

Teacher Manual

Livelihood System Example

The following is a description of a livelihood system of a small family in Tasmania. The family's main source of income comes from a crop of wheat. However, the family also grows some fruits and vegetables. They also sell some livestock for extra income. This is a family of six, a father, a mother, and four children (ages 2, 4, 8, and 14). The mother mostly tends to household duties and takes care of the children, but during harvest time works out in the field and also works in town in the distributing center that is in charge of exporting the goods of the community. This extra money is very important to the family as they barely get by every year.

Recently, a traveling salesman came into the village in Tasmania and was selling a new and improved plow. This new and improved plow was supposed to allow farmers to plow twice as fast and plow more accurately. The family was very interested in this new plow. The only thing was that it cost quite a bit and at the same time it was time for immunizations for the children. Even though the government helped some with the immunizations, there was still a cost associated with them. The family had to decide either to buy the new and improved plow or to get the immunizations.

Another difficulty facing the family was the issue of drinking water. The only fresh water well that was suitable for drinking was located about one-half mile from the village. Every day the family had to carry

water to the house for that day. Recently, the father of the family received a job offer to go and make more money farming up the road in a bigger village. The family has to decide whether to make this change and have the father take this new job. If he decides to take the job, then that will leave the rest of the family in charge of all of the farming duties, as well as taking care of getting drinking water every day.

This particular family has been growing wheat for the last ten years and makes a good living growing wheat. However, a few of the members of the community have begun growing another crop that requires a lot more labor, but also makes more money. The family is considering switching from wheat to this new crop, but is hesitant because they don't know where they will get the extra help from, and if they go with this new crop then the children will not be able to help out as much on the farm. Instead of having the kids help out, the family will have to pay for outside labor.

Also, a lot of the farmers have been switching to a crop that uses less water and is better for the environment. However, this more environmentally friendly crop does not make quite as much money as wheat and requires a little bit more labor. The family knows it would be nice to switch to this new environmentally friendly crop, but they don't know if they can make ends meet with the switch.

After reviewing the story with the students go through the

worksheet and complete the questions.

In relation to the above story which is more important?

1. Buying a new plow to replace the old one or having enough money to pay for immunizations for the family.
2. Making lots of money working elsewhere or helping to provide your family with clean water.
3. Growing a crop that requires hiring a lot of outside help or growing a crop that allows your kids to work with you.
4. Growing an organic crop that is good for the environment, but doesn't make as much money, or growing a crop that provides your family with a decent income.

What is the common theme in these questions?

Answer: Taking care of the family is the most important consideration when making decisions.

Definitions of Livelihood Systems

Webster's (1997) dictionary defines livelihood as "a means of support or subsistence" (p. 434).

Webster's (1997) dictionary describes a system as "a group of units so combined as to form a whole and to operate in unison" (p. 735).

A livelihood system is defined as the numerous bio-physical and socio-economic forces and factors that affect the family (Pomeroy, Gough, Baker, & Hildebrand, 2002).

What are the key components of these definitions of livelihood systems?

Possible answers to stimulate discussion:

Different parts working together

Providing life necessities

Forces that affect a family

The ways in which families provide for themselves

What is important to your family?
What attributes of your family are important to you?

Rank the above attributes listed in order of importance by placing a number 1 by the attribute that is most important, a number 2 by the second most important attribute, and so on.

Why was extra income needed in the livelihood system example?

Possible answers to stimulate discussion:

The family barely makes ends meet

They live in a poor country so every bit of income helps

What types of other income were sought and why?

Possible answers to stimulate discussion:

The mother helps export products during harvest

Fruits

Vegetables

Livestock

These incomes were sought to supplement the income from the main crop of wheat. If the family only relied on wheat and there was a bad year then they would lose everything.

What else could the family do to increase income coming into the family?

Possible answers to stimulate discussion:

Specialty crops

Crafts

Tourism

How will the ages of the children affect the family in the future?

Possible answers to stimulate discussion:

As the children grow older they will be able to help out on the farm more. This will allow the family to increase its farming operation and possibly add new crops to the farming system.

Write your own personal definition of a livelihood system.

A livelihood system is: