

**Household Livelihood Security Assessments  
A Toolkit for Practitioners**

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**Overview: This document is an overview of CARE's HLS Assessment concepts, methods, and tools. It provides practitioners with a toolkit from which they can design HLS Assessments based on their CO objectives and local needs.**

**SUMMARY**

Household Livelihood Security (HLS) has become CARE's basic framework for program analysis, design, monitoring and evaluation. HLS grows out of a food security perspective, but is based on the observation that food is only one important basic need among several, and adequate food consumption may be sacrificed for other important needs. Given that the causes of poverty are complex, HLS provides a framework to analyze and understand the web of poverty and people's mechanisms for dealing with it.

Household Livelihood Security is defined as adequate and sustainable access to income and resources to meet basic needs (including adequate access to food, potable water, health facilities, educational opportunities, housing, and time for community participation and social integration). Livelihoods can be made up of a range of on-farm and off-farm activities that together provide a variety of procurement strategies for food and cash. Thus, each household can have several possible sources of entitlement which constitute its livelihood. Entitlements include the rights, privileges and assets that a household has, and its position in the legal, political, and social fabric of society.

Since the introduction of the HLS Framework in 1994, the basic concepts have been evolving based on both the lessons learned by the larger development community, as well as the lessons learned within CARE. The most recent evolution involved the incorporation of rights-based approaches (RBA) into HLS. However, it is important to note that RBA does not replace HLS. The combination of a Rights Based Approach and the HLS framework can be referred to as a rights-based approach to Household Livelihood Security (RBA to HLS).

A Household Livelihood Security Assessment (HLSA) is a holistic and multi-disciplinary analysis, which uses an integrated or systems approach to analysis, with recognition that poor people and poor households live and interact within broader socioeconomic and sociopolitical systems that influence resource production and allocation decisions.

A Household Livelihood Security Assessment (HLSA) is a type of rapid rural appraisal (RRA) or participatory rural appraisal (PRA).

Importantly, and one of the key strengths for allowing incorporation of rights-based analysis, is that the HLS framework requires a desegregation of data by ethnic

groups, gender, economic status, social strata, age, etc. in order to analyze differences on various variables.

The strength of the HLSA approach lies in its ability to obtain a holistic and multi-dimensional profile of a micro-level context -- food, nutrition, livelihood, and rights-realization -- with strong regional and national contextualization, allowing for the scaling-up of interventions.

A rights-based approach to HLS makes a concerted effort to identify the underlying and root causes of poverty, livelihood insecurity and the vulnerabilities of marginalized families. The HLS assessment takes into consideration the various formal and non-formal institutions that influence rights realization. Thus, institutional mapping is needed to identify how responsible actors or institutions advance or impede rights. This also involves understanding local perceptions of the legitimacy and values of local institutions.

CARE recognizes that poor households are not static in their ability to make a living. Livelihood assessments are relevant at capturing these risk factors and their consequences. This livelihood systems approach is based on the notion that relief, rehabilitation/mitigation and development interventions are interrelated activities, often occurring simultaneously and are not separate and discrete initiatives. Likewise, the type and mix of HLS assessment tools and methods will vary according to the specific objectives, conditions and constraints of the emergency situation.

To help households meet their basic needs and realize their rights, four types of interventions are given emphasis in livelihood assessments, which are **expanding the income and resource base** of the poor (means), **empowering households and communities** to improve their access to services, **expanding the access** of poor households to basic services and interventions that **attack the root causes of poverty** using a rights-based approach.

- ❖ Before conducting the survey, some exploratory studies are required in order to have a broad understanding of the region where the HLSA will be conducted. These activities will be carried out several months prior to the field collection exercise. Preliminary studies are based mainly on secondary information obtainable at the country/national, regional and local levels.
- ❖ A preliminary field visit may be required to collect data from government officials (GO) and local NGOs, or even reaching key informants at the community level if required, in order to complement the information collected indirectly.
- ❖ In addition, a Stakeholders Identification and Institutional Assessment of other NGOs and government agencies working in the survey area are conducted, and documents such as the Terms of Reference for the assessment and Scope of Work are generated.
- ❖ An analysis of contexts, conditions and trends, livelihood resources, institutional processes and organizational structures, livelihood strategies and sustainable livelihood outcomes is also useful.

The extent to which individuals and families are able and willing to equitably exercise their rights and obligations as participating members of society is incorporated into each element or category of the HLS assessment. Household livelihood security assessments can be undertaken to satisfy one or more important programming objectives. Conducting an HLS assessment involves keeping in mind the following key points:

- ❖ sampling,
- ❖ survey team selection and composition,
- ❖ training of field workers, and
- ❖ data gathering methods, which will have to be culturally sensitive.

The Final Report should be prepared immediately after finishing the fieldwork. To facilitate the report write-up, the team leaders should assign each member a portion of the report to be written.