

Unit 1 Allocation of livelihood assets for Household food security



Introduction

Food resource management means using resources wisely to provide healthy food for the household throughout the month, season or year. Household livelihood assets are an important base for the allocation, use and management of assets and providing for food resources for household food security. We learned that just like sustainable livelihoods, household food security is an integration of environmental, economic, and cultural factors. Food resource management is an internal household decision matter that plays an important role in ensuring household food security.

Food security is 'a state that exists when all people, at all times have physical social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active life' (Devereux 2004).

Food insecurity may be temporary (transitory food insecurity) or continuous (chronic food insecurity). People arrive at these states through *unavailability* of food, *insufficient purchasing power*, *inappropriate distribution* or *inadequate utilisation* of food resources at household level. It will be important to find the relationship between *vulnerability* which destabilises the livelihood and food security in order to find solutions to stabilise the situation again. This is also referred to as *resilience* i.e. the ability to prevent moving into a situation of food insecurity. Any measure of addressing *food insecurity* or *hunger* to ensure *stability* in household food security needs to take into account the needs of a household in relation to the availability and access to foods, as well assets average consumption levels of food over a period of time. This is captured in the statement '*all people, at all times*'.

The unit consists of the following sections:

- 1.1 Food stability for maintaining food security
- 1.2 Household food resource management
- 1.3 Household food security using and allocation of livelihood assets
- 1.4 Mapping household food security



Specific outcome and learning outcomes

The information in this table is like a good road map for your learning journey. It gives you a clear idea of what you are expected to know and do at the end of Unit 1. The specific outcome engages households in the analysis of the household asset profiles and allocation of resources in different livelihood systems for food security.

Learning outcomes	Assessment activities	Actual time spent
Workbook activities		
1. What is the link between food security and food stability?	1.3 Household structures and composition 1.6 Household assets and vulnerability	
2. What is household food resource allocation and management?	1.4 Become conscious of gender roles and routine tasks	
3. What is the link between household food security, livelihood assets and livelihood strategies?	1.5 Map household resources and livelihood activities 1.6 Household assets and vulnerability	
4. Mapping the food security pathway.	POE Mapping household food security	
Portfolio Activity 2.1 Useacase study to map the food security and livelihood system of a household and family (2 hours)		
Assignment 1 You can find information on this assignment in Tutorial Letter 101 (2 hours)		



Key concepts

Sustainability	Vulnerability
Livelihoods	Stresses
Framework	Shocks
Model	Trends
Household	Resilience
Community	Food security
Livelihood assets	Foods stability
Livelihood activities	Food system
Livelihood strategies	Input
Livelihood security	Output
Food resource management	Resource allocation
Resource flow	Transformation processes
Income expenditure	

1.1 Food stability for maintaining food security

In module 4 you focussed on the optimum use of food resources by households for individual nutritional needs, and in modules 3 and 6 you learned about optimal food production using conservation theory agricultural practices. In these modules we have focused on food availability, accessibility and utilization. In this module we will look at how balancing the relationship between these food security dimensions can bring stability to household food security ensuring that all people at all times may benefit and have access to and consume enough adequate nutritious food.

Food stability can be described as balancing the relationship between the food security dimensions and the components of the food system to ensure stability of household food security in that, all people at all times will have the resources to benefit from available food, have access to and consume enough adequate nutritious food.

Knowledge gained from participatory research and development has helped us to understand that *conceptually*, food security equates to food stability. See Figure 1.1 below as a brief illustration of the relationships and linkages involved.



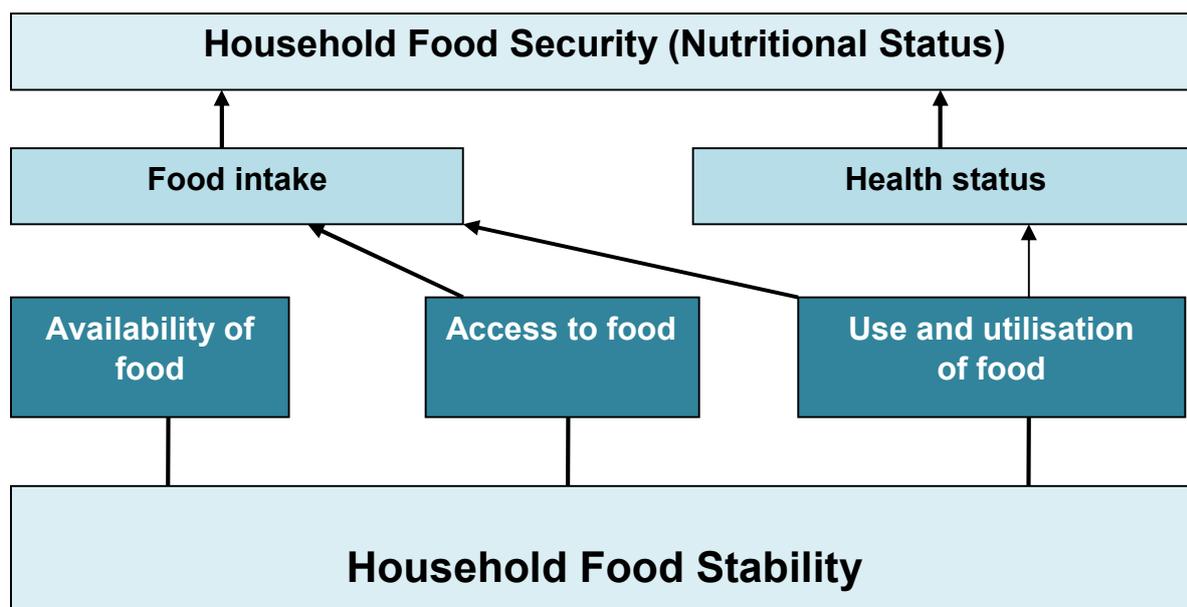


Figure 1.1 Concept linkages of household food security, nutrition and stability

Household food security as stability can be described in terms of the four dimensions as:

- Ensuring *availability* of adequate food supplies. This occurs through producing enough food supplies, (i.e. enough grains, enough dairy products) and then finding ways to ensure a constant flow of these to consumers as they are required.
- Food *accessibility* implying a constant access to stores of food. Shocks and stress on food supplies are inevitable and therefore, having regional or global reserves of food and structures (like food aid, social entitlements) in place allows individuals and groups to withstand crises.
- Food *utilization*- both the way that food is prepared and distributed between individuals within the household, and the individual's capacity to absorb and utilize nutrients in the food consumed is now considered a very critical component as well.
- *Food stability - availability accessibility and utilization* for ensuring stable food supplies for all people all the time.

At a **macro level**, food *availability and accessibility* is a result of government control of domestic food production, imports, domestic agricultural (including livestock) production and donations (in times of crisis). This can be most easily pictured as a food system on the macro level in the country with producers and distributors of food products at one end and consumers at the other.

It is important to explain that in this module we look at food stability not at the macro-level or national provincial food stores or reserves for national food insecurity, for when major natural disasters or a global crisis strike. We will enrich our learning by assisting the household with assessing and analysing food stability from the household's point of view and experience.



Each household should know what they are doing at present to acquire and secure adequate nutritious food, what else they can do, and how they will in the future secure stable food supplies.

The *stability* for household food security and stability of household food supplies refers to the ability of households to procure (to get or acquire) adequate food supplies on a continuous basis through income, production, cash transfers, exchanges and gifts. This is even possible when a household is vulnerable and faced with situations of unpredictable stress, shocks or crisis.

Food stability can

- be improved by addressing issues leading to crop failure resulting from drought, market fluctuations such as sudden price rises, the loss of employment and loss of productive assets because of ill health.
- denote the ability to stabilize food supplies through seasonal fluctuations (changes) of production and income.
- imply the households ability to cope with the extent and time (duration) of the effects of the food shortages.
- assist the household to recover and bounce back or regain quickly by trying to maintain an adequate food supply continuously.
- provide safety net mechanisms for household whose food security status fluctuates and help them to keep more or less stable.
- assist poor households with cash for work / purchasing power with work programmes and other temporarily opportunities to absorb effects of short-term food or income shortages that can affect the household
- be affected by sudden price rises that leave the households at transitory or seasonal risk.
- be due to seasonal pattern and time when at risk can be planned for. Seasonal risk is usually closely linked to constraints of natural resources and income. While chronic food secure households are always at risk and seasonal at risk households which are border cases may become chronically food insecure easily.
- be controlled by coping strategies used to balance food supplies until the situation improves. If the situation continues to get worse the household may be at risk

These sources or risks we have discussed several times before and are related to the above. In this unit we want to rather focus on how to improve food stability. It is important to identify and analyse the flow of food and livelihood strategies for accessing and managing food resources as assets for improving food security at household level.



Activity 1.1 Reasoning about food insecurity and food stability



Complete this activity in on your study guide

What to do

Answer the following questions:

Can you or your relatives remember times when either your own household or someone else's experienced insecurity, empty food cupboard and depleted food stores?

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.....
.....

How did the people involved respond?

.....
.....
.....

What was the situation and reasons involved?

.....
.....
.....

How did the people involved feel about the experience?

.....
.....
.....

Try and describe at least one negative and one positive experience.

.....
.....
.....

What would you want to be put in place so you can regard your household as food secure?

.....
.....
.....



1.2 Household food resource management

Management is about making decisions, selecting options and taking conscious actions. We first have to identify what is meant by 'management' in the ordinary household, taking into consideration the differences between households with regards to resource packages and levels of food security. Food is necessary for the health and well-being of all. Food cannot be seen as a felt need at a particular point in time that is independent of other priorities. Food flows are important, but we also need to consider that livelihoods are always changing and households adapt and household norms and activities change over time. What is important is that we want to learn to recognise the complexity and opportunities and build on that to enable households to maximise their choices and freedom to manoeuvre around food flows. For this we need to look further at the household composition, decision-making and activities household members influencing household food security.

1.2.1 Household food resource management

The household is used as entry point to understand household resource management and address rural development challenges. External factors such as policies and epidemics affect various types of households, socio-economic groups and household members in different ways. It is necessary to look inside the household to understand patterns of access, decision-making and power relations and their impact on livelihoods, food security and the overall well-being of household members. Looking at households and analysing intra-household dynamics helps us to gain a better understanding of the gender roles and relations among household members including resource management decisions, and common interests and conflicts of interest in resource needs and allocation (FAO 1999).

Food resource management is described as the handling of all foods and resources that may be used to acquire foods by an individual or households (Hersey, *et al.* 2001). To allocate, manage and use resources of a household is also referred to as household resource management.

1.2.1 What are households?

A household can be defined as people who eat together, share resources and live under the same roof. As a community development facilitator we know that this is not always true nor is it so simple. People may share resources, but do not stay under the same roof for seven days a week. Or in a homestead complex, people may not stay under the same roof. The definition for a household will also differ from community to community and cultural group to cultural group. The modern world has a nuclear family as the norm. The question is could this be the most sustainable form of a household? Can such an idealised household create a livelihood and survive risks over a lifetime. What is the real situation?



There are many variations and forms of household composition. A household might include grandparents, other relations, or children from other families who may be temporary or semi-permanent household members. People in South Africa often migrate temporarily between urban and rural areas or sleep in town during the work week and return home over weekends

- Single man (one-person or more per household)
- Single women (one person or more per household)
- Single mother with dependent children
- Single father with dependent children
- Child-headed household (siblings or from different households)
- Two-generation household without children (sometimes other family or a friend)
- Three-generation household - extended family

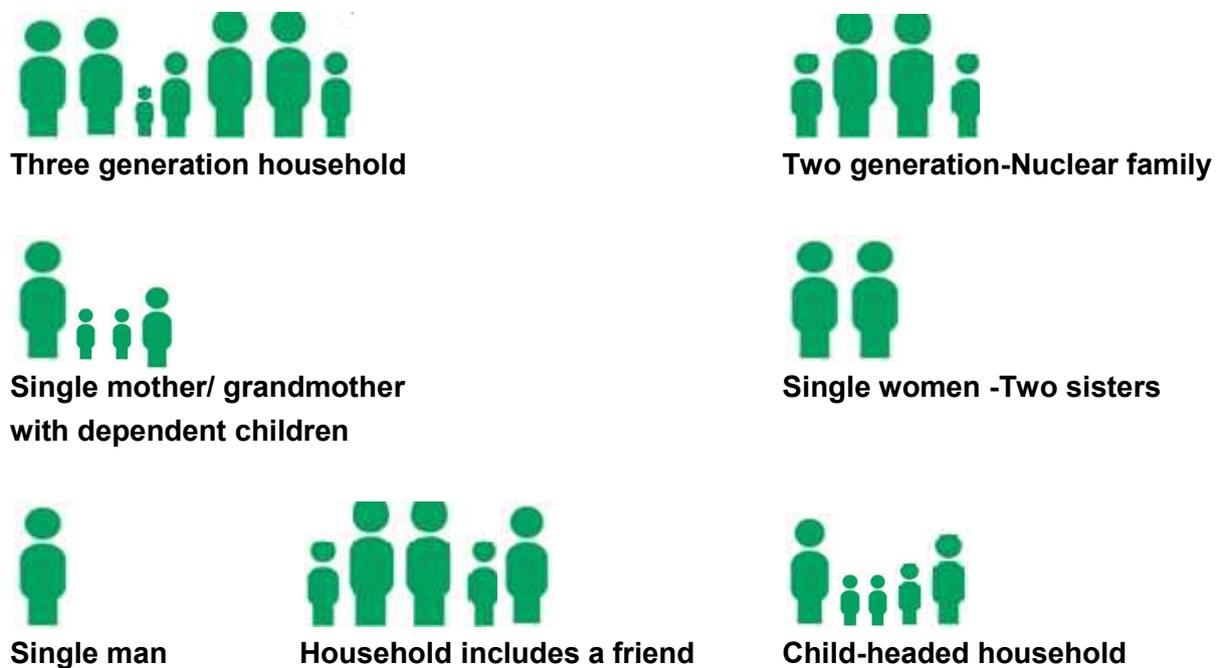


Figure 1.2 Household structures and composition

A household structure can be any shape, genders ages and may differ at different times of the year. Households can have different structures and the most common is the nuclear family, the extended family, single parent household, the child-headed household.

Within rural communities one can find extended family household networks or kinship systems. A number of households with family ties stay together in a village and share some activities for a livelihood. Similarly in another village or township one may find a cluster of households without family ties staying together and caring for each other. This is more evident in a peri-urban or urban area.



As a result of HIV/AIDS, many grannies in South Africa have households that consist of themselves and lots of little children. In Swaimanni, KwaZulu-Natal, a story is told of one *gogo* whose household consists of her and 14 grandchildren (all school age). She supports them with her pension. No shape or size of household is the ideal as it depends on the ability to care for each other and the manner in which resources are used to achieve this.

Activity 1.2 Household structures and composition



Complete this activity in your study guide

What to do:

1. Draw pictures of your household members in the box below and indicate the relationship of these members to yourself.
2. Answer the questions below in the spaces provided:

Answers:

1. Criteria for who is part of my household

are:.....
.....
.....
.....

2. How old are you and they? Are they male or female?

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3. Should those with household membership contribute assets or resources? Explain in your answer why

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4. How do those with household membership contribute to food resources

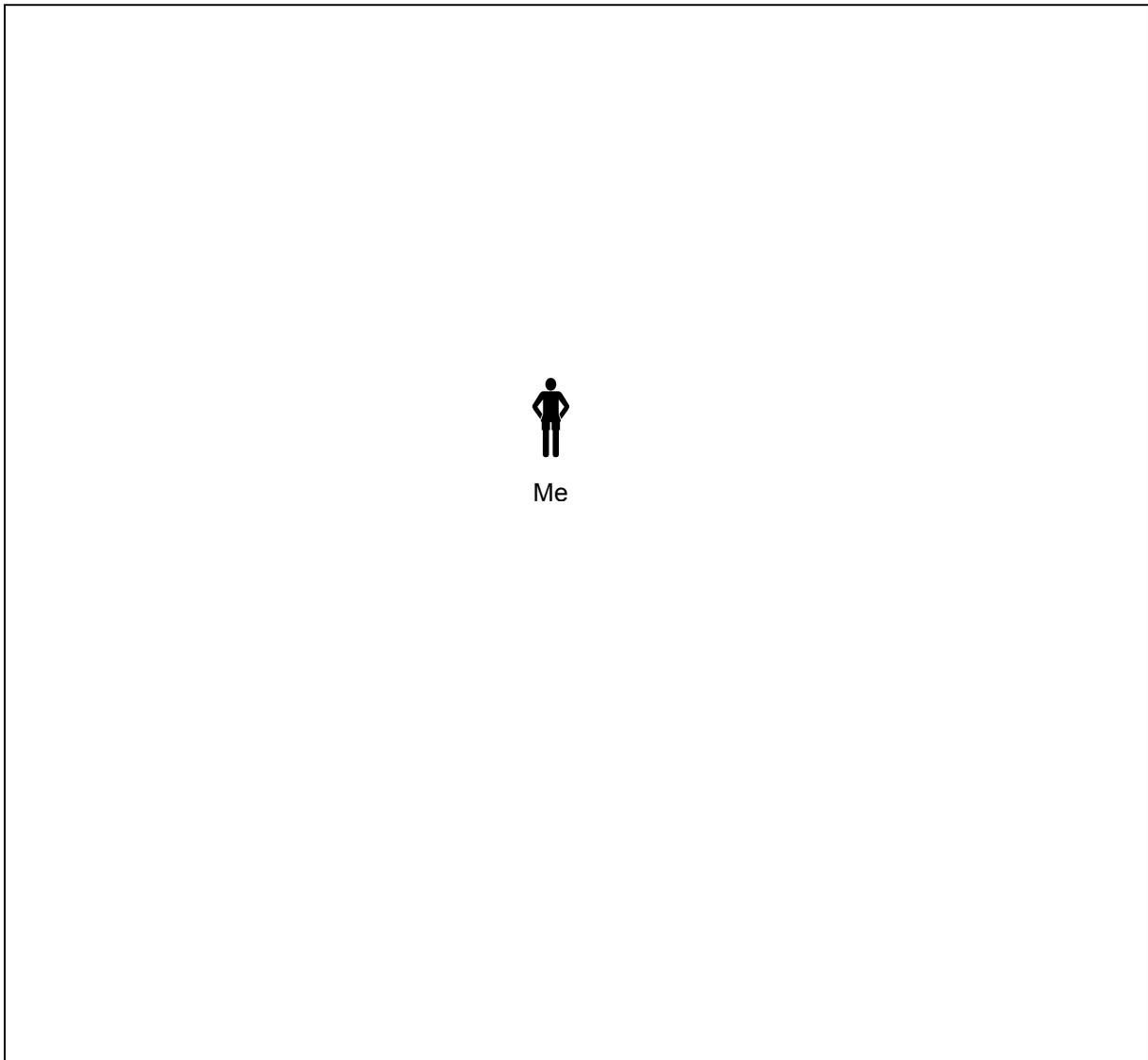
.....
.....

5. Which member of household manages the food resources

.....



Members of my household



Me

Comment on activity 1.2

Through this exercise you will realise that households are different, members use different criteria for defining who is a member of a particular household. Households have a different number of members, their sex, who is the household head, the assets each member contributes, as well as who is regarded as a household member.

In household food security we need the households to consider their own household structure and composition and analyse their own demands for household food security and the requirements needed to provide a stable food supply. Households need a gender specific understanding of their own households and so does the facilitator concerning:



- *The extent of men's and women's unpaid work in the household, particularly for food and agricultural production;*
- *Male and female access to resources, inputs and employment;*
- *The household characteristics, especially factors such as household resource access and allocation that relates to poverty*
- *The extent of male and female participation in environmental, economic, socio-cultural and political decision-making.*

1.2.2 Household decision-making and dynamics of resource allocation

Women and men often differ on how to allocate resources and what roles they are prepared to play. This creates gendered roles and power relationships within households that may impact on the way in which resources are managed. For example, in Dar es Salaam, women grow food for their family's own consumption in home gardens, whereas men grow food for the market in open spaces. In Malawi, women do most of the work in the fields and might even sell the crops, but the income is still controlled by the men (Egalet *al* 2001). Sometimes a family can maximise their resources but structural flaws in the way the economy is functioning (e.g. lack of service delivery, political injustice, food shortages) may impact and cause problems which the household simply cannot solve.

For any household, the outcomes of activities need to contribute to well-being and management of resources. Even though individual members participate in multiple sectors of the market (brings in income) and non-market (don't get paid for it) economic activities, the end result is a livelihood that does or does not result in the well-being of all the household members. As development facilitators, we want to address felt needs (e.g. 'I feel hungry today'), but we also want to begin to address the real needs (e.g. food insecurity). The process of managing begins by clarifying goals and priorities for well-being **with** households (not **for** households). To do this we need to understand the values and norms of behaviour and roles within the household. The resources and knowledge required must be identified, and finally a plan must be formulated to achieve the household's goals. And here we come to another use of a framework i.e. when a household can define what it wants for its livelihood goals (the family vision/framework for livelihood outcomes), then they have a destination for which they can plan and work towards.

Roles within households

In general, there are three typical roles within households: Productive roles, Reproductive roles and Community management roles.



Productive role	Work is done for pay in cash or kind. It includes both market production with an exchange-value, and subsistence/home production with actual use-value, and also potential exchange-value. In agricultural production, this includes work as independent farmers, includes on farm responsibilities (such as value adding) and wage workers.
Reproductive role	Childbearing/rearing responsibilities and domestic tasks required to guarantee the maintenance and reproduction of the labour force. It includes not only biological reproduction but also the care and maintenance of the work force (spouse/partners and working children) and the future work force (infants and school-going children).
Community managing role	Activities undertaken as an extension of reproductive roles, to ensure the provision and maintenance of scarce resources of collective consumption, such as water, health care and education. This is voluntary unpaid work, undertaken in 'free' time.
Community politics role	Activities undertaken at the community level, organising at the formal political level, often within the framework of national politics. This is usually paid work, either directly or indirectly, through status or power.

Activity 1.3 Household structures and composition



Complete this activity in your workbook

Answer also the following questions

1. Think about the roles that are played in your family.
2. Identify your role/s in your household and discuss how they are important to you and then consider how they are important for the rest of the family.
3. What impact does your role have on the roles of others?
4. What does it allow others to do or not to do in terms of benefits for the household?



Decision making & households

If we think of a household as a unit with a set of resources attached to it, we can explain a household's decision making in terms of the capabilities that exist for carrying out production, consumption and processing activities. In our South African society, especially rural areas, there is also a strong differentiation between genders regarding household activities. For example, men plough with oxen. A female household may hire a tractor, draft power or hoe, but will not plough themselves because they either do not have the equipment and draft power, or because they do not have the knowledge which has been passed on from father to son. Perhaps they even believe this is men's work and that they should not plough.

How a family responds to the daily hassles, routines and opportunities of life depends on their values and beliefs. Without going into the theory of this, we can assume that culture, religion, the economy and history all help determine what we are conscious of: in other words – what we know and how we perceive appropriate responses to our environment. Every day, household members are faced with making many decisions which are basically transactions with their environment.

We subconsciously make decisions about whether our environment and the actors in it are hostile or friendly, well-resourced or poorly resourced. For example, let us assume that you are a member of one political party and in the next election an opposing party is voted into power – how do you feel about this? You awake one morning having planned to leave your dwelling to go to town. It is pouring with rain – what do you do? Do you protect yourself from the environment and carry on with your plans or do you change your plans? Why did you make the choice you did? What are the consequences of that choice?

But we are supposed to be thinking about household food security – so let us think about household food choices. Think about a midweek meal that you would eat as a household. Now, think about that same midweek meal if someone you wanted to show respect to or impress had been deliberately invited by the head of the household to eat this midweek meal with you.

- Would you use the same ingredients?
- Would all members of the household eat the same food as the guests?
- How much money would you be willing to spend?
- What changes to your household resources would there be as a result of your choices?
- What would be the benefits resulting from this experience?

If you are the person who usually makes these decisions – you will recognize that you have a subconscious system for making these decisions. From previous experiences, you have



patterns that you follow. You make evaluations about the cost and consequences of the decisions you make. You make calculations (estimates or exact) about the time and equipment that you will use, what tasks need to be done, how long they will take, in what order they need to happen and who will perform each task. In other words; before the midweek meal, you will make informed decisions and make transactions within your environment for who, what, when and how resources will be used. What you perceive as correct and appropriate decisions for that meal are based on subjective perceptions and determine the immediate and consequential impacts on your household resources.

Let us assume that this meal you prepared cost the family a great deal of time and money. Perhaps someone took the day off of a paying job (resulting in loss of income) to assist in its preparation. Perhaps you did not have the cash to buy meat so you slaughtered one of your own small livestock (resulting in loss of future productivity). Perhaps you bought in extra food items (resulting in using money allocated to another household need). What are the benefits? Would they be material benefits (tangible)? Would they be social benefits (tangible and intangible)? What makes it worth going to all this effort? Why?

Households are places of strategic importance for decision making. These decisions are the result of family processes that unfold day after day and are a series of strategies that the household system and individuals use to respond to changes within or from the environment.

Both age and gender play a central role in the food security of households. While both men, women and children are actively engaged in agricultural production and income generation, most women and some men are also responsible for a range of other household activities, including family care and nutrition. Anything that diverts attention from these roles impacts on food production and preparation as well as income-earning activities. Therefore it would also impact on any planned interventions.

1.2.3 Household gendered roles and responsibilities

Gender roles are learned behaviours in a given society/community or other social group such as the household that condition which activities, tasks and responsibilities are perceived as being male or female. Gender roles vary considerably across settings and also change over time. The generally recognized factors that shape and change gender roles are: age, class, race, ethnicity, religion and other ideologies, geographical environment, economic environment, and political environment.



Both men and women play multiple roles. The major difference, however, is usually identified as:

Men typically play their roles sequentially, focusing on a single productive role at a time,

while

Women usually play their roles simultaneously, balancing the demands of each within their limited time constraints

In the following table (Table 1.1) notice the patterns. Do you see how the wife has multiple roles which she juggles within her daily routine? Notice how the husband's roles are mutually exclusive and do not have any reproductive role.

Table 1.1 Example of stylised gender roles for a traditional rural household

Who does it?	Activity	Productive	Reproductive	Community
e.g. 1 st wife	What is done?	Fetches water	Cares for infant (grandchild)	Makes beer for celebration
	Frequency?	Morning and evening	When daughter is in fields	occasionally
	Where does this happen?	Fetches from river	At home	At home
	How long does it take?	2 hours	3 hours daily	Several days
	How fixed? How much flexibility is there in completing task?	Morning and evening	Fixed during planting & harvesting	Flexible
Husband	What is done?	Works in manufacturing plant		Attends meetings called by the Chief
	Frequency?	5 days week		3 times a year
	Where does this happen?	In town		Chiefs kraal
	How long does it take?	Comes home only on weekends		2 days
	How fixed? How much flexibility is there in completing task?	Fixed		Fixed



Activity 1.4 Become conscious of gendered roles in routine tasks



Complete this activity on your own or in groups in your workbook

Aim: To become conscious of gendered roles in routine tasks

Time: 1 hour

What you must do

In the table below, who is most likely to perform the identified activity? Insert your answer into the spaces provided. What patterns do you see?

A gendered thinking exercise

Activity	Who is most likely to perform this task, a man or woman?
Levelling the ground	
Cutting poles	
Stripping bark off of poles	
Cutting grass for thatch	
Mixing clay for walls	
Applying clay to poles for walls	
Tying down the thatch	

Comments on activity 1.4

The gender-based division of labour ascribed in a given socio-economic setting determines the roles that men and women actually perform. To illustrate this, reflect for a minute on the sequence of building a traditional house in rural Southern Africa.

The gender-based division of labour in a given socio-economic setting determines the roles that men and women actually perform. Since men and women play different roles, they often face very different cultural, institutional, physical and economic constraints, many of which are rooted in biases and discrimination that are part of systems – their own community or tribal systems or those of society in general.

In South Africa, the belief in equal opportunities for all has had a high profile in every political and economic process since our constitution was formed. The constitution informs policy and the laws and guidelines which express government policy have given rise to many economic and political opportunities for women in particular. This is an example of how a system can encourage roles and responsibilities that were previously restricted to one



gender. At a household and community level, survival or interest will often impact the roles that people are willing to play.

Is the concept of age and gender roles useful in development planning and practice? According to development experts, the purpose of understanding age and gender roles is not only to separate out the different tasks both men and women, and boys and girls do. It is also to ensure the equal valuing of these tasks through the identification of reproductive, productive, community managing and community politics roles.

Gender planning recognises that in most societies low-income women (and those in traditional systems) have a triple role: women undertake reproductive, productive, and community managing activities, while men primarily undertake productive and community politics activities. Age on the other hand can determine level of cognitive and motor skills when carrying out household tasks. When making decisions then, a household has various individual and collective resources which it can call upon to respond to its environment. These resources include economic assets, health, intelligence, job skills, and proximity of support, spirit of cooperation, relationship skills, network, and social supports.

Our role as food security facilitators is to help households articulate their food security goals within their livelihood activities, identify and promote practices to achieve those goals by identifying current practices, facilitating conditions that promote behaviour change and dealing with issues that might constrain that desired behaviour. Perhaps this seems a little abstract. As you work through the module you will deal with concrete experiences of these decision making components.

1.3 Household food stability and household food supplies

It is important to identify and analyse the flow of food and livelihood strategies for accessing and managing food resources as assets for improving food security at household level. Based on what we have learnt earlier in this unit we can argue that households do not always make deliberate decisions on activities or plan actions regarding to food. Most of our daily activities are based on habitual decisions or patterns which developed from repeated doing of activities which worked at that point in time when we first made the decision. Or it could be that it is a cultural practice we learned and habitually accepted as the correct way to think and do activities. Thus we never consciously went through the decision-making process ourselves, but adopted a habit or pattern of "going about" activities carried down from one generation to the other and one to another, even in a community.



1.3.1 The past, present and future stability household food supplies

By assessing *household food stores* and looking practically at household food security and what households do in real life situations it becomes easier to work with and facilitate learning and change within households.

Current food supply - Is it adequate?

For a household to be food secure the household should at the time of assessment, have a *current food store* that is an *adequate food supply* for the household. We know from data that households which are mildly food insecure usually do not have an adequate food supply over the period of a month. Most households struggle through the fourth week of the month. Others have food only two to three weeks of a month.

Current household food supply means that there are sufficient stores of food or resources for acquiring foods to meet the immediate nutritional and social needs of the household members.

Past food supplies - Was it stable?

If we gather information *on past food supplies* one finds that households who are food insecure have had food insecurity that changes from season to season and from disaster to recovery and back to disaster. That tends to make many households vulnerable and at risk because of environmental, economic and socio-cultural reasons.

Future food supplies - Can it be managed sustainably?

Can we plan into the future for increasing the stability of the food supply and that it is sustainable for a life time and into the future. The potential future food supply is a function of the household's available resources, such as assets (e.g. land), labour, time, and income. In agricultural communities future food security may be defined as that portion of existing food stores which are invested in planting and in feed for animals to ensure adequate food supplies in the future. In more cash based economies, future food security is evidenced by sufficient, income to guarantee access to the nutritional needs of the household members over time. Obviously, these are extremes, and there are many variations and combinations in between.

See Figure 1.3 as an illustration of household food security and household food stores or food supplies.



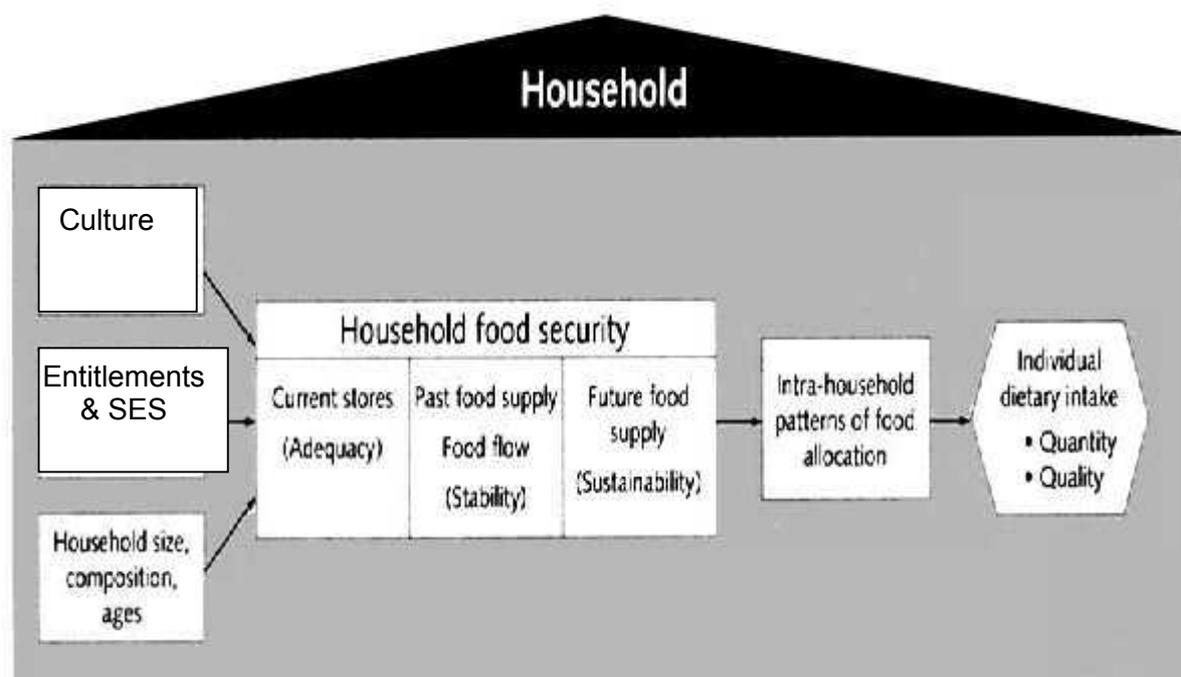


Figure 1.3 Intra household factors affecting food security (adapted from Gittelsohn *et al* 1998)

The relationships are consistent, but the resources that are used by the household are dynamic, in other words they are constantly changing and impacting on each other. Look at Figure 1.3. At the household level, food security at any point in time is determined by a household's current food supplies which must be adequate, past stability of food supply and food flow to the present that must be stable, and potential future supply which must be sustainable for future generations.

These food stores could refer to the manner in which the household food is produced, food purchased (bought), processed, stored and packaged for the future. The various ways foods enter and leave the household represent a pattern of interactions. The household could allocate, manage, transform, rework (process) food into value-added or new products. These intra-household resource allocation patterns allow us to look at both the adequacy and stability of the food supply in the past, the present and the future and how successful it is for providing the household with adequate quantity and quality food for nutritional well-being.

But even within households, there is individual access to foods and the possibility for individual food insecurity. If you will refer back again to Figure 1.3 between household food security and individual nutritional status are patterns of food distribution within the household and individual food consumption, which may include differences in dietary quality and quantity. In other words, we mean the decisions that are made about food within a particular household or family. The dietary intake nutritional status of any individual is the outcome of how that family has decided to distribute the food available.



From previous modules we know that regional and community food supplies impact on household food security and that cultural factors influence food selection and preparation. This implies that households are never far from the broader food system and its risks especially if the households are vulnerable ones.

The above intra-household food security model is very useful because it is relevant for a variety of economic environments, both rural and urban, and for subsistence farming, cash cropping, or market-dominated food procurement. However it should be noted that it is very difficult to precisely know how each household allocates and manages its food resources because a household is a private domain with members making decisions and enforcing certain rights.

1.3.2 Flow of household food supplies and household resources

So, we know now that foods available to a particular household are determined by decisions made over time that is; the past (stable) food supply, the current food stores, and the anticipated future supply of food adequate to meet the nutritional needs of all household members. But what does this mean?

In Figure 1.4 we show you a model derived by researchers who worked with households in Nepal to identify the flows of food through their village. Such analysis of food stability needs to focus on the *household livelihood assets and strategies* that are necessary to give stability through the *food system processes of production*. It also considers *food stores* gained through harvesting, storage, processing and preparation, as well as *consumption* of food.

The assumptions behind this model of household food security revolve around a concept of general household food stores. It refers to the household as a food system and shows the linkages between the different food strategies. Food flows into the household involve the movement of food through the household stores where it is distributed for production and consumption. Some food leaves the household as an outflow for other purposes in exchange for cash or services.

Balancing the food flows means the household cannot only provide what to eat for that day, but also need to plan into the future for the outflow of food to ensure it will flow into the household again. This means enough food should flow into the household food stores to be transformed or processed to balance the production, consumption and outflow demands of the household.



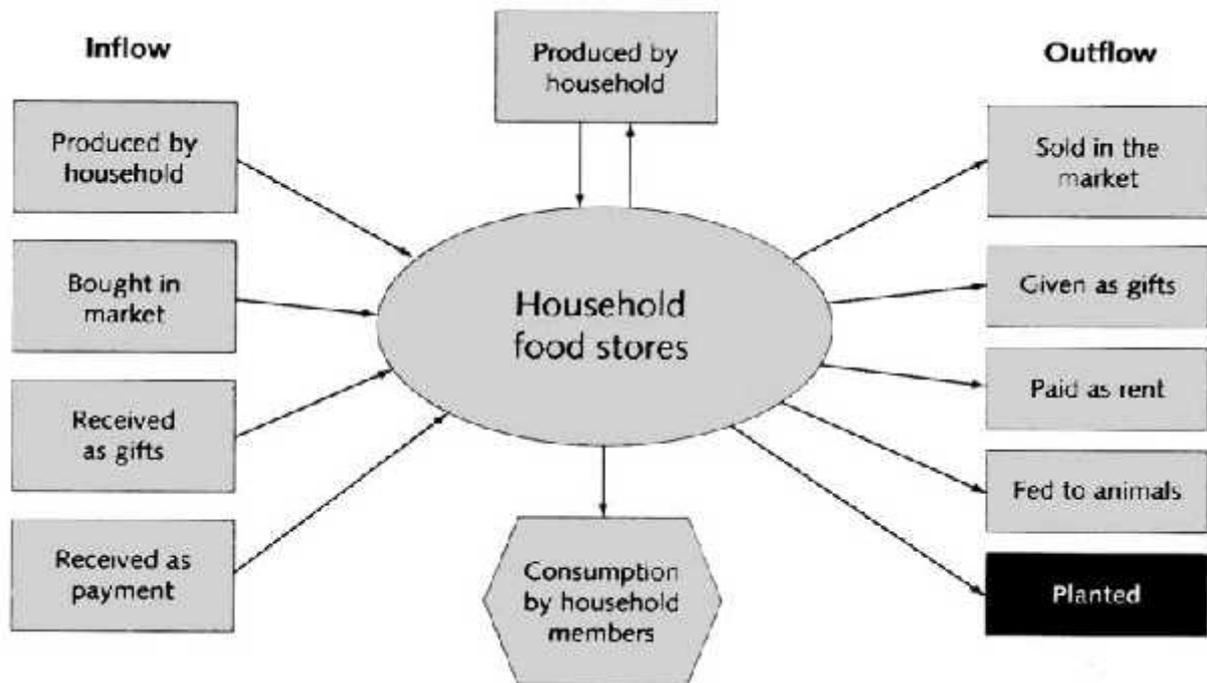


Figure 1.4 Balancing household food flows (after Gittelsohnet *al* 1998)

When the flow of food into a household, is able to match or exceed the storage and consumption within the household, and its flow out of the household– we say that we have a stable past food supply. In other words, the flow of foods into a household from all sources such as self-production, purchase, receipt as gifts, trading/bartering, hunting and gathering have theoretically met or exceeded the outflow of foods from the household. These outflows include the consumption of sufficient food, the outflow of food by selling, trading/bartering, sharing as well as the wastage of excess foods.

When households are able to generate a surplus of food or cash over and above that needed for their basic food requirements, the excess may be diverted into assets such as investments, stores and social good will. If a household find itself in a vulnerable situation these assets may be drawn upon to help cope with the crisis. Poor households with few assets, or households exposed to successive crises that deplete their resources and food stores become the most vulnerable to food insecurity (Maxwell & Frankenberger 1992).

Do the following activity of a real household situation showing the flow of food resources.



Activity 1.5 Map the flow of household food resources and livelihood activities



Complete this activity in your workbook

Aim: To map the household resource activities related to food and the roles of each household member

Time: 1 hour

What to do

1. Take a piece of A4 paper or use a flip chart for focus groups. With a pen draw the house and the different household food activities in the middle of the page.
2. The food inflows should be represented by arrows pointing towards the house. The outflow arrows should point towards the related food activity. Put arrow heads on both ends if the action is in two directions.
3. Indicate along each line the people responsible for each activity. Use symbols to represent the different people (see Figure 1.5 below).
5. Make a list of each activity each person or persons in the household are responsible for and draw lines to the activity.

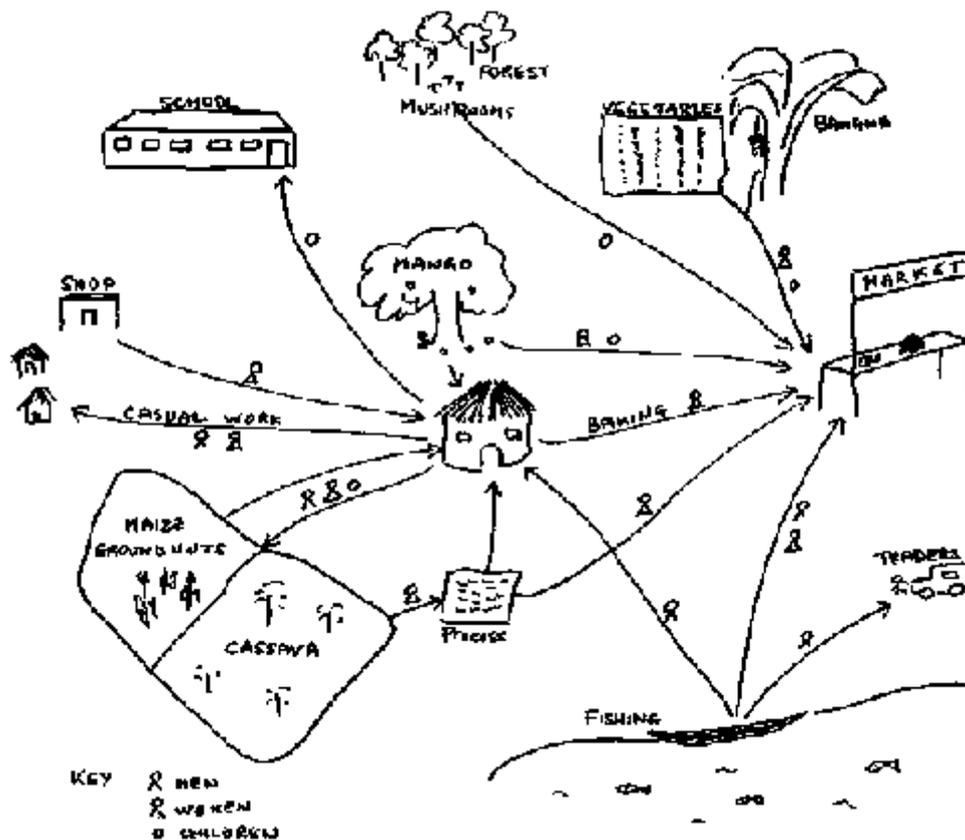


Figure 1.5 Household food resource flow and livelihood. (Adapted from FAO, 2003)



More insight for development can be gained from combining appropriate questions with the use of participatory learning tools. Participation means that people are learning while you are learning. When people participate, they link information in ways that are logical and have meaning for them. This after all is what we are trying to achieve! The table below lists a number of tools that can be used to get information from households.

Table 1.2 Measuring and understanding household food flows using PLA tools.

Type of Information	Information to look for
Defining households	Household and individual demographic data, including information on social status, age, and sex,
Determining Household Food Flows	Economic status indicators including ownership of land, animals, and material possessions, quality of the house.
	Household food stores and usage patterns estimate the amounts of key foods (identified in the ethnographic survey) acquired by the household over a specific period of time (usually one year), how the food had been used by household members, amounts of each food currently in storage, the amount of land currently planted and the numbers of each kind of animal currently owned
	Household food consumption and use patterns may be estimated first from seasonal production or purchase and allocation of those foods to various uses (e.g. marketing, trading and consumption-including obligations and wastage). To understand how foods are distributed within the household itself, a diet diversity and food-frequency instrument will show variety of foods consumed and can include an estimated quantity per individual.
Past food stability	Identification of key foods that have flowed in and out of a particular household in the last 12 months. Identification of key pathways for those foods to enter households. For example, production, purchase, gift, payment, trade, illegal activity.
Current food supply/stores	This is a reflection of household food stores at a particular point in time. Key foods can be grouped into food groups e.g. grains, legumes and nuts, milk products, home grown produce available for eating (e.g. eggs, vegetables, ripe fruit), value added products (such as homemade jams, frozen or dried foods, and purchased staple items).
Future food productivity	Here we are looking at the amount of land currently planted with a variety of crops and their expected yield; the numbers of work animals and food- or milk-producing animals currently owned as a means of indicating the potential of the household to produce food in the near future. Or for those who do not farm or grow any food, the amount (a percentage of income is sufficient information in most cases) of regular income budgeted for preparing and consuming food.



In Module 2 we have learnt about a number of participatory learning in action (PLA) tools. These tools can be selected and used according to the kind of information and learning that needs to take place. At this stage some of the previous tools can be used again to monitor if the previous learning sessions and household visits indicate some changes. However, major changes in household food security should not be expected at this point in time.

1.3 Household food security using a livelihood approach

We have built a food security conceptual framework in previous modules that includes the nutrition, household food and livelihood security components. Refer to the framework below (Figure 1.6) to refresh what you have learned up to now.

As a student in this course you have already been exposed to a framework for healthy eating. You learned that in theory, households need to allocate resources in a sustainable manner to achieve a balanced diet for each individual in the household. They need to eat a variety of fruit, vegetable and other foods rich in carbohydrates, proteins and other nutrients that are needed to satisfy the body's nutritional needs. When you look at the food resources available for a household to eat, the framework can help you identify priorities, steps and additional resources needed to achieve a healthy family dietary intake.

Activity 1.6 Using the livelihood components of the food security framework



Complete this activity on your study guide

Aim: Observe the different components that make up the food security framework based on what you learnt in the previous modules of the programme.

Time: 30 minutes

What you will need

1. Study the framework in Figure 1.6 below. You do not have to write any answer.
2. Identify the dimensions of household food security and nutritional well-being.
3. Identify those dimensions referring to household livelihood assets and strategies.
4. Identify the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro- levels on which food security dimensions are present and form linkages that spill over to household food security on the micro and meso levels (household and community levels).



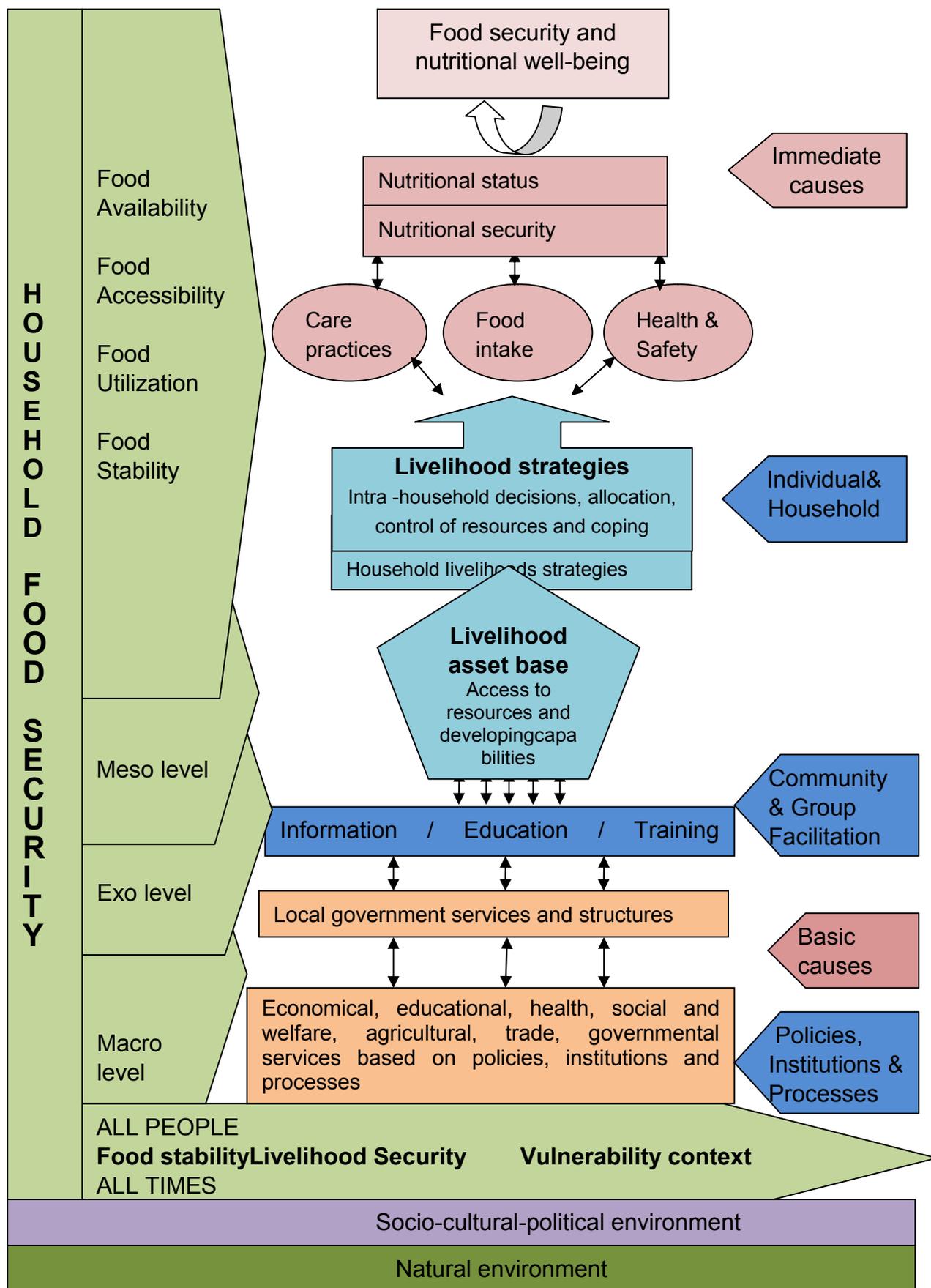


Figure 1.6 The conceptual framework with building blocks for household food and the livelihood asset base as foundation



Comments on activity 1.6

To refresh our learning from the previous modules the building blocks of food security were used to build a conceptual framework and include nutrition security aspects such as adequate nutritious food intake, care practices and a healthy environment, linked to livelihood aspects. We have until now concentrated on the top half of the food security framework.

In this module we will mostly concentrate on the bottom half of the framework dealing with the building blocks directly related to livelihoods and food security for well-being. These involve livelihood assets, livelihood strategies and the allocation of resources towards livelihood outcomes for food security, nutrition and livelihood security.

It is at the same time important to see the bigger picture on food security and livelihoods where the macro-level and its dimensions play a significant role in influencing the context within which households function. Later in this unit we will refer to the context as the vulnerability context.

Yes, you may have asked what do livelihoods and stability of assets and resources have to do with food security and nutritional health? In this module we would like to further explore the use of assets and allocation and management of livelihood and food related resources to ensure a food supply throughout the year. The solutions are not the same for all household livelihoods.

Household food security as a livelihood outcome

For many of us, traditions, celebrations, offering hospitality and remembering involve food. The ability for individuals to consume sufficient quantities of good quality food to meet their daily needs depends on the availability of food, physical and economic access to it, the utilization of food and the stability of food supply. The ability to produce food and other agricultural products, generating income and caring for and feeding family members are vital livelihood activities.

When we talk about livelihoods security, adequate nutrition is implied as one potential outcome of livelihood security. For example, as poverty issues are successfully addressed by development initiatives real family incomes increase and household strategies for exploiting available food resources become more sustainable. But households can actually be food insecure even when abundant food is available.

In order to work towards sufficient nutritious food supplies for every individual on this planet, it is necessary that livelihood systems must be economically, socially and environmentally sustainable. The way to approach food security is to approach it in the same way that we



would to develop sustainable livelihoods. We need to explore and analyse livelihood strategies in order to understand how people use their resources to achieve food security.

Food security exists at different levels as we have discovered. At any level, food security has four key dimensions. These dimensions are availability, access, stability, and utilization of food. By analysing the complex way in which these dimensions relate, we are able to address global food security problems with appropriate policy and program formulations. One of the best ways to evaluate the effectiveness of policy is to look at how it impacts on people's livelihoods – does it facilitate an enabling environment or one that prevents access to necessary resources for sustainable living?

If we want to understand the potential for reaching a state of food security, we start by focussing on people and their livelihood in a specific context. We want to understand the complexity of their situations, we want to identify the resources that they have available, we want to understand the processes and linkages that link people to the external environment. We want to identify points of vulnerability and see how we can increase a household's resistance to the impact of shocks and stresses. Ultimately, we want to be able to contribute to policy decision making that supports sustainable livelihoods.

The reason that we use the livelihoods approach for understanding food security is that it allows us to determine and understand the availability, access, utilization and stability of food resources from communities to individuals. It helps us to:

- Explore the diverse and complex realities faced by people within their contexts
- Look at interventions that will improve food security that are not necessarily related to food production
- Builds on people's existing capabilities and assets
- Addresses and strengthens linkages between households (micro environment) and the external context (macro-environment)
- Helps us to focus on long term solutions for food security.

When we look at **households** in general we see that all of them possess the following characteristics:

- human capabilities
- access to tangible and intangible assets
- the existence of livelihood activities

Capabilities are the combined knowledge, skills, state of health and ability to labour or command labour from a household. Usually these five are referred to as assets. See Module 1 Unit 2.



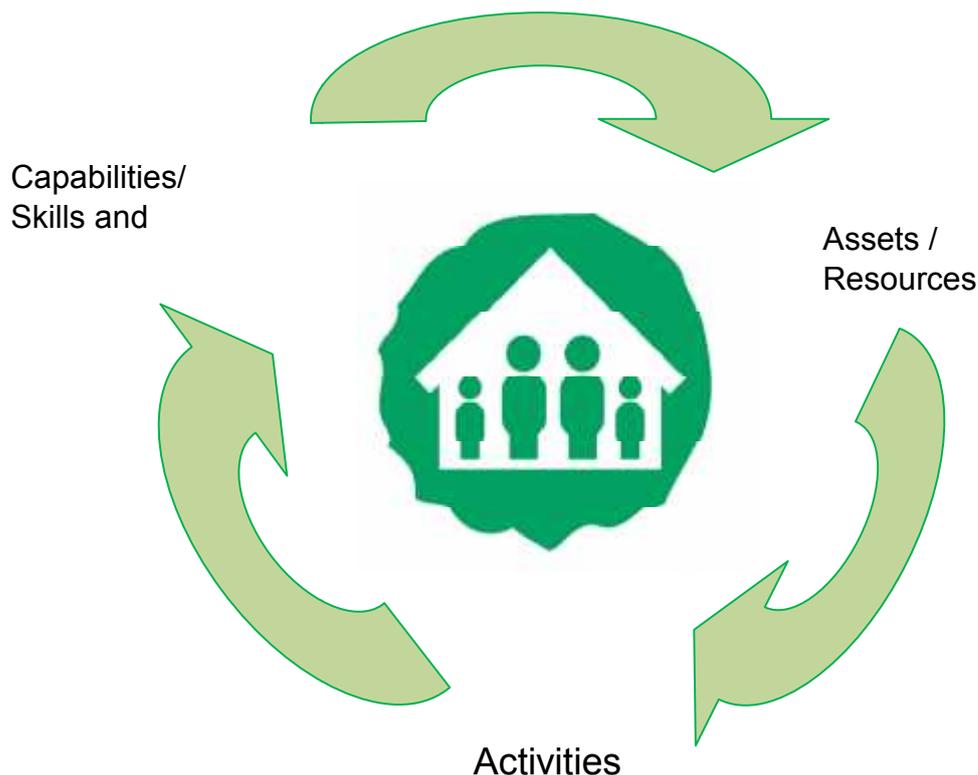


Figure 1.7 The household livelihood combining assets, activities and capabilities

Recognising and understanding how to work with these characteristics in empowering people, helps development workers respond to the complexity and individual outcomes desired by each and every household. So when we talk about 'sustainability', we look at the knowledge required to make use available natural resources in a way that conserves them and allows them to continue contributing to the activities that we carry out in seeking desired livelihood outcomes. When we talk about 'security' we mean the capability of the unit members to use assets for ensuring sufficient nutritious, enjoyable food for all members of our households at all times.

1.3.1 What is a sustainable livelihood to ensure household food security?

It has been found that a needs approach did not deliver the envisaged results and created dependency in developing countries. The concept of sustainable livelihoods has arisen out of the need to assist people to build on the assets and resources they have. Such an approach seeks to develop awareness and solutions for the poor. A sustainable livelihood is peoples' capacity to generate and maintain their means of living, and enhance their own well-being as well as that of future generations.



The livelihood approach is about people. It does not label people as 'poor', but helps us to understand that everyone has aspirations, and that everyone has assets and capabilities that can be managed as resources for planned activities to achieve those aspirations.

We use the livelihoods approach as our starting point for understanding household food security and food stability, because this theory places people at the centre of our focus. A livelihood approach helps us to identify the unique context and problems of each and every region, geographical area, cultural group, community and or household that is the focal point for development. We will learn how to identify and manage the relationship and tensions between household decision making about food resources and household food security.

A livelihood is the natural, physical and financial (material) means, as well human and social capabilities whereby one lives. The simplest livelihood may be explained as a simple cycle of getting up, going about one's daily activities and going to sleep.

*What is a livelihood?
A livelihood is the means and capabilities whereby one creates a living.*

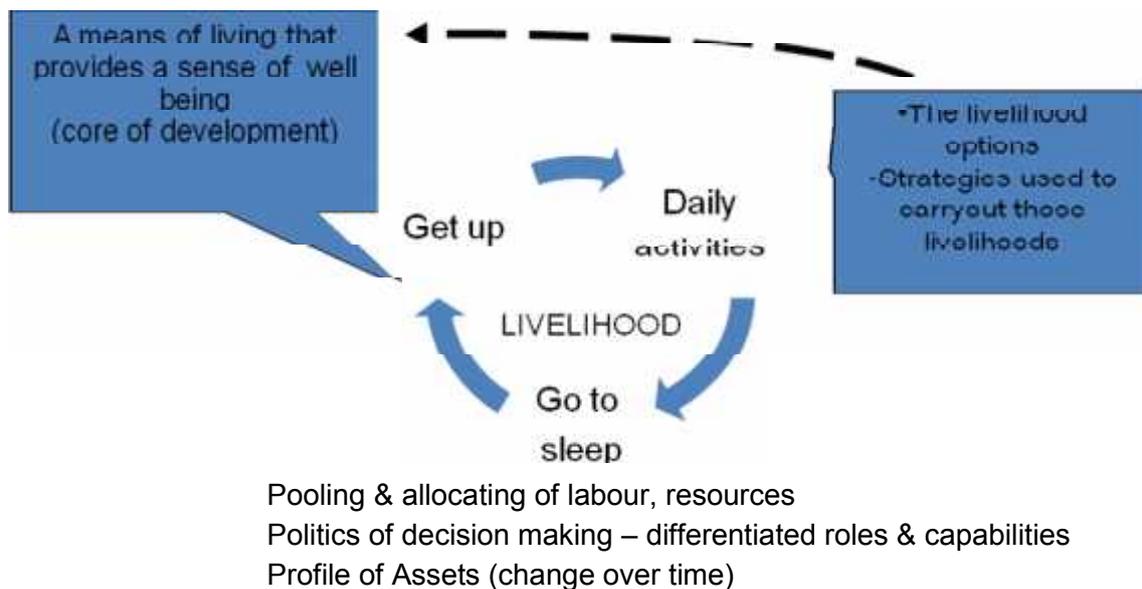


Figure 1.8 A simple illustration of a livelihood

Our daily activities are based on the livelihood options that we choose to pursue. (See Figure 1.8) These daily activities are the way we act on the decisions we have made, resources we use and the strategies that we employ to work towards our goals. Our intention is that the activities offer a means of living that provides a sense of well-being. It is this sense of well-being which is at the core of development. A sense of well-being is a human and individual



sense of being, in terms of one's livelihood, and to some extent the shared social and cultural meaning of well-being.

From our own experience, you and I both know that a livelihood is very complex and depends on many factors both from within our households (internal) and from outside them (external). How do we make sense of all these factors and how do they work together to achieve the goals that we have? All the activities that we choose to do are dependent on the capabilities, skill and knowledge we have about how to use our resources.

We will in this unit look at the relationship of all these concepts and their meaning in real life.

1.2.1 Livelihoods assets, livelihood strategies for food stability or resilience

In unit one, we looked at understanding how the livelihood options chosen by a household are a relationship between the assets that are available to that household and how that family uses these assets to interact with and impact their environment in an attempt to achieve livelihood goals. How these activities are combined to achieve well-being is what we termed livelihood strategies.

Now, we are going to narrow our focus and look at households and what makes them able to diversify their activities and identify opportunities in their environments to increase this resilience. We also want to know how they can improve and manage resources in order to strengthen their assets and capabilities. Because our overall topic in this module is food security, we will focus mainly on activities that relate to food production and consumption.

Livelihood assets and resources

What is the difference between an asset and a resource? An asset is something you have, usually of value but is not necessarily used therefore it is not a resource. A resource is something that has a use and is derived from an asset by using knowledge, skills and activities to make the asset usable. An example is cattle. Cattle are an asset when they are not used as food or being sold, but are kept for their value. Once a cow is sold, slaughtered, used for traction or ploughing, then it can be seen as a resource. One needs specific knowledge and skill and must do a specific activity to make it usable as a resource.

Livelihood capitals refers to a situation where with each asset there are associated capabilities (knowledge and skills) and activities that must be used or done before the asset can become usable as a resource.

Which of the following statements refer to an asset and which to a resource? Tick the correct cell in the table.



Object	Asset	Resource
1. Owns a cell phone without a SIM card		
2. Has a child with education but who is not willing to work		
3. Has electricity and owns a refrigerator in working condition		
4. Owns a plough and cattle		
5. Has a household plot but has no vegetable garden		
6. A granny in the household who is good at organising people		

When we are not able to effectively manage assets and available resources, or make decisions that destroy our resources or the resources of others; our livelihood decisions and strategies may be affected or even limited.

What are the five assets forming the asset base of a household?

1. **Economic (financial) assets** are defined as the financial resources that people use to achieve their livelihood objectives. These resources are of two types: available stocks and the regular inflow of money.
 - **Available stocks:** Savings are the preferred type of financial capital because they are not associated with debt or obligations. Savings can be held in several forms: cash, bank deposits or liquid assets (items which can be sold or traded) such as livestock, equipment, produce, shares and jewellery. Financial resources can also be obtained through credit-providing institutions or structures. Credit is always defined by specific obligations between the parties involved. For example, a bank loan will have specific instructions about how the loan amount is to be paid back. In a Stokvel or savings club, the members will agree on when, how and by whom the accumulated cash will be used.
 - **Regular inflows of money:** This can include earned income, pensions, or other transfers from the state, and remittances. In order to make a positive contribution to financial capital these inflows must be reliable (while complete reliability can never be guaranteed there is a difference between a one-off payment and a regular transfer on the basis of which people can plan investments).
2. **Natural assets** are the term used for the natural assets or resource stocks (e.g. trees, water, fertility of the soil, clean air, flora (plants) and fauna (animals)) upon which people rely. The benefits of these stocks are both *direct and indirect*. For example, land, animals and plants provide direct benefits by contributing to medical care, income, food and



nutrient cycling Indirect benefits that they might provide include protection from erosion and storms and the aesthetic or social value and people's sense of well-being. Of key importance for rural people are land, water, forest resources and livestock. The way in which people have access to these resources – ownership, rental, communal ownership – need to be considered as well as the condition of the resources themselves. Key questions for natural assets are how productive they are and how they change over time to be used as resources.



Figure 1.9 The five categories of household livelihood assets

3. **Physical assets** are made up of the basic infrastructure and physical things that support livelihoods. Infrastructure consists of changes to the physical environment that help people to meet their basic needs and to be more productive (e.g. roads, buildings, fences, electricity, water reticulation systems, landing places, market facilities). Access to these, as well as other forms of infrastructure such as water, electricity and, health care facilities, will influence people's ability to earn an adequate livelihood. Key components of infrastructure include affordable transport systems, water supply and sanitation, energy, good communications and access to information. For example, in South Africa today, the cell phone is a physical asset which has transformed our ability to 'keep in touch', 'do business' and 'access' information.

Other kinds of physical assets include productive assets that enhance income (e.g. bicycles, vehicles, sewing machines, tools and equipment), household goods and utensils and personal consumption items such as radios and refrigerators. Most of these are owned by individuals or groups. Some, such as larger agricultural equipment or processing units, can also be accessed through rental, communal ownership or by paying a fee for the services used. The knowledge required to use and maintain physical assets is important for building human assets.



- For example, what use is a tractor, if you do not know how to drive it or carry out routine maintenance? If you had business knowledge you could make the tractor work for itself by hiring it out to other individuals when you do not need it for your own productivity.
 - Another example would be the use of a cell phone. You could use it to communicate with your family and friends but you could also use it to access the internet or manage your import/exporting business deals. Using your cell phone can help to find special deals or specific pieces of equipment to save the rural entrepreneur lots of money.
4. **Social assets** tend to be ‘intangible’ – you can’t touch them or see them. They are the benefits that come through relationships with people and institutions and access to resources that are determined by local rules and conventions.

Social assets are resources that are produced by the way in which people work together, both within the household and in the wider community. In many communities, different households will be linked together by ties of social obligation, reciprocal exchange, trust and mutual support, especially in times of crisis. Critical benefits of social capital are access to information, access to influence or power, and access to claims or obligations for support from others. Gender inequality and class structures are often the result of value systems that give one individual more influence, more information, or more rights to demand support or control over certain assets. Social assets or resources are developed through investment in:

- **Interactions** (through work or shared interests) that increase people's ability to work together;
- **Membership** of more formal groups in which relationships are governed by accepted rules and norms; and
- **relationships of trust** that facilitate cooperation, reduce transaction costs and sometimes help in the development of informal safety nets amongst the poor.

For example, most people as individuals do not have much power and often go unheard. However, when a community is able to organise itself, it may form cooperatives which can then be registered with the appropriate government departments and access resources from the private sector. This gives communities an official channel to influence policy and other decision making. When a community builds relationships of trust and cooperation, they are increasing their capacity to achieve the desired goal. Section 21 companies and registered cooperatives and organisations are 2 ways of organising peoples’ interests in officially recognised structures.



5. **Human assets** represent people's health and ability to work as well as the knowledge and skills they have acquired over generations of experience and observation. At a household level human assets are dependent on the amount and quality of labour available and the ability to innovate, manage, cope and adapt. Human assets include the skills, knowledge, fortitude (what is in the mind which makes us persevere) and abilities (physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual) that people have. Included in human capital are

- specialised local knowledge about the environment,
- specific production and entrepreneurial skills,
- ability and desire to work
- education and other learning experiences
- the ability to change attitudes, perceptions and build skills that improve people's capacity to use existing assets better and
- able to create new assets and opportunities.

Assets are not useful on their own and are usually only useful in different combinations with activities and capabilities, which are also referred as strategies that we will discuss later.

A livelihood system and the household asset base

A livelihood system functions in an environment or vulnerability context and always has an input, an output, a throughput with processes, and a feedback component to determine whether the livelihood is secure or insecure and if corrective action is needed. Household livelihood resources rely on what we call the **asset** base of the household. The asset base consists of everything that directly influences, or is controlled by our households. Different households will have different levels of access to assets and the diversity and amount of these different assets, and the balance between them will affect what sort of livelihood we are able to create for ourselves at any particular moment.

If we consider how much of the asset base is being used, we can see how those resources influence livelihoods and determine the vulnerability and sustainability of the current livelihood activities. One can for example ask questions such as:

- Do households have limited physical resources for shelter?
- Are households restricted in their resources by having no knowledge or literacy?
- Are households restricted to access of a certain asset such as finance or land?
- Do people have the knowledge and skills but no access to the resources?
- Do people have access to natural resources but no skill to cultivate food and harvest water?



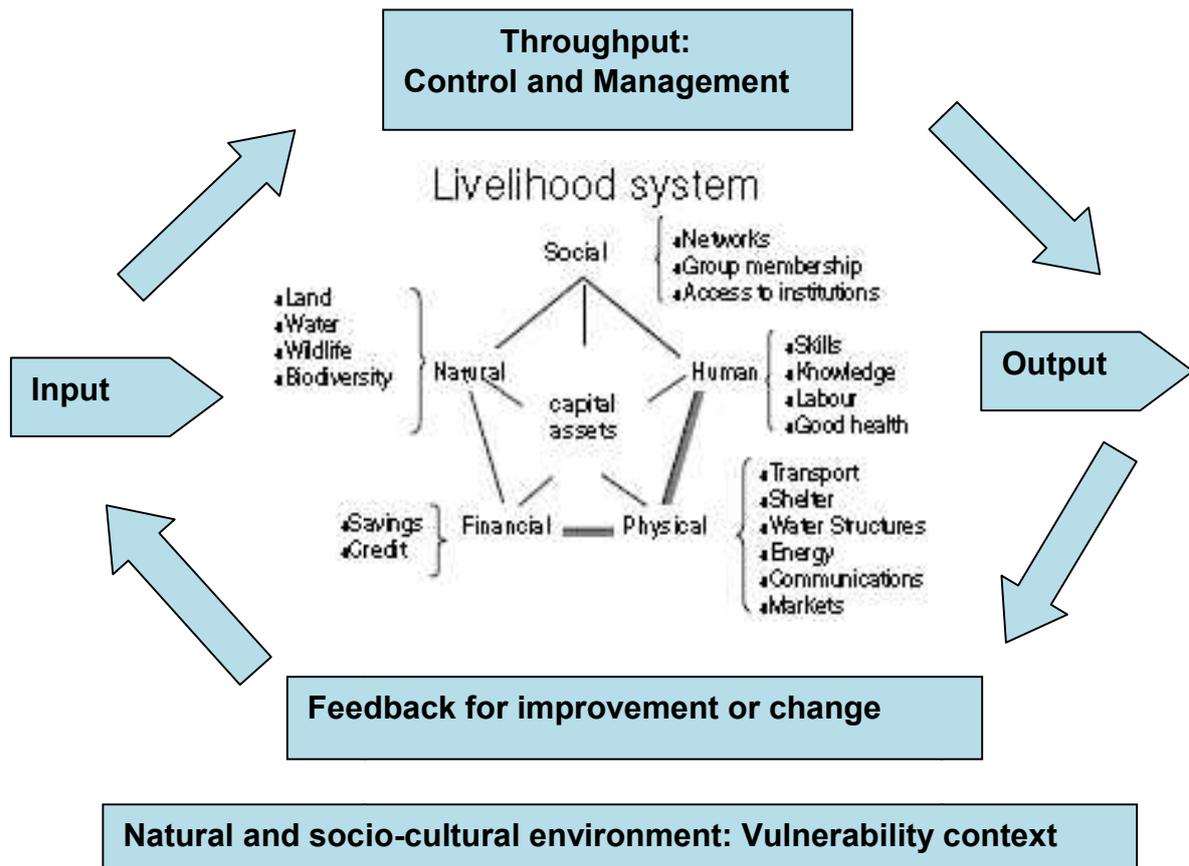


Figure 1.10 The livelihood system and the asset base

Assets and their resources are not necessarily guaranteed or permanently available to us. When resources that used to be available are no longer available to us, our livelihood choices may be affected or even limited. This could make us more vulnerable to shocks and stresses. When we are not able to effectively manage available resources, or the decisions that we make destroy our resources or the resources of others. Then our existence as humans, households, communities and a society become unsustainable. The recent famine in Somalia with hunger and malnutrition is a recent example of livelihood systems that have collapsed.

All households, especially those with only an income, are aware of assets and resources that they cannot control, and may never have access to unless something changes in the throughput of resources, or the manner in which the resources are used. What we need to learn is to understand how we can allocate and manage, as well as be in 'command' or "have control over" the resources available to us.

Resources and individuals are constantly being influenced by their environment. These influences may enable or constrain the use of resources and activities that sustain life and meet peoples' needs for social interaction, emotional and physical well-being. When the



influences constrain, shock, stress, or fluctuate in availability (as is the case when dealing with seasonality) we say that livelihoods are *vulnerable*. Within this environment is included the policies, institutions and procedures on the macro level and those of an economic, social, institutional, human and environmental nature.

A household is one kind of institution with its structure and members, with its policies or rules, and procedures or ways in which things are done on the micro-level. The government is an institution with its policies and procedures on the macro level. See Module 1 Unit 1. Remember the different types of households are important in discussion household food security. We will then take a brief look at the DFID sustainable livelihood framework.

Activity 1.7 The asset base of our household livelihood system

	Complete this activity in your study guide
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What to do:

1. Answer the following questions and then use them to complete the diagram below:

- Indicate the assets of the household? Are any of these your assets?

.....
.....
.....

- Who has ownership of these assets?

.....
.....
.....

- Who has the rights to use these assets?

.....
.....
.....

- Which assets belong to the head of the household?

.....
.....
.....



Assets of a household

Natural assets

Physical assets

Social assets



Financial assets

Human assets



Comment on activity1.7

You may find that you are not up to date with of all the assets of the households. You may feel that your own assets are too little. But once the assets are added together they make a livelihood system. In rural communities, assets are mainly dependent on the natural resources found in that community. In this situation, one of the questions we need to ask is, are the strategies used for making a living, protecting and nurturing these resources for future use? In other words, how sustainable is our use of the natural resource base?

Another question that needs to be considered is can we build capacity for the effective management and generation of assets to encourage prosperity and food security in rural households?

What is the DFID sustainable livelihood framework?

At the core of identifying whether a livelihood is sustainable is understanding how human beings combine their knowledge and skill with the use of resources to achieve livelihood goals. These combinations are called *livelihood strategies*. All households have resources which are within their power to control. All households are also surrounded by resources which they may not be able to control, but may be able to use. And some have little resources and hardly any control. These differences between households are very important. In your work as a household food security facilitator you need to be conscious of these differences all the time as you assist households to make decisions on changes within their livelihood assets available to them. The Sustainable livelihood framework is given here for you to familiarise yourself with what it is composed of.

Development practitioners in all fields and government departments talk about the *livelihood approach*. It is one of the tools that have been developed to help us understand what combination of resources can be used and activities undertaken to live in a secure way.

Definition: A **framework** is an underlying set of ideas principles, agreements, or rules. It is a particular way of viewing the world. A framework also allows us to examine the connections between a micro situation and the wider (macro) world.

The DFID Sustainable Livelihood Framework is used by researchers and practitioners to think through the different aspects of how people achieve their livelihood outcomes, especially those factors that cause problems or create opportunities.



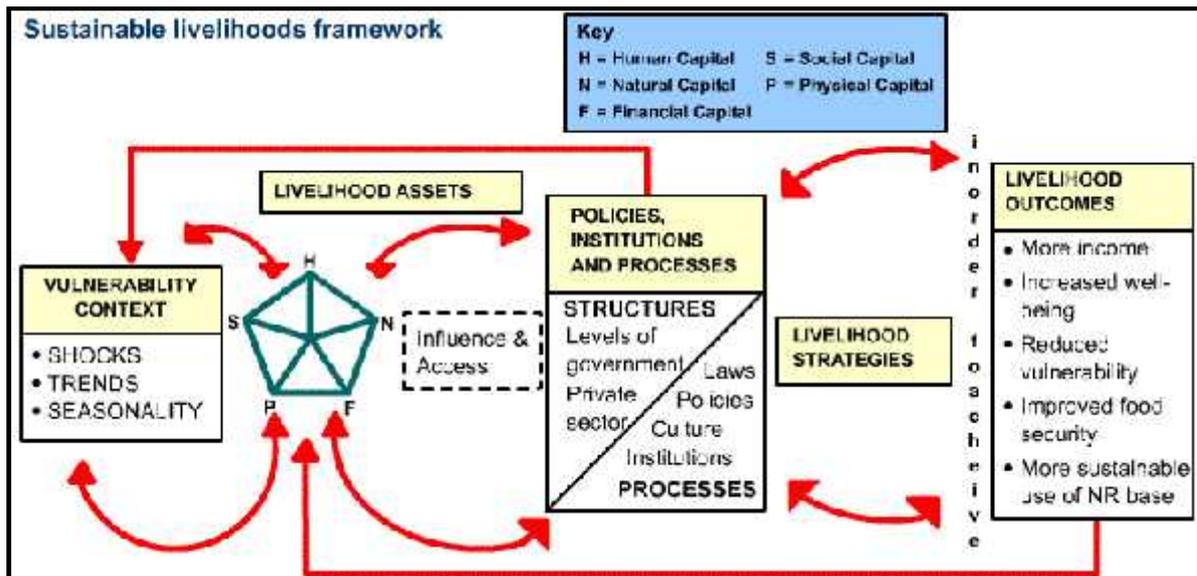


Figure 1.11 The DFID Sustainable livelihood approach based on research fighting poverty

The framework is a theoretical model of a reality that is complicated by many interlinked factors each of these affecting our lives from the macro to the micro level. This framework is complex to use in household analysis. We have discussed the various components and linkages in Module 1, 3 and now again in Module 6.

Activity 1.8 The DFID sustainable livelihoods framework



Complete this activity on your own or in groups in your study guide

Aim: Interpret the DFID Framework displaying the relationship between the vulnerability and the livelihood strategies and outcomes.

Time: 15 minutes

What you must do

1. Study the framework in Figure 1.11 which is a version of the DFID Sustainable Livelihoods Framework.
2. Do you see the relationships?
3. The arrow heads show directions of influence.
4. Do you notice that some arrows have one head and others have two?
5. What do you think that means?
6. Why can we assume that the dashed lines are not always true.

Please note that: The dashed lines (---) mean that boundaries or relationships may not be counted on to always be true.



Answer the following questions about The DFID Sustainable Livelihoods Framework:

1. Between which two factors is the livelihood asset pentagon placed?

.....
.....
.....

2. Will the relationship of assets with policies, institutions and processes always influence and affect the livelihood assets of the household and their food security?

.....
.....

3. According to the framework, which factors influence the Livelihood strategies?

.....
.....
.....

4. According to the framework, which factors influence the Vulnerability context?

.....
.....
.....

Comments on activity 1.8

To remind you again, sustainability requires that the key dimensions – economic, social, human, environmental and physical infrastructure, are kept in balance by the institutional dimension (decision-making power and allocation of resources). One dimension of sustainability should never be ignored and all be considered in relation to each other when making livelihood choices. For example one cannot focus on employment creation (economic) and ignore housing and services (physical) or education (human).

Follow the illustration and arrows and identify the main concepts and the aspects that needs analysis for which we can use any suitable combinations of participatory of learning techniques to develop a household livelihood profiles and activity pathways.

- *vulnerability context*
- *asset pentagon*
- *policies, institutions and processes*
- *livelihood strategies*
- *livelihood outcomes*

Go back to Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.3 and see if you can find these concepts. The DFID SL framework is a tool which helps us think through the different aspects of livelihoods and how



*they relate to each other. Understanding the relationships highlighted by the framework helps us to know which questions we should be asking when we work with communities and households so as to identify problems and solutions using assets and adapted or new livelihood strategies. It also allows us to visualise the factors that cause problems, and or undermine livelihoods, identify solutions using the available assets and adapting strategies, that will enable households to increase their **resilience** in the face of **vulnerability** and **micro to macro level policies, institutions and procedures**.*

What is the vulnerability context and resilience?

We have been referring to vulnerability and risk in the previous modules. A new concept that will be added in this module is **resilience**, an important concept for maintaining food stability. There is an old saying that you should not put all your eggs in one basket. If you drop the basket, you break all of the eggs! Household resilience is a little bit like this. **Resilience** is a measure of a household's ability to absorb shocks and stresses. Livelihoods that can access a variety of assets and use diverse strategies to manage and benefit from those assets are better able to cope than families who have limited assets or rely on a few strategies. Read the example below:

Let's think about our basket of eggs:

- If we ate all of the eggs or sold all of our eggs and our hen died – we would have no more eggs.
- If we sold all of the eggs we would have none to eat but we would have some cash.

If we were to take the eggs and 'diversify' the ways in which we could benefit from these eggs we might have a set of strategies that looks like this:

- Some eggs are **left with the hen to hatch** (the goal is to replenish and increase our laying population).
- Some eggs are **taken to the market and sold** (the goal is to liquidize an asset to bring in income as a resource to buy items we could not produce ourselves).
- Some of the eggs **are eaten** (the goal is to provide nutritious food for family).
- Some are **given to another family** who have run out of food (the purpose being to care for our neighbours).
- Now when we **drop the basket** (i.e. experience a shock) how many eggs do we lose? How many eggs are left and which goals will receive priority to allocate the remaining eggs and which goals will be ignored?

Will there be enough eggs left to fulfil all the goals?



In this example there is actually no correct answer, as we do not know the total number of eggs and we do not know how many will break from the shock. But the hope is that not many of the eggs break. How many goals will be priority and be achieved? How many different stresses can the household absorb and still be resilient if most of the eggs break?

All livelihood activities, such as carrying the basket of eggs, occur in what is called the **vulnerability context**. The dynamic (changing) nature of this context depends on environmental conditions, constraints and opportunities of different seasons and a range of institutions (like culture, businesses, organisations) and processes (like governance, democratisation, and education). These factors influence the way in which assets are transformed into livelihood outcomes. **Shocks** or **trends** that impact these activities may move a household towards livelihood security (desirable) or livelihood vulnerability (undesirable). These forces are referred to as enabling influences or disabling influences. This depends on whether they have a positive (enabling) or negative (disabling) impact on livelihood outcomes. These include:

- Who has the most power to influence development?
- Who owns resources?
- Who is the most interested?
- Who will benefit from various activities and processes?
- Finding ways to build relationships based on trust and co-operation
 - within households
 - between households and
 - between communities and stakeholders
- Who has control over assets or processes?.

To be vulnerable means to be at risk. I am sure that there have been times when you have felt vulnerable as a person. Usually situations involving floods, droughts, fires, unemployment put vulnerable households at risk. Therefore we are referring to the vulnerability context i.e. in what ways are they vulnerable.

When we talk about livelihood **vulnerability** we are referring to negative influences that would destroy or make inaccessible the resources which we require for secure livelihoods. For example, we may be talking about a global increase in food and transport costs, a region or community marginalisation of aid or access to government services, or the death of livestock or a person in the household. When we talk of **resilience**, we are referring to a household or community's ability to recover from shocks and stresses which cause vulnerability.

STRESSES are those things which are constantly present at the lower levels, (meso- and micro level) and involve the household or community assets: the prevalence of AIDS in a community, the degradation of the land, persistent violence, crime, a weak economy, and



roads in poor condition. In each case it is the stress on the asset (not on the owner of the asset). A stress reduces the value of the asset or the ability of the asset to contribute to a livelihood. **[Note: this does not refer to emotional stress.]**

SHOCKS are sudden impacts on an asset and/or livelihood strategy of a household or community. For example, it may be part of a livelihood strategy that the family uses Granny's pension. Granny is 95 years old. A potential shock would be that Granny is likely to die soon and her pension would stop. This would be a shock to the livelihood of that family. **[Note: the passing of an elderly granny is something that can be naturally anticipated therefore it can be registered as a potential shock]**

Another example of a potential shock is the case where the bridge over the river which the children use to get to school every day is in poor condition. They have to be careful when crossing. This is a stress to the human asset of education. The potential shock is that the bridge could collapse entirely a) preventing the children from getting to school or b) causing their death or injury. The potential shock is known because the poor condition of the bridge is evident. **[Random disasters are not considered potential shocks and become part of the livelihood]**

The **TREND** of the vulnerability indicates the direction these stresses are moving. Are they increasing or decreasing? What is the trend? Is HIV/AIDS increasing or is it decreasing? Stresses and shocks may have seasonality to them. For example, more people become ill during the cold winter. Water tends to run low in the winter, as does food. Jobs are scarce in all months except for the harvest months. These are examples of seasonal trends.

Activity 1.9 Linking contextual factors to daily activities



Complete this activity in your study guide

What to do

1. Read each block below and then read the list of contextual factors in the middle column
2. Take a contextual factor and find links in the blocks with daily life situations that match.
3. Draw a line between the factor and its related examples in the text block. It will look like a spider web when you are done.



<p>News Agencies before the 2008 Olympics in Beijing reported that dog meat has been struck from the menus of officially designated Olympic restaurants. Beijing tourism officials told other outlets to discourage consumers from ordering dishes made from dogs. Dog, known in Chinese as "xiangrou," or "fragrant meat," is eaten by some Chinese for its purported health-giving qualities. Dog meat is also eaten in some other Asian countries, including Vietnam, the Philippines and Laos. South Korea also banned dog meat during the 1988 Seoul Olympics by invoking a law prohibiting the sale of "foods deemed unsightly."</p>	<p>Policy with respect to (trade)</p>	<p>One branch of the Mchunu family will only eat the flesh of long haired sheep. If you want to be able to sell your sheep at the market in their community, you had better offer woolly sheep meat together with long haired varieties!</p>
<p>In another example, a lady from north of the Illovo River married a man from South of the Illovo. An agricultural extension officer was trying to convince her that she should grow cowpeas. The lady knew all about cowpeas. She had grown up using and eating cow peas in a variety of ways. However, her husband had not grown up eating them, and so even though they grow well on her farm and help enrich the soil, she will not grow them. It is not worth the effort because no one eats them.</p>	<p>Policy with respect to (production)</p>	<p>For example, In low veldt areas such as the Mwanezi district of Zimbabwe, The women help each other collect Mopani worms which are sun dried and then stored as an edible protein source. Can you imagine Oprah Winfrey eating dried mopani worms?</p>
<p>For example, at a church conference near iZingolweni in the Eastern Cape in 1991, the budget allowed for some meat to be served every night (but not enough for everyone). The decision makers decided that the men would be served meat every night along with cabbage and beetroot salads. The women and children would get porridge and sugar with no milk. For breakfast everyone was given mealie meal porridge and sugar but only the men also got milk. Lunch was bread and maas for everyone. What could have been the reasons for these decisions? From a scientific perspective the men had less nutritional needs then the women at this time because the women were working (collecting firewood, cooking, fetching water; and the men just sat in meetings all day). What other beliefs and values would have been more important than nutritional needs to influence the access and distribution of the foods available?</p>	<p>Regional Food Supply</p>	<p>For example, during the 1970's there was a terrible famine in Ethiopia. The people in this country eat rice. Thinking that they were helping, the United States donated tons of wheat. These were sent by ship. Because people did not know how to use wheat, the shiploads were sold to Russia by Ethiopian government officials. The officials put the money in their personal bank accounts, and did not use it to buy rice for their people. How does political corruption affect our livelihoods? What values can you</p>
	<p>Community market food supply</p>	
	<p>Climate Seasonality</p>	
	<p>Household food resource allocation (behaviour)</p>	
	<p>Cultural Factors</p>	
	<p>Individual dietary intakes</p>	
	<p>Corruption</p>	



Comments on activity 1.9

It will look messy, but will show the complexity of the context we live in. It highlights some of the contextual factors that impact on household food security. If we a community or cultural group can work together, we can solve some of these contextual factors causing vulnerability to food security.

Culture also contributes to stress and, to a lesser extent to shocks. Culture is not a fixed thing. The tendency is for those who benefit from a particular aspect of culture to feel the stress of that change and they will try to retain or keep that custom. For example, at a recent land reform conference it was highlighted that there was a strong correlation between the empowerment of women and poverty reduction. And there was a strong correlation between land reform and poverty reduction. When it was suggested that land reform should be aimed primarily at putting land in the hands of women, this was considered – mostly by the men – as not an option to be considered. So culture – its change and its staying the same – contribute to the stresses on livelihoods of families and communities.

In Kenya, research was done on tea estates. It was found that workers with HIV/AIDS were not as efficient as workers with a HIV negative status. It took 3 HIV/AIDS positive workers to do the work of 2 HIV negative workers. This, again, is a **stress**, as it has a continuing eroding effect on the human resource asset of the tea estate. Tea estates in South Africa have been given to farmers as plots with shares. The farmers could not manage the tea estate, conflict developed, production declined and the estate went into debt and the estate had to be institutionally managed. The loss of ownership is a **shock** to the households, and families changing their livelihoods.

Policies, Institutions and procedures

Every household has an internal and external environment impacted by enabling and disabling forces both from within and from outside the household. Every household exists within a micro and macro environment. The micro environment consists of the assets which the household can control whereas the macro environment consists of assets outside of the direct control of the household.

Every household exists within a macro environment. Institutions and processes that contribute to household food security may be sector-specific (e.g. agriculture extension by Department of Agriculture, Consumer Protection by Trade and Industry). These contributions may focus on development of policies and regulations, service provision or research, and may represent civil society, the public and private sectors, and the international community. For instance, policy decisions like the Free Trade Agreement or farming subsidies will have indirect effects on households because of the way they affect the prices of materials needed for farming or impact the interest rates of savings or loans.



In terms of linking the macro control with the micro control of assets for achieving food security, a region may be able to produce enough food to meet the demands of her people from the domestic resources available. We call this **food self-sufficiency**. What this means is that sufficient supplies of food are physically available through **markets**.

Markets in this context refer to the stores of food and food related assets which may be accessed through exchange activities. These markets may be local, regional, national and international.

If you were an economist looking at food insecurity, you might say that household income and market food prices had the most potential to stress or shock a household's food security. At a **micro level**, we are looking at the assets which a household can *command* for the purpose of improving food security. One can ask many questions for example:

- do households have limited assets?
- are households restricted in their resources by having no or little appropriate knowledge?
- do households have access to a certain type of resource such as finance or land?
- do people have the knowledge and skills but no access to the material assets required?
- do people in rural communities, who have a predominant reliance on natural resources have access to resources?
- which livelihood strategies are used for making a living and at the same time protecting and nurturing these resources for future use?
- how sustainable (to provide for all) is the use of the natural resource base?
- can households be encouraged to learn appropriate knowledge and skills (build capacity) for effective management of assets?
- can people take command of the different resources that are available to households?
- do they actually recognise them as resources?
- do they see the weaknesses and strengths of these resources as opportunities for developing and managing them?
- do households identify opportunities and processes for increasing the quality and diversity of assets available to a household?

Therefore can the households build capacity to enable the development of resilience to manage vulnerabilities and risk?

As development facilitators, our goal is to facilitate and support appropriate livelihood choices that help households to manage livelihood strategies to increase and maximise access to assets can move a household closer towards sustainability.



Activity 1.10 Household assets and vulnerabilities



Complete this activity in on your workbook

1. Identify the assets and their vulnerability.
2. What assets does your household have? Make a list of them in the table below.
3. What type of resources are they?
4. What would make each of these assets in your list vulnerable?

Examples:

Category of asset	Description of resource	What would make this asset vulnerable
Physical	Bakkie	Rust, wearing parts, overloading, accidents that make it unusable,
Social	Matric education	Poor nutrition, lack of cash to purchase uniforms, poor teaching, school not well resourced.
Financial	Stokvel membership	Corrupt management, anger & jealousy amongst participants,
Natural	River water	Pollution, drought, dam up stream preventing water flow
Human	Labour for planting/harvesting	Illness, urban migration of youth, no cash or seeds to exchange for labour

Category of asset	Description of resource	What would make this asset vulnerable

Comment on activity 1.10

In a group discuss whether you have matched the assets, resources and vulnerability correctly.



Household livelihood security

Another framework which is less complicated is the Household Livelihoods Security Framework of CARE. The complex real life situations of livelihoods can be better understood on the micro-level or the household itself. By simplifying the concepts and showing the relationship of the factors to one another we can begin to see how household *livelihood security outcomes* are related to the household management of resources, through put and transforming processes as well as its rules and policies which impact on the use of available and individual member assets. The CARE framework focuses on survival of the household and its members as individuals and shows how people draw on assets in different combinations to use them for *production and income activities*, *processing or exchange activities* and *consumption activities* to meet the households livelihood and survival needs. Please note the central focus of the household and its members are the centre of the household livelihood approach.

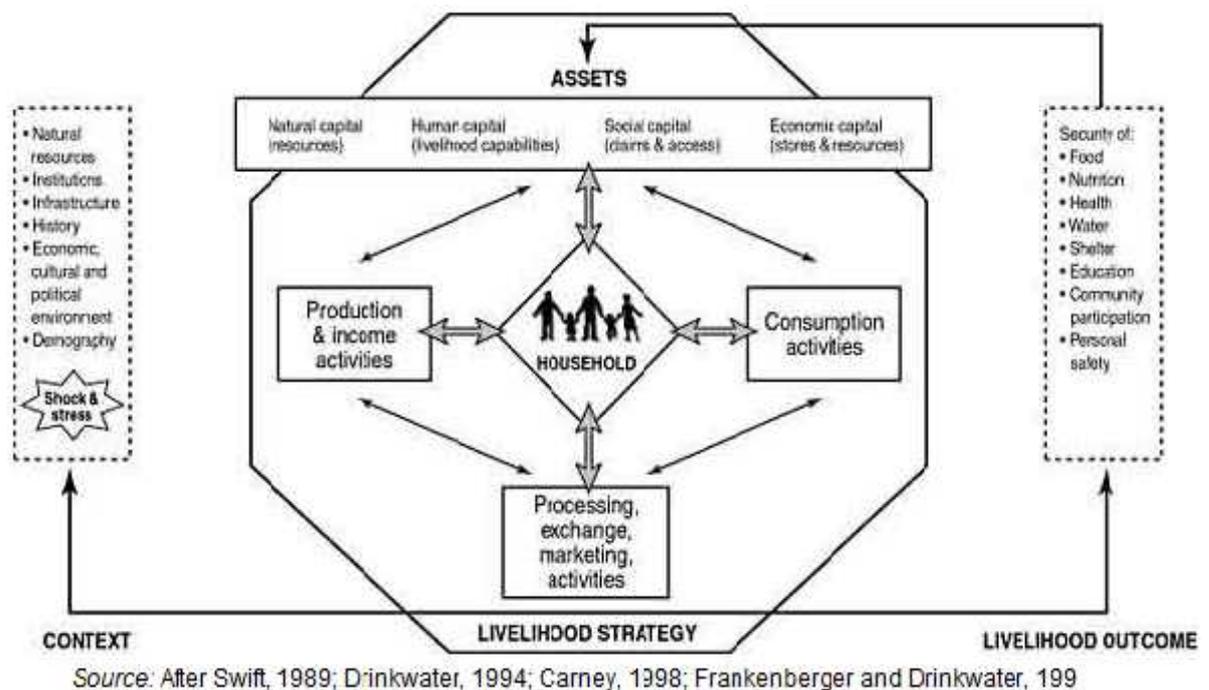


Figure 1.12 The CARE Household Livelihood Security Framework.
(Adapted from FAO, 2000)



Activity 1.11 The CARE Household Livelihood Security Model



Complete this activity on your own or in groups in your study guide

Aim: Interpret the CARE Livelihood model displaying the relationship between the household, livelihood assets and activities as livelihood strategies and the livelihood and outcomes.

Time: 15 minutes

What you must do

1. Identify the household at the centre of the model.
2. Identify the livelihood assets, livelihood strategies and livelihood outcomes in the model.
3. Which five types of activities interact to describe the household livelihood strategies used to achieve livelihood outcomes?

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.....

4. List the household livelihood security outcomes in the model.

.....
.....
.....

Comment on activity 1.11

The livelihood activities in the model can be listed as production, income, processing, exchange and consumption. There are a number of household livelihood security outcomes including: food, nutrition, health, water etc as listed on the right hand side of the model.

Food production, income, processing, exchange and consumption activities are of relevance when we speak about food security, because the some of the rural households that we will be working with will derive some or most of the food that they consume from their own agricultural activities. Within a livelihoods context they will be using the natural resource assets such as land and water as part of their livelihood strategies.

In its simplest form, household livelihood security is the ability of a household to meet its basic needs (or realize its basic rights)using the assets available. These needs include adequate food, health, shelter, minimal levels of income, basic education and community participation and is also the outcomes of sustainable household livelihoods. As we have seen before, households may have enough food, but they may still be food insecure because of the way they use, process, store, prepare and consume the food they have. This is why



increasing livelihood resilience with respect to food availability, stability and utilisation is the central theme of this module.

1.4 Mapping household food security

The CARE livelihoods model has food security as one of the outcomes of livelihood strategies. Let us now look at the concept of 'security' in terms of food for a specific household. The household food security model shown below (Figure 1.13) has been designed to show how the Ndlala household (See Annexure A) would fit into household food security models developed in other countries. Read Annexure A – a case study of the Ndlala household.

In the diagram, there exist three major ways in which the household can achieve food security. That is, through food production, public food distribution (food aid) and through food purchase or 'in kind' trades. At point one. Food aid may be necessary in times of great vulnerability (e.g. natural disasters, pandemics, violence). In these cases, food parcels or vouchers would have to be accessed by the household. The success of this type of aid depends on the policies that accompany the distribution. In our map, there is a dashed line indicating that the Ndlalas do not require food assistance at this point.

At point two, we include the concept that policies have an effect on national food imports/exports and markets and how people access the things that they need to build their livelihoods. These policies may increase the amount of food available in the country or they could limit it. Policies can impact the quality of food available. For instance, free trade has encouraged exports. South African growers who can achieve the standards send as much of their produce as possible into these export markets. Sometimes this means a local shortage of an item and those that remain on local markets may be inferior in aesthetic or nutritional quality. On the other hand, free trade has encouraged imports, and items previously unavailable are now accessible increasing the diversity of choices.

Even if it is available, that does not mean it is accessible. The reason for this is that the available food may be unevenly distributed at the regional and sub-regional levels. On the other hand, even if the food is equally distributed, it does not imply that everyone can afford for it. Thus food's affordability depends on the household income that is set aside for food procurement. The more dependant the household is on purchasing food for food security, the more vulnerable that family is to food insecurity when incomes are decreasing. Under such conditions, households may be motivated to create other income generating activities that will in turn increase household incomes. Increasing household income may empower the growth or quantity of income generating activities (balanced loop). However, the creation of income generating activities depends on the existence of markets to sell goods and render services.



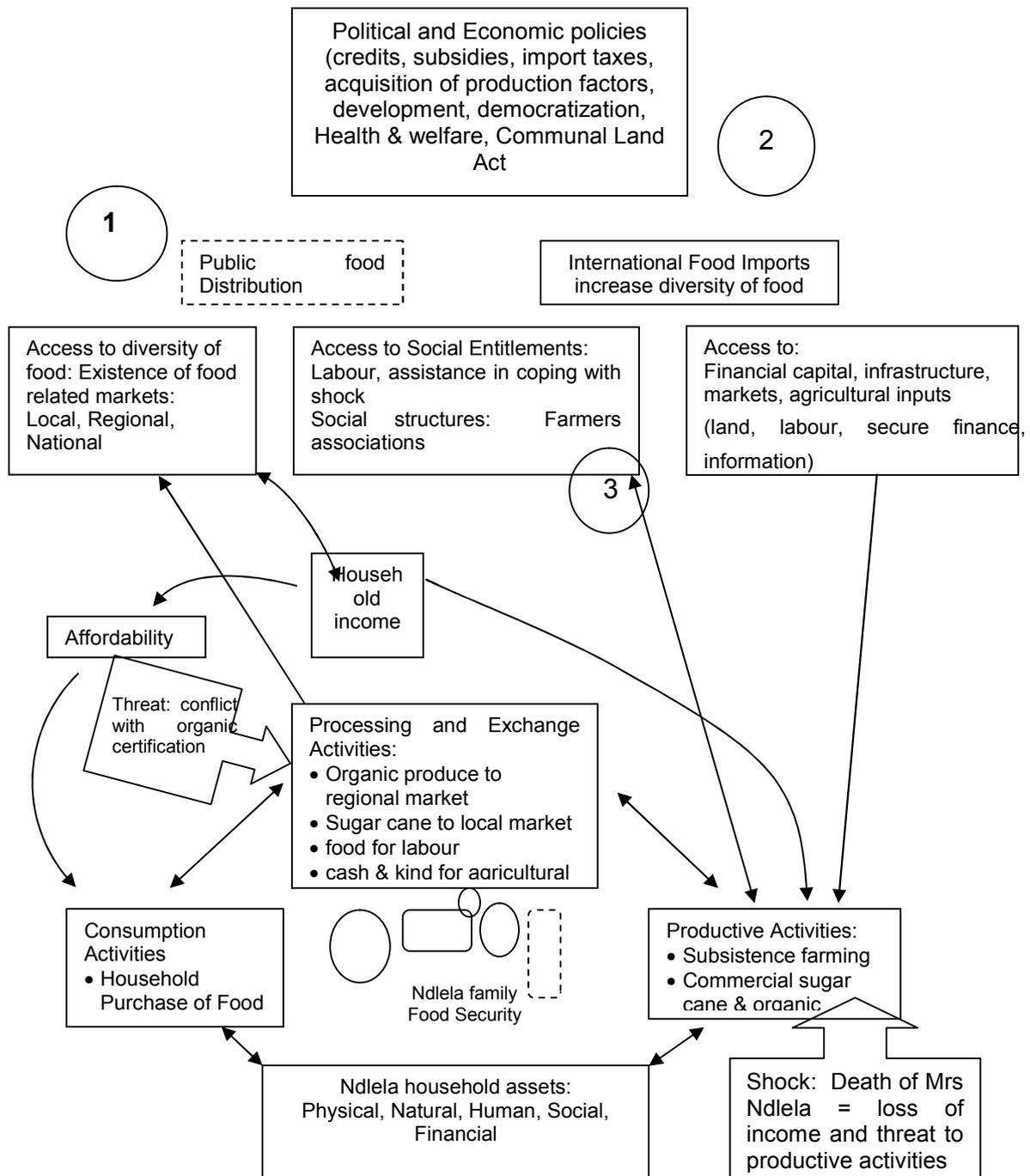


Figure 1.13 Mapping household food security

At point 3, we are introduced to the concept of social resources. When social resources are high, families are able to draw on many creative options for increasing diverse livelihood options and reducing vulnerability to food insecurity. If they are low, the household is very dependent on its own unit for securing adequate food for family members. When households are able to generate a surplus over and above their food needs; the willingness to help others with this excess results in social credit. Some people refer to this as banking entitlements. In other words, in times of vulnerability, others will see their need and assist.



Portfolio activity 6.1. Mapping food security



Complete this activity on your own in your portfolio

Time:2 hours

Portfolio Activity 2.2 Read the Case Study and do your analysis.

- Think about what this map is saying about the shape of food security for the Ndlela family. Use the map to describe the Food security strategies of the Ndlela family out loud to someone else.
- Tell your story within the context of how they access land and how they use their natural assets, their social assets and their knowledge to make a livelihood.
- Describe the vulnerabilities that exist and which relationships in the system are likely to be affected by threats and shocks.
- Identify the micro and macro linkages

