



Researching livelihoods and  
services affected by conflict

# Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium

## Democratic Republic of Congo Research Programme

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# About us

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

SLRC is undertaking research in seven focus countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Uganda. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) research programme is being led by Dorothea Hilhorst of Wageningen University in conjunction with the Institut Supérieur de Développement Rural (ISDR) in Bukavu and the Catholic University of Congo (UCC).

## What is the focus of SLRC's DRC research programme?

The Congolese people have suffered enormous loss of lives and livelihoods due to almost two decades of war and insecurity. People's access to, as well as the quality of, basic services have also deteriorated, and most services – including health, education and water – are provided by non-state actors or those charging high user-fees. Evidence suggests that service delivery and access failures are rooted in governance problems – problems which also contributed to the onset and continuation of war. The present functioning of the state in DRC and the nature of governance must be understood through the historical legacy of a neo-patrimonial state, clientelism, institutional deterioration and loss of national assets. Furthermore, it was only util relatively recently, after a

prolonged period of transition, national and provincial governments were elected and national policies started emerging.

The country's health service sector is of interest for three reasons. First, the lack of affordable health services is a major concern for ordinary people. Second, DRC's health services and systems act as a microcosm of wider governance relations. And third, the health sector has been the focus of many interventions designed to develop innovative governance and improve institutional capacity.

Transport and urban livelihoods issues have also been largely neglected by both research and policy making communities. International funding has been channelled into the development of roads, but we know very little about whether these investments have generated opportunities within the transportation sector or how this sector is organised and affected by governance processes. Similarly, recent years have seen a strong trend towards urbanisation in DRC, yet we know little about the governance and organisation of newly urbanised households' access to livelihoods.

SLRC's DRC research programme will help fill the knowledge gaps in these areas, and is guided by three research themes.

### 1 Drivers of legitimacy: Experiences of service delivery and perceptions of a non-Weberian state

Although the state plays a role in shaping livelihood outcomes, the Congolese state appears and functions very differently from what the traditional Weberian view stipulates. Evidence suggests that the state works according to its own rationale and is regarded as just one of many actors people have to deal with to go about their business.

International organisations are strongly geared to build state capacity, and tend to work on the assumption that when the state is 'enabled' to provide social protection and basic services, it will enhance its legitimacy. However, evidence supporting this assumption is lacking and questions regarding the relationship between service delivery, people's perceptions and state-building remain unanswered.

Research under this theme will generate evidence on people's perceptions of the state, and in particular local manifestations of the state, and explore how access to (and quality of) services affects legitimacy.

## 2 Engaging with multi-stakeholder processes: How can external actors improve capacity development efforts in complex governance arrangements?

In DRC, interacting with the state and contributing towards state-building processes are of paramount importance to external actors - indeed, they might be said to represent the 'million dollar question'. This 'million dollar question', however, is profoundly complex. Institutional multiplicity and state structures tend to operate according to their own logics and have a large bearing on livelihood outcomes, patterns of economic activity, and the provision of basic services and social protection. The Congolese state is just one of multiple actors, and in order to understand how international actors can work more effectively to develop institutional capacities, we first need to situate them within multi-stakeholder arrangements. We also need a deeper understanding of how corruption, elite interests and the political economy of patrimonial power dynamics determine the ways services are provided or livelihoods supported.

Research within this theme will focus on how international actors in the health sector seek to build state capacity and improve sectoral governance in light of DRC's complex governance arrangements and multi-stakeholder processes.

## 3 The organisation of economic life

Although many agencies are involved in livelihood support programming, there is limited evidence that such interventions have much of an impact. In particular, there is a real lack of understanding of what might be termed the 'organisation of economic life' and the ways in which people's economic activity is governed. There has also been little attention paid to the influence of aid agencies on livelihood processes and outcomes beyond the household level (for example, in relation to labour markets).

Research within this theme will focus on the organisation of economic life in DRC, and is guided by questions focusing on urban livelihoods and informal economic activity. These will be further refined over the coming months, but will be based around the following:

- How do people navigate and negotiate and organise their livelihoods in urban informal environments?
- How do patterns of displacement – including the differences between early and late arrivals – affect urban livelihoods?



- How do the urban poor gain access to land, housing, resources, markets and jobs to sustain their livelihoods?
- What kinds of local government policies influence people's livelihood opportunities?
- How do aid agencies and their interventions contribute to ordering the urban informal sector and shaping the way in which it is governed?

### How will we carry out the research?

SLRC's DRC research programme will apply qualitative as well as quantitative data collection methods, beginning with the first round of a combined livelihoods and perceptions panel survey in 2012. This survey, which will be repeated in 2015, will explore people's views of the legitimacy of the state and how this is influenced by access to services (including health and transport). This will be complemented by in-depth qualitative research focusing on the health sector.

Research will be focused geographically on two provinces: South Kivu and Equateur. Whilst both conflict-affected, the two provinces differ in the intensity of state-building programmes being implemented by international actors.

### What will be done with the research?

Through a combination of regular engagement with key stakeholders and disseminating compelling, accessible and relevant research outputs, we primarily hope to provide insights into the governance and dynamics of service delivery in the Congolese health sector.

These insights will help to ensure that the international community's approaches to state-building are better adjusted to Congolese realities. A focus on health will help to unpack the various ways in which different actors in DRC relate to each other and how power gets concentrated through networks across different service providers.

The research will also generate lessons that can be used to build and refine current theoretical frameworks being used to look at institutional multiplicity and service delivery in conflict-affected situations.

Finally, we also hope that findings from the programme will be used to inform aid agencies, donors and local and national governments about the effects of roads and transport infrastructure on economic activity.



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