
Introduction

Bernard Giraud

**Electronic version**

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/factsreports/2673>

ISSN: 1867-8521

Publisher

Institut Veolia

Electronic reference

Bernard Giraud, « Introduction », *Field Actions Science Reports* [Online], Special Issue 7 | 2013, Online since 16 May 2013, connection on 03 May 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/factsreports/2673>

Introduction



Bernard Giraud

Co-Founder and President
of Livelihoods Venture
contact@livelihoods.eu

One of the most appalling paradoxes of our times is that more than three-quarters of the one billion human beings suffering from malnutrition are small farmers: those who are supposed to be feeding their fellow men haven't enough to feed their own families. These small farmers, herders or fishermen are for the most part terribly dependent on natural resources, from which they draw the majority of their own resources. In many cases, they have only their own bodily strength to rely on, occasionally supported by working animals. When the mangrove forests from which they catch the fish are destroyed, when the soil loses its fertility as a result of erosion, when deforestation leads to groundwater sources drying up, and when hurricanes ravage the dikes erected to protect their crops, the rural poor are impacted immediately and directly. For them, the deterioration of their ecosystem is a lot more than a conference discussion topic. For them, it means greater poverty, food insecurity and real uncertainty about the future.

Nevertheless, there is now a growing movement underpinned by rural communities and local organisations that aims to redress the balance by experimenting with a range of different eco-agricultural and 'eco-intensive agricultural' methods. This Livelihoods Special Issue of FACTS Reports points the way towards this new hope for the future: written by those actually involved in the projects, it witnesses the commitment shown by hundreds of villages in the Casamance area of Senegal and the Sundarbans of India, who have succeeded in restoring life-supporting mangrove habitats on a very large scale. It gives a voice to organisations working in Kenya, Malawi, Congo and the high-altitude valleys of Araku in India to develop agroforestry systems that intelligently combine trees with crops, skilled livestock farming and the organic fertilisation of soils to rapidly increase the yield per hectare of small farming operations at very low investment cost. It tells of successful experiments in providing access to energy, with examples such as the large-scale distribution of more efficient cookers that reduce wood consumption and therefore deforestation.

The bottom line is that this Livelihoods' Special Issue highlights a very simple thing that we must all take increasingly into account when making decisions, whether public or private, collective or individual: we all live on one planet, and everything that happens is interconnected. Throughout this revue, from the four corners of the world where they are taking direct action for change, the authors send us a series of strong messages and help us to answer some of the most crucial questions for our shared futures: can we successfully feed a global population that will be approaching 9 billion by 2050, without destroying what remains

of natural biodiversity and pure water resources and without accelerating climate change? Will it be possible to keep alive the intimate and complex links between rural societies, the earth and the natural cycles of life? Do we understand how to build a modern world inspired by the best of this heritage to invent forms of rural existence suited to today's world, and which will make younger generations want to live off the land? How can we build win-win relationships between fast-growing cities and the countryside, with the markets of developed regions near and far, and between big business and rural communities?

The Livelihoods Fund set up by a number of committed companies is another encouraging sign. By applying the mechanisms of the carbon economy to projects supported by rural communities and organisations capable of deploying them on a large scale, it has, in a very short time, enabled the delivery of projects whose economic, social and ecological impact will be very significant. In addition to the Fund itself, the Livelihoods Network has also been set up to build active bridges between social entrepreneurs, NGOs, research bodies, companies and governments to accelerate the transfer of best practices, share expertise and encourage innovation. In short, to build an informal community of actors that think beyond geographic and institutional boundaries, share a single vision, have communal values and are all committed to taking action at grass roots level.

In re-reading the articles in this special issue, I could not help remembering a proverb that intrigued me as a child: "It is not necessary to hope in order to act." The authors of this revue are tireless actors driven by hope: it will be difficult to stop them.

ABOUT LIVELIHOODS



Livelihoods is a carbon fund that invests in large scale projects of agroforestry, ecosystem restoration and access to rural energy. Investors in the fund are corporations that get certified carbon credits with high social and environmental value in return for their investment. Since its creation end 2011, 8 corporations have joined Livelihoods: Danone, which initiated the fund, Crédit Agricole, Schneider Electric, Hermès, SAP, Voyageurs du Monde, CDC Climat, La Poste.

Livelihoods projects are implemented by rural communities with the support of field NGOs. They are designed to provide food security as well as revenue increase to the farmers and their families while contributing to maintain or restore biodiversity, water resources, soil organic fertility, etc. Livelihoods Fund has already invested in 6 major projects which are impacting more than one million people. 130 million trees have been planted which will sequester 5-7 million Tons of CO₂ on 20 years. Livelihoods business model is quite unique with up-front investment to allow poor communities pre-finance their project. A Livelihoods Charter defines the vision and the principles that guide the selection process and the way projects are managed.

In addition to the Livelihoods Fund, a capacity building and knowledge transfer organization was formed between field practitioners, experts, researchers and the private sector: Livelihoods Network. Its mission is to foster innovation and develop tools and methodologies that prove to be efficient in Livelihoods type projects. Companies are invited to bring their own expertise and participate to the co-creation process of the Livelihoods Network.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Special Issue on Livelihoods could not exist without the outstanding support of the companies that are engaged in the fund and more broadly in the Livelihoods adventure. It could not exist without the members of the Livelihoods Network which have strongly contributed to this Livelihoods issue in sharing the learnings from their field experience.

We are also happy to pay tribute to our institutional partners that have brought so much to Livelihoods since its creation and play an important role in its development: IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, The World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF), and many others. We also would like to make a special thank you to the French Fund For Global Environment (FFEM) that brings its support to the Livelihoods projects and the activities of the Livelihoods Network.

This Special Issue would not have been possible without the engagement and tenacity of the FACTS Reports team. We thank them very warmly for giving the Livelihoods Network this opportunity. Our thanks also go to all those who have contributed to improving the quality of the articles submitted, and especially the FACTS Reports editorial committee members.