognise the distinctive ways in which policy (as opposed to, e.g. rainfall or gender divisions of labour) influences livelihood strategies and outcomes. The second is that by concentrating on the contribution of 'social capital' to livelihood strategies rather than its relationship with power and empowerment, it does not leave room for exploring the opportunities and constraints for poor people themselves to engage in the policy process. The third is that by putting people and their livelihood resources and strategies at the centre of analysis, it limits the space for examining policy in its own right, since this would necessarily imply a 'policy-centred' rather than a 'people-centred' approach.

Addressing each of these limitations[14] requires a different strategy. The first requires us to develop a model of 'how policy affects livelihoods' which is compatible with the logic of the framework, so that the findings of SL analysis and policy analysis can be usefully combined within a single frame of reference. The second requires us to go back into the framework and ensure that it takes adequate account of people's political resources, in examining the assets on which they are able to draw. The third requires us to recognise that, since policy analysis for sustainable livelihoods must include investigation of higher-level processes operating outside the scope of the 'people-centred' SL framework, it must therefore necessarily be a distinct process from a livelihoods analysis itself, albeit one that is designed to complement rather than substitute for bottom-up SL analysis.

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[13] For an influential example of this approach, see Thomas and Grindle 1990.

[14] It should be stressed that these are 'limitations' only in the sense that they restrict the usefulness of the SL framework as a tool for policy analysis; the 'people-centredness' of the framework, for example, is integral to its conception and in most circumstances represents a strength rather than a limitation.

The next three sections of this report address each strategy in turn. The three are then combined in a suggested sequence for carrying out SL-focused policy analysis alongside livelihoods analysis, with a checklist of key questions. The concluding section also examines the potential for establishing the broad relevance of policy recommendations by combining context-specific SL analysis with aggregated data, and discusses some of the practical issues involved in identifying entry points for policy-focused interventions to promote sustainable livelihoods.

3 POLICY AND LIVELIHOODS

There is substantial literature on the impact of policy (particularly macroeconomic policy, and above all structural adjustment) on livelihoods. However, despite the use of standardised econometric techniques and a common emphasis on aspects such as supply response to price changes, the findings of these studies have tended to highlight the specificities of each country or sectoral case, rather than permitting the conclusive identification of general trends (Ahmed and Lipton 1997). From livelihoods perspective, such studies tend to be problematic on two counts: (1) their reliance on aggregate indicators such as demand and output levels means that they do not help to identify the particular impacts of policy on different groups (and specifically on different poor and vulnerable groups), and (2) their assumption of a simple cause-and-effect relationship between policy changes and changes in livelihoods ignores the multiplicity of contextual and institutional factors which feature so strongly in SL analysis.

However, there are also limitations on the usefulness of current approaches to livelihoods analysis for guiding assessment of policy impacts. As noted above, one such limitation is the difficulty of generalising from highly contextualised findings such as those typically generated by SL studies. Approaches to overcoming this problem are discussed in Section 6. Another, and potentially more serious, limitation is the fact that the SL framework itself seems to suffer from a certain amount of confusion over exactly how policy affects livelihoods, as evidenced by the tendency to shift policy to and fro between the 'context' and 'institutions and organisations' boxes in different adaptations of the framework. At the root of this confusion is that the framework implies that the different contextual and institutional factors, including policy, will have a direct influence on livelihood resources, strategies and outcomes. In reality, the essential ingredient in any attempt to analyse policy impacts must be an understanding that policy operates in an indirect way, that is, that its influence on livelihoods is always mediated by institutions and organisations.

The importance of these mediating structures has already been noted by policy analysts. Thomson, for example, points out that 'policies, whether macroeconomic or more sectoral and structural in nature, are channelled through meso structures', and goes on to distinguish between 'country-wide' and 'geographically-specific' meso structures (Thomson 2000: 9). As Thomson herself notes, however, even 'country-wide' meso structures such as markets are likely to vary according to local conditions. Completing the link between policy and livelihoods requires us to acknowledge that mediating structures are not homogeneous, and that it is the extent and nature of the presence of such structures in different local settings which will actually determine how (and indeed whether) they 'channel' different elements of policy to people in those settings.

The distinction between 'country-wide' and 'geographically-specific' meso structures could more usefully be adapted to allow us to distinguish between policies which are channelled through institutions and those which are channelled through organisations. The definition of 'institutions' as distinct from 'organisations' has long been contested territory;[15] it is not the purpose of this report to rehearse the academic debate, but rather to suggest that it can be useful to distinguish between the two in attempting to analyse how policy affects livelihoods (Box 1). To this end, the IDS Sustainable Livelihoods Programme has followed North's (1990) distinction between institutions as 'rules of the game' and organisations as 'players', which allows us to define institutions as 'established sets of rules, norms and patterns of behaviour' (Scoones 1998: 12).

Institutions, of course, do not and cannot exist independently of people and the relations between them, which, given differences in interests and in the power of different groups to pursue those interests, tend to be characterised by contestation as much as by consensus. The IDS approach acknowledges this by drawing on the 'structuration' theory of Giddens (1979) to emphasise that 'institutions are also dynamic, continually being shaped and reshaped over time…[and] part of a process of social negotiation, rather than fixed "objects"' (Scoones 1998: 12). Since people and organisations (as 'players') are continually contesting and adapting the 'rules of the game', it is logical to expect policy to suffer a number of influences as it makes its way through what Cousins (1997) has called the 'messy matrix' of institutions and organisations. To illustrate this, we can extend Thomson's metaphor to suggest that meso structures 'channel' policy much as irrigation systems channel water: the system's controllers may release a defined amount of water from the dam and rely on engineering and gravity to get it to its assigned destination, but the quantity and quality of water which actually reaches the individual farmer will be influenced not only by external factors such as evaporation and rainfall, but also by the actions of others who may divert or pollute the water along the way. It therefore makes sense to think of institutions and organisations as mediating policy, rather than simply transmitting it, and to acknowledge that the outcome of this process of mediation is likely to vary considerably for different places and groups.

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[15] As Abercrombie *et al.* (1994) put it, 'the concept of institution is widely used in sociology, though often without precise specification…different schools of sociology treat it in different ways' (Abercrombie *et al.* 1994: 217). Even more significant than the differences within disciplines are those between disciplines, in particular between anthropology and economics.

Box 1

Policy types and mediating structures

The impact on people and their livelihoods of different types of policy is conditioned by the different structures which 'channel' or mediate each policy. These structures can be classified as either **institutions** or **organisations**. Key institutions include markets and formal legal codes, as well as the media.[16] Key organisations include government service delivery and law enforcement agencies, as well as private-sector or civil society groups which deliver services under contract to government. **Macroeconomic**, **regulatory** and **rights-based** policies operate primarily through institutions. The former type of policy will typically be transmitted through markets: devaluation increases the price of imported goods in the inputs market, while interest-rate rises will increase the cost of borrowing in the formal-sector credit market. The latter two types of policy will typically involve changes in the law or in official rules governing access to resources: land tenure reform will extend or restrict rights of access to 'natural capital', while social assistance policy may extend different groups' entitlement to transfers and even introduce new rights, such as the right to paid work which underpins some employment guarantee schemes.[17] Rights-based policies will also tend to depend on the media to ensure that people are aware of their rights and can claim them. Other types of policy operate primarily through organisations. **Governance reform** policies (such as decentralisation) change the allocation of resources and responsibilities among different branches and/or levels of government, or between government and the private sector. **Organisational change** policies alter the allocation of resources and responsibilities within a particular government organisation, such as a sectoral ministry. Some policies may operate through both institutions and organisations: an example would be a forest policy which both changed the law on access to state-owned forests and devolved decision-making to front-line forestry officers. Where a policy operates through institutions, its impact on livelihoods will be conditioned by the extent to which people operate within those institutions (for example the extent to which they conduct transactions in the market or consider themselves to be bound by formal rather than customary law). Where it is channelled through organisations, the impact of policy will depend on the extent and nature of people's interactions with those organisations (for example the size of their presence on the ground and the degree of fear or trust which they inspire). In addition, the shape in which a given policy reaches people and, indeed, whether it reaches them at all, will be significantly influenced by the internal politics and priorities of the organisation through which it is channelled.

Although increasing attention has been paid to the role of organisations (and particularly government bureaucracies) in influencing policy implementation,[18] the policy literature has largely neglected the importance of mediating institutions. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that the vast majority of this literature has been produced by analysts writing in a European or North American setting (Keeley and Scoones 1999: 3), who have been able to ignore such institutions precisely because in these settings they are so efficient at transmitting policy. Where market integration, media penetration and reliance on the formal legal system are near-universal, it is reasonable (though not always correct) simply to assume that policy, once formulated, will be transmitted to the populace with a minimum of delay and distortion.

This is emphatically not the case in poorer countries, and particularly in the more isolated regions where a large proportion of the world's poor people are to be found. Here the media may be virtually non-existent, with television inaccessible, newspaper readership negligible and even access to information from the radio limited to a minority of people (usually wealthier men) who can speak the national language. Market failure may be the norm rather than the exception, as a small number of traders fix prices at artificially low levels or impassable roads prevent producers from taking their crops to town for sale. The formal legal system may be

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[16]   The media provides a good case of the difficulty surrounding the definition of 'institutions', since it obviously consists of a number of different structures rather than a set of rules. It can be argued, however, that 'the media' is an institution in the same sense as 'the market'; that is, it consists of many players operating under a single set of conventions.

[17]   See Davies and Hossain (1997: 23) for a discussion of one such example, the Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme.

[18]   See Keeley and Scoones (1999) for a review of the literatures on 'bureaucratic politics' and the role of 'street-level bureaucrats', and Joshi (1997) for a case study of front-line workers influencing not only implementation but formal policy itself.

rendered inaccessible by corruption, distance or cultural barriers, and its place taken by customary systems whose principles on everything from property rights to the status of women may be very different from those enshrined in the national Constitution. Even where 'country-wide' institutions are dominant, it is often unwise to assume that policy changes will be transmitted easily or without distortion. Mosley (1999) has documented how in Malawi (a country with relatively high levels of market integration) the segmented nature of the financial market meant that the impact of macroeconomic policies designed to increase credit availability was severely distorted[19]; while Tucker (1998), has reported that in Ethiopia (a country with a traditionally strong state presence) many of the judges responsible for upholding the new Constitution still had not received a copy of the text four years after it was promulgated.[20]

It should be clear from the discussion thus far that while policy itself needs to be analysed outside the SL framework, an emphasis on the role of institutions and organisations enables us to link policy analysis and SL analysis. While the former should identify which institutions and organisations serve as channels or mediating structures for a given element of policy, the latter should identify whether those institutions and organisations are present at the local level and how local people interact with them. The two forms of analysis can thus be seen as converging on the 'grey box' in which the SL framework locates the institutions and organisations with which people interact in pursuit of their desired livelihood outcomes.

The SL framework makes it clear that institutions and organisations can support or constrain livelihoods by affecting people's access to resources, their ability to pursue certain activities and the returns they can expect from those activities. In a SL context, policy should therefore be understood to affect livelihoods by changing, reinforcing or reducing the supportive or constraining role played by existing institutions and organisations, or by introducing new institutions and organisations to the local arena.[21]

At the same time, the framework emphasises the importance of choices and strategies, and thus highlights the fact that people are not simply passive victims or beneficiaries of policy. Livelihood adaptation is a conscious process, though in practice people's ability to choose how they respond may be so severely constrained (by lack of resources, by an unfavourable context or by the operation of institutions and organisations not affected by policy) that it takes the form of coping or 'negative adaptation' (Davies and Hossain 1997).

Combining these insights enables us to formulate a model of how policy affects livelihoods, which is consistent with the SL framework. This can be summarised as follows: **policy operates through specific institutions and organisations to influence people's choice of livelihood strategies, by changing their perception of the opportunities and constraints which they face in pursuing different strategies, and**

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[19]   Mosley goes on to conclude that 'the assumption of a unitary economy, which is required to sustain the stock arguments for financial de-repression, is particularly dangerous in Africa' (Mosley 1999: 11).

[20]   This may be an extreme example of a wider tendency observed in Ethiopia, whereby policy documents tend to circulate extensively among decision-makers in draft form without ever being formally published and distributed (James Keeley, pers comm).

[21]   For example: The removal of police powers from a forestry service can reduce its ability to block the forest-dwellers' access to natural resources. The downsizing of a state agricultural extension service can reduce its ability to deliver agricultural inputs. Official approval for microcredit programmes can allow NGOs to move in and develop schemes with the potential to improve poor people's access to financial resources.

the returns which they can expect from them.[22] It is this model which underpins the approach to analysing policy for SL, outlined in Section 6.

4 SOCIAL CAPITAL, CLAIMS AND LIVELIHOODS

As the discussion in the previous section has shown, the same institutions and organisations through which policy influences people are themselves the focus of contestation and negotiation, and therefore subject to influence by people. The key question is which people, since clearly not all groups have the same capacity to exercise influence. This is the domain of power and politics, an area where some observers have found the SL approach lacking in clarity (Ashley and Carney 1999: 35). Although power issues were highlighted in the original presentation of the SL framework (Scoones 1998: 12), in subsequent applications they have tended to remain latent rather than explicit.[23] While the framework emphasises the importance of people's own agency (however constrained) in determining responses to policies, it does not provide any guidance in attempts to understand how far this agency extends to influencing institutions and organisations, and through them the implementation (and even the formulation) of policy. This is particularly relevant in view of the expectation (discussed in Section 2) that SL analysis should help to identify entry points for strengthening poor people's participation in the policy process.

At the root of the apparent failure of much livelihoods analysis to address issues of power and politics is the understanding of 'social capital', which the framework identifies as one of the key resources on which people draw, in constructing their livelihood portfolios. As Grootaert (1998) points out, the concept has been applied to patterns of social relationships at three levels: horizontal links (or norms of reciprocity) between household, group or community members, vertical links between more and less powerful people or groups and diffuse links between people and groups in society.[24] The latter definition of social capital, which is generally used to describe public goods such as well-functioning markets and the rule of law, clearly belongs in the 'institutions and organisations' box of the sustainable livelihoods framework. The concept of social capital as embodied in horizontal social networks and solidarity relationships, on the other hand, closely fits with the understanding of the term as it is most commonly applied in SL analysis, and is also the approach which has found most favour with development agencies, notably the World Bank (Edwards 1999). The second definition of social capital, which identifies it with vertical links between people and groups unequally endowed with power and resources, has, however, been largely ignored by most SL analysis.

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[22] It should be noted that the emphasis is on **perceived** opportunities, constraints and returns. Perceptions are shaped both by direct observation and experience and by norms and values, that is, institutions. Exactly **how** institutions mediate perceptions is a vast and complex field, where a range of ideas including false consciousness (Freire), hegemony (Gramsci) and discourse (Foucault) could come into play. This paper does not even attempt to cover this field.

[23] Exceptions include the IDS research in Bangladesh (Box 2) and the experience of SL analysis in India described in Turton (2000a).

[24] Grootaert (1998) identifies the first with the work of Putnam (1993), the second with that of Coleman (1988) and the third with that of North (1990) and Olson (1982).

This results in a focus on poor people's ability to make claims on other equally (or slightly less) poor people, rather than their ability to lay claim to support from centres of authority in general and government in particular. That this should be the case is all the more surprising in view of the theoretical ancestry of the SL approach. Sen, who most originally and forcefully emphasised the importance of intangible assets in reducing vulnerability, emphasised the importance of claims to (legal) rights (Sen 1984). His work underpinned the 'environmental entitlements' approach (Leach, Mearns and Scoones 1997) which in turn informed the development of the SL framework (Scoones 1998). Sen's concept of entitlements was also refined in an influential article by Swift (1989), which has become an essential reference in the 'asset-vulnerability' literature (Moser 1998) which itself has clearly influenced the SL framework's model of livelihood resources as 'capitals'. In this article, Swift stresses the importance of 'claims on government' in addition to 'local community support', and notes the distinctive relevance of the former to policy (Swift 1989: 14).

Neglecting the vertical dimension of social capital leaves open the possibility that SL analysis could generate findings, which are, at best incomplete and, at worst misleading. Attempts to produce a composite 'score' for this type of asset, using models such as the 'pentagon' suggested in DFID's SL guidance (Carney 1998, DFID 2000) could, for example, treat one group with little commitment to horizontal reciprocity but a successful track record of demanding support from a responsive government agency, and another with well-developed norms of mutual solidarity but no ability to press claims on those in authority as identically endowed with 'social capital'. Unless SL analysis incorporates an understanding of vertical claims and rights, it is likely to miss an opportunity to encourage analysis of a key variable in the relationship between people and policy.

Some analysts have suggested that the best way to avoid this is to incorporate a sixth category of asset, 'political capital', into the SL framework (Box 2). From the point of view of SL-focused policy analysis, however, the key point is not whether the framework itself is altered but whether its application to SL analysis pays sufficient attention to the ability of poor and vulnerable people to make claims on the state. Here, it is important to note that not all vertical claims are directed towards state institutions. Unwritten 'social contracts' between landlords and their tenants, patrons and their clients or traditional leaders and the junior members of their lineage groups can also play an important part in determining the viability of livelihood strategies. By their very nature, however, such relationships tend to be influenced only indirectly by policy and they should therefore be distinguished from those involving rights which form the basis of claims on the state.

Box 2

Political capital

IDS Sustainable Livelihoods Programme research in Bangladesh included a detailed case study of an attempt to 'privatise' a fishpond (*beel*) which had formerly been treated as a common-property resource by local residents. The case highlighted the role of party affiliation and links to state structures (including the police) in determining access to natural capital. This led the researchers to conclude that 'contests over state and non-state resources in the context of unequal power relationships amongst the claimants' were such a significant influence on livelihood strategies and outcomes that the SL framework should be modified to include 'political capital' (Toufique 1999: 1). This echoed the recommendation of Booth *et al.* (in an analysis predating the development of the SL framework) that political capital should be included in 'a more comprehensive conceptual framework for analysing the assets of the poor' (1998: 15). However, Booth *et al.* treat 'political capital' as effectively synonymous with power, and therefore as a factor at the intra-household and intra-community levels as well as in vertical relations with state structures. While this approach highlights important issues (in particular of gender relations), it does not address the need to identify the power of an individual, household or group specifically in relation to the structures most directly involved in policy formulation and implementation, that is, the institutions and organisations of the state.

Whether it involves formal or informal institutions, the process of claim-making is rarely free of contestation. Notwithstanding the philosophical argument that certain 'basic human rights' are the inalienable property of all people in all societies, recent work on rights-based approaches has tended to distinguish between rights which are 'given from above' by legal codes or international conventions and those which are 'taken from below' by people struggling to assert claims which had not previously achieved widespread acceptance (John Gaventa, pers comm). As Gore (1993) points out, people's determination to uphold what they see as their entitlements is often expressed through 'unruly' social practices (such as the looting of government food stores by farmers whose crops have failed); this highlights the point that there may be a mismatch between the formal rights recognised by the state and those which poor people themselves feel entitled to claim.

In analysing the 'vertical' dimension of social capital, SL analysis should therefore focus on the extent to which different groups of people are aware of their formal rights and are capable of asserting their claims both to these and to other rights which they feel the state should guarantee (whether or not the state itself recognises this responsibility). This part of the framework should be understood to cover the 'demand side' of relations between people and the state, while the 'supply side' of laws which recognise rights and government agencies which uphold them belongs in the 'institutions and organisations' box.

This distinction between demand (understood as awareness of rights, willingness to claim them and ability to mobilise in support of these claims) and supply (understood as the recognition of rights by the state and the responsiveness of its agents to claims made by rights-holders) should not obscure the fact that the two are interdependent. As Moore and Putzel (2000) have pointed out, the ability of the poor to mobilise politically, generally depends on the capacity of the state to respond. This is especially important where there is a high degree of inequality at the local level. While individuals or groups who are marginalised within a household or community are **likely** also to be relatively powerless in relation to state structures, this is not automatically the case. If government agencies remain outside the control of local élites and can offer what Gaventa and Robinson (1998) call 'space from above', they may be used by previously marginalised groups as a source of leverage in tackling intra-community inequalities (Fox 1994).

Where the state itself is unresponsive, the poor may seek out other organisations (such as NGOs or church groups) as allies in the claim-making process. Where the poor themselves have been unable or unwilling to organise around their rights, such organisations are also likely to act on their behalf in bringing pressure on the state. If efforts are made to involve marginalised groups in the work of external actors who are engaged in advocacy for their rights, this may lead in turn to the growth of 'vertical' social capital among the poor. This is by no means always the case, however, and SL analysis should be careful to distinguish between situations where the poor themselves are able to exercise voice and those where the representation of their interests is controlled from outside. The implications of this distinction for the identification of entry points for influencing policy processes in the interests of the poor and, in particular for determining whether the influence of poor people themselves is likely to be direct or indirect, are discussed in Section 6.

5 UNDERSTANDING POLICY

As Section 2 made clear, policy analysis for sustainable livelihoods should complement SL analysis, but cannot restrict itself to the SL framework. A parallel process of 'policy-centred' analysis is therefore required, combining rigorous examination of policy-specific factors with careful attention to the need both to inform and to draw on the findings of the 'people-centred' examination of livelihoods which SL analysis provides. Three principles are important in the design of this process.

The first is that analysis should start from actually existing policy and work towards prescription, rather than vice versa. This may seem obvious, but some advocates of SL have taken the view that anything which smacks of an incremental approach is doomed to failure, and that sweeping change represents the only effective way forward.[25] SL-focused policy analysis may conclude that sweeping change is indeed necessary, but equally the process may reveal the potential for more focused interventions to reverse negative influences on livelihoods or enhance positive ones.[26] In practice, opportunities to promote incremental change are likely to be considerably more abundant than opportunities for root and branch transformation, but they may be missed if the approach taken is overly prescriptive or concentrates exclusively on macro-political constraints rather than the 'policy space' which can exist at lower levels. In addition, careful examination of the strengths and weaknesses of existing policies is likely to provide the best guide to the factors which should be taken into account in designing new ones.

The second principle is that analysis should consider implementation as an integral part of the policy process, rather than focusing only on policy formulation. 'Policy' is often understood to refer to public statements of intent: manifestos, declarations, papers etc., and their formalisation in legislation, programmes or strategies. This favours a concentration on the 'what' decisions involved in defining policy rather than the 'how' decisions of implementation. As noted in Section 1, however, much recent work on policy analysis has tended to question the validity of separating policymaking from implementation. Thomas and Grindle (1990)

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[25]   See, for example, Goldman 2000.

[26]   Ashley and Carney (1999) cite the example of the DFID-supported DELIVERI project in Indonesia, which began as a focused livestock services intervention and was subsequently able to extend its influence beyond this sub-sectoral entry point.

argue that contestation in the implementation phase can feed back into changes in the policy itself, while John (1998: 25) points out that official policy may be little more than the formal recognition of what has already happened in practice through the actions of implementing agencies and their interactions with external stakeholders. Hill (1997) sums up the arguments for analysing the various phases of policy identification, formulation and implementation as part of a single process by stating that 'policy involves a course of action or a web of decisions rather than one decision' (Hill 1997: 7).

Emphasising the importance of implementation should, in turn, lead us to recognise that analysing actually existing policy requires an understanding of the different implementation mechanisms, or rather, following the model proposed in Section 3, the different mediating structures on which different types of policy rely. Some policy analysts have recognised that the characteristics of the institutions and organisations involved in the policy process can vary significantly according to the nature of the policy in question, with Thomas and Grindle (1990), for example, distinguishing between 'macroeconomic', 'sectoral' and 'organizational change' policies (Thomas and Grindle 1990: 1164). As indicated in Section 3, however, insufficient attention has been paid to the role of institutions and organisations in mediating the shape in which policy decisions actually reach the people whose livelihood resources and strategies they affect. This is a crucial area for efforts to 'link the micro to the macro' in processes of policy analysis for sustainable livelihoods.

'Linking the micro to the macro' also requires us to be specific about what we mean by the 'macro' level. It should not be automatically assumed that it refers to the national level of policymaking. Different countries (above all, those with federal constitutions) may reserve significant policy responsibilities for sub-national units such as regions, states or provinces. They may also operate within wider structures where a number of nations share a single policy framework (most commonly for trade, but also in some circumstances for economic and monetary policy, as is the case for the West African CFA zone). In addition, livelihood strategies (particularly migration) may be significantly influenced by policy in neighbouring countries or more distant ones. National policy may also be affected by a country's obligations under global policy frameworks, such those promoted by the various UN conventions, as well as by its membership of trading blocs or associations of commodity-producing countries. In these cases, the principle of including implementation in the definition of policy may require us to consider the role of some very different institutions (including the border control regimes or land tenure legislation of neighbouring countries) as mediating structures alongside the more obvious and localised ones.

The third principle is that of disaggregation. SL-focused policy analysis must go beyond the broad-brush approach of most conventional policy studies (which tend to be concerned with macro-level political, economic and social trends), and seek to identify the specific ingredients of different policies, the specific factors which influence the process of putting them into practice and the specific implications which they have for different groups of people.

This disaggregation process should begin with a recognition that although statements of policy may attempt to cut across sectoral boundaries in order to assert the primacy of broad strategic objectives,[27] most policymaking activity falls into specific 'policy sectors' (John 1998: 12), each of which has its own distinct characteristics.[28] Given the sectorally-based nature of most implementation structures, it is inevitable that national policy statements on cross-cutting issues such as poverty or the environment will tend to guide rather than substitute for sector-specific policymaking. The disaggregation process should, however, extend below the sector level. Although each sector will often have a single document (such as a 'White Paper' or sector strategy) which sets out official policy,[29] this is by no means always the case and in practice subsectoral departments or agencies may in effect be setting their own policies.

This points to the importance of another essential element of the process of disaggregating policy for analysis: distinguishing between policies and policy measures. The former are broad statements of intent, while the latter are the specific forms: laws, regulations, programmes or projects, into which they are translated for implementation. Policies can guide decision-making within public sector agencies (not least in resource allocation) and send out signals to society as a whole, but it is in the shape of specific measures that policy generally acts on institutions and organisations, and through them on livelihood resources and strategies. Policy analysis for SL should therefore take account of the macro-level and sectoral policy framework, but only as a preliminary step before focusing on policy measures. It should also recognise that in practice, the neat hierarchy of policy frameworks guiding the design of policy measures often does not apply. Measures may be put in place in response to specific demands or individual ministerial agendas, without necessarily referring to any higher-level policy. Conversely, policy statements may exist which are not accompanied by any specific policy measures (a situation which generally indicates that the government or ministry in question is trying to placate an external pressure group or powerful donor, without actually committing itself to change).

The potential impact (whether positive or negative) of a given policy measure on livelihoods will be affected by many factors. As noted above (and discussed in Section 3), the mediating structures through which a policy is channelled will play an important role in determining the shape in which it reaches people. In addition, two further sets of factors are important: the characteristics of the measure itself, and the nature of the specific local contexts in which policies and people meet.

The policy-specific factors conditioning impact on livelihoods can be broken down into a number of different characteristics, as described in Box 3. These characteristics can be seen as broadly analogous to the 'livelihood resources' examined in SL analysis: a successful (or 'sustainable') policy measure requires an appropriate combination of these attributes, though given the importance of context and of mediating institutions and organisations, such a combination does not in itself guarantee success or sustainability.

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[27] Examples include National Strategies for Sustainable Development and the 'Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers' which some heavily-indebted countries are developing under the auspices of the World Bank and IMF.

[28] See, for example, Keeley and Scoones (1999) for environmental policy and Walt (1994) for health policy.

[29] Particularly in developing countries where aid donors have a high degree of influence and are committed to a 'sector approach' (Akroyd and Duncan 1998).

Box 3

Characteristics of different policy measures

In addition to external factors (mediating structures and the local context), the likelihood that a given policy measure will influence specific livelihood resources, strategies and outcomes will be affected by the attributes or characteristics of the measure itself. **Design** characteristics, such as stated objectives and targeting, will determine which groups, resources and strategies fall within its scope and which are excluded. **Commitment**, which includes the level of support the measure enjoys from policymakers and senior implementing agency staff as well as the importance given to it by 'street-level bureaucrats', will affect the strength of its influence on mediating institutions and organisations. The same applies to the human and material **resources** committed to the implementation of a measure, including the level of management capacity in the implementing agency. **Links** between the 'champions' of the measure and other important stakeholders determine whether its impact will be strengthened by complementary initiatives or undermined by contradictory ones, as well as the extent to which it is open to influence by people outside the implementing agency (including the poor and their allies). Finally, **time** is also important because it will affect the degree to which any lack of impact can be attributed to other factors; if a measure is very recent, it may be too early to make judgements about the extent of its influence.

The discussion in Section 3 of the role played by mediating structures (whether institutions or organisations) suggested that local conditions (including lack of access to markets and a predominance of customary over formal law) may limit or distort the channelling of policy. Also, by extension, that factors which are not directly policy-related may play a relatively more important role. Because the policy arena is the natural focus of activity for donors (and, increasingly, for NGOs), it is all too easy for these actors to assume that it is the source of the most significant influences on the livelihood resources, strategies and outcomes of the poor. Recent IDS research has demonstrated, however, that many of the factors which are critically important to the livelihoods of the poor are at best only marginally susceptible to influence by policy initiatives (Brock and Coulibaly 1999; Carswell *et al.* 2000). This applies both to 'contextual' conditions such as climate and resource endowments and to the informal institutions and local power relations which often govern access to resources.

The final element of disaggregation involves identifying the specific impacts of policy measures on different groups. This is where policy analysis meets livelihoods analysis. In fact, the opportunity it provides to identify who is affected by a given policy measure and how, and thereby to permit assessment of that measure's poverty impact, is the principal rationale for linking SL studies with policy analysis. The next section uses the conclusions from the discussion thus far to illustrate how this might be done.

6 POLICY AND LIVELIHOODS ANALYSIS IN PRACTICE

This section presents a checklist of questions intended to guide analysis of policy as it relates to livelihoods, and discusses some of the practical and methodological issues involved in applying the approach outlined in this report. As noted in Section 1, the purpose of such analysis is to help those planning SL interventions to locate suitable entry points amid the complexity which characterises both the policy arena and the reality within which poor people map out their livelihood strategies. It should be emphasised that the process of 'policy and livelihoods analysis' outlined here should complement rather than substitute for SL analysis itself. Earlier sections of this report have already argued that policy itself should be analysed outside the SL framework, both because it needs to be seen as distinct from (though operating through) the framework's

'grey box' of institutions and organisations, and because policy-centred analysis cannot be satisfactorily undertaken within a people-centred framework. However, it is essential that the type of policy-centred analysis described here both draws on and feeds into a process of people-centred investigation of livelihoods at the micro level.

This does not mean that policy analysis of the kind described here can only operate alongside a large-scale research project with a 'sustainable livelihoods' label. SL analysis, that is the process of identifying the resources and strategies of the poor, the institutions and organisations with which they interact and the sustainability of the livelihood outcomes which they achieve, can draw on the findings of an increasing number of complementary approaches, of which Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) are perhaps the most important. In their review of recent experience with PPAs in Africa, Booth *et al.* (1998) conclude that while such exercises are likely to develop into different types of study, one consequence should be an increase in both the quantity and quality of 'contextualised' investigations of the perspectives, assets and strategies of the poor. In addition, NGOs (and, in some cases, government agencies) are increasingly adopting a livelihoods perspective and emphasising contextualised methods in their own applied research. This suggests that in future the absence of complementary data on local livelihood realities is unlikely to prove a serious barrier to the effective application of policy analysis for SL.

As mentioned in Section 2, however, it is often difficult or inappropriate to generalise from the findings produced by contextual approaches. The purpose of policy analysis for SL is not only to provide a more contextualised understanding of the interactions between policies and livelihoods but also to make it possible to arrive at more general conclusions. This implies that such analysis should use non-contextual sources to cross-check the findings of contextual studies and vice versa, as this will enhance both the explanatory power of the former and the generalisability of the latter.

In addition to SL analysis, PPAs and other contextual sources, policy analysis for SL should therefore draw wherever possible on available large-scale surveys and aggregate data.[30] Large-scale surveys can be used to identify to what extent a locality covered by a detailed SL study is representative of wider regional or national patterns, while SL analysis can reveal the vital but non-quantifiable institutional factors which may explain apparently anomalous patterns in survey data. While this approach may not generate findings which can be statistically verified at the national level, it does offer a way for SL analysis to demonstrate that its findings are not necessarily relevant only in a particular local context. As Booth *et al.* (1998) point out, 'while case studies cannot be representative of larger populations from a statistical perspective because they cover only a small geographic area, they can nevertheless be indicative of wider trends' (Booth *et al.* 1998: 58). Even more significantly for SL analysis, the same authors argue that 'contextual studies can also assess how important it is for general policies to pay attention to the heterogeneity of local conditions' (Booth *et al.* 1998: 58).

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[30] As well as existing national-level analyses of such data and its policy implications, which will indicate how information is currently being selected and interpreted for use in policymaking.

This is borne out by the case material from research carried out by the IDS Sustainable Livelihoods Programme in Ethiopia and Mali,[31] which is used to illustrate the detailed guide to SL-focused policy research in the Annex. Some of the research findings suggest broad conclusions on the impact of certain policies on the livelihoods of vulnerable groups, while others serve to illustrate the danger of making blanket assumptions about local people's priorities, resources and strategies. The latter point takes us back to the need to ensure that local people themselves have a greater say in the policy process, an issue which is explored in the final part of this section.

The discussion of interactions between policy and livelihoods and people and policy in the preceding sections has identified a number of key issues for SL-focused policy analysis. These issues can in turn be used to generate a checklist of questions around which such processes of analysis can be structured. This checklist is presented in Box 4, which illustrates a proposed five-stage process designed to move iteratively between policy and people, combining macro-level investigation of policy with insights from micro-level SL analysis.

Box 4

Analysing policy for sustainable livelihoods: a checklist

Part 1: Livelihood priorities

1   Who and where are the poor?
2   What are their livelihood priorities?
3   What policy sectors are relevant to these priorities?

Part 2: The policy context

1   What is policy in those sectors?
2   Who makes policy in those sectors?
3   What is the macro policy context?

Part 3: Policy measures

1   What measures have been put in place to implement each policy?
2   What are the characteristics of these policy measures?
3   Through what institutions and organisations are these measures channelled?

Part 4: Policy in the local context

1   In what shape do these institutions and organisations exist locally?
2   What other institutions and organisations affect local responses to policy?
3   What other local institutions and organisations might policy affect?

Part 5: People and policy

1   What resources can poor people draw on to influence policy?
2   What opportunities exist for poor people to influence policy directly?
3   What opportunities exist for poor people to influence policy indirectly?

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[31]   This research was co-ordinated by Grace Carswell (Ethiopia and agricultural intensification) and Karen Brock (Mali and work on livelihood diversification) under the overall supervision of Jeremy Swift and Ian Scoones. Additional research and analysis were carried out by Data Dea, Alemayehu Konde, Haileyesus Seba, Annette Sinclair and Alex Shankland (Ethiopia) and N'golo Coulibali (Mali). Further research was carried out in Bangladesh by Kazi Ali Toufique, supervised by Martin Greeley. Arjan de Haan of the Poverty Research Unit, University of Sussex, co-ordinated research on migration, while Camilla Toulmin of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) co-ordinated livelihood diversification research. The Sustainable Livelihoods Programme was funded by the UK Department for International Development (contract reference CNTR 95 4012A).

The Annex to this report includes detailed discussion of each question and suggested methodologies for generating answers, in addition to case material illustrating some of the issues raised. Here, the focus is on the logic of the five parts of the process and the opportunities which each should provide for the identification of potential entry points for intervention.

Part 1 includes many of the steps which are required by conventional policy analysis, with one significant difference: it moves upwards from poor people and their livelihood priorities to examine sectoral policymaking, rather than downwards from predetermined sectoral priorities. This should enable analysts to focus on those policy areas which actually have the potential to play a key role in supporting the livelihood strategies of the poor, rather than making assumptions based on aggregate data.

Part 2 sets out to generate a profile of existing policy at the sectoral and macro levels, which should make it possible both to identify where policy is absent or inappropriate and to analyse the broader political conditions which will influence the success of attempts to promote change. This in turn should help decision-makers to select entry points for higher-level policy interventions. It also examines the characteristics of the policy process in different sectors, helping analysts to identify the key actors with whom any policy-based interventions will need to engage.

Part 3 narrows the focus to examine the specific measures through which policy is (or is not) translated into practice. Where appropriate policy exists on paper but no measures have been put in place, lobbying for the enactment of measures represents an obvious entry point for intervention. Where specific measures do exist, analysis of their characteristics (whether of design, ownership, resourcing, external support or time elapsed) along the lines proposed in Box 3 will suggest other possible entry points, from improving targeting to strengthening management capacity to facilitating links with donors and other external stakeholders. Analysis of the institutions and organisations through which a given policy measure is channelled will, in turn, provide insights into the scope for intervention to support existing delivery systems or suggest alternative ones (which may include community-based organisations, NGOs, local government or the private sector).

Part 4 draws on the wealth of contextual information generated by SL analysis and related approaches to examine the importance of diverse local conditions in determining the extent to which a given policy measure will influence livelihoods. Where contextual studies indicate that in a particular locality the structures through which a measure is channelled are non-existent, lacking in capacity or dominated by interests hostile to those of the poor, an effort must be made to identify how far these conditions are likely to apply across the country or region as a whole. If they are confined to a few areas, targeted support (through NGOs or support teams from higher levels of government) can be used to overcome the constraints they imply. If these conditions are found to be more widespread, however, a more radical reshaping of the measure (such as a stronger emphasis on decentralisation or greater involvement of civil society groups) is likely to be required.

Contextual studies will also provide insights into the enabling or constraining effects of 'informal' institutions and organisations (such as caste systems, gender divisions of labour, savings groups or traditional labour sharing arrangements) for different groups of poor people. Where such structures play a significant

constraining role, policy-based interventions are unlikely to work without a considerable investment in areas such as rights awareness and grassroots organisation. Where 'informal' institutions and organisations play an important role in enabling poor people to gain access to livelihood resources, however, the design of policy measures should be carefully reviewed to ensure that they support these arrangements wherever appropriate and at the very least, avoid undermining them.

Part 5 focuses on the scope for poor people to influence policy change, whether directly or indirectly. As suggested in Section 4, the starting-point should be an assessment of the extent to which different groups possess 'vertical' social capital; an awareness of their rights and a willingness and ability to press claims on the state. This should be combined with an examination of the opportunities for direct participation by the poor in defining policy priorities and holding to account those who are responsible for implementation. The degree to which such opportunities exist will tend to reflect the extent of democratisation and decentralisation, both in the country as a whole and above all in the remoter areas where participatory and accountable governance is usually least evident. Finally, the mapping of locally important state and non-state actors which SL analysis generates should be combined with the list of key policy actors and networks identified in Part 2, to indicate where opportunities exist for outsiders to capture the perspectives of the poor and feed them into the policy process.

ANNEX

Analysing policy for sustainable livelihoods: a guide to the process

This Annex discusses in more detail the five-stage process of analysis proposed in Section 6. This process is structured around a checklist of key questions (set out in Box 4). Answering each question will require analysts to examine a particular aspect of policy and how it interacts with livelihoods, and should make it possible to explore a number of possible entry points for policy-focused intervention. After this examination, the various possibilities can be either discarded or added to the list from which the intervening agency will make its final choice (a choice which in practice will be determined as much by the agency's assessment of its own capacity, strategic priorities and comparative advantage as by the potential impact of a given intervention).

Each of the key questions included in the checklist raises a number of issues which require to be taken into account in subsequent analysis. In the discussion which follows, some of these issues are illustrated with case material from research carried out by the IDS Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (SLP) in Mali and Ethiopia.[32]

Part 1: Livelihood priorities

The first part of the process of 'policy and livelihoods analysis' should identify the potential points of contact between the different policy sectors and the livelihood priorities of poor and vulnerable people. Working upwards from poor people and their priorities to the wider policy context makes it possible to concentrate subsequent analysis on those policy measures with the greatest actual or potential impact on livelihoods.

Key question 1: **Who *and* where *are the poor?***

This question must be the starting point for any analysis aiming to provide the basis for anti-poverty action. It should be possible to answer the first part of the question by drawing on PPAs or SL analysis to generate a list of vulnerable groups. However, care should be taken to avoid over-aggregation, as the use of categories such as 'female-headed households' or 'ethnic minorities' can mask the importance of other factors which can make a critical contribution to vulnerability.

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[32]   The principal sources for this case material are Brock and Coulibaly 1999, Carswell *et al*. 2000 and Keeley and Scoones 1998, supplemented by personal communications from Jeremy Swift, Karen Brock, James Keeley and Grace Carswell of IDS, Camilla Toulmin of IIED, Stevens Tucker of WriteNet and Zewdi Abadi of ACORD.

Box A1

Ethnicity and vulnerability in Mali

Power inequalities based on ethnicity can be a major factor in social exclusion, which in turn accentuates the vulnerability of the excluded. However, the case of the village of Dalonguebougou in Mali's Southern Sahel illustrates that this is not inevitably the case, and emphasises the point that social difference within ethnic groups can in fact play a more significant role in determining vulnerability. Dalonguebougou has been dominated by Bambara people since it was first settled over a century ago. They control access to land and water and have consistently refused to allow households belonging to the minority Maure ethnic group to dig wells from which to water their herds. The village also has a large number of Bambara farmers who have come in recent years to cultivate fields within its territory, but who return after the harvest to their villages of origin (where they have had to abandon their own fields as a result of constant losses to crop pests). These households belong to the same ethnic group as the dominant households in the village. However, they do not have the status of permanent residents, and must rely on kinship obligations alone for the continued right to farm in Dalonguebougou. With increasing pressure on land in the village, these obligations have come under strain. As a result, the livelihoods of the visiting Bambara are less secure than those of the Maure households, who despite their apparent second-class status in the village have developed long-term relationships with the resident Bambara (based on contracts to exchange the manure from their herds for water from Bambara wells) which have proved robust enough for past attempts to expel them from the village to have come to nothing.

Answering the second part of the question (that is, locating the regions or areas where there are high proportions of poor and vulnerable people) will require the development of 'poverty maps' based on data that can be compared across a whole region or country. Aggregated statistics can provide a picture of the relative prevalence of poverty and vulnerability in rural and urban areas (and possibly in high- and low-potential rural areas), while concentrations of key indicators in different regions or districts can be identified using geographical breakdowns of data drawn from sources such as national censuses.[33] Composite indicators such as the Human Development Index (HDI) may also be available for sub-national units such as districts or municipalities. However, the choice of indicators to be used in poverty mapping should be informed by the findings of PPAs or other participatory research as to which dimensions of poverty are felt to be most significant by poor people living in a variety of different contexts.[34]

Both parts of the question should be studied together, since poverty maps need to be complemented by an understanding of the differences which exist between groups of people in any given place. Concentrating efforts on 'impoverished areas' is likely to ignore the presence of large numbers of vulnerable people in wealthier regions, while an assumption that everyone in an 'impoverished area' is equally in need of livelihood support exposes any subsequent interventions to the risk of 'leakage' or hijacking by the non-poor.

Key question 2: What are their livelihood priorities?

Once the characteristics and locations of the poor and vulnerable have been identified, livelihoods analysis (whether in the shape of specially-commissioned research, use of an 'SL lens' to interpret data from PPAs

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[33] In time, the spread of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) is likely to lead to wider availability of poverty maps and/or to make it easier to generate them from existing data (for existing resources, see website www.worldbank.org/poverty/inequal/povmap/index.htm).

[34] Caution should be exercised in the use of a single indicator (particularly an income-based one) to define poverty mapping. In Mali, for example, the arid, livestock-dependent North of the country has traditionally been considered the poorest region. However, the baseline study for the national anti-poverty strategy was carried out just after a currency devaluation had boosted livestock prices, which meant that a smaller proportion of the population was counted as falling below the national poverty line than in the comparatively prosperous South (Brock and Coulibaly 1999: 148).

and other sources, or a combination of the two) should provide answers to the second key question. Participatory assessment (and, where appropriate, ranking) of desired livelihood outcomes will provide a guide to different groups' priority objectives, while other dimensions of SL analysis will reveal the livelihood resources (assets or 'capitals') most important to vulnerable groups and the livelihood strategies which they pursue (both by choice and of necessity).

Box A2

Health as a priority for the rural poor

SLP research in Ethiopia and Mali has demonstrated that shortage of labour is often a critical constraint for poorer households in rural areas. While such shortages may result from a number of factors (including the position of the household in the demographic cycle and government policies such as forced recruitment of young men into the military), several SLP case studies demonstrate how the prolonged illness or death of a person of working age is one of the factors most likely to push the whole household into poverty. People in all the study areas emphasised the threat to livelihood sustainability which ill-health represents, and access to health care was accordingly given a very high priority when they came to identify areas for action to protect livelihoods. In the Malian village of Dalonguebougou, for example, the first initiative undertaken by the newly-formed community association was the mobilisation of local residents to respond to the absence of government-provided health care by establishing their own village dispensary.

Key question 3: What policy sectors are relevant to these priorities?

Each of the key assets, strategies and outcomes identified will be affected by decisions and actions in particular 'policy sectors'. It is important to remember, however, that people do not live their lives according to artificially-defined sectors, and consequently that the ways in which they construct their livelihood portfolios may cross sectoral boundaries or fall into the gaps which exist between conventional policy sectors. Analysis should therefore take account of the potential for policy measures in a given sector to have multiple, indirect or unintended impacts, as well as the possibility that they will miss their target altogether by relying on simplistic or incorrect assumptions about the sectoral basis of people's livelihoods.

One way of mapping out the different areas where sectoral policies have the potential to affect livelihoods is to construct a matrix which cross-references policy sectors and the strategies pursued by different groups of poor people.[35] Again, the starting-point should be the reality of different groups' livelihood strategies (taking account of factors of difference such as gender, age and geographical location) rather than assumptions based on broad categories such as 'smallholders' or 'pastoralists'.[36] This implies that insights from SL analysis and other forms of participatory research will be required to identify which groups and which strategies are likely to be affected by policies in a given sector. This should in turn enable analysts to weigh the relative importance of each sector or subsector according to its influence on resources and activities which are of critical importance to the poor, making it easier to prioritise key areas for subsequent policy-focused interventions.

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[35] For an example of this approach, see Chapter 11 of Carswell *et al.* 2000.

[36] SLP research has documented how in both Ethiopia and Mali groups traditionally classified as 'pastoralists' (such as the Sidama and the Maure) are increasingly investing in agricultural intensification as a livelihood strategy, while at the same time cattle ownership is becoming increasingly important to groups for whom agriculture is the traditional base livelihood.

During the final years of the Derg régime in Ethiopia, there was a collapse in the provision of veterinary services by the state. The incoming government of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) took several years to begin to re-establish service provision, and when it did so it introduced an emphasis on cost recovery which meant that many livestock keepers were unable or unwilling to use the official services. The Derg's restrictions on private veterinary practice have meanwhile been kept in place, except for animal health practitioners licensed under a new government programme. These practitioners are overwhelmingly concentrated in areas of commercial livestock and dairy production close to the major cities. Though some NGOs have secured local-level government approval for their efforts to train paravets or community animal health workers, national policy remains opposed to granting official status to this type of practitioner. This situation has left livestock keepers in remoter areas with little option but to resort to purchasing drugs from illegal suppliers and treating their animals themselves. Such treatment is often ineffective, since under-dosing in an effort to save money is a widespread practice. Incidence of trypanosomiasis (the main killer of cattle in lowland areas) climbed sharply with the collapse of government services after 1989, and has continued to rise in those areas where services have not been re-established. In one SLP study area, Mundena, 22 per cent of the entire cattle herd had been lost to trypanosomiasis in a single year (1996). Although government policy is beginning to emphasise re-establishing services in areas classified as 'pastoralist zones', SLP research has demonstrated that a large proportion of the households pushed into poverty by the loss of cattle to trypanosomiasis live in areas where it is not pastoral livestock raising but smallholder agriculture which predominates. These households own fewer cattle, and are thus less able to sell healthy animals to cover the costs of treating the remainder of the herd. For them, cattle deaths not only mean the loss of assets which provide some insurance against destitution, but also represent a threat to household food security since they reduce the availability of plough oxen and manure for agriculture. Livestock loss is particularly damaging for women, for whom the production and sale of butter is often the principal source of income. Government policy on veterinary services thus has significant implications for livelihood strategies based on petty trade and agriculture, as well as for those which emphasise livestock-raising.

Part 2: The policy context

The next stage of the process should focus on examining the extent to which existing policy fits with poor people's livelihood priorities. It should also generate an understanding of the actors, processes and broad contextual factors involved in policymaking. This understanding is essential for outlining intervention strategies, once potential entry points have been identified.

Key question 4: What is policy in those sectors?

The matrix suggested above, which identifies the sectors and subsectors most relevant to poor people's livelihood priorities, can provide a starting-point for the process of mapping out already existing policies and analysing their implications. The most obvious place to look for information on existing policy in a given sector is in official documents such as ministerial 'White Papers'. If no such documents exist, however, this does not automatically imply that no policy is actually in place. In many countries, the production of policy documents is seen by officials more as a way to placate donors than as an opportunity to set out the government's thinking on a particular set of issues. In such cases, there may be a clear policy but it will be contained in an assortment of memos, draft papers and statements by key decision-makers, rather than in a single document. There will, however, be cases where research reveals that the absence of policy is not only apparent, but real. 'Policy gaps' are most likely to be found where livelihood strategies straddle several different sectors (as is the case for rural livelihood diversification) or are hardly recognised as livelihood strategies at all (as is the case for many forms of migration).

Conversely, there may be a well-developed policy in a given sector or subsector, one which promotes livelihood strategies not generally open to the poor (as when agricultural extension is geared to capital-

intensive activities or when credit is disbursed only in large tranches which are beyond the repayment capacity of poorer borrowers). Existing policies may even emphasise restricting rather than enhancing poor people's opportunities to pursue a given strategy (as when forested areas are placed off-limits or high licensing costs are imposed on petty traders).

The process of examining existing policy in each of the sectors or subsectors with the potential to affect the livelihood strategies of the poor should result in the identification of a number of possible entry points. Subsequent interventions based on these entry points may use research, advocacy or networking activities to draw attention to the importance to livelihoods of areas currently neglected by policymakers, to suggest ways of facilitating poor people's access to existing schemes or to argue for restrictive measures to be lifted.

Box A4

Migration

The findings of the SLP studies have highlighted the importance of migration, whether seasonal or longer-term, rural-urban or rural-rural, internal or international, in households' efforts to construct sustainable livelihoods. In the Malian village of Zaradougou, for example, SLP researchers found that cocoa and coffee plantations in Côte d'Ivoire were the most important source of income for over 30 per cent of households. However, while international migration may be a high-profile policy issue in destination countries, it is rarely so in migrants' countries of origin. As a result, opportunities to enhance the livelihood impact of migration (for example by facilitating the investment of migrants' earnings in their home communities) tend to be missed. Seasonal or temporary migration from one rural area to another is also a neglected policy area: the only form of rural-rural migration generally promoted by governments is that of permanent resettlement (which may rely on incentives for settlers or on forced displacement, both of which approaches have been used in Ethiopia). Rural-urban migration, on the other hand, is more frequently acknowledged by policymakers, though the emphasis is on discouraging rather than facilitating it. Policy statements on the need to 'keep people in the countryside' ignore the fact that rural-urban migration is often temporary and involves not whole families but individual members of households which remain rooted in rural areas. In Mali, for example, many young rural women take several years' employment as domestic servants in the capital to finance the purchase of their marriage *trousseau*, while in Ethiopia young men may work for a few seasons in town and invest in cattle which are kept on the family smallholding, before they return to start their own households. SLP research has shown that far from encouraging the wholesale movement of households from rural to urban areas, migration by individuals contributes to the sustainability of the rural households from which they come. This contribution includes both material and non-material benefits. Remittances are important, but equally so are the new knowledge and skills brought by returning migrants and the reduction in intergenerational tensions which comes from relieving pressure on scarce household resources. However, it can also come at a price for those household members (usually women) who are left to shoulder additional work burdens while migrants are absent.

Key question 5: Who makes policy in those sectors?

The chances of success of interventions such as those suggested above will depend on the way in which policy is decided, how open the process is, who has a say in it and what kinds of information are used in decision-making. It is therefore essential to gain an understanding of how the policy process works in each key sector. This implies going beyond identifying which departments and decision-makers have formal responsibility for a given area of policy. As noted in Section 5, there are significant differences in the way policy is made in the various sectors. In some, the outcome of scientific arguments will tend to play a key role. In others, the lobbying power of professional bodies or other interest groups will predominate. Where donor agencies are particularly powerful in a given sector, their agendas will tend to dominate national policymaking processes. Where particular social groups (whether poor or non-poor, urban-based or rural) have strong links to the governing party or coalition, their interests are likely to be an important factor. In many cases, networks of actors from different backgrounds (which may include civil society, political parties,

business, donors, academia or the bureaucracy) may come together to challenge or support a particular policy initiative. Unravelling this complexity is the domain of policy process analysis. Such investigations will need to deploy a variety of tools, ranging from stakeholder analysis to actor-network studies to identification of emerging discourses and narratives.[37] One product of such analysis should be a list of the key actors (organisations and individuals) involved in policymaking in each sector. Once the analysis of opportunities for poor people to influence policy outlined in Part 5 has been completed, this list can be used to identify the key stakeholders who should be taken into account in any subsequent intervention intended to influence policy at the sector level.

Box A5

Environmental policymaking in Ethiopia

IDS research carried out in parallel to the SLP studies has documented how changes in policy can be associated with shifts in the actor-networks supporting different approaches (Keeley and Scoones 1998). In Ethiopia, environmental policy relied throughout the 1980s and early 1990s on a top-down emphasis on physical soil-conservation measures. This approach was supported by a network of donor agencies, NGOs and government policymakers, and justified by a small number of scientific studies whose findings were so frequently quoted in policy documents that they attained the status of a 'dominant narrative'. In the second half of the 1990s, however, the picture became more complex. While the soil-conservation approach remained prominent at the national level, it began to lose ground to the production-focused 'Green Revolution' approach supported by a new and powerful actor-network (see Box A6 below). At the same time, Ethiopia's process of regionalisation allowed new actor-networks to form at the regional level, successfully influencing a shift in some regions (such as Tigray) towards a more participatory and decentralised approach.

In addition to identifying the key actors, however, it is important at this stage to identify where the centres of policymaking for each sector are located. As noted in Section 5, many countries (especially those with federal constitutions, as is the case in Ethiopia) allow considerable latitude for sectoral policymaking at subnational levels such as regions, states or provinces. Even where overall policy is set centrally, the design of specific implementation measures may be devolved to lower levels of governance, making government agencies at these levels the key actors in determining how policy is translated into practice. In other cases, countries' membership of regional blocs may mean that policy is made at the supranational level.[38] In such contexts, the likelihood that the interests of the poor and vulnerable will be taken into account in decision-making will depend on the extent of the links between international actor-networks and local civil society groups who are committed to promoting those interests.

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[37]   See Keeley and Scoones 1999 for a discussion of different approaches to the analysis of environmental policymaking processes.

[38]   One example is Mali, whose membership of the UEMOA currency union means that its government has little control over the setting of exchange rates for the national currency, the CFA franc. While the 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc affected the returns to livelihood strategies ranging from extensive livestock herding in the arid North to intensive cotton production in the more fertile South, the key actors involved in the decision were the international financial institutions and the governments of the larger economies in the region, none of whom are accountable to rural Malians.

Key question 6: What is the macro policy context?

As noted in Section 5, sectoral and sub-sectoral policies may emerge from initiatives promoted by individual agencies or particular actor-networks, without taking any obvious lead from the government's overall policy framework. Nevertheless, any analysis at these levels will need to be complemented by an overview of the 'big picture' of policy (and indeed politics). Macro-level policy frameworks are an important factor in defining the political space which exists for policy change, and are likely to affect the higher-level links with political leaders and donor agencies which are a key factor in the sustainability of sectoral or subsectoral initiatives.

Box A6

Agricultural development-led industrialisation

When the EPRDF came to power after the overthrow of the Derg régime in Ethiopia, it brought with it a strong political commitment to ensuring the food security of the country. This commitment was born out of the experience of famine during the civil war, but also reflected the ideological emphasis of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the dominant component of the EPRDF, on rural development in general and smallholder agriculture in particular. The new government also needed to respond to pressure from the international financial institutions, who were calling for policies which reflected their own emphasis on export-led growth and encouragement of the private sector. At the same time, an influential actor-network led by agricultural economists and technologists from the World Bank and consultants linked to the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) was seeking an opportunity to promote its vision of a technology-led 'African Green Revolution'. This combination of factors resulted in the adoption of 'Agricultural development-led industrialisation', or ADLI, as the government's overall development strategy. ADLI emphasises capital-led agricultural intensification and its potential spin-offs for the urban economy, and ensures that policy initiatives which promote 'Green Revolution' approaches receive a much higher priority than those emphasising sustainable agriculture or rural livelihood diversification. The link with ADLI has helped to maintain a high level of political support for the national agricultural extension strategy of 'aggressive technology transfer' which has now been developed under the influence of the NGO Sasakawa Global 2000 (see Box A8). This, in turn, limits the scope for outsiders to attempt to promote policy change. A donor agency representative interviewed by IDS researchers summed up the implications of this situation by describing the agricultural extension programme as 'the one policy we can't do anything about'.

While macro-level policy frameworks have traditionally reflected the ideological emphasis of the governing party, those of poorer countries with a high degree of aid-dependence will tend to be strongly influenced by donors' agendas. Structural adjustment policies provide the most obvious examples of this phenomenon, but national anti-poverty plans (promoted by the World Bank in the shape of 'Comprehensive development frameworks' and 'Poverty reduction strategies') are also becoming increasingly common. Other sources of macro-level policy influence are multilateral trade agreements (such as those involving regional blocs or North-South arrangements such as the EU-ACP accords) and the global frameworks promoted by the various UN conventions.

Part 3: Policy measures

As noted in Sections 3 and 5, the shape in which policy reaches people will reflect the specific measures (laws, regulations, programmes or projects) into which it has been translated for implementation, and the mediating structures (institutions and/or organisations) through which these measures operate. Understanding the livelihood implications of policy in a given sector therefore requires a careful examination both of the characteristics of different measures and of the nature of these mediating institutions and organisations.

Key question 7: What measures have been put in place to implement each policy?

Implementing some policies, such as currency devaluation or the removal of agricultural price subsidies, may require only a small number of relatively simple measures (though even where the measures themselves are simple, the technical and political calculations involved may be far from straightforward). Translating other policies into practice, however, will require a complex assortment of different decisions and actions. Some of these will be preconditions for others, requiring measures to be carefully sequenced. Organisational change (or even governance reform) may be necessary before a particular policy measure can be implemented, while changes to the law may be needed before new regulations can be applied.

Where no measures appear to have been put in place to implement a particular policy, therefore, this may be attributable to sequencing problems. However, in many cases the existence of a policy which has no accompanying measures will indicate that there is little political will to pursue its implementation, and possibly that the policy was only drawn up in the first place in order to placate an external constituency (such as a lobbying group or donor agency). Analysts will therefore need to use research techniques such as key informant interviews to ascertain how likely it is that the specific measures required to implement a particular policy will eventually be put in place, as well as reviewing official documents and legislation to identify those measures which have already been taken. They will also need to bear in mind that there may be measures which have resulted not from the adoption of any wider policy but rather from *ad hoc* decision-making by a particular sectoral or subsectoral agency. This implies going back to any apparent 'policy gaps' previously identified, to check whether policy measures have in fact been put in place in these areas.

Box A7

Missing policy measures: implementing environmental policy in Ethiopia

The second half of the 1990s saw considerable activity in the field of environmental policymaking in Ethiopia. Influenced by actor-networks who lobbied for greater priority to be given to issues such as deforestation and soil erosion, and by international protocols such as the Convention to Combat Desertification (to which Ethiopia became a signatory in 1994), the EPRDF government produced a number of high-profile 'green' policy statements. The first of these, the Conservation Strategy of Ethiopia, was launched in 1995. In the same year, the government established the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), an agency linked directly to the Prime Minister's Office. The EPA oversaw the development of the Environmental Policy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1997), and established a process through which the different regions would develop their own policies in line with the national framework. However, despite its high political profile the EPA had a very small budget and no implementing bureaucracy of its own, being forced to rely on the different line ministries and regional governments for the translation of policy into practice. Obliged by its lack of resources to emphasise consensus and co-ordination in a bureaucratic environment which was dominated by top-down approaches and sectoral divisions and complicated by the decentralisation of key responsibilities to the regions, the EPA has made little headway. As a result, very few of the specific policy measures necessary to ensure implementation of the framework have materialised.

Key question 8: What are the characteristics of these policy measures?

Section 5 pointed out that the likelihood that a given policy measure will affect specific livelihood resources, strategies or outcomes will be conditioned by particular key characteristics of the measure. Once existing policy measures have been identified, therefore, it is essential to gain an understanding of the inherent features which will shape their influence on livelihoods. This can then be combined with examination of the

roles of mediating structures and contextual influences to build up a picture of the extent and nature of a particular measure's influence at the local level.

This report proposes five broad categories into which the key characteristics of a policy measure can be divided (see Box 3). The first, **design**, refers to the stated objectives of a measure and the ways in which it is targeted. The second, **commitment**, refers to the level of importance given to a measure by the people responsible for putting it into practice (both at the top of an implementing agency and among 'street-level bureaucrats'), and will reflect prevailing incentive structures and the political capital invested in making a success of implementation. The third, **resources**, refers to the human and material inputs dedicated to implementing the measure, and to the capacity of implementing agencies to deploy these resources effectively. The fourth, **links**, refers to the degree of support which a measure enjoys from external stakeholders such as donors and senior political figures, while the fifth, **time**, highlights the importance of the sequencing issues identified above and the fact that some measures will necessarily take longer to put in place than others.

Box A8

The Global Package

The key policy measure for implementing the 'Green Revolution' agricultural policy adopted by Ethiopia after 1994 was the introduction of a package combining fixed quantities of hybrid seed and chemical fertiliser. This combination, dubbed the 'Global Package' in an obvious reference to the fact that it had been initially tested and promoted by the NGO Sasakawa Global 2000, was distributed on credit through a network of extension agents employed by the Bureau of Agriculture (BoA). The stated objective of this policy measure was to boost yields from smallholder agriculture in line with the overall policy goal of achieving food security for Ethiopia. Although it was not explicitly targeted (indeed it was based on the assumption that the package would be taken up by farmers irrespective of agro-ecological setting or the size of their landholding), the design of the policy measure did have implications for determining which groups it directly affected. Since it relied on BoA extension agents to deliver inputs, supervise application and monitor credit repayment, it was not available in areas classified as 'pastoralist zones' (such as Chokare in the SLP study area), where the BoA failed to allocate extension agents on the (incorrect) assumption that no agricultural activities were taking place. The package also assumed levels of capital and labour availability which many poorer households simply did not possess (though it was subsequently revised to allow the poor to make downpayments of less than the standard amount), and its reliance on high levels of tied and closely-monitored credit made it unsuitable for the risk-averse. The degree of commitment to the programme among BoA officials was high, reflecting both the initial success of the 'Global Package' (which offered significant yield gains in the favourable climatic conditions of 1994 and 1995) and the introduction of a quota-based system of rewards and sanctions. This system also ensured that extension agents remained committed to meeting their targets even when they had doubts about the appropriateness of the package. As befitted a flagship programme, significant government and donor resources were dedicated to promoting the package (and importing the seeds and fertiliser which it required), and it ranked as one of Ethiopia's top public-spending priorities until the outbreak of war with Eritrea. The strongly hierarchical BoA system, used to managing a vast network of extension agents through several administrative tiers, had the right kind of management capacity to deliver a top-down programme of this kind, aided by the one-size-fits-all nature of the package and the relative ease with which performance against delivery targets could be monitored. High-level political support also helped to promote strong links with governance structures down to the lowest level (that of the Peasant Associations, which played a crucial role in helping BoA agents to enforce credit repayments). However, these links were less evident in independent-minded regions (such as Tigray) than in others (such as the Southern Region) more used to following the lead provided by central government. The size of the country and the logistical challenges inherent in ensuring input supply in remoter areas made it inevitable that it would be several years before the 'Global Package' was universally available in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, by the time of the SLP study (which took place three years after the policy measure was first introduced) official figures suggested that even in the large and relatively inaccessible Southern Region almost half of all farming households had taken up the package. The speed with which the programme was scaled up reflected not only the level of resources committed to it and the increasingly involuntary nature of its extension to farmers (which included restricting farmers' access to inputs from other sources and encouraging Peasant Associations to put pressure on those reluctant to join), but also the absence of any serious sequencing issues: no changes to the law were needed, the package had already been tested, the delivery system already existed and the length of time required to train extension agents was relatively short. The result was a major shift in Ethiopia's agricultural base away from diversified systems to heavy reliance on a few strains of hybrid maize and teff. This produced high yields in favourable conditions, but also gave rise to growing concern that the rapid spread of such a standardised package had actually increased vulnerability to drought in more marginal areas.

Key question 9: Through what institutions and organisations are these measures channelled?

As argued in Section 3, the impact of policy measures on livelihoods is not direct, but rather depends on how these measures are channelled through institutions and organisations. These 'mediating structures' represent the interface between policy and people, and their widely differing characteristics provide a significant influence on the extent and nature of any given measure's impact.

Different policy measures will operate through institutions (such as markets or the law), organisations (such as extension services or local governments), or a combination of the two. It is essential to gain an understanding of which structures serve to channel each policy measure and how they operate, since this will have to be taken into account in any subsequent identification of entry points for intervention.

Box A9

The CMDT

Mali depends for a large proportion of its export earnings on cotton, most of which is produced in the South of the country. Cotton production was encouraged throughout the colonial period, and from 1949, a French government agency, the *Compagnie Française pour le Dévéloppement des Textiles* (CFDT) served as a monopoly input provider and crop-buyer for Malian cotton-growers. This set a pattern which continued after independence; when the Malian operations of the CFDT were nationalised in 1974, the newly-created *Compagnie Malienne pour le Dévéloppement des Textiles* (CMDT) continued to operate the colonial model almost unchanged. Over two and a half decades of oscillating cotton prices, structural adjustment programmes and political change, the CMDT succeeded in retaining its status as all-powerful arbiter of key factors influencing the livelihood strategies of households in the cotton zone. Even the Village Associations which emerged in Southern Mali during the 1970s were very much a product of CMDT policies, as the company pursued a strategy of establishing local organisations to which it could devolve the day-to-day management of some of its functions (though many associations have since developed in a more autonomous fashion). Over the years the CMDT broadened its remit, serving as a channel for policy measures ranging from adult literacy programmes to the provision of technical support and credit for maize cultivation. It thus became the key mediating structure for rural development policies in Southern Mali, while policy measures intended to promote rural livelihoods in other parts of the country had to rely on much weaker structures such as the regional agricultural extension departments (DRAMR). Although sustained pressure from the World Bank during the 1980s forced it to relinquish some functions and change its status to that of a state-owned commercial company, the CMDT continued to provide a wide range of services to villages within its zone of influence. The company's strategic importance was so great that the Malian government successfully resisted the international financial organisations' pressure to privatise the CMDT even while other former French colonies were divesting themselves of their national cotton boards. In 1999 resistance to privatisation was finally overcome, introducing a new element of uncertainty into the livelihoods of cotton growers in Southern Mali.

Part 4: Policy in the local context

This report has argued that one of the key strengths of the sustainable livelihoods approach is its potential to generate a contextualised understanding of the implications of policy measures for different groups. Once the combination of policy process research, stakeholder analysis and institutional appraisal recommended in Parts 2 and 3 has been carried out, the findings of SL studies (or, as suggested above, the use of an 'SL lens' to interpret findings from PPAs and other contextual methods) should therefore be used to establish how different local contexts influence who is affected by policy measures and how. The approach to combining contextual studies with aggregate data suggested in Section 6 can then help to establish to what extent these findings are indicative of wider trends, which in turn should guide the identification of potential entry points at different levels.

Key question 10: In what shape do these institutions and organisations exist locally?

In Section 3, the point was made that even 'country-wide' institutions such as laws and markets can take very different shapes in the diverse local contexts within which poor people map out their livelihood strategies. This stage of analysis should therefore use insights from the 'institutions and organisations' component of SL studies to establish how the different mediating structures through which policy measures operate are experienced by different groups of people in different settings. This should include examining the functioning of local markets and the relative importance of formal and customary legal systems, as well as the characteristics of organisations such as local governments, agricultural extension agencies and health and education services.

Box A10

Zaradougou and Dalonguebougou

SLP research in Mali included detailed comparative studies of two villages in different regions of the country. Zaradougou, in the cotton-growing zone of Southern Mali, lies 27 km from the major town of Sikasso along an all-weather road with regular transport links. It has a primary school and an adult literacy classroom, though the nearest health centre is located in Sikasso. The CMDT (see Box A9) purchases all cotton grown locally, and provides inputs and technical advice through the well-established Village Association, which also negotiates support from other government agencies and from development NGOs. Two formal-sector agencies provide credit for agricultural and livelihood diversification activities, and agents of the government health, veterinary and forest management services regularly visit the village. Dalonguebougou, in the semi-arid livestock and millet zone of the Southern Sahel, lies 35 km from the nearest paved road and 60 km from the nearest large town. No children go to school, as the nearest primary school is 25 km away in the village of Doura. The nearest health centre is 35 km away. The CMDT does not operate in the region, and the DRAMR extension agent based in Doura never visits Dalonguebougou. There is no formal-sector credit provision, either for agriculture or for livelihood diversification activities.

Key question 11: What other institutions and organisations affect local responses to policy?

The sustainable livelihoods framework emphasises the importance to livelihoods of 'informal' institutions and organisations. Although these structures have remained largely invisible to policymakers, SLP research has demonstrated how they can decisively condition the ability of different groups to respond to the opportunities and constraints introduced by policy measures. Membership of labour-sharing groups or rotating savings and credit associations can facilitate individuals' involvement in new government-sponsored activities, while traditional institutions can help to protect *de facto* access to natural resources from which policy measures may be attempting to exclude people. In contrast, institutions such as gender and caste can exclude particular groups from participating in the livelihood activities which policy measures may be designed to promote.

Box A11

Gender and agricultural technology uptake in Ethiopia

In the highlands of Wolayta in Southern Ethiopia, gender roles are clearly-defined and the intensity of social disapproval which greets any departure from recognised tradition provides a powerful disincentive for attempts to deviate from the norm. Though women can own livestock and control land (which is often registered in the names of young sons or absent male relatives), it is considered unacceptable for them to carry out certain key agricultural activities, including ploughing and *shilshallo* weeding (which also involves the use of a plough). The 'Global Package' of seed, fertiliser and credit which has come to form the centrepiece of Ethiopian agricultural extension policy (see Box A8) requires particularly intensive investments of labour in activities identified as 'male'. This places female-headed households (who accounted for no fewer than 25 per cent of the total in one SLP study site in highland Wolayta) in a very difficult position. Even if they have land, plough oxen and have sufficient assets to cover the repayment of the credit in case of harvest failure, they remain dependent on male labour. This labour can be accessed through traditional informal institutions, but almost always at a price. As a result, women heads of household who do join the extension programme often find themselves forced to exchange a share of the harvest for ploughing and other work which a male household head could perform himself.

Key question 12: What other local institutions and organisations might policy affect?

The imperative noted above to consider the potential for policy measures to have indirect or unintended impacts on livelihoods is particularly important in relation to 'informal' institutions and organisations. The introduction of an ill-thought-out microfinance scheme to an area where informal credit groups are well-established, for example, could have a significant destabilising effect on poor people's ability to access financial capital. Similarly, in a number of countries land tenure reforms have undermined traditional resource management institutions with a proven capacity to balance equity and sustainability considerations. In some cases, however, policy measures may help to undermine institutions and organisations, which constrain the opportunities of vulnerable groups, such as traders' cartels or caste-based restrictions on access to resources; though groups with a stake in these structures may in turn attempt to undermine the policy measure in question.

Box A12

Customary land tenure in Mali

The right to allocate land within the *terroir* (territory) of the Malian village of Dalonguebougou rests with the chief, who represents the village's founding lineage. However, this power is far from absolute, and the chief in practice acts as chair of a council of elders, made up of representatives of all the resident Bambara households. If they wish to gain access to land within the *terroir*, households belonging to other groups generally approach the chief through a council member who represents a resident Bambara household with which they have kinship links (in the case of visiting Bambara) or contracts based on herding services or the exchange of manure for water (in the case of resident Maure and Fulani). This apparently discriminatory system has in fact succeeded in ensuring a minimally adequate (though not equal) level of access to land for members of all groups, despite the conflicts which have arisen from the growing pressure on the natural resources of the area. However, it is currently under threat from a policy measure the stated intention of which is to improve the governance of natural resources: the decentralisation of formal land allocation rights to a newly-established local government structure, the *commune rural* (see Box A14). Paradoxically, this 'decentralisation' process in practice involves transferring power to a higher level of government, since the fact that the centralised Malian state never invoked its formal right to reallocate land in Dalonguebougou had left the village-level customary system intact.

Part 5: People and policy

The final part of the process of policy and livelihoods analysis should serve to identify the scope for poor people to influence policy. This influence may be direct, through the local exercise of voice, cooperation or resistance, or indirect, through links with supportive organisations or individuals who have access to higher-level policy processes. Any intervention based on the participatory principles which underpin the sustainable livelihoods approach will need to focus on exploiting or expanding opportunities for bottom-up efforts to influence policy. However, it will also need to start from a realistic assessment of what is possible, informed by the conclusions from earlier parts of this process of analysis as well as by an understanding of local aspirations and strategies.

Key question 13: What resources can poor people draw on to influence policy?

The remoteness of most policy processes from the perspectives and priorities of the poor has been well established. This should not, however, obscure the fact that what counts is policy in practice, and that poor people may be able to exercise a significant degree of influence over implementation, even when policy formulation takes no account of their views. A key factor in determining the extent of this influence is the capacity of different poor and vulnerable groups to mobilise around particular issues and engage directly with implementing agencies. As has been argued in Section 4, investigation of this capacity needs to be included in any analysis of local-level 'social capital'.

Many variables are potentially important in determining the level of 'vertical' social capital. Other forms of social capital (including horizontal solidarity networks) may facilitate mobilisation, though they may also predispose people to rely on one another rather than press claims on the state. Concepts such as 'rights' and 'social justice' may resonate with existing cultural norms, or conversely seem completely alien to local values, and this can be as important as people's level of awareness of the entitlements which are formally recognised by the state in determining their willingness and ability to mobilise. As noted in Section 4, however, norms and values are rarely uncontested, and where prevailing institutions limit their room for manoeuvre, marginalised groups may find ways of interpreting collective traditions in a way which justifies their claim to a particular resource, or supports a demand for their views to be taken into account.

As a rule, the greater people's familiarity with the workings of the state the more likely they are to be able to engage effectively with its agents. It follows that once previously marginalised people have been exposed to some part of the policy process (whether through an NGO-run civic education programme or a consultation exercise by a government agency), they may begin to develop strategies for influencing other aspects.

Key question 14: What opportunities exist for poor people to influence policy directly?

While analysis of 'vertical social capital' should provide an understanding of the 'demand side' of poor people's involvement with the policy process, identifying the opportunities for influence which exist requires an understanding of the 'supply side', that is, the approach to participation of government agencies and policymakers.

Here, the broad political environment will be important, including the extent to which the government tolerates dissent and respects civil and political rights. The use of political analysis tools such as 'good governance assessment frameworks' should provide an understanding of macro-level conditions. However, even broadly democratic countries often have 'authoritarian enclaves' where local élites continue to limit the scope for marginalised groups to press for recognition of their rights. It should be noted that such enclaves will tend to be found in the remoter areas where a large proportion of the poor and vulnerable live. Macro-level governance assessment should therefore be combined with insights from the 'institutions and organisations' component of SL studies, which can illuminate the political realities on the ground as well as the extent to which potentially supportive government agencies have an effective local presence.

A key factor in determining the extent of poor people's opportunities to engage directly with the policy process is decentralisation. However, caution should be exercised in equating decentralisation with participation. Not all decentralisation is 'democratic' (i.e. linked to mechanisms for downwards accountability such as local elections). Not all 'democratic' decentralisation necessarily favours the interests of the poor, who may belong to minority groups unable to make their votes count, or be trapped in an electoral process so dominated by clientelism that it serves only to reinforce élite power. In addition, there may be a mismatch between the size of the 'decentralised' government units (which may be districts with a population of 100,000 or more, or even, as in the Ethiopian case, regions with a population of several million), and the scale at which decisions are taken about key livelihood resources, (which will tend to be at village or locality level).

<table>
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Box A14

Decentralisation in Mali

In the late 1990s, Mali began a complex and drawn-out process of decentralisation which included an extensive redefinition of the boundaries of *arrondissements* (the smallest administrative units) and their transformation into *communes ruraux* with elected councils. Although the redefinition of boundaries was supposedly based on a consultative process, it generated a large number of conflicts as a result of villages being denied the right to join the *commune* of their choice. One example was Dalonguebougou, which was allocated to the *commune* of Doura despite local leaders' requests for the village to be linked instead to Dougabougou, where the market and health centre used by people from Dalonguebougou are located. Relations with Doura have traditionally been tense, and there is little confidence in Dalonguebougou that the newly-elected council will respect the interests of villagers. This mistrust reduces the opportunities for local people to influence decision-making at the *commune* level. It also increases the risk of conflict once the *commune* begins to exercise its right to decide on village-level land tenure issues (see Box A12). The creation of this new structure raises the possibility that, where they have suffered discrimination, less powerful groups such the Maure and the visiting Bambara will be able to appeal to Doura over the heads of the village chief and elders. However, some observers have also noted a fear that the *commune* will concentrate instead on encouraging outsiders to settle in Dalonguebougou, overloading the natural resource base and bringing to an end a management system which hitherto has enabled all groups in the village to gain sustainable (though unequal) access to key livelihood resources.

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</table>

Key question 15: What opportunities exist for poor people to influence policy indirectly?

In many contexts, the political odds are so heavily stacked against poor and vulnerable groups that there is little prospect that they will be able to mobilise successfully to ensure that policy measures respect their interests. This does not mean, however, that there are no opportunities for the perspectives of the marginalised to be fed into policy processes. Indeed, a key purpose of SL-focused policy analysis should be to identify such opportunities and suggest ways in which they can be exploited.

The analysis of policy processes proposed in **Part 2** should already have produced some insights into the ways in which different actor-networks influence policy in particular sectors. In concluding the process of policy and livelihoods analysis, these insights should be combined with the findings of SL studies or other local-level research to identify those institutions and organisations that could provide a link between poor people and policy decision-makers. This is where any agency which intends to develop policy-focused interventions to promote sustainable livelihoods should look for its allies. Once they have been identified, the findings of the whole process of policy and livelihoods analysis should be shared with them, and work can begin on developing a strategy for intervention.

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