



EXPLORING THE LIVELIHOODS SUSTENANCE OF PERI-URBAN COMMUNITIES SURROUNDING ADDIS ABABA CITY IN ETHIOPIA - A SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD FRAMEWORK APPROACH

Gnamura, Kejela Gemtessa, PhD candidate, IIC University of Technology

ABSTRACT

The primary purpose of this article was to explore the livelihoods sustenance of the peri-urban communities surrounding Addis Ababa City in Ethiopia. Based on the exploration of the literature on the phenomenon the article concludes that the sustainable livelihoods framework approach as a model offers a structured way of thinking connecting the management of natural resources with the need to address poverty amongst the rural vulnerable and poor through the creation of sustainable livelihoods. The model can be leveraged by the Ethiopian authorities to overcome the current challenges of sprawling peri-urban illegal land plots that are disrupting agricultural farming in the country. At the same time, the approach allows for contextual reflection in the consideration of how different people may prefer certain ranges and combinations of livelihoods strategies depending on their given contexts and vulnerabilities and how best to mitigate the vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the sustainable livelihoods approach and framework derives its inspiration from the diverse work that has been covered on issues of assets and vulnerability matters of well-being, entitlements, and capabilities.

1. INTRODUCTION

In a country like Ethiopia where the vast majority of the populations are employed in agriculture, land is an important economic resource for the development of rural livelihoods (Adam, 2020). Agricultural land in peri-urban areas is, however, transformed into built-up regions through horizontal urban expansion that has an effect on land use value. In recent years Ethiopia has been experiencing rapid urbanization, which has led to an ever-increasing demand for land in peri-urban areas for housing and other non-agricultural activities that pervades agricultural land. There is a high demand for informal and illegal peri-urban land which has been held by peri-urban farmers, and this plays a vital role in the unauthorized and sub-standard housing construction on agricultural land (Adam, 2020).

This urbanization has not been extensively reviewed and documented. In this article an attempt is being made to assess the impacts of rapid urbanization on agricultural activities and livelihoods. Urban expansion has reduced the areas available for agriculture, which has seriously impacted upon peri-urban farmers that are often left with little or no land to cultivate and which has increased their vulnerability. Housing encroachments have been observed to be uncontrolled due to a weak government response to the trend of unplanned city

expansion (Adam, 2020). This has left peri-urban farmers exposed to the negative shocks of urbanization because significant urbanization-related agricultural land loss has a positive correlation with grain production decrease. Appropriate governing bodies are urged to control urban development in order to control the illegal and informal spread of urbanization on agricultural land that threatens food production (Adam, 2020).

The article proceeds from here by way of exploring the livelihood framework approach as a systematic strategy for overcoming the challenges of informal and illegal peri-urban land demand that has resulted in loss of livelihoods for many agricultural dependent Ethiopians.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1 The livelihood framework approach

Figure 2.1 below depicts the sustainable livelihoods framework.

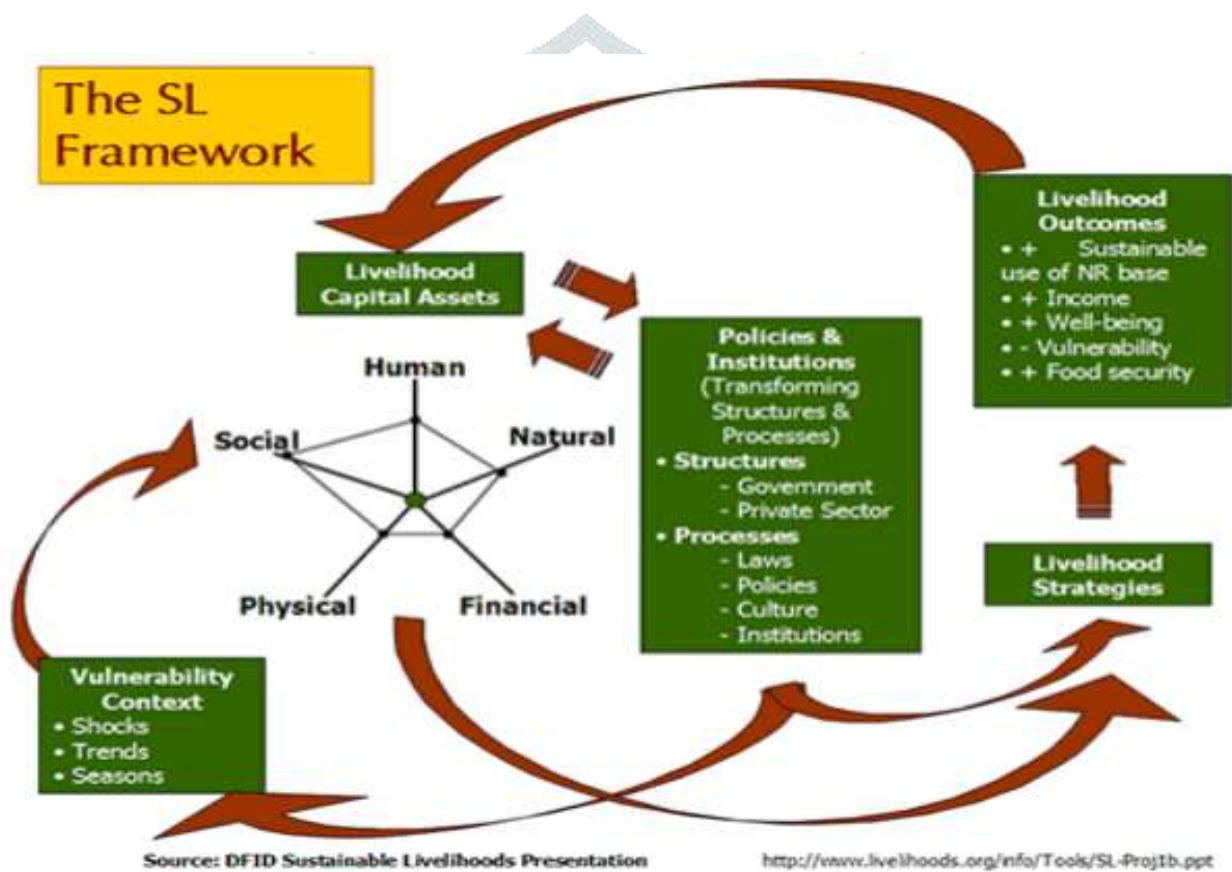


Figure 1: The Sustainable Livelihood Framework

Source: (Scoones, 2009; Serrat, 2008).

The sustainable livelihood framework approach depicts some key attributes that include the multiple and diverse livelihoods attained by combining related activities, capabilities and ranges or portfolios of assets to spread the risks of drought, loss of employment and diseases (Farrington et al, 2018; Chambers & Conway, 2016). The framework also classifies the social and material assets into the following forms of capital: financial, human, social, natural, and physical (Cousins & Scoones, 2010). Livelihood's strategies are understandably mediated by both organisational and institutional frameworks. It is from these organisational and institutional frameworks that the robustness or the vulnerability of livelihoods strategies are leveraged.

In harmony with the spirit of managing the Ethiopian per-urbanization developmental trajectory, the land as a form of natural capital and its access should depend on the mediation of institutions or institutional frameworks such as property rights, other related policies, and land tenure (Cousins & Scoones, 2010).

In other words, the sustainable livelihoods framework enables the organisation of the factors that either enhance or constrain chances of sustainable livelihoods and also demonstrates how these factors are interrelated (Serrat, 2008). Central to the sustainable livelihoods approach lies the notion that different households experience different ways of accessing different livelihoods assets. As a result, the sustainable livelihoods approach seeks to establish strategies that expand access to whatever livelihoods assets are. Depicted below are livelihoods assets aspects that the rural poor are expected to make trade-offs and choices about:

- Human Capital- this includes education, nutrition, and health, capacity to work, capacity to adapt, knowledge and skills.
- Social Capital- these define the relations of mutual understanding, support, formal and informal values shared by groups, mechanisms, and trust and allowing public participation in the decision-making processes.
- Natural Capital- this includes, among many, the wildlife, the trees, the forest products, biodiversity, the environmental services, and the land.
- Physical Capital- this includes the infrastructure such as communication, sanitation, water, energy, roads and transport, secure shelter, and buildings.
- Financial Capital- this form of capital includes debt and credit, both informal and formal; wages, payments, allowances, and savings (Serrat, 2008).

In its endeavours to enable and facilitate the identification of practical actions and priorities that are founded on the interests and the views of the people concerned, the sustainable livelihoods approach, however, is not seeking to replace the other tools such as integrated rural economic development, participatory development, and sector-wide approaches (Serrat, 2008). Nevertheless, the approach links the people with the environment that affects them directly and also influences the outcomes of the people's livelihoods strategies chosen (Serrat, 2008). In line with the sustainable livelihood framework, the following are expected:

- Sustainable growth through leveraging the natural resources base.
- Increased household incomes and better well-being, and
- Increased food security through reduced vulnerability.

The proponents of the sustainable livelihood framework regard the framework as explicitly recognising that poor people's livelihoods are both dynamic and complex and are a combination of informal and formal economic activities (Cousins & Scoones, 2010; Shackleton et al., 2015). According to Ellis (2017) and Shackleton et al., (2011) the sustainable livelihoods approach has become attractive because of its holistic and integrative approach to issues of households' incomes, employment, and production. As a result, there are different and varying ways of viewing the land.

Quan (2013) contended that land can be seen as a basic livelihoods' asset, the primary form of capital that people employ produce food and earn a living including cropland, common land, and grazing land where people can derive a range of natural resources such as wild fruits and game meat. As result, the land is viewed as a resource to supplement the rural workers as well as the urban poor livelihoods (Quan, 2013). The author further argued that the land is a heritable asset and foundation for wealth accumulation and livelihoods security for the future rural generations.

The sustainable livelihoods approach drives strategic thinking outside the common and known development parameters. The approach creates space for the stakeholders for development and practitioners to exercise their thinking capabilities and extend their work outside the conventional and traditional ways of executing development agendas (Serrat, 2017). In the process, all stakeholders for development come together to explore the contextual dynamics and relationships that have the potential of enabling the sustainable development programs to be process-oriented-driven instead of being rigid systems of development (Serrat, 2017; Brocklesby & Fisher, 2013).

A structured way of thinking connecting the management of natural resources with the need to address poverty amongst the rural vulnerable and poor through the creation of sustainable livelihoods can be leveraged by employing this approach (Giddens, 2011). At the same time, the approach allows for contextual reflection in the consideration of how different people may prefer certain ranges and combinations of livelihoods strategies depending on their given contexts and vulnerabilities and how best to mitigate the vulnerabilities (Giddens, 2011; North, 2007). Furthermore, the sustainable livelihoods approach and framework derives its inspiration from the diverse work that has been covered on issues of assets and vulnerability (Swift, 2004), matters of well-being, entitlements, and capabilities (Drèze & Sen, 2008; Sen, 2007).

Like the rest of the approaches, the sustainable livelihoods approach has been criticized as well, mainly for assuming a pentagonal perspective of the five forms of capital. That is the human capital, the financial capital, the physical capital, the natural capital, and the social capital. However, there has been a strong push for a hexagon perspective including the information capital (Odero, 2013). Odero (2013) argued that information capital is supposedly the core livelihoods asset. The author intimated that information capital is an important factor affecting people's livelihoods, particularly the livelihoods of the poor and should be incorporated in the sustainable livelihoods framework to fully understand the concept of livelihoods, especially those of the rural poor.

However, some scholars continue advocating for improvements of the sustainable livelihoods approach to encapsulate critical missing elements like the political capital (Hajer, 2012; Gieryn, 2012). Nevertheless, despite criticism, the sustainable livelihoods approach's accruing benefits outweigh its criticisms. The approach has been credited for its holistic approach to people-centred change through their access to a variety of assets such as land, its sensitivity to poor people's vulnerability, their sustainability, and the multi-faceted nature of their livelihoods (Hajer, 2012; Mushonga, 2012; Mkodzongi, 2013; Mutopo, 2011). Since conception, the sustainable livelihoods approach has brought together all the disparate perspectives, has allowed for conversations cutting across various disciplines and professions by providing the needed institutional bridge linking the people, their practices in new ways and their professions (Gieryn, 2012).

In addition, Scoones and Wolmer (2011) suggested that the sustainable livelihoods approach provided important lenses for viewing the complex rural development issues by encouraging critical and deeper reflections stemming from the consequences of the development efforts initiated at local-levels, micro-levels situating the particular livelihoods of the poor people to the wider-institutional and policy framing at the district, the provincial, the national and international levels.

Consequently, the sustainable livelihoods approach scholars demonstrates increased levels of resilience by the households through the use of a variety of livelihoods diversification strategies (Chambers & Conway, 2010; Clarke & Carney, 2008). Resilience has been achieved by leveraging the forms of capital: human capital, social capital, financial capital, natural capital, and the physical capital (Scoones et al, 2011, 2014; Scoones, 2015; Mkodzongi, 2013, 2018; Mutopo, 2011; Mushonga, 2012; Murisa, 2007; Chiweshe, 2012; Richardson, 2004).

3. RESULTS

The key lessons derived from the sustainable livelihoods approach are that assets, resources, capabilities and all the other related activities that are required for a sustained means of living are viewed as what constitute sustainable livelihoods. As such livelihoods are regarded sustainable if they can cope with the changing environment, recover from stress and shocks, and enhance the maintenance of the assets, capabilities, and related activities now and in the future and at the same time not degrading the natural resources bases (Serrat, 2017). This is a critical lesson that the Ethiopian authorities should learn from the sustainable livelihoods framework approach.

Chambers and Conway (2010) advance that livelihoods comprise assets, resources and capabilities and activities that are required for the furtherance of living and resources including both social and material resources. Nevertheless, the foregoing conceptualization of the concept of livelihoods is descriptive and depicts multifaceted activities and interactions which highlight the diverse ways that people can seek to make

a living for themselves (Baumann, 2010). Consequently, what can also be descended from the sustainable livelihoods framework approach is that livelihoods cut across several disciplines attempting to counter the monovalent approaches, which have always dominated enquiry on matters of development practices such as the per-urban development in Ethiopia (Scoones, 2009).

The livelihoods approach primarily focuses on the people, their capabilities, and assets and in its enquiry pays a lot of attention to how people utilise their resources, available opportunities and how they overcome the impediments they meet in their quest to eliminate poverty (Baumann, 2010). Underpinning the livelihoods concept is the 'sustainable livelihoods framework' developed by Scoones (2009). As shown in the figure 1 above, the sustainable livelihoods framework interrogates the contextual policy environment by articulating the macro-economic conditions, the social differentiation, the politics, the demographics, the history, and the climate (Scoones, 2009).

The sustainable livelihoods framework also contextualizes livelihoods resources as financial, human capital and natural. In harmony with the spirit of the per-urban development in Ethiopia, the sustainable livelihoods framework can provide institutions and other forms of organisations as conduits for accessing the livelihoods resources (Baumann, 2010; Scoones, 2009). The framework further identifies the three livelihoods strategies that the Ethiopians can employ to hedge themselves against the uncertainties inherent in the business of per-urban farming. The strategies are proffered as agricultural intensification, migration or extensification, and livelihoods diversification with the expected outcomes of livelihoods as being poverty reduction, wellbeing and capabilities, and increased number of working days (Baumann, 2010; Scoones, 2009).

4. DISCUSSION

As already has been established above, livelihoods comprise of the capabilities, assets including both material and social resources and activities required for means of living. For livelihood to be sustainable and cope with the stress as well as recovering from the shocks it should be able to maintain or enhance its capabilities of being an asset. This explorative study on the sustainable livelihoods of rural households or per-urban households in Ethiopia is of great significance in solving the Ethiopian rural poverty and promoting the transfer of per-urban land management rights, which are necessary for realizing better livelihoods and sustainable development, mechanisms of livelihood capital, livelihood strategy, and agricultural land transfer based on review of the literature and the analysis of the sustainable livelihoods framework approach. It is very clear from the results discussed above that there is a high demand for informal and illegal peri-urban land in Ethiopia which has been held by peri-urban farmers, and this plays a vital role in the unauthorized and sub-standard housing construction sprawling on agricultural land.

This raises the aspect of the Livelihood Sustainability Index or diversity index that is, the higher the proportion of the non-agricultural labour force/livelihood diversity index, the greater the possibility to roll-out plots. The lower the proportion of the non-agricultural labour force/livelihood diversity index, the greater the possibility to roll-in plots. The natural capital would be directly and negatively affected by livelihood strategy in Ethiopia, and indirectly and positively affected by land transfers. While financial capital insurance would indirectly and be positively affected by livelihood strategy in Ethiopia. Naturally, financial capital insurance would have a mediating effect, and land transfers would not only have a direct negative effect on it but also would have an indirect effect through natural capital. Financial capital income would naturally be directly positively affected by financial capital insurance, and indirectly negatively affected by land transfers and natural capital in Ethiopia. Financial capital income would have a mediating effect, and livelihood strategy would therefore not only have a direct positive effect on it but also would have an indirect positive effect via the human capital in Ethiopia. Nevertheless, physical capital and human capital would be directly positively affected by livelihood strategy in Ethiopia. Certain moderating effects were observed. Non-agricultural-dependent farmers had higher physical capital, greater human capital, higher financial capital income, and more area of roll-out plots than agriculture-dependent farmers in Ethiopia (Shili, Lin, Liu, Wei, Xu, Li & Su, 2019).

The study conducted on farmers in central Ethiopia on the impacts of adaptation strategies on the sustainability of the livelihoods of farmers for example, using the economic, social, and environmental outcomes were integrated to construct the Livelihood Sustainability Index shows that farmers switching crop type, diversifying crops, planting improved seeds, engaging in land management activities, and using irrigation had a higher livelihood sustainability index compared to the counterfactual case in which they did not use them. Non-farm employment and migration significantly increased livelihood sustainability for the using households. However, had these factors been used by the non-users, it would have resulted in reduced livelihood sustainability. Farmers using more than four adaptation strategies had more sustainable livelihoods than using fewer strategies. The findings affirm that adaptation contributes to livelihood improvement (Etana et.al., 2021).

5. CONCLUSION

This article concludes that the sustainable livelihoods approach drives strategic thinking outside the common and known development parameters. The approach creates space for the stakeholders for development and practitioners to exercise their thinking capabilities and extend their work outside the conventional and traditional ways of executing development agendas. In the process, all stakeholders for development come together to explore the contextual dynamics and relationships that have the potential of enabling the sustainable development programs to be process-oriented-driven instead of being rigid systems of development.

The model offers a structured way of thinking connecting the management of natural resources with the need to address poverty amongst the rural vulnerable and poor through the creation of sustainable livelihoods can be leveraged by employing this approach. At the same time, the approach allows for contextual reflection in the consideration of how different people may prefer certain ranges and combinations of livelihoods strategies depending on their given contexts and vulnerabilities and how best to mitigate the vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the sustainable livelihoods approach and framework derives its inspiration from the diverse work that has been covered on issues of assets and vulnerability matters of well-being, entitlements, and capabilities.

REFERENCE

- Adam, A. G. (2020). Understanding competing and conflicting interests for peri-urban land in Ethiopia's era of urbanization. *Environment and Urbanization*, 32(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956247819890215>.
- Baumann, P.C. (2010). Sustainable livelihoods and political capital: Arguments and evidence from decentralisation and natural resource management in India. *Pakistan Journal of Agriculture, Agricultural Engineering and Veterinary Sciences*, 28, 186-198.
- Brocklesby, M.A. and Fisher, E. (2013). Community development in sustainable livelihoods approaches—an introduction. *Community Development Journal*, 38(3), pp.185-198.
- Chambers, R. and Conway, G. (2010). *Sustainable rural livelihoods: practical concepts for the 21st century*. Institute of Development Studies (UK).
- Chambers, R. and Conway, G. (2016). *Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st Century*, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton.
- Chiweshe, M. K. (2012). Education and skills development in the newly resettled areas in Mazowe District, Zimbabwe. Mimeo. Harare, Zimbabwe: Ruzivo Trust.
- Clarke, J and Carney, D. (2008) ESRC Research seminar Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches, *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38 (5): 762–187.
- Cousins, B. and I. Scoones, (2010) 'Contested Paradigms of "Viability" in Redistributive Land Reform: Perspectives from Southern Africa'. *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 37 (1): 31–66.

Drèze, J and Sen, A. (2008). *Hunger and Public Action* Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Ellis, F., (2017). The determinants of rural livelihood diversification in developing countries. *Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 51(2), pp.289-302.

Etana, D., Snelder, D. J. R. M., van Wesenbeeck, C. F. A., & Buning, T. de C. (2021). The impact of adaptation to climate change and variability on the livelihood of smallholder farmers in central ethiopia. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 13(12). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13126790>.

Farrington, J., Carney, D., Ashley, C. and Turton, C. (2018). *Sustainable livelihoods in practice: early applications of concepts in rural areas* (Vol. 42, pp. 1-2). London: ODI.

Giddens, A. (2011). *Introduction to Sociology*. Sixth Edition. UK: W.W Norton & Company.

Gieryn, T. (2012). *Cultural boundaries of science: credibility on the line*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Hajer, M. (2012). *The politics of environmental discourse: ecological modernisation and the policy process*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mkodzongi, G. (2013). New People, New Land and New Livelihoods: A Micro-study of Zimbabwe's Fast-track Land Reform. *Journal of Political Economy*. 2 (3) 345-366.

Mkodzongi, G. (2018). *Land and Agrarian Transformation in Zimbabwe: Rethinking Rural Livelihoods in the Aftermath of the Land Reforms* (Anthem Environment and Sustainability ... Environmental Policy Series), Illustrated edition, Anthem Press.

Murisa, T. (2007). 'Social Organisation and Agency in the Newly Resettled Areas of Zimbabwe: Nation in the Context of Crisis'. Weaver Press.

Mushonga, J. (2012). Livelihood Change in Rural Zimbabwe over 20 Years, *The Journal of Development Studies*, 48:9, 1241-1257, DOI:10.1080/00220388.2012.671474T (11) (PDF) Livelihood Change in Rural Zimbabwe over 20 Years. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254242850_Livelihood_Change_in_Rural_Zimbabwe_over_20_Years [accessed Oct 03, 2021].

Mutopo, P. (2011). "Women's Struggles to Access and Control Land and Livelihoods after Fast Track Land Reform in Mwenezi District, Zimbabwe." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38 (5): 1021-46. doi:10.1080/03066150.2011.635787.

North, D. C. (2007). *Limited Access Orders in the Developing World: A New Approach to the Problems of Development*. Policy Research Working Paper; No. 4359. World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/7341>.

Odero, K. (2013). Information capital: 6th asset of sustainable livelihood framework. *Discovery and Innovation* 18(2) 234-278.

Quan, J. (2013). Land tenure, economic growth and poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa. In: Toumlin, C. and Quan, J. (eds). *Evolving land rights, policy and tenure in Africa*. London: Department of International Development.

Richardson, C. (2004). *The Collapse of Zimbabwe in the Wake of the 2000-2003 Land Reforms*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press.

Scoones, I and W. Wolmer. (2011). *Pathways of Change in Africa. Crops, Livestock & Livelihoods in Mali, Ethiopia & Zimbabwe*. Oxford: James Currey.

Scoones, I. (2009). Livelihoods perspectives and rural development, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36:1, 171-196, DOI: 10.1080/03066150902820503.

Scoones, I. (2009). Livelihoods perspectives and rural development, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36:1, 171-196, DOI: 10.1080/03066150902820503.

Scoones, I. (2014). Zimbabwe's land reform: New political dynamics in the countryside. *Review of African Political Economy*, 42(144), 190–205. [https://doi.org/ 10.1080/03056244.2014.968118](https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2014.968118).

Scoones, I. (2015). "Zimbabwe's land reform: new political dynamics in the countryside", *Review of African Political Economy*, 42(144):190–205. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03056244.2014.968118>.

Scoones, I., Marongwe, N., Mavedzenge, B., Murimbarimba, F., Mahenehene, J and Sukume (2011). Zimbabwe's Land Reform: Myths and Realities. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 12(1), 170-176.

Sen, A. K. (2007). Human rights and capabilities. *Journal of Human Development*. 6 (1)151–166.

Serrat, O. (2008). *The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach*, Washington, DC: Asian Development Bank.

Serrat, O. (2017). *Knowledge Solutions: Tools, Methods, and Approaches to Drive Organizational Performance*. Harvard Business School Press.

Serrat, O. (2017). *Knowledge Solutions: Tools, Methods, and Approaches to Drive Organizational Performance*. Harvard Business School Press.

Shackleton, C.M., Shackleton, S.E and Cousins, B. (2011). 'The Role of Land-Based Strategies in Rural Livelihoods: The Contribution of Arable Production, Animal Husbandry and Natural Resource Harvesting in Communal Areas of South Africa'. *Development Southern Africa*, 18 (5): 581–604.

Shackleton, S. E., Shackleton, C and Cousins, B. (2015). *Re-valuing the Communal Lands of Southern Africa: New Understandings of Rural Livelihoods*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

Shili Guo, Lei Lin, Shaoquan Liu, Yali Wei, Dingde Xu, Qianyu Li, Shenglin Su (2019). Interactions between sustainable livelihood of rural household and agricultural land transfer in the mountainous and hilly regions of Sichuan, China. *Sustainable Development*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.1937>.

Swift, J. (2004). 'Why are rural people vulnerable to famine?' *IDS Bulletin* 20(2): 8-15.

