



Researching livelihoods and services affected by conflict

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium South Sudan Research Programme

CJ Clarke/Save the Children



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 South Sudan research programme is being led by the Feinstein International Center (FIC) based at Tufts University in conjunction with Swisspeace and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

What is the focus of SLRC's South Sudan research programme?

Until very recently, South Sudan – the world's newest state – had been at war for almost half a century. The long armed conflict generated devastating impacts not only on the lives and livelihoods of millions of South Sudanese, but also on government and state institutions, resulting in heavily reduced capacity, an erosion of legitimacy, and a breakdown in state-society relations.

Today, the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) enjoys popularity in many parts of the country, largely due to the ultimate success of the long struggle for independence. South Sudanese people hope that their nation's independence is followed up with effective delivery of services and economic progress,

without which the country is unlikely to see improvements in incomes and wellbeing at the household and community level and stable state-building at the national level. The SLRC South Sudan research programme will explore the enormous challenges to making such improvements by rigorously investigating the following three research themes:

1 Building new South Sudan: How does the delivery of basic services and social protection in South Sudan affect the internal dimensions of state-building and state formation?

With the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, a 'new' administration and 'new' executive, legislative and judiciary institutions are in the process of being set up in South Sudan with international support. Yet, the ongoing state-building and state formation processes are contested, as a multitude of actors and strategic groups negotiate public authority, governance, and access to resources. Furthermore, community perceptions and expectations of the services these institutions are expected to provide are influencing state legitimacy and state-society relations. All of these factors will influence and shape the state-building and state formation processes, and potentially influence the long-term stability of the world's newest nation.

Research under Theme 1 will focus on the South Sudanese dimension of these processes by studying the role of authority structures, including state and civil society, in basic service delivery and social protection provision. We will explore people's experiences and perceptions of state and non-state actors, and critically investigate the end outcomes of service delivery, both in terms of impacts on people's livelihoods

at the local level as well as impacts on legitimacy and state-building.

2 Finding the right balance: How do, and how should, international aid organizations engage with the South Sudanese state in order to improve state capacity to deliver social protection and basic services?

Since 2005, international aid engagement in South Sudan has increased dramatically, especially in terms of development assistance flows. The international community is funding basic services and social protection with the GoSS, whilst at the same time, engaging in a number of different capacity and institution building projects. It is still unclear how the international aid community considers and responds to the differential authority of the various internal state and local actors they support, and how international engagement ultimately shapes state-building and state formation processes.

In order to achieve constructive engagement with the state as well as with South Sudanese civil society, there is a real need for evidence-based programming. SLRC research on this theme will contribute directly to this need. We will look at the interactions between international and South Sudanese state and local actors, assess the effectiveness of capacity development efforts, and consider the impacts of external programming on state-building processes, including those relating to legitimacy and state-society relations.

3 Livelihood trajectories: Post-conflict livelihood recovery in South Sudan

Decades of conflict in South Sudan devastated the livelihoods of millions of people. But despite this, most of the international assistance provided during

those years was in the form of humanitarian aid, with only limited support for livelihood recovery.

Since the signing of the CPA, the issue of people's livelihoods has come increasingly to the fore. However, much of the effort appears to have been focused on rural infrastructure and large-scale production. Moreover, while there has been an institutional effort to resettle the nearly two million returnees, formal programmes and comprehensive assistance have been limited. As a result, the majority of return and resettlement has happened spontaneously. Overall, there is limited understanding of how livelihoods may have changed from a conflict to post-conflict environment and even less understanding of how people's needs may have changed.

Research under this theme will take a 'livelihoods cycle' approach in order to capture livelihood change over time. We will focus on two areas of South Sudan – Jonglei and Upper Nile states – noting key differences between rural and urban areas, between returnees and groups who were never displaced or who were displaced locally, and between spontaneous returnees and those who returned within a sponsored program. The research will also take into account gender and generational differences.

How will we carry out the research?

The research programme will apply qualitative as well as quantitative data



collection methods, beginning with a household survey in Jonglei and Upper Nile. The survey, conducted by FAO, will include both livelihoods and perception modules so that people's views of the state and livelihood indicators can be jointly analysed, and will constitute a quantitative baseline for the SLRC study.

The survey will be followed by a qualitative phase in 2013 and 2014, which will include community member interviews and group discussions. These interviews will provide an opportunity for local leaders and community members to reflect their perceptions of livelihood change and their expectations of local authority and state institutions, and the role of these institutions in supporting livelihoods.

In 2014-2015, SLRC will collaborate with FAO to undertake another household survey aimed to build on the insights gained from the explorative qualitative research phase. We hope to interview as many of the same stakeholders as in the first survey as possible. This approach will allow comparisons of potential changes in both people's livelihoods as well as their perceptions and expectations of state and local institutions over time.

What will be done with the research?

Through a combination of regular engagement with key stakeholders and disseminating compelling, accessible and relevant research outputs, we hope to feed into policy discussions of South Sudanese government officials, as well as international aid organizations, for the development of policy and practice that

supports the GoSS, local government and customary institutions, and local actors in livelihoods promotion and state-building.

This research programme, in collaboration with South Sudanese research institutions, should contribute to a change in practice of policy makers and practitioners that compels them to place greater emphasis in understanding: the dynamics between internal state and local authority structures; the role of traditional structures in social protection and the accompanying community perceptions and expectations of these structures; and how these factors shape state-society relations and state capacity and legitimacy. By collaborating with local research institutions, we hope to help build capacity for livelihoods research on a much more sustained basis.



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