

Livelihoods, conflict and recovery



Findings from the Secure Livelihoods Research
Consortium

June 2017



Suggested citation

Maxwell, D., Mazurana, D., Wagner, M. and Slater, R. (2017) *Livelihoods, conflict and recovery: findings from the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium*. London: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium.

SLRC publications present information, analysis and key policy recommendations on issues relating to livelihoods, basic services and social protection in conflict affected situations. This and other SLRC publications are available from www.securelivelihoods.org. Funded by UK aid from the UK government, Irish Aid and the EC.

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Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium

Overseas Development Institute (ODI)
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
United Kingdom

T +44 (0)20 3817 0031
F +44 (0)20 7922 0399
E slrc@odi.org.uk
www.securelivelihoods.org
[@SLRCtweet](https://twitter.com/SLRCtweet)

Cover photo: a farmer in her fields in Surkhet province, Nepal. © Aubrey Wade.

Preface



The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) aims to generate a stronger evidence base on state-building, service delivery and livelihood recovery in fragile and conflict-affected situations. It began in 2011 with funding from the UK's Department for International Development, Irish Aid and the European Commission.

At the centre of SLRC's research are three core questions, developed over the course of an intensive one-year inception period in which the consortium set about identifying major evidence gaps:

- To what extent and under what conditions does the delivery of basic services and social protection contribute towards state legitimacy in fragile and conflict-affected situations?
- How do external actors attempt to develop the capacities of states in fragile and conflict-affected situations to deliver better services – and how fit for purpose are the dominant approaches?
- What do livelihood trajectories in fragile and conflict-affected situations tell us about how governments and aid agencies can more effectively support the ways in which people make a living?

From 2011 to 2016 – the duration of SLRC's first phase – the consortium implemented packages of quantitative and qualitative research across eight countries affected by fragility and conflict to varying degrees: Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and Uganda.

This paper is one of a series of 'synthesis reports' produced at the end of SLRC's first phase. These reports bring together and analyse all relevant material on SLRC's overarching research questions, with a view to drawing out broader lessons that will be of use to policy

makers, practitioners and researchers. There are five in total:

- [Service delivery, public perceptions and state legitimacy](#). A synthesis of SLRC's material on the first overarching research question above.
- [Service delivery and state capacity](#). A synthesis of SLRC's material on its second overarching research question.
- [Livelihoods, conflict and recovery](#). A synthesis of SLRC's material on its third overarching research question.
- [Markets, conflict and recovery](#). A more focused synthesis of the role that markets and the private sector play in processes of livelihood recovery. It links to and informs the 'Livelihoods, conflict and recovery' report.
- [Tracking livelihoods, service delivery and governance](#). A synthesis of SLRC's cross-country survey findings, drawing on two rounds of data collection with the same respondents.

Although specific authors were responsible for the analysis and writing of each synthesis report, all must ultimately be considered products of a collective, consortium-wide effort. They simply would not have been possible without the efforts and outputs of SLRC's various partner organisations. They include the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in the UK, the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) in Sri Lanka, Feinstein International Center (FIC) at Tufts University in the USA, the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Pakistan, Disaster Studies at Wageningen University (WUR) in the Netherlands, the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research (NCCR), Focus 1000 in Sierra Leone, and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Acknowledgements



This synthesis report was written by Daniel Maxwell, Dyan Mazurana, Michael Wagner and Rachel Slater. However, it is based on multiple studies carried out by multiple researchers at the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium, and should therefore be ultimately considered the product of a collective effort.

For valuable feedback on an earlier draft of this paper, the authors would like to thank Paul Harvey (Humanitarian Outcomes / SLRC), Simon Levine (Overseas Development

Institute), Susanne Jaspars (University of Bristol) and Adam Pain (independent / SLRC).

Finally, the authors would like to thank Patricia Prohaszka, Sonia Sezille, Claire Bracegirdle and the rest of the SLRC team based at the Overseas Development Institute, all members of the wider Consortium around the world, John Maher for editing, Garth Stewart for formatting and Emily Steadman for proofreading.

Acronyms



ANP	Afghan National Police	LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement (Sudan)	M4P	Making Markets Work for the Poor
CSI	Coping Strategies Index	MSI	Morris Score Index
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo	NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (UN)	NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
FCS	Food Consumption Score	NSP	National Solidarity Programme (Afghanistan)
IDP	Internally Displaced Person	SLRC	Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force (Afghanistan) ANP	SP	Social Protection
LA	Livelihoods Assistance	UN	United Nations
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army	US	United States

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Executive summary



Livelihoods are fundamentally about what people do to meet their needs over time, including how they cope with and recover from shocks. Understanding how people do this in a range of fragile and conflict-affected situations is a central part of the work of the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC), a six-year, eight-country research programme exploring how people make a living, access adequate food, educate their children and stay healthy in a range of conflict-affected countries. This report synthesises findings on livelihoods from the SLRC across a range of its quantitative and qualitative research projects.

What we did

At the heart of SLRC's work on livelihoods is a longitudinal panel survey carried out with 8,404 respondents over two waves (2012 and 2015) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda. This allowed SLRC to directly track changes in people's livelihoods over time, and to identify factors that are associated with positive or negative change. In addition to this 'quantitative core', SLRC has carried out multiple pieces of qualitative research, designed to add depth to the survey findings and examine key livelihoods questions in greater detail.

What we found

From the panel survey, discussed in depth in Section 2, three particularly important findings about livelihoods and wellbeing stand out.

First, **while average levels of food security changed relatively little, we saw a substantial amount of 'churning' in our samples in all countries – that is, some households are seeing improvements in food security outcomes over time, but more or less equal numbers are seeing theirs worsen.** Dividing up respondents into five equally sized quintiles at the baseline shows the extent of this churning. By the second wave of the survey, most households had moved position by at least one quintile and, most surprisingly, sometimes jumped from

the bottom to the top of our distribution and vice versa. We will require a further wave of survey data to identify whether households remain on the same trajectory, or whether those on upward trajectories fall back and those on downward trajectories recover. But some of the drivers of household fortunes are clear: access to social protection provides very little explanation for churning, livelihoods support provides only a little, and exposure to shocks and crimes provides a lot.

Second, we found **considerable change in people's livelihoods activities but, overall, there was a broad picture of modest diversification.** Some of the shifts were associated with changes in food insecurity, but with substantial variation across countries. In two countries (Nepal and DRC), households in which a member started engaging in casual labour between waves also saw a decline in their food security. Meanwhile, in these two countries (and also Pakistan), starting up livelihoods in other sectors was linked to an improvement in food security. The findings reflect the wider literature on livelihoods diversification that acknowledges that diversification can reflect the spreading of risk and the development of a stronger income base on the one hand and, on the other, desperation.

Third, **while households increased their assets (often substantially) between waves, the evidence overall suggests that some assets can be relatively easy to build up after conflict, but can also be easily lost.** There are patterns in the types of assets that households invested in across countries, with many countries showing higher ownership levels of large, durable and often domestic assets, such as furniture and sizeable electronic goods. Many of these assets are not portable (with an obvious exception being mobile phones), and investment in them often corresponds with a reduction in reported conflict. It is debatable whether this decline in conflict and rise in the purchase of bulky assets represents 'putting down roots' because of reduced conflict. Our survey data do not allow us to disentangle causality, and the relationship between fighting, security

and investment is not at all straightforward: although less fighting is reported, there is little evidence that households perceive themselves to be safer.

Overall, the key message from the survey on livelihoods and wellbeing is that timelines and trajectories matter more, and are far more complex, than is often assumed. Recovery (and relapse) can change quickly and dramatically, but the extent to which households can stay on upward trajectories of improving livelihoods and wellbeing relates to the diverse shocks and stresses that households in conflict-affected situations face.

The SLRC qualitative studies reviewed in Section 3 cover a range of themes and reflect the diversity of the contexts studied. Some key findings emerged from the synthesis analysis.

First, **the assumption in conflict-affected areas that conflict is the main driver of poor livelihood outcomes is not necessarily true, and neither is the assumption that livelihood recovery naturally follows the end of conflict.** Underlying these observations is the fact that the ‘end’ of conflict is often quite murky: in some cases (Sri Lanka, Uganda) there is a clear defeat of one party to the conflict and a clear ‘winner’; in others (South Sudan) conflict formally appears to end, but actually continues (and in this case a large-scale *return* to conflict was observed), making the term ‘post-conflict’ more or less meaningless. In other cases, (Afghanistan, DRC) while the term ‘post-conflict’ was used, in fact conflict continued in many areas. But even where conflict clearly comes to an end, the effects linger.

Second, **the evidence for a post-conflict ‘peace dividend’ is weak at best**, and in many cases negligible. The assumption of post-conflict livelihood recovery is simply not supported in most cases. Sometimes a peace dividend is engineered in an attempt to bolster peace agreements, particularly with regard to job creation targeted at young men who may otherwise be tempted to return to fighting. But these programmes are limited and their impact is patchy.

Third, **there are key constraints to post-conflict livelihood recovery, which suggest areas for investment, but also highlight the limits to livelihood support in post-conflict contexts.** The chief constraints that emerge from qualitative studies include lack of access to land and natural resources; the limits of the

ability of the state to assist, and also the limits of the self-reliance capacities of post-conflict communities; poor targeting and elite capture of the limited support that does exist, bypassing the hardest hit or most marginalised groups; and even perverse impacts, with levels of support greater during conflicts than in the post-conflict timeframe.

Fourth, SLRC case studies highlight the **continuing role of conflict actors in post-conflict economic activities**, thus shaping the livelihood options of people who have survived the conflict. This includes both state and non-state actors, and highlights the need for conflict-sensitive programming and policy into post-conflict eras.

Fifth, the **livelihood options for women are constrained and strongly shaped by patriarchy**, with more limited options for migration, livelihood diversification and engagement in more lucrative post-conflict opportunities. This seemed to be the case in both urban and rural livelihood systems.

Sixth, **movement is a constant form of livelihood adaptation in conflict and afterwards.** Whether the drivers of migration and movement are conflict-related or more purely economically focused, movement often entails significant disruption to livelihoods. When people are displaced by conflict, there is frequent mixed movement after conflict ends: some of it is a return to the place of origin, but often it is to somewhere else, and frequently to towns rather than to rural places of origin, particularly for men. The end of conflict does not mean the end of population movement. In fact, in some places, migration picked up *after* conflict. And while remittances may be a significant factor in livelihoods in some locations, in other places, they played almost no role in the survival of those left behind.

Seventh, despite the large – and growing – share of aid budgets that **post-conflict livelihood support programming attracts, there is limited evidence as to the resulting impact.**

And eighth, **labour markets often prove to be highly exploitative economic spaces**, both during and after conflict – a separate synthesis of SLRC’s research into the related, yet more specific, subject of markets and conflict, which forms the basis for this final observation (Mallett and Pain, 2017).

What it means for policy

Taken together, these insights paint a bleaker picture of the prospects for post-conflict recovery than is warranted by the conventional optimism surrounding peace agreements and associated presumptions of a recover and post-conflict ‘peace dividend’. Nevertheless, Section 4 concludes this synthesis report by exploring a number of options and principles to consider for the future of livelihood programming in the face of stubborn challenges.

- **First, there is a pattern of post-conflict livelihood recovery programmes tending to neglect the context, needs and priorities of the population.** These combine market factors, gender dimensions, and formal and informal institutions and processes that play a significant role in deciding who can access and succeed in various livelihoods.
- **Second, protracted conflict has facilitated a transition for some from rural agricultural-based livelihoods to informal urban livelihoods, and this should be taken into account in designing livelihood programmes.**
- **Third, the fact that informal employment remains high throughout all SLRC countries, and the failure to understand informal economies, structures and institutions, has a negative impact on the delivery of livelihood programmes.**
- **Fourth, the most pertinent criticism of international agencies supporting livelihood programmes is their lack of contextual awareness. To address this, donors and implementing agencies must gain a better understanding of the factors that drive men, women, boys and girls to reject or be blocked from certain livelihood pursuits.** There should also be contextually-based assessments regarding what livelihood interventions are most desirable and marketable by specific demographic segments.
- **Fifth, rather than pushing supply-driven training and capacity-building programmes, greater reflection is required to assess what is working for and against participation across sectors and genders, particularly as urban markets develop during the post-conflict period.**
- **Finally, people’s desire for ‘decent work’ should spur efforts to create less exploitative jobs.** At the same time, there should be recognition that men and women desire regular incomes, a job with dignity, and one that helps them maintain or improve their social status.



Image: family on the move, Afghanistan. Credit: Ihsanullah Ghafoori, edited by James Mauger.

1 Introduction

Livelihoods are fundamentally about what people do to meet their needs over time, including how they cope with and recover from shocks. Sue Lautze and colleagues (2003: 18) offer one of the clearest and most concise definition of livelihoods: ‘the sum of means by which people get by over time’. While there are high-quality case studies of how people build or maintain their livelihoods during or after conflict,¹ these are often geographically patchy. Big questions remain about how people make a living and how their livelihoods improve, stagnate or regress in situations that are characterised by fragility, conflict and insecurity and, in particular, about the role of national and international actors. Thus, at the beginning of this research process, it was argued that:

Researchers and policymakers continue to struggle to make sense of the heterogeneity of war’s impacts – for example, among different population groups or over time – and fundamental questions regarding the effectiveness of programming loom large.

(Mallett and Slater, 2012: vii).

The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) is a six-year, eight-country research programme exploring how people make a living, access adequate food, educate their children and stay healthy in conflict-affected countries.² The dynamics of livelihoods are the focus of one of three core SLRC areas of investigation, with a primary goal of providing better information to governments and agencies seeking to support livelihoods in conflict-affected, post-conflict and fragile states. This is done by developing a stronger understanding of the circumstances under which people’s livelihoods improve, stagnate or worsen. Thus, the research question underpinning this theme is:

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?

The purpose of this report is to synthesise the diverse set of SLRC empirical studies that have been carried out in response to this question between 2011 and 2016. For the most part, the SLRC studies have approached this complex subject using a longitudinal perspective – a key gap in the current evidence base – that paints a picture

¹ For a relevant review of the evidence base by SLRC, see Mallett and Slater (2012).

² The eight countries are Afghanistan, DRC, Nepal, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and Uganda.

of how people attempt to secure their livelihoods in particular contexts and over time. Rather than tracing the impact of individual programmes, this enables us to start from the perspective of conflict-affected people, and to ask which, if any, aid interventions or government policies and programmes are making a difference to peoples' lives. By paying close attention to the governance structures that support and hinder people's livelihoods, we link our research within this theme to SLRC's work on legitimacy (see Nixon and Mallett, 2017 for the relevant synthesis report) and state capacity (see Denney *et al.*, 2017 for the relevant synthesis report).

The main quantitative part of the SLRC programme comprises a five-country longitudinal panel survey, administered twice to the same respondents with a roughly three-year interval between the two waves. The SLRC panel presents an opportunity to go beyond cross-sectional analysis, generating information about changes in the sample over time and the specific trajectories of individuals and their households. In terms of livelihoods, the panels in each country were designed to generate information about changes over time in income generation, assets, food security and a range of constraining and enabling factors for livelihoods within the broader institutional and geographical context. The panel survey and the highlights from the findings are discussed in the next section.³

Alongside this quantitative work are many individual qualitative research projects in the SLRC's eight focus countries. Whereas the panel survey can help us identify the types of trajectories and trends that we find in people's livelihoods, the qualitative work has greater explanatory potential and can begin to piece together why livelihoods unfold the way they do in particular social, economic and cultural contexts.

The remainder of the report proceeds as follows: in Section 2 we outline the first set of main findings that emerge from the panel survey, and highlight some of the implications for policies and programmes that aim to support livelihoods in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Then, Section 3 synthesises the second set of findings that emerge from the qualitative work. A number of key themes emerge: the complexity of transitions from war to peace; the limited impact of livelihoods assistance, including that of donors; the effects of gender and other social difference on livelihoods opportunities and people's engagement in markets, including labour markets. It should be noted that in both Sections 2 and 3, bold font is used to highlight SLRC's focus countries whenever mentioned. This is to help readers distinguish between SLRC's own material and that from the wider literature. Finally, Section 4 offers some synthesised conclusions across the range of SLRC studies.



Image: delivering food aid, Sierra Leone. Credit: Richard Mallett, edited by James Mauger.

³ There is further survey work in SLRC on taxation and livelihoods in Nepal (Mallett *et al.*, 2016a), and on migration from Nepal and Pakistan (Hagen-Zanker *et al.*, 2014).

2 Findings I: the SLRC's two- wave panel survey



As a multi-year research programme, SLRC has been particularly focused on understanding how people make a living during conflict, and how trajectories of livelihoods recovery happen in post-conflict situations. At the heart of this effort, the SLRC has established longitudinal panel surveys in five countries: **Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda.**⁴ This section summarises the findings of the SLRC panel survey in relation to livelihoods and wellbeing findings across those five countries, drawing specifically on two waves of panel survey data.

Data collection for the first wave took place between September and October 2012 for DRC, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and in January 2013 for Uganda. The second wave followed three years later, with the exception of Uganda, where the follow-up happened after two years.⁵ Interviews took place at the same time of year in all locations. In Pakistan, the changing timing of Ramadan and Eid was controlled for because of the changes in food consumption during those times, and we tested whether, in Nepal, the changing timing of Tihar and Dashain festivities was influencing our results. Table 1 below summarises the number of respondents per country, as well as the attrition rate – i.e. respondent drop-out – between the two waves.

This section provides a summary of the survey findings drawing on Sturge *et al.* (2017). The findings on livelihoods and wellbeing from the survey are organised here under two main headings: churning and assets. In addition, findings on debt, migration and the longstanding legacies of conflict and social inequalities are also discussed.

Table 1: Number of respondents per country and panel wave

	Wave 1	Wave 2	Found	Attrition
DRC	1,243	1,040	84%	16%
Nepal	3,176	2,855	90%	10%
Pakistan	2,114	1,772	84%	16%
Sri Lanka	1,377	1,183	86%	14%
Uganda	1,857	1,554	84%	16%
Total	9,767	8,404	86%	14%

⁴ At the baseline we had also intended to establish a panel survey in South Sudan, albeit in a different manner where we started, with a survey by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and intended to track these individuals. With the renewed outbreak of violence in December 2013 this unfortunately became impossible.

⁵ In Uganda, the second panel wave was moved forward by one year to avoid coinciding with presidential elections in February 2016.

Box 1: Measuring food security

The reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI but hereafter referred to as CSI) is a tool for measuring current food access and quantity: the higher the score on this index, the worse off a household is in terms of food security (Maxwell and Caldwell, 2008). The index score is a weighted sum that reflects the frequency with which households have adopted particular behaviours over a given period of time. The recall period for CSI varied between countries – so it is useful to compare trends between countries, but not absolute values. The Food Consumption Score (FCS) is a measure of food quality. It measures diversity of diet based on the food groups consumed, with nutrient-dense food groups weighted more heavily (Vaitla *et al.*, 2015). More specifically, the FCS is a composite score, which takes the number of food groups (out of a possible eight) that any household member has consumed over the previous seven days, and multiplies this by the number of days that the food group was consumed. The score is weighted by the nutritional importance of the consumed food group. For a discussion of the assumptions required in interpreting these indicators, see the comparative study by Vaitla *et al.* (2015).

For more detail of the SLRC approach to measuring food security, see Sturge *et al.* (2017).

2.1 Changes in wellbeing – a story of churning

The SLRC survey uses two measures of food security – a Coping Strategies Index and a Food Consumption Score to capture changes in both the quantity and quality of household food consumption (see Box 1 for more details on the indicators). Looking at food security, though many of the average scores for food security appear stagnant, more than 90% of households experienced some change in their situation between waves (Table 2). By 2015, a slim majority of households had experienced an improvement in food security. However, there was a considerable degree of change *in all directions* within the sample. This kind of change we term ‘churning’ – meaning that while some households are seeing improvements in food security, at the same time relatively equal numbers

are seeing their situation worsen. Dividing respondents into five equally sized quintiles at the baseline shows the extent of this churning; by the second wave of the survey, most households had moved position by at least one quintile and, most surprisingly of all, sometimes jumped from the bottom to the top of our distribution, or vice versa (an example of this change in the **Sri Lanka** sample is illustrated in Figure 1).

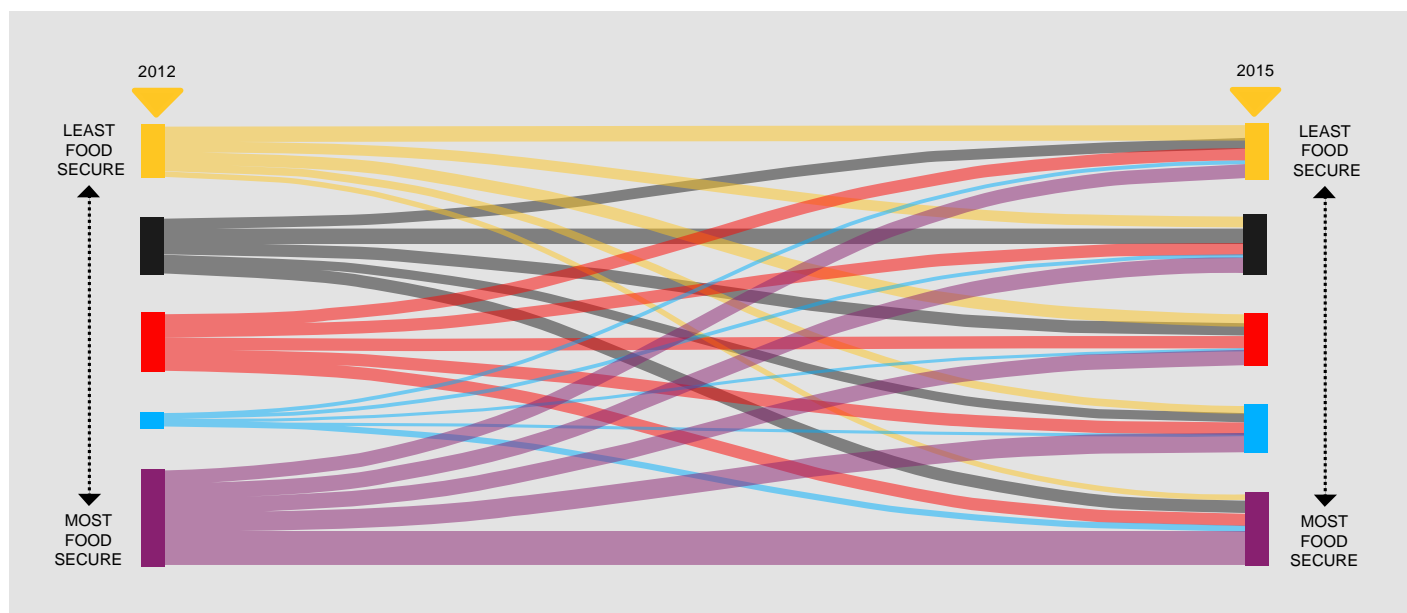
So, what explains the churning in food insecurity? Notwithstanding the considerable variation across countries, the experience of certain shocks and crimes during the three years between waves is associated with a worsening of food insecurity (a rise in CSI score). In Nepal, it was health shocks or the death of a household member that were associated with worsening CSI scores,

Table 2: Coping Strategies Index (CSI) by country and wave

Country	Mean CSI Wave 1	Average		Change over time (%)		
		Mean CSI Wave 2	% with no food insecurity (CSI = 0). Two-wave average	No change	Lower (Better off)	Higher (Worse off)
DRC	12.5	12.2	2.0%	4.4	46.3	49.3
Nepal ***	3.2	1.4	63.6%	45.3	37.7	17.1
Pakistan ***	2.5	4.4	56.6%	34.5	21.1	44.4
Sri Lanka ***	5.4	6.5	30.7%	16.0	35.8	48.2
Uganda ***	10.0	7.0	8.6%	7.6	61.6	30.8

Note: These are weighted means. Statistical significance of the difference between means over time (calculating by a two-sided T-test) is indicated by asterisks where *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05 * p<0.1

Figure 1: Change in Coping Strategies Index (CSI) over time in Sri Lanka, by quintile



while in Uganda environmental shocks (for example drought or flood) were most significant. Experiencing crime was associated with food insecurity in both countries. Increased prevalence of different types of shock or crime was associated with increasing food insecurity in all countries but **Pakistan**, where increasing local crime rates were related to falling food quality. While it is not possible to infer causality from the data, the size of any potential effect is small – experiencing an additional shock was linked to a decrease in FCS of between 2% and 4% compared to 2012 – but clearly show support for the hypothesis that experiencing a greater number of shocks and/or crimes over time is related to worse wellbeing outcomes.

Beyond shocks themselves, perceptions of safety mattered for changes in food security, which was measured using CSI. The results were strongest for perceptions of safety when moving outside the village (as opposed to inside the village), perhaps because livelihood opportunities are rarely on people’s front doorstep.

This interpretation is supported by regression results showing a reduction (improvement) in food insecurity among households that also improved their asset scores between waves. The results for CSI were stronger and more consistent than those for dietary diversity, where the relationship with perceptions of safety was inconsistent between countries and ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ the village.

The extent of churning in relation to livelihoods and wellbeing is also reflected in our findings on people’s receipt of livelihoods assistance and social protection. Few households receive consistent livelihood support (measured as being a beneficiary of any livelihood programme in both waves – Table 3), but for those that that started receiving livelihood assistance between waves there was also an improvement in food security, and satisfaction with support received for livelihoods was high. Despite there being only two waves of data so far, the positive relationship between livelihood assistance and improved food security raises questions about what the longer-term implications of such interventions might be.

Table 3: Access to livelihood assistance (LA) by wave and changes within households over time

	Received LA in wave 1 (%)	Received LA in wave 2 (%)	Household has started accessing (%)	Household has stopped accessing (%)
DRC	30	20	11	21
Nepal	16	18	13	12
Pakistan	24	5	4	24
Sri Lanka	31	57	36	10
Uganda	4	6	6	3

We would normally expect social protection to reduce the churning that we see in food security. In fact, we found no evidence of a relationship between food security and starting to receive social protection at any point in the last three years. Two things may explain this. First, those receiving social protection include those who have only just begun receipt and so are not yet showing its possible impacts on food security. Second, outside the survey, our experience in social protection more broadly tells us that social protection has a limited impact on outcomes like food security if it is not delivered over a sustained period (HLPE, 2012; Slater *et al.*, 2013). In the survey we find that more households received social protection in only one wave than in both waves, except in **Nepal** (Table 4).

2.2 Changes in livelihoods – modest diversification with uncertain drivers

Switches into certain livelihood activities were also associated with changes in food insecurity. In particular, the percentage of households with a member in casual labour increased over time in all countries. Just as households dip in and out of coping strategies at difficult times, especially in response to shocks and stresses, so we suggest that the movement into casual labour, in general, reflects the fact that other sources of livelihood are insecure or unreliable or inadequate in meeting household needs.

We found considerable change in people’s livelihood activities and, overall, a broad picture of modest diversification. Some of the changes were associated with changes in food insecurity, though there was substantial variation across countries. In **DRC**, an increase in the household’s number of income sources between waves was linked to an improvement in food quality and/or diversity (FCS); though what activities people moved into, rather than solely the number of activities, appears important. Households that had a member start working in casual labour (where previously there had been none) also experienced a rise in food insecurity between waves in two countries (**Nepal** and **DRC**) and a fall in food quality and diversity in one country (**Nepal**). In **Nepal** and **Pakistan** the increase in casual labour was fairly negligible, but in **Uganda** almost a quarter (23%) of the sample started casual labour between waves, and in **DRC** this figure was almost one third (32%) (Table 5).

Though the regression results themselves do not imply causality, our interpretation is that poor performance in other livelihood sectors – particularly own food production – leads to worsening food security and drives households into seeking casual labour income. Starting up other livelihoods was in some cases linked to an *improvement* in food security. Starting to sell goods or carrying out one’s own agriculture (as opposed to paid agricultural labour) was associated with an improvement

Table 4: Access to social protection (SP) by wave and changes within households over time

	Received SP in wave 1 (%)	Received SP in wave 2 (%)	Household has started accessing (%)	Household has stopped accessing (%)
DRC	30	20	11	21
Nepal	38	39	12	11
Pakistan	25	31	15	8
Sri Lanka	33	53	28	8
Uganda	17	17	14	10

Table 5: Changes in participation in casual labour, by country

	Wave 1 %	Wave 2 %	Percentage point difference	% households which started it for the first time
Nepal	48.7	50.2	1.5	17.1
Pakistan	35.5	37.3	1.8	16.9
Sri Lanka	47.8	51.2	3.3	18.6
Uganda ***	64.3	76.4	12.1	23.1
DRC ***	46.0	61.9	15.9	31.7

Note: These are weighted means. Statistical significance of the difference between means over time (calculating by a two-sided T-test) is indicated by asterisks where *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05 * p<0.1

in FCS in **Nepal, Pakistan** and **DRC**. The findings appear to reflect the wider literature on livelihoods diversification: in some cases it can reflect the spreading of risk and the development of a stronger income base, whilst in others diversification is the result of desperation.

2.3 Assets

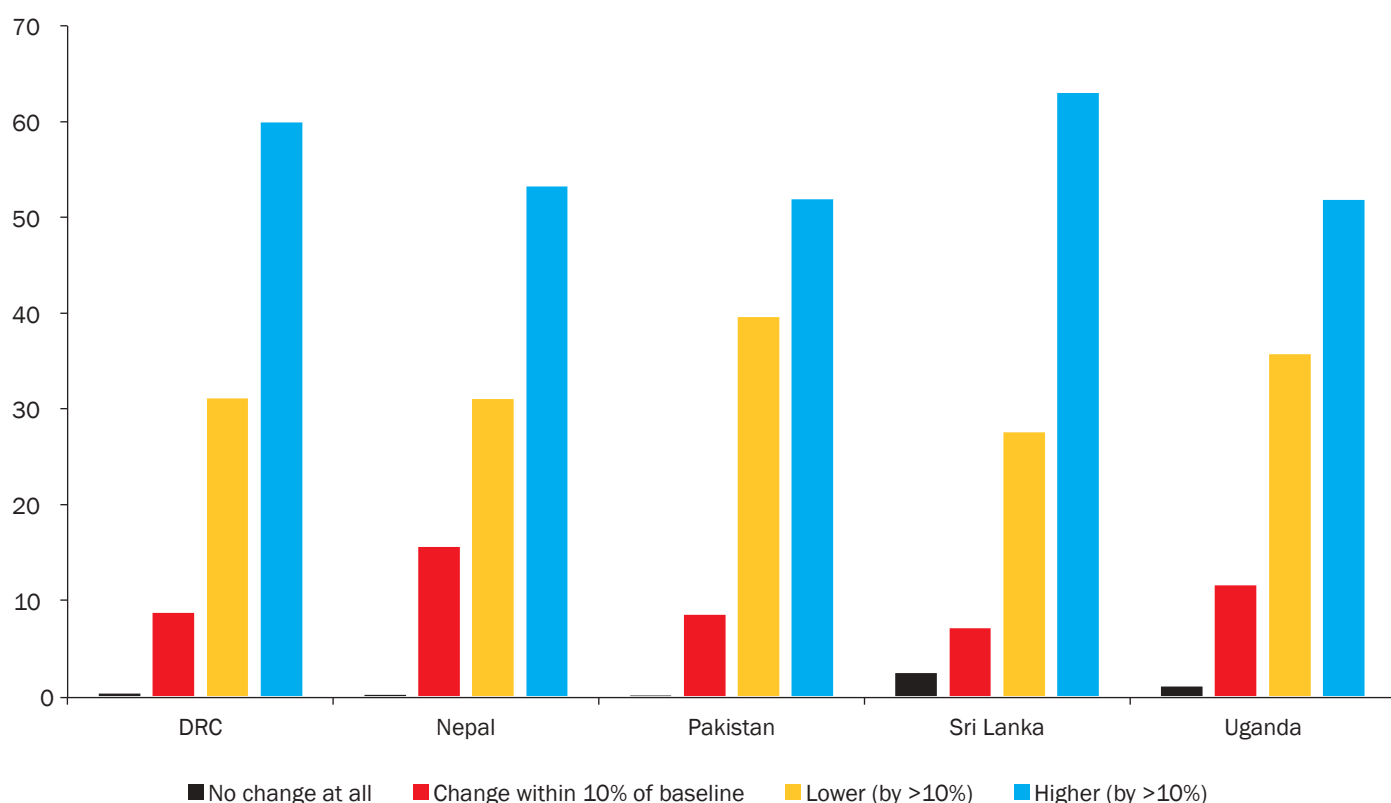
Given the volatility faced by households in many of the countries in which the panel survey was carried out, SLRC uses asset ownership as a proxy for wealth using a Morris Score Index (MSI) (Morris *et al.*, 1999), rather than seeking to examine wealth using income or expenditure. On the whole, households in our survey increased their assets between waves and the changes are often substantial. In **DRC**, for example, households frequently doubled (but sometimes halved) the value of their household assets between waves (albeit often starting from a very low base), or at least substantially changed their asset holdings in three years.

The evidence may indicate that assets, or at least some of them, can be relatively easily built up after conflict. The wider evidence on this is mixed. On the one hand,

Ibáñez and Moya's (2009) work on Colombia finds that households struggle to recuperate assets following conflict. But on the other, Bellows and Miguel (2009) find no evidence of lasting impacts on asset ownership following the Sierra Leone civil war, and Miguel and Roland (2011) report no long-term negative impacts on economic development as a result of the US bombing of Vietnam. The answers to these puzzles lie in the more granular country analysis rather than in the aggregation of findings presented here. In **Uganda**, for example, it is suggested that households may choose, depending on circumstances – particularly security – to save money in other ways not captured by the asset score (Marshak *et al.*, 2017). An increase in MSI could represent households 'cashing in' these other savings. In **Sri Lanka**, it is argued that credit markets have expanded rapidly and much of the increase in assets in the areas covered by the survey may be assets bought on credit (Sanguhan and Gunasekara, 2017).

The SLRC survey findings do more than add to the evidence base on asset accumulation by contributing more specific case studies from particular sub-national regions, they add a new finding – namely that just

Figure 2: Average change in household asset scores between waves



as assets can be relatively easily built up in some circumstances following conflict, so they can also be lost very rapidly. These changes in the distribution of assets mirror the churning identified in food security above and add further weight to the sense of instability of livelihoods and wellbeing that emerges from the survey evidence when considered across countries.

In addition to the churning found across household asset holdings, there are patterns in the types of asset that households have invested in across countries, and these appear to support the theory that households do change the configuration of their asset holdings according to their changing physical environment and security situations. Many countries show increasing ownership levels of bulky, durable and often domestic assets (Table 6). In **DRC**, ownership of tables and chairs increased from 58% to 76% in three years, and bed ownership grew from 70% to 90%. These outweigh increases in other types of assets. Another cluster of assets that increased substantially in all countries (although to a lesser extent in **Pakistan**) is ‘electronic goods’, for example mobile phones, televisions, fans and air-conditioning units, and also, in **Uganda**, solar panels.

With the exception of mobile phones, many of these assets are not portable, and investment in them often corresponds with a reduction in reported conflict. The reduction in reported conflict is particularly evident in **Pakistan** – with 99% of households reporting fighting in their area between 2009 and 2012, and only 4% of households reporting fighting between 2012 and 2015. It is debatable whether this sequencing of a decline in conflict and a rise in the purchase of bulky assets represents ‘putting down roots’, and our survey data do not allow us to disentangle causality. First, the relationship between fighting, security and investment is not as straightforward as it may seem. Although households report less fighting, there is little evidence that they perceive themselves to be safer, either within their villages or when travelling further afield. Second, our data indicate that, in the specific case of **Sri Lanka**, households frequently bought bulky items on credit; this was related anecdotally in some of the other survey sites. This suggests the need for focussing on the connection between a reduction in conflict and the opening up of credit markets, and the extent to which asset accumulation is a sign of confidence in the security situation or represents households taking advantage of new financial opportunities.

Table 6: Percentage increase in household assets between waves – by asset type and country

Asset		DRC	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka	Uganda
Furniture set	Increase	18		18		
	Baseline	58%		56%		
Mattress	Increase	6				8
	Baseline	49%				71%
Bed	Increase	20				
	Baseline	70%				
Washing machine	Increase			10		
	Baseline			54%		
Fridge	Increase		4	9	7	
	Baseline		8%	36%	19%	
Television	Increase	2	6	2	15	
	Baseline	2%	49%	31%	49%	
Mobile phone	Increase	20	7	4	16	5
	Baseline	26%	82%	93%	77%	52%
Fan/air-conditioning	Increase		4	2	18	
	Baseline		25%	94%	33%	

Note: Baseline numbers show the percentage of the sample owning that asset in wave 1. Increases between waves represent percentage point increases on the baseline level.

2.4 Debt

Debt is a regular feature of life in all countries except **Uganda**. The incidence of debt was highest in **Pakistan**, but the greatest increase in debt between waves was found in **DRC**, albeit with many households switching in and out of debt between waves (Table 7). **Pakistan** and **Sri Lanka** had the highest levels of sustained indebtedness, with more than half of respondents in both countries indebted in both waves.

In most cases, owing money was associated with worsening food insecurity, with some clues in the data as to what might be driving debt and food insecurity. In **DRC**, debts were usually required for consumption purposes – particularly to meet immediate basic needs or health costs – rather than for productive investments. Lifecycle events were also important, with respondents in **Nepal** citing borrowing money to pay for weddings as a key reason. The extent to which debt is part of a positive cycle of livelihoods recovery and improvement is moot, but there is little to be optimistic about. The association with worsening food insecurity could, in some cases, be a sign of households ‘tightening their belts’ following investment in new or expanded livelihoods – i.e. households consuming less today in return for a better tomorrow. However, given the preponderance of debt used to service health costs and basic consumption, this does not appear to be the case.

2.5 Migration

The one area where debt may support a more positive step into a new livelihood activity is where it allows migration. Trends for migration and remittance receipt are highly variable between countries, with **Sri Lanka** showing the highest internal migration rates (a household member had migrated in almost nine out of ten households) in either wave, compared to only 4% of households in **Uganda**. **Pakistan** had the greatest rate of international migration (with 43% of households reporting an international migrant in either wave) and the highest level of remittances in either wave, followed by **Nepal**, which was catching up rapidly.

Other SLRC work shows that debt is often used to support international migration – for example in **Nepal**, where a loan to migrate from the Rolpa District is typically the equivalent of an entire year’s annual expenditure (Hagen-Zanker *et al.*, 2014). Despite these initial outlays, the regression results suggest that migration and remittances were linked to improvements in wellbeing, but that this can take time. In **Nepal** again, households that started to receive

Table 7: Incidence of household debt across waves

Sample	Anyone within household owes money to anyone (%)		Debt across waves	
	Wave 1	Wave 2	% always in debt	% went into debt between waves
DRC	50.7	61.4	34.6	27.2
Nepal **	64.7	61.7	46.3	15.6
Pakistan	69.5	78.2	59.3	19.1
Sri Lanka	69.3	70.3	54.7	15.7
Uganda	15.9	21.6	8.6	14.2

Note: These are weighted means. Statistical significance of the difference between means over time (calculating by a two-sided T-test) is indicated by asterisks where *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05 * p<0.1

remittances also experienced a fall in food insecurity (i.e. an improvement in their situation) and increases in assets roughly equivalent to a 6% rise in baseline wealth. In **Sri Lanka**, the lag between a household member migrating and remittances reaching the household was apparent: having a household member migrate in the preceding three years was associated with a substantial fall (21%) in asset wealth, though when remittances had begun in the last three years assets increased by 7%. Similarly, a worsening of FCS was also associated with having a household member migrate internationally for the first time between waves.

2.6 Longstanding inequalities and legacies of conflict

We also find that gender, ethnicity and histories of displacement – variables that vary far less, or sometimes not at all, between our two waves – make a difference to wellbeing and livelihoods.

In **Sri Lanka**, female-headed households fare worse than their male-headed counterparts on both indicators of food insecurity. In **Pakistan**, the same is true for food quality/diversity (in FCS terms). Regarding assets, female-headed households reported lower asset wealth than male-headed households in four countries (**DRC**, **Pakistan**, **Sri Lanka** and **Uganda**) and this ranged from 10% lower to 22% lower. In **Sri Lanka** and **Nepal**, households of certain marginalised ethnicities fare worse on both food indicators than similar households in the majority or wealthiest ethnic group. In **Nepal** and **Uganda**, households which had been displaced due to conflict, but had returned prior to baseline, still experienced worse food insecurity – though not worse food quality/diversity.

Another variable that shows little shift between waves is the average education level among household adult members. This was consistently related to food security outcomes in four out of five countries (**Sri Lanka** was the exception). The higher the average level of education, the lower the food insecurity. As might be expected, food quality/diversity was also better among more highly educated households in three countries (**Nepal**, **Pakistan** and **DRC**). These results indicate that there is a clear relationship between education and having enough to eat, though we cannot say which direction the causality runs in. But it mirrored the results for assets: household members' average education level was also strongly linked to asset wealth in four out of five countries. The difference ranged from 4% higher wealth for every additional year of average education (in **DRC** and **Uganda**) to 36% higher asset wealth among households in which the average education was completing secondary school or higher (**Nepal**).

Overall, the relationship between these variables and food security point us to the influence of long-term legacies of conflict (such as displacement and missed years of education) and other long-term inequalities (such as gender and ethnicity). The connections between these variables and wellbeing suggest that they are likely to continue to hinder livelihood recovery efforts if not explicitly and directly addressed.

2.7 A final word on the panel survey findings

Overall, the key message to emerge from the analysis of livelihoods and wellbeing is that timelines and

trajectories matter and are far more complex than is often assumed: recovery (and decline) can change quite dramatically within a relatively short time period, but the extent to which households are able to stay on upwards trajectories of livelihoods improvement and advances in wellbeing is related to the diverse profusion of shocks and stresses – the long-term legacies of violent conflict, and also issues associated with the environment or health that households in fragile and conflict-affected situations continue to face.

A number of puzzles remain, notably whether the churning identified in livelihoods and wellbeing may indicate asset- or activity-based poverty traps (Carter and Barrett, 2006). Some of these require a further wave of panel data to unpick, but this in itself is not enough. The answers to many of the puzzles that emerge from the survey findings are not to be found in global aggregations of country or district level data from diverse countries or adding further waves of data to the panel.

But alongside the SLRC survey lies a wealth of qualitative work carried out across the five countries in which the panel survey took place, plus **South Sudan**, **Sierra Leone** and **Afghanistan**. Whereas the survey has allowed the SLRC to understand what is happening to livelihoods and wellbeing in some of our survey sites – and perhaps raised as many questions as it answers – the broader, yet at the same time, more granular, qualitative work allows a more nuanced and explanatory analysis. It is to this part of SLRC's work that we now turn.

3 Findings II: Livelihood trajectories and economic activity among conflict-affected populations

This section presents the eight main SLRC findings on livelihood trajectories and economic activity during and after conflict. The findings are derived from both the quantitative and the qualitative research conducted in the eight SLRC study countries.

3.1 The end of conflict is not clear-cut and not always accompanied by improvement in livelihood trajectories

At the core of the SLRC research agenda is the question of what livelihood trajectories look like in armed conflict-affected and post-conflict situations – and how understanding those trajectories can inform better interventions by both state and external actors. Though protecting livelihoods in conflict is clearly an important objective, this question tends to presume a significant improvement in livelihoods when conflict ends. This, in turn, implies two important sub-questions. First, when does conflict end (or does it actually end)? And second, if and when conflict ends, does it result in significant changes in livelihood support or livelihood recovery?

Examining these questions is important because violent conflict is frequently presumed to be the main, if not sole, driver of livelihood vulnerability in such contexts. This assumption may lead to withdrawal of support when conflict ends – or result in significant shifts in that support. And assumptions about livelihoods' role in conflict contexts also highlight the contested nature of intervention in conflict – should it be solely about protection and provision of life sustaining emergency assistance, or also about protecting and building livelihoods? This section addresses these questions, based on findings from SLRC field studies.

The conflicts in the SLRC country cases are highly variable. Some of the case study countries were clearly in a post-conflict situation during the SLRC study (**Uganda, Nepal, Sri Lanka** and **Sierra Leone**); others (notably, **South Sudan**) have fallen back into large-scale violent conflict since SLRC's inception. But several countries are in conflicts that ebb and flow, change in nature and location, but have not truly ended, even though there may be formal peace agreements (**DRC, South Sudan** prior to December 2013), or major combat operations may have been declared to be over (**Pakistan, Afghanistan**).

The civil war in central **Uganda** ended in 1985, although over half the country continued to be involved in conflict until the 1990s, including most of the Eastern region, the Northern region, and areas of the Western region. The

macro-economic figures for Uganda – and the livelihoods of many of its citizens in areas not affected by conflict – improved significantly in the late 1990s (Gelsdorf *et al.*, 2012). However, conflict continued in Northern Uganda for two more decades, and ended only when the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) signed a truce in 2006. This ended a conflict in one country while fanning it in others (South Sudan, DRC). But the wounds from the LRA war within Uganda are deep and the effects of conflict have lingered for over a decade, particularly in the households of those who suffered war crimes and/or disability due to the war (Mazurana *et al.*, 2014).

The civil war in Sudan formally ended with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005, and **South Sudan** became an independent country in 2011. Improvements in many livelihood outcomes were noted during the post-CPA era, but local conflict continued in some areas of the country, particular Jonglei State, where SLRC research was concentrated (d'Errico *et al.*, 2014; Maxwell *et al.*, 2012). Thus, even prior to December 2013, when the current civil war in South Sudan was reignited, it was difficult to portray South Sudan – particularly the area of the country on which SLRC focused – as truly being in a 'post-conflict' situation, though that is the way it was treated by external actors (Gordon, 2014; Maxwell *et al.*, 2016b). The conflict that re-emerged after December 2013 spread quickly to Greater Upper Nile, and subsequently to most other parts of the country.

In **DRC** and **Nepal**, peace agreements formally ended internal conflict. Former insurgent leaders and combatants are now part of the government in Nepal. In DRC, the conflict has continued, with occasional flare-ups, displacement and widespread gender violence all ongoing. Thus, in Nepal, the civil war has been transformed from violent conflict into political competition, and indeed the (violent) conflict in Nepal has come to an end. In DRC, on the other hand, the peace agreement resulted in the heads of some of the armed groups being co-opted into government, but did little to address the underlying political differences – and although the level of violence abated, the conflict continued and occasionally flared up. Both DRC and Nepal have seen overall economic improvement since their peace agreements, with improvements in both countries heavily influenced by location. The greatest prevalence of poverty and poor livelihood outcomes is in eastern DRC, where conflict lingers (Weijs *et al.*, 2012). In Nepal, Rolpa District became a humanitarian hub during the conflict, and thus its inhabitants were better covered by social protection services, which has facilitated greater

recovery since the signing of the peace accord (Upreti *et al.*, 2014). Limitations to government and development agency reach have been noted, impacting the recovery of communities and households beyond capitals and regional centres (Upreti *et al.*, 2012).

Major offensives by the Government of **Sri Lanka** resulted in the military defeat of armed non-state actors, ending the Sri Lankan civil war. Government offensives pushed the conflict in **Pakistan** into a different form and location. In Pakistan, a major government offensive against the Taliban in the Swat Valley in 2008–2009 resulted in widespread, but relatively short-term, displacement. Ongoing conflict in parts of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas since then has meant that, like many of the other country case studies in SLRC, conflict continued in parts of the country even after a major military push ended. Importantly, while areas in **Sri Lanka**, **Pakistan** and **Afghanistan** may have relative peace, they are still often highly militarised, with a strong army presence that brings both its own problems (e.g. roadblocks, harassment, corruption) and opportunities (e.g. additional markets and people to whom to sell wares or labour).

In **Sri Lanka**, 30 years of conflict came to an end in 2009, when the army militarily defeated the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), entrapping the latter in a civilian population and leading to widespread civilian casualties. Since then, conflict has not re-emerged, although the end of the war did little to address the underlying grievances that fed it. In their review, Fernando and Moonesinghe (2012: vi) note the 'war in Sri Lanka exerted significant impacts on peoples' lives [and livelihoods], but that the specific effects were highly contextual'. In other words, making sweeping generalisations about livelihood trajectories in conflict or even post-conflict situations is very difficult, due to local variations in livelihood options and the formal and informal governing environment that determines the range of possible livelihood strategies for particular groups, locations, economies, etc.

Though often labelled 'post-conflict', **Afghanistan** continues to experience conflict of varying intensity depending on location. Substantial economic growth occurred after the NATO invasion and the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2002, but control over different parts of the country has been challenged for much of the decade and a half since. Poverty indicators remain high, and much of the economy continues to be lodged in either the informal sector or the illicit drug economy. Despite the start of nationwide programmes, only limited improvements are visible in rural livelihoods (Pain, 2012).

From 2008 onwards, a resurgent Taliban increasingly challenged the state over control of territory and, since 2014, the country has suffered a string of attacks by ISIS. Thus, it is difficult to argue that Afghanistan has been a truly post-conflict society since 2001.

It is hard to contend that the conflicts in SLRC case countries have had uniformly clear ‘endings’ – and some have not ended at all. Nevertheless, a number of themes emerge regarding conflict and post-conflict transitions’ impact on livelihoods.

First, the presumption that conflict is the sole or main driver of vulnerability – even during warfare – is rarely, if ever, supported. Multiple factors influence household and community level vulnerability, quite apart from conflict. Nevertheless, donors and external actors sometimes continue to presume that conflict is the predominant factor underlying poor livelihood outcomes (Mallett and Slater, 2015; Pain and Huot, 2017). Poor outcomes may be attributable to a range of other causal factors (e.g. ‘natural’ hazards, economic shocks, chronic poverty, etc.) as demonstrated in the five SLRC country baseline surveys (Mallett *et al.*, 2015). Several SLRC qualitative case studies also highlight the significance of urban/rural (i.e. location) differences and caste/ethnicity differences, rather than conflict/post-conflict (i.e., temporal) differences (Pain and Mallett, 2014; Upreti *et al.*, 2012). Second, SLRC research demonstrates that there is no clear trend regarding the question of post-conflict livelihoods dynamics. That is, there is no clear linear relationship between the cessation of violent conflict and livelihoods recovery or improvement.

Third, there is no clear relationship between the cessation of violent conflict and improved support for livelihoods by either state or international actors. Indeed, in some cases, such as **South Sudan**, livelihood support service provision may in fact have been *better* during a conflict than after conflict ended or abated (Maxwell *et al.*, 2014b.; Maxwell *et al.*, 2015).

Fourth, conflict’s effects may linger long after conflict ends. The impact on livelihood opportunities and outcomes may still be manifest years or even decades after the violence itself has ceased. After all, the effects of the Second World War were felt economically in Britain for at least 30 years. The presumption of some kind of rapid post-conflict livelihoods recovery (as discussed below) is problematic. Rather, such a recovery cannot be assumed and, should it occur, is likely to take a long time.

3.2 The evidence is weak for a peace dividend when conflict ends

A ‘peace dividend’ refers to a potential economic uplift in a post-conflict transition, as money can be invested in livelihoods and improving services or infrastructure – activities that contribute to productivity – rather than spent on fighting or preparing to fight. Sometimes there may be attempts to engineer peace dividends through livelihood and economic recovery interventions in post-conflict settings. Whether or not actual peace dividends materialise is still debated. However, some research suggests that, in some cases, real peace dividends for some people in some sectors are observed (Gupta *et al.*, 2002). In many cases, markets and trade may expand in the aftermath of a peace agreement, but whether average people’s livelihoods are improved or not is debatable (Lokuge, 2014; Maxwell *et al.*, 2012; Upreti *et al.*, 2012). The expected growth in state service provision is also debatable.

Reviewing the evidence on specific livelihood investments as peace dividends, Mallett and Slater (2015: 229) note that,

In conflict-affected situations, aid-funded livelihood interventions are often tasked with a dual imperative: to generate material welfare benefits and to contribute to peacebuilding outcomes. There may be some logic to such a transformative agenda, but does the reality square with the rhetoric?

The authors evaluated the evidence for five specific interventions, including microfinance, value chain development, ‘making markets work for the poor’ (or M4P), job creation and skills training. They noted that the evidence on all of these programmes is thin; that some carry considerable risk to the participants; that the programmes often conflate output with impact, and programmes may be explicitly linked not just to peacebuilding objectives, but also to counter-terrorism or countering violent extremism objectives – which may aim to constrain or restrict the activities of non-state armed groups, but do not necessarily build peace (Stites and Bushby, 2017).

Indeed, the SLRC review of livelihoods literature from 2012 to 2016 found a broader conceptual link by donors between idle young men – i.e., those without meaningful livelihoods – and potential recruitment or mobilisation for engagement in conflict (Stites and Bushby, 2017). This concept is captured, for instance, in the earlier

(and often criticised) literature on the so-called ‘youth bulge’ (Sommers, 2011; Urdal, 2006), in the analysis of underemployed young men joining right-wing extremist groups in Germany (Falk and Zweimüller, 2005), and in the correlation between low male educational attainment (among other factors) and recidivism of ex-combatants into armed conflict in Colombia (Kaplan and Nussio, 2016).

The SLRC 2012–2016 livelihood literature review found other studies that question the extent to which unemployment or limited livelihood opportunities drive radicalisation or participation in conflict more generally. For example, a report by Mercy Corps found that perceptions of injustice drove youth radicalisation much more than poverty or unemployment, and employment programmes needed to be linked to governance reform and meaningful change, particularly because youth who were more civically engaged were *more likely* to support armed opposition groups (Mercy Corps, 2015a). While there are still merits in livelihood programming that seek to promote and provide more job opportunities and greater economic integration, it is questionable whether such activities have any direct impact on the political imperative to counter radicalisation or participation in violent extremism (Mallett and Slater, 2015). This means that such programmes should not be incorporated unquestioningly into efforts to prevent radicalisation, but rather need to be based on empirical work and combined with extensive understanding of the local factors that motivate young men to participate in such groups (Stites and Bushby, 2017). The authors thus urge restraint and nuance in managing such interventions to achieve livelihood improvements or peacebuilding or counter-terrorism goals.

Nevertheless, there is a recurrent assumption in managing post-conflict transitions that creating good jobs and decent employment conditions will not only stimulate economic growth, but also create safer societies and enhance states’ legitimacy. This idea was first promoted in the 2006 United Nations (UN) Secretary General’s progress report on the prevention of armed conflict, which highlighted the perceived linkages between effective livelihoods promotion and food security interventions as a means to increase stability. It argued that ‘tackling food insecurity and related problems of agricultural underproduction and resource scarcity can do much to stabilize a fragile situation’ (in Alinovi *et al.*, 2007: 5). More recently, the 2011 World Development Report (World Bank, 2011) stressed the critical role that job creation programmes play in

stabilising countries emerging from conflict.

The SLRC case studies show variable and, at times, conflicting results regarding the emergence of a peace dividend. To some degree, opening up roads and access in **Sri Lanka** after the 2002 peace accords between the government and the LTTE did improve access and markets, but in 2009, civilians did not note this as particularly important (Fernando and Moonesinghe, 2012). In the aftermath of intense military operations in the Swat Valley in **Pakistan**, some people who had been farming before were quickly able to return to farming, but if they had been displaced far from home, the recovery was much more difficult, and many such households opted for non-farm based livelihood activities (Shahbaz *et al.*, 2014). Elsewhere in Pakistan, residents faced considerable destruction and the inability to recover previous livelihood activities. In northern **Uganda**, people were so impoverished by the long war and extended periods of displacement that, while they were able to resume farming, recovering their earlier mixed agro-pastoral livelihoods has proven very difficult, and most households remain in poverty (Mazurana *et al.*, 2014). In other cases, as noted above, the conflict did not have a clear end point, making it very difficult to assess the period from which a peace dividend should be measured.

In many cases, interventions aimed at ‘engineering’ a peace dividend were evident, but these faced significant hurdles and did not necessarily result in post-conflict improvements. In **DRC**, for instance, Disarmament/Demobilisation/Reintegration programmes with livelihoods components have been implemented. Despite significant donor support to such programmes, limited evidence exists for their impact on developing livelihoods, creating markets or pacifying regions historically plagued by conflict (Weijs *et al.*, 2012). Also in DRC, credit programmes were introduced to help affected households overcome the losses incurred during the conflict (Mallett and Slater, 2015). New roads and other infrastructure were introduced in a number of countries to assist in the post-conflict transition and enable livelihoods recovery. Yet transport studies in DRC found that, rather than driving the economy, poverty and governance conditions restrict the possibilities for enhancing transport by road construction (Ferf *et al.*, 2014). In both **Pakistan** and **DRC**, SLRC found that these programmes’ impact may have been more apparent than real (Ferf *et al.*, 2014; Shahbaz *et al.*, 2012).

Social protection programmes – intended to protect the most vulnerable in both post-conflict settings and in

situations of chronic poverty – were a very popular donor initiative at the time SLRC was initiated. Some evidence programmes was found in SLRC study areas. Godamunne (2015) found that the Samurdhi programme in post-war **Sri Lanka** had a significant impact on people's access to services and consumption, but little impact on rebuilding livelihoods. KC *et al.* (2014) note a similar finding in **Nepal**, and Mallett *et al.* (2015) note the same trend quantitatively across baseline findings from the SLRC survey.

In conclusion, the SLRC did not find evidence of a peace dividend occurring in the study countries, and thus aid agencies and donors should not assume that a peace dividend will materialise quickly, or possibly at all for some populations. Rather, our findings suggest that if the goals are to boost the livelihoods of people affected by conflict, along with overall improvements in recovery, then greater investment in livelihoods – sustained and over longer periods, and bolstered by increased overall support for education and health care – is required (Levine, 2016).

3.3 Key factors significantly constrain livelihood recovery, and few households report that livelihood assistance made a positive difference

SLRC research was predicated on the hypothesis that some degree of livelihood recovery would be evident after conflicts came to an end. However, a number of constraints to post-conflict recovery were noted across the SLRC country cases.

Land and natural resource access: Across the board, access to natural resources necessary for rural livelihoods presents a constraint in post-conflict situations. For example, despite signing the Sun City Accord, limited access to land for agricultural production persists in **DRC**, with reports that 'only 10 percent of [the arable land] is being used, and the total is declining' (FAO, 2011; Ministère du Plan, 2011; Weijs *et al.*, 2012).⁶ Furthermore, agricultural potential remains limited as landholdings at considerable distance from settlements remain inaccessible due to insecurity, leading to the overexploitation of fields nearest to villages, which are considered more secure (Ferf *et al.*, 2014). Research has also concluded that **Afghanistan** has reached the limit of its arable land, and therefore the agricultural economy will be unable to provide additional employment opportunities

(Pain and Huot, 2017).

Problems regarding land access are also noted in **South Sudan** where, despite signing the CPA in 2005, only 4% of arable land is cultivated, and livestock production is estimated at only 20% of its potential (Maxwell *et al.*, 2012). More recently, livelihoods in communities hosting large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been negatively impacted due to limited land resources available to newcomers for living on, livestock grazing and crop planting (Maxwell *et al.*, 2015). Given that issues of land ownership comprised a significant factor behind the war between the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army, and continues to be a major driver of ongoing inter-ethnic and communal conflicts, the failure to address this issue has limited livelihoods' recovery in rural areas (Maxwell *et al.*, 2012).

Land disputes, land grabbing and theft of agricultural products were found to devastate people's livelihoods in northern **Uganda** (Levine, 2016). In **Sri Lanka**, the combined powers of military and national and international business elites grabbed the best shoreline to build their tourist resorts, forcing local conflict-affected fishers off the best docks and beaches (Gunasekara *et al.*, 2016).

Limits of state 'reach': Typically, the state would be expected to play a leading role in livelihood recovery post-conflict, but the evidence is mixed. In **DRC** and **Afghanistan**, the government is not perceived to provide basic services, social protection or livelihood assistance. In **DRC**, international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and religious institutions have played a key role in service provision, which has been delivered outside government systems since the Mobutu era (de Milliano *et al.*, 2015). Despite developing 'Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers' that represent the government's attempt to improve access to basic services, the number of Congolese able to access formal social protection and basic services remains limited, and most services that are available are not provided by the state (Weijs *et al.*, 2012).

In theory, the Pakistani National Disaster Management Authority is tasked with federal-level disaster response and recovery efforts. However, for the majority of Pakistanis in need of humanitarian assistance and livelihood support, the most crucial coping mechanism

⁶ Quoted from FAO (2011) 'Research on Congo's basic crops: a first step towards producing more and better'. Available at <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/49320/icode/>.

during crises and conflicts is 'local self-help'. This highlights the minimal role government agencies play in enhancing livelihood security (Shahbaz, 2012). In both **Pakistan** and **Afghanistan**, international migration and remittances remain key livelihood strategies, and are frequently the main source of support to livelihood recovery beyond the household's own immediate resources (Pain and Huot, 2017; Shahbaz *et al.*, 2014).

In **Sri Lanka**, the lack of state support for livelihoods in conflict-affected areas is evident from the minimal provision of social protection services required for restarting livelihood opportunities. While the provision of extension services is considered the government's responsibility, less than 23% of households in regions that had been impacted by conflict reported receiving such services through a government agency (Mayadunne *et al.*, 2014).

In another example from post-conflict Sri Lanka, the government used the tourism industry to try to address economic development, ethnic tensions and the economic disruption brought by the war in conflict-affected areas. The research finds that the tourism industry, far from being a means for local war-affected populations to find livelihood opportunities, is reproducing the militarised political and economic relations that characterised the war. The research reveals that the government proceeds as if the 'real problems' after the war are about economic development, not justice and equitable access to resources and opportunities. Research finds that the tourist industry, backed by the government and powerful Sinhalese and international business interests, markets luxury and hospitality in an environment of deprivation and continued exclusion and marginality of Tamils (Gunasekara *et al.*, 2016). The research demonstrates that there is virtually no scope for local people's integration into the mega tourism sector, and that while it is very attractive to tourists, tour operators and hotels, it has limited benefits for locals and the local economy (*ibid.*).

In northern **Uganda**, despite over two decades of conflict that affected the majority of the population, the survey found that only 16% of households in the two most

war-affected sub-regions had received any livelihood services⁷ in the last three years,⁸ and half of these were free seeds worth a few US dollars. Furthermore, over half of the receiving households reported no positive impact from the livelihood services. Even more discouraging, only 4% of households reported receiving any social protection services,⁹ and one third of those were also one-off assistance (Mazurana *et al.*, 2014).

In **Afghanistan**, conflict status has driven donor decisions on expenditure patterns (high conflict areas received high levels of funding, while areas experiencing little to no conflict receive much less support). As such, certain provinces are neglected, and aid does not always go where it is needed most. For example, Sar-i-Pul has long been one of the most impoverished provinces in Afghanistan and among the poorest performers on development indicators including health, water access, sanitation and education, yet it also receives among the lowest levels of funding (Huot and Pain, 2017).

A parallel case exists in regions of **South Sudan** where the provision of humanitarian assistance and development aid have been uneven, with some regions benefitting from being more accessible and less insecure. For example, in Pibor, one of the most peripheral regions of South Sudan, access to basic services and livelihood support was minimal during much of the post-CPA period, and non-existent beyond the town of Pibor. This is in contrast to communities nearer to Bor, where service provision is more extensive, due to this region's inaccessibility to the capital, Juba (Santschi *et al.*, 2014.)

In South Sudan, particularly in the parts of the country that SLRC research focused on (mostly Jonglei State and populations displaced from Jonglei), the state's reach was extremely limited. Roads and infrastructure were almost non-existent, access to services was extremely reduced and providing security was a major challenge (d'Errico *et al.*, 2014; Santschi *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, while the refugees' return to South Sudan was highly celebrated during the interim period and after independence in 2011, the outcome for returnees is far from a uniformly positive one. Only 13% of all returnees

⁷ 'Livelihood transfers' in our survey included: seeds, fertilisers, pesticide and tool distribution; agricultural extension services, including training and marketing; seed money for revolving funds (savings and credit); non-agricultural services, including training and marketing; and any other project that helped households with their livelihoods.

⁸ The actual percentage is even smaller as qualitative research found that, in the initial survey, some people who joined village savings groups without any support from external actors reported this to the surveyors as 'livelihoods support', when this should not count as livelihoods support as no external support was received.

⁹ Social protection was recorded in the survey as: free food or household items; school feeding programmes; old-age pension; feeding patients in hospitals; retirement pension; and any other money payment from the government or other organisations.

have received any support through official programmes for livelihood recovery. Assistance has been particularly limited for persons lacking access to credit, land and agricultural inputs. Additionally, some returnees have lost the ability to engage in traditional livelihood activities as a result of protracted displacement, and have opted to move to urban centres, where few economic opportunities exist, rather than to their regions of origin. Thus, many returnees are impoverished and extremely vulnerable to shocks, a condition also apparent in **Afghanistan** (Huot and Pain, 2017; Maxwell *et al.*, 2012).

The state is quite distant in providing social protection and livelihoods support in countries like **South Sudan**, and in regions like northern **Uganda** and parts of **DRC**. However, in some SLRC countries, most notably **Sri Lanka**, the state is quite active in social protection services (Fernando and Moonesinghe, 2012). In others like **Pakistan**, it is not that the state is absent, as regions of our study had heavy military presence, it is rather they are not doing much, if anything, to provide social protection or livelihood services.

What people do for themselves: Households and individuals residing in regions impacted by conflict and insecurity employ a variety of strategies to mitigate vulnerability and risk, while at the same time protecting their earning potential. In the SLRC countries studied, these strategies centred on participating in the informal urban labour market, out-migrating to diversify livelihood opportunities and remitting wages earned abroad, and relying on kinship networks for support – limited as that support might be in conflict or post-conflict situations. Such strategies entail significant risk. For example, conditions of participation in the informal economies of northern Sri Lanka are inherently precarious, with employers breaching statutory labour and social protection laws (Mayadunne, unpublished draft). In northern Uganda, workers in the catering sector occupy positions in low-end bars and restaurants, characterised by irregular wage payments and the inability to accumulate assets. Such workers also risk the potential of being stigmatised, particularly the women, who are thought of as prostitutes and, as a result, are excluded from rural kinship networks (Mallett and Atim, 2014).

In **South Sudan**, men have migrated to urban centres, most notably Juba, in search of meaningful employment opportunities. Such efforts have come at great social cost, as urban migration has left many female-headed households in rural South Sudan, an environment endemic with insecurity (Maxwell *et al.*, 2012). In **DRC**,

insecurity has led people to seek both safety and economic opportunity in urban environments. But, due to limited opportunities, particularly for young women (who often lack the requisite training and social connections to participate in formal employment) engaging in transactional sex has become a means for many to obtain a source of income (Mwapu *et al.*, 2016; Weijs *et al.*, 2012).

Similarly, the inability to develop livelihood systems has led families, particularly in **Nepal** and **Pakistan**, to seek employment opportunities abroad, frequently in Gulf States. There, working conditions are characterised by vulnerability and exploitation, as unskilled migrants are forced to move frequently through informal and often illegal channels that deny them legal protection. While remitting income earned abroad represents significant portions of the respective gross domestic products of both Nepal and Pakistan, and has served to enhance household financial security, international migration to Gulf States remains out of reach of households in the lowest socio-economic strata, whose migration patterns tend to focus on India (Hagen-Zanker *et al.*, 2014). In **Afghanistan**, Herat labour migrants make the journey to Iran by foot with human smugglers and attempt to cross the border illegally. Associated risks reported by respondents include: detainment at the border by Iranian police, detainment by the smuggler for ransom, injury, developing an opium addiction, or death (Huot *et al.*, 2016).

In **South Sudan** and northern **Uganda**, conflict-affected or displaced households reported having to rely heavily on kinship networks for support. Such support was often extremely limited, given that even non-displaced households were seriously affected by conflict and other hazards. Households relying solely on such forms of social support were among the most vulnerable, often surviving solely on coping strategies such as natural resource extraction or relying on wild foods (Levine, 2016 ; Maxwell *et al.*, 2014b; Santschi *et al.*, 2014). Notably, in Somalia, households with poor social connections were among the most vulnerable in the face of the 2011 famine (Maxwell and Majid, 2016; Maxwell *et al.*, 2016a).

The importance of social networks in conflict-affected societies, and their impact on labour market outcomes, is a persistent theme in understanding entry into the tailoring sector in **Afghanistan**. It would be remiss to assess such entry without considering the ways in which gender and socio-economic class impact one's ability to secure employment. This is perhaps best understood by

analysing the barriers to entry for both men and women. This includes the nuanced understanding that the way in which women's access to the market is controlled (through male relatives, difficulty in accessing training and inability to work outside the home) is akin to an informal tax on women's livelihoods (Pain and Mallett, 2014). Summarising experience in Afghanistan more broadly, Ashley Jackson (2016) notes that 'ordinary' Afghans can only gain access to state resources through personalised networks, frequently centred around former mujahideen commanders.

In northern **Uganda**, social networks and the ability to draw on the resources and support of extended family to enable or bolster households' livelihoods was a key determinant of which families were able to pull themselves out of the bottom economic quartile of the population (Levine, 2016; Mazurana *et al.*, 2014).

Poor targeting, elite capture: Programmes to support livelihood recovery in post-conflict contexts have frequently been accused of either failing to target groups that need it the most, or of being 'captured' by those who need it the least. The funnelling of assistance to relatively well-off people has been noted in **Pakistan** and **Afghanistan**, stemming from insecurity in affected regions, which has forced humanitarian organisations to work through local leaders to develop beneficiary lists and ensure service delivery, rather than implement directly. Such programming has led to the perception that 'viable' households, or those with connections to political and community leaders, were selected over vulnerable households with less social capital, for the receipt of humanitarian aid. Additionally, households in more remote locations have received less support and assistance than households in regions that are easier to access (Pain, 2016; Shah and Shahbaz, 2015).

In **DRC**, the present functioning of the state, state structures and governance can best be understood through the historical legacy of a neo-patrimonial state and clientelism, taking into consideration the increasing economic downturn, institutional deterioration and loss of national assets. Public servants, including the army and the police, became more dependent on the self-financing of salaries and operational cost through informal taxation, corruption and extortion of the general public. The development of humanitarian infrastructure in Goma, and the provision of humanitarian services throughout eastern DRC, has contributed to this perverse effect, as international funds are co-opted by the well-educated and business elites at the expense of those in greatest need

(Weijs *et al.*, 2012).

With little government presence in peripheral regions of **South Sudan**, the provision of social protection and livelihood support relies on engaging local authorities and traditional elders. Such authorities are frequently influential political stakeholders with significant influence over the control and distribution of local revenues and humanitarian aid (d'Errico *et al.*, 2014).

In northern **Uganda**, livelihood assistance and social protection were seen to have minimal impact, often failing to reach households with the greatest needs and vulnerabilities. In fact, some intended beneficiaries noted not having received any form of assistance in over a year. Moreover, when assistance was distributed, it was significantly (at the level of 1%) more likely to be to male-headed households exhibiting higher food security status and wealth (Mazurana *et al.*, 2014). It was also documented that the processes by which support programmes were implemented were influenced by corruption and rent seeking, with even beneficiaries noting the need to pay to receive assistance and livelihood support. Such practices have served to further widen the gap in trust and the breach of the civic contract that exists between the citizens of Uganda and government representatives at local, regional and national levels (Levine, 2016).

Findings from **Afghanistan** on village level governance and the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) highlight that international aid is likely to always need to work with local interlocutors. These could be new committees, as set up under the NSP in Afghanistan, or through existing elites, as in **Pakistan** (Pain, 2016; Shah and Shahbaz, 2015). Furthermore, any attempts at targeting require engagement with local-level governance and a negotiation over meanings and understandings of vulnerability, fairness and merit. The risk is that it is precisely in such negotiations, or in the distribution of resources, that aid processes can feed into existing corruption and can contribute to some, or even most, of the population receiving poor quality services. The SLRC five-country panel survey found that problems with basic services, including poor quality of health and education, were associated with a worsening of people's perceptions of local and, especially, central government (Sturge *et al.*, 2017).

Cost of entry into livelihoods programmes: There are a number of costs that people incur trying to engage in different forms of livelihoods. The conflict in **Sri Lanka** led

to the destruction of livelihood assets and infrastructure required for recovery of fishing communities throughout the north and east. To facilitate recovery in the post-conflict period, the state government devised loan schemes to be accessed through the Central Bank. However, accessing these loan and insurance schemes remains a challenge for the majority of households from fishing communities that need to re-establish their livelihoods in the post-conflict period (Mayadunne and Phillips, 2016). Given that 'access to credit' and 'access to livelihood assistance' in this context (Lokuge, forthcoming) have been noted to correlate positively with households' ability to increase productive capacity, the failure to extend these credit schemes to households impacted by conflict has constrained household economic security. This has also forced Sri Lankans to engage in non-traditional livelihood strategies for which they lack the requisite skills and training, such as petty trade and commerce, rather than paddy cultivation. Re-establishing this traditional livelihood activity would have required significant up-front investments that could be lost if there was a relapse into conflict. Returnees also engaged in vegetable production that was deemed a socially inferior livelihood pursuit. In short, households made strategic decisions between livelihood strategies and protection goals, driven by their efforts to mitigate security concerns during the post-conflict period (Fernando and Moonesinghe, 2012).

Perverse impacts – is livelihood support better during than after conflict? There is, likewise, some evidence that levels of support are, in fact, greater *during* conflict than afterwards. During the **Sudanese** civil war, assistance to war-affected populations provided under Operation Lifeline Sudan, for instance, at first covered only life-saving needs, such as food and emergency health care. But, as the war dragged on, support to livelihoods became a more common form of intervention, and in some cases became quite sophisticated, including the development of networks of roads and infrastructure, and the training and outreach of community animal health workers and agricultural extension workers. Support for many of these initiatives trailed off in the post-war or post-independence era, as aid efforts shifted to other sectors. People in Jonglei State reported having received better services in some of these areas during the war than during the post-war period (Maxwell *et al.*, 2014b; Maxwell *et al.*, 2015). Similarly, people displaced from Jonglei to Lakes State after the internal conflict within newly independent South Sudan in 2013 reported receiving better livelihood services in displacement than they had at their places of origin prior to the re-emergence

of conflict. These observations were context specific and did not apply, for example, in Pibor County in south-eastern Jonglei, where livelihood support had virtually stopped during the conflict.

This observation of livelihood support services appearing to be greater during – rather than after – conflict does not apply across the board. Livelihood activities were disrupted during the offensive in the Swat Valley in **Pakistan**, and significant asset losses were incurred, forcing people to borrow money (Shahbaz, 2012). Although livelihood support services were reinitiated after the offensive, it was too limited to enable recovery. People were forced to rely on their own initiatives and social connections to recover (Hagen-Zanker *et al.*, 2014; Shahbaz, 2012).

In northern **Uganda**, very little livelihood support was made available during the war; however, only limited levels of support were made available by the state or international agencies during the post-war period as well (Mazurana *et al.*, 2014). Of note, while not labelled as livelihoods support, the massive level of food distribution, which continued for one to two years after people began to leave the camps and return home, was among the most important aid for enabling people to get their farms up and running (Savage *et al.*, 2008).

It is fair to conclude that the presumption that greater post-conflict provision of support services will inevitably support livelihoods recovery is unfounded. Some cases that support this presumption have been noted, but many cases were found where little post-conflict support was provided, or where livelihood support assistance was greater *during* conflict than post-conflict. More recently, such examples include **DRC** and **Afghanistan**, where conflict-affected provinces have more support, better services and better performance on some critical indicators than provinces with no conflict and no humanitarian aid (Huot and Pain, 2016; Weijs *et al.*, 2012).

The assumption usually is that the state should provide these services to its citizens, but the evidence is that during conflict, these services come from humanitarian agencies – whose work then does not continue very long into a post-conflict timeframe. Donors need to be more willing to continue funding humanitarian and development actors to support recovery processes. Additionally, states need to step up service provision and provide it more quickly.

The lingering effects of conflict: Even in countries where conflict has ended, the effects of conflict linger, constraining livelihoods for years or even decades. In **Pakistan**, approximately 90% of the IDP and returnee population noted the need to access informal credit lines, with survey results indicating that 80% of IDP households were forced to secure finances for food purchases. Formal sources of credit were inaccessible and are often restricted to productive activities only, rather than consumption. At the same time, average livestock losses were estimated at over 1,000 US dollars per household. Recovery appears to have been greater for households with a higher level of pre-existing wealth, indicating that the level of pre-conflict assets, rather than the receipt of aid, drives the trajectory of recovery (Shahbaz, 2012).

In northern **Uganda**, the legacy of the war on livelihood and social protection systems remains profound, and most acutely affects those who experienced war crimes and war-related injuries.¹⁰ In northern Uganda, households with members who had experienced war crimes were significantly (at a 1% level) more likely to be less food secure, have less access to assets, credit and social protection, and worse access to basic essential services (health care, education and water) compared to households that did not experience war crimes. Yet they are no more likely to receive livelihood or social protection services. Given the apparent trend of targeting viable rather than vulnerable households with livelihood support and social protection, households that experienced war crimes will continue to have limited access to services required to facilitate post-conflict recovery (Levine, 2016; Mazurana *et al.*, 2014).

In **Sri Lanka**, unequal access to land continues to impact recovery and livelihood trajectories. Notably, returnees have been unwilling to engage in agricultural ventures, remaining reluctant to invest in activities that could be lost if displaced again. Returnees have also opted to lease their land to people from nearby villages, with others even abandoning traditional livelihood activities (Fernando and Moonesinghe, 2012.) Disputes stemming from the encroachment of Indian and Southern fishers in Northern waters have also limited recovery for Northern fishing communities (Mayadunne, unpublished draft).

Expectations of a peace dividend or an immediate

improvement in people's livelihoods after conflict ends – logical though such assumptions may be – are simply not borne out by empirical findings across SLRC county cases. These findings imply that, for there to be a real peace dividend – and for post-conflict recovery to happen more quickly – there will need to be a much greater investment in livelihoods, sustained over a much longer period of time, based on more in-depth understanding of the ways the livelihood system and resource ownership both underpinned the conflict and were affected by conflict, and with much better understanding of the most vulnerable or most conflict-affected groups. Unfortunately, there were too few such cases found within SLRC research to be able to investigate comparatively.

3.4 Conflict actors play prominent roles in shaping people's livelihood opportunities during and after conflict

A number of SLRC country studies demonstrate that powerful conflict actors play substantial roles in shaping people's livelihoods, institutions, markets, trade and national development priorities both during and after conflict. These conflict actors include the military, government officials, the police, state and non-state elite power holders, and non-state armed groups and their patrons.

Research on male street vendors in **Kandahar, Afghanistan** found that most street vendors had migrated from rural to urban areas due to conflict and insecurity (particularly during periods of spikes in fighting between the Taliban and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)), drought, landlessness and limited economic opportunities because of the lack of rural to urban economic links. After failed attempts at various forms of rural livelihood, some men were able to borrow money from friends or lenders to migrate to urban areas to sell goods in the city. Access to informal credit was a key determinant in these men being able to change livelihoods. Working as a street vendor was preferable to being a driver or working for the armed forces, because of the perceived security risks of the latter occupations. Indeed, security was one of men's main concerns in selecting a livelihood. Street vending was also attractive because there were low barriers to entrance. Men were drawn to Kandahar by the booming war economy that

¹⁰ The SLRC Uganda survey recorded the following as experiences of war crimes when perpetrated against civilians by belligerents during deliberate or indiscriminate attacks: killing; attempted murder; abduction; forced recruitment; forced disappearance; severe beating or torture; deliberate immolation; sexual violence (which included rape, forced marriage, forced pregnancy and child bearing, sexual enslavement); and being forced to kill or seriously injure another person. Our survey then recorded self-reporting on whether the war crimes caused physical and/or emotional injury or distress that inhibits the victim's functionality due to experiencing or witnessing the crime(s).

developed with the presence of ISAF and the Peace and Reconstruction Teams.

Once there, street vendors found that the police, military, security officials, border guards, elite families linked to the state, and local power holders all exerted significant influence on their livelihoods. The Afghan National Police (ANP) would carry out periodic raids, during which they would confiscate and not return the vendors' goods, at times under the guise of enforcing security near the governor's residence in an area where the vendors sold their wares. Thus, vendors had to change location based on calculations about harassment and raids. Some street vendors further diversified their livelihoods to become informants for the ANP, given their proximity to street life. Militarised power holders also shaped access to wares for vendors to sell, as the border areas into Pakistan are controlled by powerful families and high-ranking officials in the ANP who impose taxes on traders (formal and informal), exacting payment to move goods.

Elite families, particularly the family of President Karzai, controlled the main pillars of the city's economy, and prospective vendors had to either buy their way into the various economies or find themselves shut out. In contrast to the limited economic and political capital of most street vendors, business owners, retailers and wholesalers often had land, strong family ties and contacts among the other elites, and benefited from the booming war economy. With the ongoing withdrawal of ISAF and other military forces, the street vendors find fewer customers for their wares and some are shifting their livelihoods into the poppy economy, a main driver of Kandahar's militarised economy of Kandahar. In both Herat and Kandahar, Afghans highlighted the government's inability to introduce alternatives to livelihoods now that programmes and funds for development are shrinking and the ISAF troops are no longer providing employment. Thus, research in Afghanistan finds that conflict actors control and block growth through predation, rent seeking, closed and controlled economies and a lack of investment in public goods, making actual development and growth impossible for most local people (Minoia and Pain, 2015).

Suleri *et al.* (2016) describe the multiple depredations on the people, agriculture and economy of the Swat region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, **Pakistan**, during the 2007–2009 conflict between the Taliban militants and the Pakistan. These went from turning the main market square into a 'death square', population flight

and destroyed markets and infrastructure, to a 10% tax on agricultural production and widespread pillaging. Yet, those with connections to the police and military benefited by being hired to help evacuate people, and made significant income, which they used to diversify their livelihoods and invest in new businesses that continued into the post-conflict period.

Powerful conflict actors can play significant roles in shaping peoples' livelihoods, not only during but *after* conflict. Importantly, while these actors play decisive roles in people's livelihood choices and options, their actions are well beyond the influence of most conflict-affected individuals and households. It is thus necessary for national and international development and aid actors seeking to support the livelihoods of conflict-affected households to pay careful attention to the powers shaping (and narrowing) the options available to people, how local people try to navigate in these restricted spaces, and what possibilities exist for strengthening and expanding livelihoods. Simply put, there is a need for conflict-sensitive analyses to extend into the post-conflict stage.

3.5 Women's livelihoods are constrained by patriarchy, and this should be factored into any livelihood intervention aimed at women

Women's livelihoods are significantly shaped and constricted by patriarchal influence over space, movement and resources, as well as social and familial anxiety over controlling female sexuality and perceived 'respectability'. Patriarchy is the male-domination of power structures throughout organised society, in households and in individual relations. Livelihoods are fundamentally about what people do to get by over time, including responses to shocks.

Women and men tailors in **Afghanistan** found that tailoring is a highly social space, accessed largely through networks that were significantly gendered in terms of entrance and ability to work in the trade. For men in the tailoring profession, it was something they had to fall back on if other more desirable livelihoods failed to provide sufficient income or opportunities. For women, in contrast, tailoring was a profession that was hard won, and women faced many gendered barriers, including gaining the permission of male family members to enter the trade and limited access to the required education and training. The women also had to primarily work at home due to gendered cultural restrictions. Thus, the researchers concluded that being a woman

actually represented a 'tax' on a person's ability to gain entry into, and make a livelihood from, tailoring.¹¹ The study highlights that donors should have a gendered understanding of the social spaces and access needed for livelihoods and should use this understanding to create work programmes that respond to how women, in particular, have to negotiate in order to enter these spaces (Pain and Mallett, 2014).

Research on migration in **Nepal** and **Pakistan** found that international migration opportunities existed primarily for males from non-poor households. Women from all households and men from poor households had few opportunities to migrate, particularly internationally. At the same time, the absence of male family members due to migration further curtailed and restricted women's movement, and this negatively impacted their and their children's access to health care, among other issues. The research also found significant stresses on the women and children left behind by male migrants, as women and children were forced to take on additional workloads at home, at times incurring debt and leading to the removal of children from schools to make up for the increased need for labour (Hagen-Zanker and Mallett, 2014; Hagen-Zanker *et al.*, 2014).

SLRC research in **Afghanistan** found that women migrate from the provinces of Sar-i-Pul to Mazar-i-Sharif in Balkh to work alongside the rest of their families as labourers in the brick kilns. However, payment goes to the male head of household and women generally do not know how much money is being earned or what it is being used for (Pain and Huot, 2017).

In the south-eastern seaboard of **Sri Lanka**, some local Tamil women have sought work in the tourist resorts discussed above. However, these hotels and resorts are Sinhalese-dominated and male-dominated spaces. Local Tamil women are stigmatised within their communities for working in hotels and resorts. Local women who work in more public aspects of the resorts are defamed as being of morally dubious character, and even those out of public sight, such as those in the laundry services, are seen as being only slightly better. As in the SLRC studies from Afghanistan (Minoia and Pain, 2015), the Sri Lanka research highlights families' anxieties around class, ethnicity and gender for women in their households being

in spaces with 'other' men, and their fear that the women will be preyed upon by 'outsiders'.¹² The research finds that women are sexually harassed in public spaces and at work, thus significantly curbing their livelihood options and infringing on their rights (Gunasekara *et al.*, 2016).

The SLRC also investigated the feasibility of shifting from a livelihood based on opium to one based on saffron in Herat Province, **Afghanistan** (Minoia and Pain, 2016). The research found that saffron is more profitable than opium and employs more people per unit than opium production, but has not reached the scale of production that opium has. However, the saffron industry lacks the credit, transport networks and farm gate purchase that accompany the opium trade. Saffron is a perennial crop (living from five to seven years) that only yields from the third or fourth year, so there is a delay in profit. Saffron also requires high capital investment. While saffron is touted by government and international actors as an alternative to opium for rural livelihoods, there was little evidence of NGO support to maximise this livelihood option. The researchers found that those growing saffron and making a profit tended to be wealthy male-headed households. And while saffron has been promoted as providing employment for women, the study found that women were attractive hirers for growers because they can (and do) receive less for the same work as men, they can work in ways that do not challenge *pardah*, and they are more readily employed, as many men have left for work in Iran. Working as a daily labourer with saffron was piecemeal work, and did not provide steady or reliable income. The SLRC study concluded that women cannot make a secure living from working in saffron as the industry currently operates (Minoia and Pain, 2016).

Research into the catering sector in Lira in northern **Uganda**, one of the largest cities in the region, revealed a highly exploitative industry that is characterised by job insecurity, lack of workers' rights, long hours, and pay that is poor, late or taken to cover owner losses. In addition, workers in catering face demeaning attitudes on the part of community members, with stigma and insults particularly directed at young women working in the medium and lower tiers of the sector, who are subjected to different forms of sexual harassment, abuse and vulnerability. Because of the stigma, young women who participated in the medium to lower tiers of the

¹¹ For more on this phenomenon of 'informal taxation', see the evidence review jointly undertaken by SLRC and the International Centre for Tax and Development (Lough *et al.*, 2013) and Mallett *et al.*'s (2016a) empirical work in Nepal.

¹² Attempted research on women street vendors in Kandahar, Afghanistan, proved impossible as families refused to let the women meet research teams due to concerns over their exposure to men outside their families in a private setting to conduct the interviews (Minoia and Pain, 2015).

sector risked losing future opportunities for decent and better paying employment, more dignified work, their reputation back in their villages, and even the chance to marry a 'good' husband. Thus, while earning an income is important, so too are dignity, a non-exploitative workplace, maintaining social respectability and the potential to progress. The research found that the situation of the catering industry was indicative of the urban market in northern Uganda in general, and was far from being able deliver what young people, and young women in particular, aspired to (Mallett and Atim, 2014).

Transactional sex represents another form of livelihood diversification in **DRC** (Formson and Hilhorst, 2016; Mwapu *et al.*, 2016) and **Sierra Leone** (Denney *et al.*, 2016). Transactional sex in humanitarian crises is usually referred to as survival sex, implying that mostly women and girls are engaging in this activity to meet needs for themselves and/or their families. Transactional sex is common throughout sub-Saharan Africa and – while exacerbated and shaped by conflict environments – it is not completely driven by conflict-related factors. Transactional sex in DRC and Sierra Leone is common, illustrates highly unequal gender relations and limited livelihoods options for females, and is intimately linked to survival and powerlessness. For example, in DRC, women and girls felt they had no choice but to provide free sex if they wanted to avoid being forced into sex by the police or military. Transactional sex is often accompanied by implicit or explicit violence and puts women and girls at emotional and physical risk. In both DRC and Sierra Leone, most women and girls used transactional sex as an additional livelihood strategy to meet their needs or enable them to afford or receive material goods. In both countries, transactional sex can be more consensual than the literature suggests, with women and girls having a range of sexual relations to maximise access to resources. However, the conclusion of these studies is that transactional sex as a form of livelihood for women is based on a high level of male abuse of power and male control of access to resources.

For many women in the SLRC research, their livelihood opportunities and outcomes were nearly completely predicated on the decisions made by males in their families (**Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal**); males who controlled the industries they sought to enter (northern **Uganda** and **Sri Lanka**); males who paid for transactional sex (**DRC** and **Sierra Leone**); and gendered and ethnicised/caste social spaces and access to particular livelihoods (**Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka** and **Uganda**). Thus, patriarchal control

and power over women's lives and livelihoods plays a significant factor in all the SLRC research sites, and a nuanced understanding of how this is manifested in the different locations and sectors should be taken into account by donors and governments seeking to enhance and rebuild livelihoods.

3.6 Population movement is driven by conflict- and non-conflict factors, affecting livelihoods and incurring economic, labour and access costs

Across the SLRC countries studied there is significant variability in the reasons for people migrating and in the migration patterns themselves. Conflict in **Afghanistan, DRC, Pakistan, South Sudan, Sri Lanka** and northern **Uganda** resulted in mass forced displacement and migration. In northern **Uganda**, it is estimated that 90% of the population of Acholi sub-region and 33% of the population of Lango sub-region were displaced from their homes during the two decades of LRA conflict. This movement was ordered and enforced by the Government of Uganda, having assured people they would only be displaced for six months. Their movement came at the cost of dramatically reducing most people's livelihoods; for the vast majority it was not a livelihood strategy aimed at securing household assets and generating income (Mazurana *et al.*, 2014). When the fighting moved out of northern Uganda (though fighting and violence perpetrated by the LRA continued in DRC, South Sudan and Sudan), there was a combination of voluntary and pressured return, as the government cut off food supplies to the majority of those in the IDP camps. At the same time, given the relative calm for a year prior to the end of fighting in northern Uganda, many families had been separating and moving back and forth between camps and their homes of origin in an effort to restart agricultural livelihoods (Mazurana *et al.*, 2012).

In **Sri Lanka**, the forced return of displaced people has been the major area of study for SLRC (Saparamadu and Lall, 2014). In the face of three decades of protracted conflict, the Government of Sri Lanka has implemented an accelerated programme of return in which 90% of the populations that had been displaced during the conflict were resettled within one year, often against their wishes. Some measures, such as the closure of Manik Farm IDP camp, were initially welcomed by bilateral donors and the UN as a symbol of transition from conflict to durable peace. However, the speed of the resettlement, the lack of assistance provided to returnees, the continued occupation of property to which IDPs were to return by

the Sri Lankan military, and the limited rehabilitation of conflict-affected areas in the north-east significantly limited the ability of returnees to resume their previous livelihood activities (Saparamadu and Lall, 2014). Furthermore, despite allocating state resources to the improvement of infrastructure in the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka, the conditions of return and resettlement remain unclear. Informants have noted that livelihood opportunities and the ability to access basic service provision remain curtailed due to High Security Zones, which limit access to sites such as fisheries and paddy fields (*ibid.*). Such challenges decrease the ability of affected households to address their basic needs and earn an income, and has resulted in increased indebtedness, while limiting the effectiveness of poverty reduction efforts (Mayadunne, unpublished draft).

Urbanisation is one component of migration, and often results in temporary or durable livelihood linkages between rural and urban areas. In conflict areas, the causes of such migration are often mixed. Conflict in eastern **DRC** has played a role in the expansion of urban centres such as Bakavu, which grew from approximately 100,000 inhabitants in the 1990s to over one million in 2016. Relative security in cities continues to serve as a strong pull factor, and migrants seek to carve out a space for themselves in the informal urban sectors. While people have shifted away from rural agrarian livelihoods as they move to cities, the urban growth has also brought a boom in urban and peri-urban agriculture, allowing new urban arrivals to spread risk across multiple sectors (Weijs *et al.*, 2012).

In **Afghanistan**, for instance, many men have moved to urban centres from rural districts in search of better livelihood opportunities. Yet, while male migrants may have exercised a certain degree of choice in deciding whether to migrate, most of the street vendors in Kandahar were driven from their traditional rural livelihoods due to insecurity, and those who migrate from Heart and Sar-i-pul are driven by a lack of land and access to rural work. With limited social connections in receiving communities, most of these Afghan migrants to Kandahar have struggled to gain employment beyond the informal urban economy (Minoia and Pain, 2015).

Similarly, in northern **Uganda**, rapid urbanisation occurred during the 1990s and early 2000s as people fled to the towns in an effort to avoid conflict-related violence. In the post-conflict era, the promise of economic opportunity in the cities of northern Uganda prompts thousands

each year to abandon agricultural livelihoods in search of very limited opportunities in a saturated economic marketplace (Mallett and Atim, 2014; Mallett *et al.*, 2016b).

Underinvestment in local economies, regional development disparities and the worldwide demand for cheap labour continue to serve as driving factors for economic migration from **Nepal** and **Pakistan** to the Gulf States and Malaysia, and in **Afghanistan** for internal economic migration and migration into Pakistan and Iran. In both Nepal and Pakistan, the SLRC found that the end of conflict did not bring a wave of new opportunities for meaningful employment or a significant reduction in economic migration. In fact, an uptick in international migration has been noted in the post-conflict period in these countries (Hagen-Zanker *et al.*, 2014; Pain and Huot, 2017).

Similarly, in **Sri Lanka**, while migration served as an important survival strategy for those facing violent conflict, significant numbers also migrated to Colombo from the Northern and Eastern provinces due to limited economic opportunities in their home regions (Fernando and Moonesinghe, 2012).

Of the African countries in the SLRC study, only in **DRC** was there a notable impact of remittances from family members who migrated. Yet it was estimated that up to 80% of households in urban centres are recipients of remittances (Weijs *et al.*, 2012).

Migration can be an effective livelihood strategy and a viable option for diversifying income sources. However, the formal and informal processes that enable migration are costly and exclusionary. For example, even though out-migration from **Nepal** and **Pakistan** dates back to the 1950s, the absence of the state bureaucracy throughout this process gives rise to multiple layers of informality, which raise issues of protection and drive the likelihood of migrant exploitation. In **Afghanistan**, **Nepal**, **Pakistan** and **Sri Lanka** it was found that debt is almost always incurred to facilitate migration through informal channels that are rife with smugglers and country border officials who solicit bribes (Hagen-Zanker *et al.*, 2014; Pain, 2012; Pain and Minoia 2015). The informal networks by which migrants seek to earn an income abroad also exposes them to exploitative labour practices and frequent delays in the payment of salaries. Minimal, if any, recourse is available, due to the fact that many migrants occupy a precarious legal position in their host country (Hagen-Zanker *et al.*, 2014).

Migration opportunities are not open to all. Migration, particularly international migration, as a livelihood strategy is more likely to be an option for households with a significant asset base. Furthermore, social connections are a crucial factor in determining whether an individual's migration efforts are indeed able to enhance a household's livelihood and economic security (Minoia and Pain, 2015). Households incur substantial costs to facilitate out-migration of a household member from **Pakistan** or **Nepal**, and perceptions of the 'ideal/desired migrant' frequently exclude men from lower socio-economic classes and almost all women from migrating (Hagen-Zanker *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, in **Sri Lanka**, persons from higher socio-economic strata, and with greater social connections, were more likely to migrate – not only to Colombo, but also abroad in search of better economic opportunities (Fernando and Moonesinghe, 2012). In **South Sudan**, even prior to December 2013, individuals with financial security and social connections were more likely to migrate for livelihoods to Juba (Santschi *et al.*, 2014). However, in **Afghanistan** a slightly different picture emerges. Many of the migrants in SLRC studies from Afghanistan had little or no land, and relied heavily on labour migration. Networks played an important role in determining where migrants could go and what kind of job they could get. Their economic security depended on a range of discrete factors: for example, if the migrant develops an opium addiction, as seen in case study in Herat; becomes a financial burden to the host household; is detained by police or a smuggler and the family must pay a ransom, and so on (Huot *et al.*, 2016).

Migration can increase household income and status, but the social impact of such migration should also be assessed. The changes in family dynamics resulting from international migration are highly gendered and frequently result in shifting intra-household workloads onto women and children, as reported in **Nepal**. At the community level, shifts have also been noted in power relations and decision-making structures (Hagen-Zanker *et al.*, 2014).

Movement of conflict-affected people occurs for many reasons, only some of which are related to pursuit of livelihoods. More often, in areas experiencing conflict, people move for security-related reasons and, as a result, often find their previous livelihoods either severely under strain or completely compromised. Regardless of the drivers for movement, there are substantial implications on people and their households' livelihoods, labour and access to a range of services, opportunities

and social networks. Economic migration can be a successful livelihood strategy, particularly for households that have the human and financial resources to ensure that the complex formal and informal processes that enable migration occur effectively. Notably, remittances play an important role in households affected by armed conflict, and at times may be one of the few reliable and uninterrupted sources of income during conflict. At the same time, as most economic migrants in our study countries are male, a wide range of costs borne by those remaining at home fall most heavily on women and children. Policy and programmes regarding migration therefore need to pay attention to both rural and urban poverty, links and opportunities. In addition, consideration should be given to the gender dimensions of different types of safety and security risks, and increased vulnerabilities for migrants *and* the families they leave behind.

3.7 Evidence of effective donor-supported livelihood recovery is sparse. Successful programmes are grounded in local market contexts and populations

The SLRC did not specifically set out to document or evaluate particular livelihood projects in our research countries. Thus, there may be good livelihoods programming of which we are unaware (Stites and Bushby, 2017). However, it is striking that, in the populations we did survey and research, there was little evidence of livelihood programming, and even less of people reporting that such programming made a difference to their lives.

Donor-supported livelihood recovery programmes seek to supplement the weak capacity of governments to respond to livelihood needs and vulnerabilities, particularly of more peripheral populations that may have been especially negatively affected by protracted conflict. However, there is limited empirical evidence regarding the impact of such interventions on recipients' lives and on livelihood trajectories as a whole. This knowledge gap hinders the development of evidence-based programming based on what works and what does not. Post-implementation evaluations that do exist frequently lack information pertaining to methodologies used and data sets assessed, making it difficult to assess the quality of, or to take lessons from, these studies (Mallett and Slater, 2015).

Critics contend that predetermined livelihood programmes often appear to be supply-side driven, to

prioritise donors' objectives rather than beneficiaries' specific needs, and to evaluate output over actual impact on the ground. Programme design and implementation strategies are frequently based on what is assumed to work and, at times, context does not influence the design and implementation to the extent it should (Mallett and Slater, 2015).

Within the SLRC countries of study, the evidence regarding livelihood support interventions notes a range of challenges associated with implementing a multiplicity of donor-supported programmes of varying duration and funding levels. So, in **Afghanistan**, uneven funding levels allocated to livelihood support interventions in different provinces and districts – which frequently prioritise volatile regions – have been characterised by a rush to implement and an imperative to spend (Pain, 2012). This rush to 'do something' has limited coordination efforts of both humanitarian and development programmes targeting livelihood recovery, and has restricted the development of an effective base of evidence. This was noted in Afghanistan (Pain, 2012), eastern **DRC** (Weijs *et al.*, 2012), in **South Sudan** (during the Operation Lifeline Sudan era and in the interim and post-independence periods) (Maxwell *et al.*, 2014c) and in **Sri Lanka** in the rush to close the Manick Farm IDP camps (Saparamadu and Lall, 2014). Moreover, the design of such programmes has been humanitarian in nature, targeting specific regions and characterised by short-term funding cycles, as opposed to aiming at longer-term durable livelihood impacts (Levine 2016; Mazurana *et al.*, 2014; Weijs *et al.*, 2012).

Livelihood services in conflict-affected regions are sparse and, when available, frequently fail to reach those who most need assistance (Mazurana *et al.*, 2014; SLRC, 2014a; SLRC, 2014b). These constraints also present challenges to developing a robust evidence base, a problem further compounded by the lack of data on aid interventions among donors, implementing agencies and national governments (Maxwell *et al.*, 2014c; Shah *et al.*, 2015).

Elite capture remains an issue. In **Afghanistan**, village elites' behaviour has been noted as a key determinant of the extent to which access to public goods has improved. For example, elite capture of Community Development Council projects has resulted in the privatisation of community assets, such as public wells. However, elders' approval has been deemed crucial for facilitating girls' attendance in school (Huot *et al.*, 2016). Pain also observes that the political economy

of Kandahar has provided significant opportunities for landed elites to prosper. On the other hand, the lack of interest of landed elites in ensuring service provision and infrastructure development has limited access to public goods at the district level. These same elites also inflict systemic structural violence, as noted in the uneven and exploitative relationships that exist between landless labourers and large landowners (Pain *et al.*, 2016).

Research from northern **Uganda** finds that the best-off households (in terms of food security and wealth) are significantly (at 1% level) more likely to receive livelihood support in the post-conflict period, with well-off male-headed households particularly favoured (Mazurana *et al.*, 2014). The infrequent and patchy livelihood interventions remain fragmented and uncoordinated, highlighting that assistance continues to be delivered ad hoc, and is regarded as an activity rather than a strategic plan to enhance wellbeing and recovery (Levine, 2016).

In **Pakistan**, attempts by international organisations to target relief and early recovery assistance have been undermined by poor assessments, which has ultimately led to skewed distribution and elite capture, factors which have limited the impact of livelihood support at household level (Shahbaz *et al.*, 2012). More positively, although rarely tapped into by development actors, the incorporation of rural village committees (established prior to the conflict) to implement the Sarhad Rural Support Programme has been perceived by recipients as critical to ensuring the development and implementation of culturally appropriate programmes that address the needs of communities impacted by conflict and flooding, while also ensuring that individuals and households with the greatest needs are targeted for assistance (Shah and Shahbaz, 2015). This further highlights the importance of contextual understanding and connection to recipient communities as a key to successful implementation.

Parallel to the state, religious institutions and national and local NGOs leverage their proximity to recipient communities to carry out livelihood support in eastern **DRC** (de Milliano *et al.*, 2015), **South Sudan** (d'Erricco *et al.*, 2014) and **Pakistan** (Shah and Shahbaz, 2015). In these cases, some religious organisations have played a critical role in ensuring the continuation of basic services provision and livelihoods support despite prolonged conflict. In these locations, local NGOs are perceived by local populations as effective in implementing livelihood support programmes due to their extended presence and nuanced understanding of the context and local operating environment. To illustrate, in eastern **DRC**,

local civil society organisations, religious institutions and national NGOs have been instrumental in preventing the complete collapse of basic services, social protection and livelihood support. Community-based organisations have been perceived as critical in targeting livelihood assistance in DRC regions impacted by protracted conflict in which state service capacity is minimal (de Milliano *et al.*, 2015). Though their understanding of local cultures and traditions is a critical component of implementing programmes that address needs within respective communities, further assessment and evaluation is required to mitigate risks such as elite capture, the privileging of men and exclusion of women, and the diversion of humanitarian support – all of which were recorded in several SLRC study locations (Levine, 2016; Maxwell *et al.*, 2015; Mazurana *et al.*, 2014; Shah and Shahbaz, 2015).

Livelihoods support in conflict-affected countries has frequently been through the (often one-off) distribution of seeds, tools and fertiliser vouchers. Donors perceive these services as useful to enhancing agricultural production and income generation in the short-term (KC *et al.*, 2014; Levine, 2016; Weijs *et al.*, 2012), although recipients of this aid often report that it provided no benefit and was carried out in locations where people do not actually lack seeds or tools (Levine, 2016; Mazurana *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, such interventions prioritise the production and availability of food, rather than addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity, such as the loss of access to land due to protracted displacement and the lack of inputs and labour (d’Errico *et al.*, 2014; KC *et al.*, 2014; Levine, 2016; Mazurana *et al.*, 2014; Weijs *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, such livelihood assistance consistently reaches less than 33% of all households (Mallett *et al.*, 2015), and, in some cases, as little as 16%. Most of those who do get assistance receive it as a one-off benefit that reportedly has little impact; survey results in northern Uganda showed that around half of the households reported that the assistance had no effect (Mazurana *et al.*, 2014).

Recipients perceived one-off assistance to be ineffective, preferring more regular and reliable livelihoods assistance. The desired regularity of such transactions stands in stark contrast to the ‘reintegration package’ received by returnees to **South Sudan**, which consisted of a one-off transfer of seeds and tools and a three-month food ration (Maxwell *et al.*, 2012). This situation mirrors the one-off food aid packet received by those leaving IDP camps in northern **Uganda** after prolonged displacement (Levine, 2016). In **Nepal**, research on the

implementation of cash transfer programmes based on the assumption that such transfers were sufficient to enhance household-level economic security have found that the transfers have had minimal impact in facilitating asset accumulation (Upreti *et al.*, 2014). While some households received one-off cash transfers, others received monthly or quarterly transfers. Regular monthly payments were preferred to one-off or quarterly transfers as a means to enhance economic recovery in Nepal (Upreti *et al.*, 2014).

Despite their continued prioritisation by international donors, there is limited evidence of the effectiveness of market-based approaches in enhancing rural livelihood diversification and increasing livelihood security. Microfinance – access to credit, savings and financial services – continues to be a prominent donor-supported livelihood intervention in conflict-affected states. Of the SLRC countries studied, the government of **Afghanistan** is at the forefront of establishing the microfinance sector, most notably through the Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan (Mallett and Slater, 2015). Despite donor prioritisation of microfinance in Afghanistan, SLRC research found that credit was accessed only through informal sources. Thus, results for microfinance remain mixed for several reasons. First, donors’ objectives have been prioritised over recipients’ needs. To illustrate, donors have prioritised the creation of job opportunities as part of their countering violent extremism strategies, based on the (questionable) underlying assumption that unemployment and underemployment are root causes of destabilising violence (Mallett *et al.*, 2016b). Second, while credit has been available based on the assumption that it would be used to enhance production, evidence suggests that it has facilitated consumption as opposed to accumulation of productive assets (Pain, 2012). Third, formal credit has also been repaid through informal channels (Pain, 2012). Finally, measuring indicators such as the number of loans dispersed, rather than benefits accrued, has resulted in difficulty quantifying and qualifying impact.

In **South Sudan**, microcredit programmes have been geared towards addressing urban populations’ needs, despite the fact that limited access to credit remains a significant constraint on re-establishing rural livelihoods (Maxwell *et al.*, 2012). While, in some cases, improved access to credit for South Sudanese women had been noted (prior to December 2013), those living at the periphery of urban centres lack access to credit and intended recipients frequently noted challenges in fulfilling the conditions of the loans, such as being able to

prove land ownership (Maxwell *et al.*, 2012).

Significant investments are made annually in microfinance and lending schemes in post-conflict countries, and there is a major policy focus on developing entrepreneurial skills, particularly of young people. It can be argued, however, that such investments too often fail to cater to the interests and needs of recipients and the market, and that they would prefer secure and dignified employment that provided a regular income. Often this would come through working for someone else, rather than establishing a microenterprise in sectors which are already saturated and where opportunities to enhance economic security are minimal (Mallett and Atim, 2014).

There is a dearth of impact assessments that evaluate the effectiveness of skills training geared towards enhancing livelihood security. Qualitative evidence points to a failure to understand the local context in which such programmes are being implemented as one factor limiting their impact. For example, in **DRC**, skills development programming has focused on diversifying miners' skills in an effort to transition them to entrepreneurial ventures or agricultural production. Women's participation in these trainings was touted as a success. However, the majority of female and male miners do not, in fact, aspire to rural subsistence life, nor are entrepreneurial undertakings or self-employment a viable option for many (Weijs *et al.*, 2012).

Many youth in northern **Uganda** and Kandahar, **Afghanistan**, wish to move to urban areas and away from subsistence agriculture and its associated poverty and stigma. For those looking for work in the urban areas, entry into the catering sector in northern Uganda (Mallett and Atim, 2014), and the tailoring industry in Afghanistan (Pain and Mallett, 2014), for example, remains socially regulated and beyond the reach of many people. The often exploitative nature of informal sectors, coupled with the fact that entry to more secure positions is socially and economically regulated, has given rise to donor support of microcredit schemes and skill-building aimed at securing self-employment. However, this fails to address many youths' desire to work in an established business in order to secure regular income (Mallett and Atim, 2014).

Additionally, in **Sri Lanka**, skills training programmes have attempted to diversify livelihood strategies among returnees by pushing agricultural ventures that required up-front costs. The failure to adequately assess the local context led to low uptake, as returnees were reluctant to invest in pursuits that could be lost if they were again forced to flee. Rather, such households opted to lease

their land to other community members that had not been displaced while generating income as wage labourers (Fernando and Moonesinghe, 2012).

In **Pakistan**, organisations offered skills development training that targeted female beneficiaries for kitchen gardening and poultry farming. However, restrictions on women's mobility stemming from gendered cultural norms were not adequately taken into account when designing the programme. This resulted in limited participation by women in the training (Shah and Shahbaz, 2015).

SLRC research also looked at supply-driven agricultural and fisheries interventions. In **Afghanistan**, where many communities and households have minimal market access and limited agricultural production capacity, supply-driven agricultural support, coupled with the recipient being tied to the land, have in some cases resulted in a type of poverty trap (Pain, 2012). Except for those who can capture economies of scale, improved opportunity probably lies in non-rural and urban livelihood rather than through farm and rural-based ones – observations echoed in East Africa (Catley and Iyasu, 2010). This also parallels donor prioritisation of the fishing sector in **Sri Lanka**, which was deemed critical for enhancing post-conflict livelihood recovery. Such programmes neglected the inherent challenges faced by small-scale fishers, such as debt due to seasonal fishing activities, the inability to access the capital required to obtain enhanced technology, and young Sri Lankans' reluctance to take up fishing and government policies which prioritise commercial deep-sea fishing at the expense of small-scale fishery development (Fernando and Moonesinghe, 2012).

Issues such as land and water access for re-establishing livelihood activities and, in the case of Sri Lanka, access to fisheries, are important. These access problems, combined with limited financial capital and the state's minimal structural investment present a considerable challenge to most interventions aimed at livelihood recovery (Fernando and Moonesinghe, 2012; Weijs *et al.*, 2012). The understanding that access constraints to land and water drive conflict and limit livelihood recovery should be emphasised during the development of programmes aimed at post-conflict recovery.

Several policy implications come from these findings. First, people affected by conflict are often able to scrape by in spite of the effects of conflict. Second, World Bank-type business reforms are largely irrelevant to the populations interviewed by SLRC – formal rules and regulations are not

the issue. Third, the issue really seemed to be the ways in which local power holders, politics, social networks and relations dominate people's access to livelihoods, an understanding that needs to be incorporated into work on growth and private sector development. Fourth, donors may not be directly consulting intended recipients of aid. Consequently, donors do not understand why certain people reject or are blocked from certain types of jobs, as well as failing to understand and account for the gendered norms which exist within a given society that affects access to opportunities. Does the focus on microcredit and vocational skills training really make a positive difference or, instead, are we pushing people into overcrowded markets, risky and insecure forms of employment, and increased debt? Finally, and perhaps most importantly, these findings speak to the need to support collective action to improve pay and working conditions (Harvey, 2015). There is a strong case for examining the relevance, effectiveness and coverage of current efforts to support jobs and livelihoods, as SLRC studies have found little evidence that aid is making a difference.

3.8 Labour markets can be exploitative – even where economies lack formal state oversight, there is market regulation

In a separate synthesis report, Mallett and Pain (2017) examine how commodity and labour markets function across a range of the fragile and conflict-affected states that SLRC researched. They explore what the outcomes of these markets have meant for those participating within them, and how people perceive and experience the governance of markets. They argue that 'markets are normatively constructed as core instruments of peacebuilding, growth and development; as the engines driving those processes', and, drawing on the work of James Ferguson (2015), note that, in many ways, the logic of international engagement to promote livelihood recovery in post-conflict contexts is all about 'putting people to work'. In short, labour markets are intended to facilitate:

the incorporation of young people (and particularly young men) into the labour market. [This] is seen as an absolutely essential first step in post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery, their otherwise disconnectedness viewed as a major security threat.

Two key points stand out from their review with regard to this discussion. First, markets – even ostensibly 'free' markets with little if any evident state oversight – are heavily regulated by other social forces; often social

networks that are invisible to outsiders. Second, and closely tied to the first point, labour markets can be highly exploitative, and even 'having a job' may mean little in terms of a secure livelihood.

Market 'regulation'. The prevailing assumption underpinning some interventions in post-conflict economic development is that markets are neutral spaces – and that if individuals are linked to markets in post-conflict contexts, economic growth will follow. However, SLRC market studies raise serious questions about these assumptions. Mallett and Pain (2017) note that, 'far from operating "along economic textbook lines" markets are governed by a range of overlapping regulatory systems and institutions' – formal, informal and a mixture of both. The norms, rules and actors that comprise these spheres of market governance must be thoroughly understood by external actors and the state alike. These include formal state rules and regulations, the nature of the political settlement (which in this sense is taken to mean the wide range of informal ways in which 'big politics' shape markets), informal taxation (Lough *et al.*, 2013), and institutions – comprising embedded patterns of social norms, expectations and behaviours – at the micro level. Markets and their regulation are multi-level and multi-layered processes, and must be understood in context. The way markets function results in uneven, and sometimes unexpected, distributional outcomes. Active intervention in markets may be called for to ensure that they work for poor or conflict-affected people, just as the principles of M4P programming imply.

Labour markets and informal jobs. In many of the countries comprising the SLRC case studies, relatively little has been done to intervene in markets to improve the livelihoods of households and communities. The way in which young people, in particular, have been absorbed into urban labour markets in **Uganda, DRC, Sri Lanka** and **Afghanistan** suggests that donors and governments miss the point of *how* people are actually making a living. For example, in northern Uganda, the *Human Development Report* notes that 'economic growth has not yet translated into significant and sustainable progress in human development outcomes, particularly in [previously war-affected northern Uganda]' (UNDP, 2015). In other countries, a similar pattern is observed – there is little improvement in the livelihoods of those most affected by the conflict, even after it ends. Christopher Cramer (2015) puts it bluntly, noting that labour markets are places where order may be 'violence in disguise'. Following from Ashley Jackson's (2016) point noted above about the ongoing role of former mujahideen commanders in the current economy of **Afghanistan**, Mallett and Pain (2017)

note that ‘the degree to which someone is able to make a living in the local informal economy is a function not only of their skills, or indeed of the demand for labour, but also of their capacity to navigate potentially violent actors’.

People must learn to navigate not only violent actors, but also exploitative ones. Urbanisation’s rapid pace – stemming from protracted conflict in northern **Uganda** – has led to an overabundance of labour in an environment in which formal employment opportunities are extremely limited. This has frequently resulted in exploitative working conditions, highlighted by the example of the catering sector’s development in Lira, Uganda (Mallett and Atim, 2014). The exploitation may include sexual abuse, extremely long working hours and delayed wage payments or unexpected costs being passed on to employees. Coupled with limited educational opportunities due to prolonged conflict, many young Ugandans are employed in jobs in the informal economy, characterised by horizontal (as opposed to upward) mobility, high financial costs of entry for training, exploitation and abuse (including sexual exploitation and abuse), and minimal opportunities for savings and accumulation. This adds up to treating wage labourers in the catering industry essentially as disposable commodities.

Two examples from **Sri Lanka** further demonstrate this point. The post-war development of the luxury tourist industry in Passikudah has not lived up to its promise of new work opportunities for local residents (Gunasekara *et al.*, 2016). The authors note that,

[w]hile some jobs have been generated, it is clear that (1) they are far fewer in number than what was and is still claimed by government officials as well as a resorts and (2) jobs for locals tend to be low-paid, at the bottom end of the wage pyramid and in many cases precarious.

Elsewhere in urban areas of Sri Lanka, elderly women are trapped in near slave-labour conditions in the hand-rolled cigarette (*beedi*) industry (Jayasekara and Najab, 2016). These women are employed on a subcontracting basis by urban entrepreneurs, which enables the ‘employer’ to avoid any and all labour obligations, including minimum wage law, insurance or the right to collective bargaining. The extremely low pay that women take home subsequently means that, simply to continue survival, they find themselves working until death (a situation referred to as ‘necrocapitalism’).

From the perspective of international engagement,

Mallett and Pain (2017) recommend a series of ‘key programming principles’ based on the findings of the empirical research.

- *Pay closer attention to the substance and trajectories of economic transitions out of war.* Broad-based economic development does not automatically follow the signing of peace agreements, and growth is often uneven. Post-conflict environments often sustain underdevelopment and continued forms of violence, which from a peacebuilding perspective ought to be of major concern.
- *Rethink the links between work and violence.* Unemployment is often simplistically framed as a driver of violence and insurrection, but the research suggests the relationship is significantly more complicated and multidimensional.
- *Engage more proactively with markets’ ‘demand side’.* Economic programming is often concerned with developing individuals’ capacity to engage in markets – think vocational training, skills development, microcredit – with far less attention paid to the equally important issues of job supply, working conditions, and employee-employer relations.
- *Build more detailed, contextual understandings of how markets are regulated.* The SLRC findings suggest that markets are fundamentally political. There is a need for multi-dimensional power analysis of how markets are structured, not just at the country level, but on a more granular, sub-national basis.
- *Think and work politically to secure more people-centred market outcomes.* Appropriate power-based analysis should lead to politically aware programming, sensitive to what is and what is not possible in a given context and savvy enough to support internal drivers of progressive change. The existing M4P approach offers a sensible basis on which to extend this way of thinking and working.

Ultimately, the research suggests, policy-makers have to accept that, one way or another, markets are governed, even if only by informal mechanisms – they are not neutral spaces for exchange. A more actively interventionist does not, in itself, undermine the functioning of markets, but can rather help markets to function better for populations in conflict-affected and post-conflict contexts.

4 Conclusion



A number of conclusions can be drawn from the heterogeneous mix of quantitative and qualitative SLRC studies.

First, the individual qualitative studies reflect the highly variable contexts in which they took place, and the outcomes reflected in the studies are very mixed, making direct comparison difficult. One evident message, therefore, is that, in spite of some of the general conclusions noted here, context matters greatly. **Outside intervention needs to be much more concerned with understanding this context and less concerned with implementing grand programme designs, or replicating successful programmes from outside the context.**

The survey results are similarly mixed – with some households doing distinctly better, others doing distinctly worse – in contexts in which overt militarised conflict may have ended, but in which armed or military actors still control resources and access to markets, and in which the more straightforwardly humanitarian priority of reaching vulnerable people has shifted towards enabling the more entrepreneurial (or the better connected) to make investments and reap the rewards. It is hardly a surprise that standard outcome measures for livelihood security are mixed in these circumstances. The survey results themselves are hard to parse: education plays an obvious role, but access to credit, and other programmatic inputs, give mixed results. The explanation of these results is enhanced by the qualitative research.

A second message is that, for the average person, **there is little evidence of any post-conflict peace dividend and, with limited external support that may only amount to a one-off transfer or loan, people are largely left to their own resources to build post-conflict livelihoods.** None of these contexts have seen a strong post-conflict economic recovery in terms of significantly improved employment opportunities, land reform or other measures enabling equitable access to rural resources, or large investments in education or vocational training. The actions of armed parties to the conflict continue to shape and constrain access to credit, markets, natural resources and other necessary inputs to livelihoods. One of the most damaging constraints to recovery is the lingering impact of human rights abuses and violations during the conflict at the hands of one or more armed actors. Under these circumstances, there have been high levels of migration – some of it forced, some of it voluntary – in conflict

and post-conflict contexts. Much of this is focused on urban areas, and some of it is oriented towards a return to areas of origin. In some cases, mobility is highly constrained or limited – physically and, in some cases, culturally – particularly regarding the constraints on women’s movement.

Several clear themes emerge regarding support to livelihoods programming.

- **First, post-conflict livelihood recovery programmes tend to neglect the context, needs and priorities of the population.** This combines market factors, gender dimensions, and formal and informal institutions and processes that play a significant role in deciding who can access and succeed in various livelihoods.
- **Second, protracted conflict has facilitated a transition for some from rural agricultural-based livelihoods to informal urban livelihoods.** This should be taken into account in designing livelihood programmes.
- **Third, the fact that informal employment remains high throughout all SLRC countries - and the failure to understand informal economies, structures and institutions - has a negative impact on the delivery of livelihood programmes.**
- **Fourth, the most pertinent criticism of international agencies supporting livelihood programmes is their lack of contextual awareness. To address this, donors and implementing agencies must gain a**

better understanding of the factors that drive men, women, boys and girls to reject or be blocked from certain livelihood pursuits. There should also be contextually-based assessments regarding what livelihood interventions are most desirable and marketable by specific demographic segments.

- **Fifth, rather than pushing supply-driven training and capacity-building programmes, greater reflection is required to assess what is working for and against participation across sectors and genders,** particularly as urban markets develop during the post-conflict period.
- **Finally, people’s desire for ‘decent work’ should spur efforts to create less exploitative jobs.** At the same time, there should be recognition that men and women desire regular incomes, a job with dignity, and one that helps them maintain or improve their social status.

Overall, the composite picture resulting from these studies is not a cheerful one, even if violent conflict has well and truly come to an end. In most cases, the end of the conflict itself is not always clear; in several cases, conflict has continued – sometimes on a smaller scale. In the South Sudan case, conflict reignited to create even greater levels of insecurity. Donor-supported programmes tend to have a different focus after conflict than they do during conflict, and many of those most affected by conflict do not benefit from them. Protecting livelihoods in conflict and rebuilding them afterwards continues to be a stubborn challenge.

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Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium
Overseas Development Institute (ODI)
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
United Kingdom

T +44 (0)20 3817 0031
F +44 (0)20 7922 0399
E slrc@odi.org.uk
www.securelivelihoods.org
[@SLRCtweet](https://twitter.com/SLRCtweet)

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