



Secure
Livelihoods
Research
Consortium

Researching livelihoods and
services affected by conflict

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium

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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 the European Commission (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.

What is the focus of SLRC's research?

The evidence base on livelihoods, services and social protection in conflict-affected situations is patchy and extremely weak in certain places. In particular, there is:

- little understanding of the relationships between service provision, legitimacy and state-building;
- little evidence on the service delivery and human wellbeing outcomes of external actors' state-building and capacity development efforts in conflict-affected situations;
- a lack of comparable and longitudinal research into how people are able to maintain or create secure livelihoods during and after violent conflict.

As a result, many arguments found in the academic and policy literatures are thinly evidenced, driven less by high quality research and more by received wisdoms.

At the centre of SLRC's research are three core themes.

- 1 State legitimacy: experiences, perceptions and expectations of the state and local governance in conflict-affected situations**

Establishing, building or strengthening state legitimacy is a major element of state-building, and considered important for securing both peace and development.

Yet, policy makers and researchers have tended to ignore the tricky question of legitimacy – sometimes referred to as the 'intangible' element or 'demand' side of state-building – instead focusing their attention on the more technical exercise of increasing state capacity.

Using a local-level, people-centred perspective, we will explore how individuals' experiences, perceptions and expectations of the state and local governance shape legitimacy, and attempt to identify some of the routes through which improvements in legitimacy might strengthen state-society relations. More specifically, we want to know whether government provision of basic services actually contributes to state-building via its possible effects on state legitimacy.

- 2 State capacity: building effective states that deliver services and social protection in conflict-affected situations**

If the first theme focuses on the 'demand' side of state-building, then the second is concerned with its 'supply' side.

Social protection and basic services are important in their own right, and identifying which mechanisms and partnerships are most effective in terms of securing their delivery in different contexts is a key priority for research and policy.

One of the standard modes of international engagement in conflict-affected environments is through programmes where the intention is to build the capacity of the state to a point where international aid actors can handover to government authorities. So, for example, various types

of independent service authorities or project management units are created in order to substitute for weaknesses in state delivery capacity, while technical assistance is simultaneously provided to enable line ministries to gradually take increasing responsibility for implementation.

There is, however, little evidence on the impacts of international attempts to build state capacity, and many efforts appear to be based on unrealistic expectations about the speed at which state capacities to deliver services can be built.

SLRC research under this theme will follow a two-stage logic: we will first describe what international actors' approaches to capacity development in conflict-affected situations look like, before analysing the outcomes of their engagement in order to draw out lessons for future programming. Theme 2 research therefore involves both descriptive and prescriptive elements, and will be of direct use to aid agencies engaging in state-building and service delivery operations in conflict-affected environments.

Taken together, these two research themes will generate evidence that contributes towards a fuller understanding of the different dimensions of the state-building process.

3 Livelihood trajectories and economic activity under conflict

Research under this theme will ask: what do livelihood trajectories in conflict-affected situations tell us about how governments and aid agencies can more effectively support the ways in which poor and vulnerable people make a living?

SLRC will address this using a longitudinal perspective – a key gap in the current evidence base – which will help build a picture of how people attempt to secure

their livelihoods in particular contexts and over time. Rather than tracing the impact of individual programmes, this will enable us to start from the perspective of poor people, and to ask which, if any, aid interventions or government policies and programmes are making a difference in peoples' lives.

By paying close attention to the governance structures that both support and undermine people's livelihoods, we will link our research within this theme with our work on legitimacy and state capacity.

Particular issues and sub-themes to investigate in more detail will emerge through an iterative process. However, based on a set of 10 evidence papers completed during SLRC's inception phase, it is anticipated that these may include: processes of return; land rights; urbanisation; shifts in gender roles; emerging non-western actors; the role of the private sector; markets (particularly agricultural markets); and opportunities for growth.

Funding will be available for SLRC partner organisations to bid for work outside of these core themes and in other conflict-affected countries.

How will SLRC carry out the research?

At the heart of SLRC's research will be a survey on livelihoods and access to services, which will also explore experiences, perceptions and expectations of the state and local governance. This will be carried out on two separate occasions – once at the start of the programme, and once again at the end – thus providing a valuable longitudinal, panel-based perspective. The surveys will be complemented by in-depth qualitative research.

Developing capacity is at the core of SLRC's approach to conducting high quality research, and we will achieve this through a combination of activities, including funding

PhDs for students from the global south, holding training sessions and workshops, and facilitating collaboration between our partners (for the development of both northern and southern researchers).

Where is SLRC working and with whom?

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the lead organisation.

SLRC partners include: the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) in Sri Lanka, Feinstein International Center (FIC, Tufts University), the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Pakistan, Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction based at Wageningen University (WUR), the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research (NCCR), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

SLRC's research focuses on eight core countries, covering a range of conflict-affected situations:

- Afghanistan
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Nepal
- Pakistan
- Sierra Leone
- South Sudan
- Sri Lanka
- Uganda

What will be done with SLRC's research?

Through a combination of regular engagement with key stakeholders and disseminating compelling, accessible and relevant research outputs, we intend to ensure our findings are used to facilitate better informed policy making

and practices, and promote spaces for dialogue.

SLRC will pay particular attention to engaging with national and local governments, and national civil society, within our seven focus countries. In doing so we will leverage the strength of Consortium members by building on CEPA, SDPI, NCCR, ODI, Feinstein and Wageningen's existing capacities and expertise at a national level and international level.

SLRC research hopes to contribute towards on-going efforts by the g7+ – an exciting new institution that is enabling fragile states to bring their own voices to debates about fragility – and the 'International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding' to measure fragile states' progress towards achieving the five Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (PSGs) as set out in the 'New Deal'.



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