



Secure
Livelihoods
Research
Consortium



Researching livelihoods and
services affected by conflict

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium Nepal Research Programme

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About us

The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) is a six year global research programme exploring livelihoods, basic services and social protection in conflict-affected situations. Funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), Irish Aid and EC, SLRC was established in 2011 with the aim of strengthening the evidence base and informing policy and practice around livelihoods and services in conflict.

SLRC is undertaking research in eight focus countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Uganda. Our Nepal research programme is being led by the National Centre of Contemporary in Research (NCCR) based in Nepal.

What is the focus of SLRC's Nepal research programme?

It is now six years since the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement brought an official end to a decade-long conflict (the 'People's War') between the Nepalese state and Maoist insurgents. Yet, peace remains fragile and the construction of a state able to effectively deliver services to its citizens is very much a work in progress. International aid actors' engagement in Nepal is largely premised around support to state- and peacebuilding processes, with the 2010–2015 Nepal Peace and Development Strategy developed by donor agencies (including DFID, USAID, the EU and UN agencies) making explicit connections between effective service delivery and state-building. However, little is known about how people have been accessing services and interacting with local-level

governance structures in the post-conflict period, which leaves the central premise of donor engagement in Nepal on shaky foundations. Furthermore, the limited evidence we have suggests some significant challenges persist, including: the presence of local political vacuums stemming from an absence of elected local government; weak government and aid interventions in remote rural areas; and uneven inclusion of various conflict-affected groups in formal social protection programmes.

SLRC's Nepal research programme seeks to generate evidence on livelihoods, service delivery, taxation and social protection that will help inform better modes of international engagement in Nepal. The programme is driven by two central research themes, outlined below, and focused geographically on Rolpa and Bardiya – two of the most conflict-affected remote areas in the mid-western hills and Terai – as well as Ilam, a relatively accessible district in the far eastern hills.

1 How do perceptions of old-age allowance recipients vary depending on their social and demographic characteristics, such as gender, income status, caste/ethnicity and place of residence, and why?

The Nepalese state has previously failed to fulfil its core functions. The historically weak capacity of the state to provide basic services and effective social protection, as well as tackle a range of interlinked problems relating to poverty, inequality, injustice and exclusion, is connected to the country's geographical factors, resource constraints, and poor socio-economic conditions. Subsequently, both the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Interim Constitution of Nepal envision a particular restructuring of the state, emphasising dimensions of capacity, responsiveness

and legitimacy. There have also been calls for national and sub-national policy processes to be more inclusive of Nepali citizens' needs and views. However, there has not been enough research, particularly of a quantitative nature, into people's perceptions of state legitimacy in Nepal, and understandings of the quality of the state's service delivery in the post-conflict period remain sketchy.

The first research theme of SLRC's Nepal programme aims to explore people's experiences of service delivery and examine how these affect perceptions of state legitimacy. This theme will focus on Nepal's old age allowance and how the pension scheme, and other social protection instruments, impact on people's perceptions of government and state-society relations. By analysing the match (or mismatch) between public expectations and state performance, research within this theme will provide empirical evidence that can be used to help improve mechanisms and arrangements for service delivery. More specifically, the programme intends to shed light on answers to the following interlinked research questions:

- What factors influence perceptions of the government among the old-age allowance recipients?
- How does service delivery affect people's perceptions of the local government?
- How do perceptions of service delivery recipients vary depending on their social and demographic characteristics, such as gender, income status, caste/ethnicity and place of residence, and why?
- What factors influence perceptions of the government among the serviced delivery recipients?



Right to left:
Minister for Local
Development of
Nepal, SLRC's
Bishnu Upreti
and the Chair of
University Grant
Commission

2 How do specific capacity-building interventions, such as the Nepal Peace Trust Fund (NPTF) and Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP), affect the capacity of local government to support service delivery and improve people's well-being in Nepal?

The 'People's War' severely affected the ability of the state to provide services. In particular, retaining trained staff at the local level proved to be especially difficult and contributed to poor administrative management. Given the prominence of state-building objectives within donor agendas, understanding the successes and failures of externally-driven capacity development represents a particular priority for researchers.

Research within this theme will focus on international engagement in state capacity building. The main objective of this research component is to examine the engagement of international actors in developing the capacity of the state at a local level. In order

to answer the above question we will be focusing on two case studies. The first case study will explore the role of the Local Governance Community Development Project (LGCDP) as a multi-donor funded national programme, in building the capacity of the government at local and central levels. The second case study will look at the Nepal Peace Trust Fund's effectiveness in developing the capacity of Local Peace Committees (LPC), and how effective the LPCs are in providing specific services to local people that contribute to peace building and state building objectives.

How will we carry out the research?

The Nepal research programme will apply qualitative as well as quantitative data collection methods, beginning with a panel survey in Rolpa and Bardiya districts, two of the most conflict-affected and remote areas in far western Nepal, as well as Ilam, a relatively accessible district in the far eastern hills. A second round of the survey will be carried out again in 2015. More in-depth qualitative research will take place in the intermittent years, which will be shaped in part by the initial findings of the quantitative survey work.

In order to tackle a number of the more specific research questions, we will be conducting additional desk and fieldwork: particular methods will include key informant interviews and semi-structured survey questionnaires.

What will be done with the research?

Through a combination of regular

engagement with key stakeholders and dissemination of accessible and relevant research outputs, we primarily hope to contribute towards the development of a more robust evidence base on education services and pensions schemes in Nepal. In particular, we hope that the empirical evidence generated by the programme into the relationship between service delivery and state-building will help inform policy and practice among international and national NGOs, UN agencies and donors. As part of this, NCCR will organise a series of meetings and debates with the donor community, INGOs, media and the Nepal government, the aim of which will be to help refine and improve their capacity development efforts.



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