Researching livelihoods and services affected by conflict

The first round of the SLRC Panel Survey: The Process Paper

Purpose of this paper

The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) aims to generate a stronger evidence base on how people make a living, educate their children, deal with illness and access other basic services in fragile and conflict-affected situations. To answer two of the Consortium's overarching research questions – one on views towards governance actors and perceptions of legitimacy, the other on livelihood trajectories – a panel survey is being conducted in five countries – Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda. The first round of the survey was carried out in 2012/2013, following a lengthy design stage. This paper shares our experiences during this time, both in terms of survey design and survey implementation, and offers honest reflections on the process.

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1 Introduction

The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) aims to generate a stronger evidence base on how people make a living, educate their children, deal with illness and access other basic services in fragile and conflict-affected situations. To answer two of the Consortium's overarching research questions – one on views towards governance actors and perceptions of legitimacy, the other on livelihood trajectories – a panel survey is being conducted across a range of countries affected, to varying degrees, by fragility and conflict. The baseline study for this survey was conducted in 2012 / 2013 in five countries – Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda – and emerged out of a process that lasted roughly one year. This paper shares our experiences during this time, both in terms of survey design and survey implementation, and offers honest reflections on the process.

The structure of this paper is as follows. After providing some background information on the SLRC research agenda in section 2, we then describe our process in two parts: section 3 focuses on stages of design, while section 4 focuses on stages of implementation. Having outlined what we did, section 5 offers reflections on the process as a whole: what worked well, what less so, and do the results justify the time and expense accrued over the last year or so?

2 Background

SLRC's research agenda is constructed around three overarching research questions:

1. What are people's perceptions, expectations and experiences of the state and of local-level governance? How does the way services are delivered and livelihoods are supported affect people's views on the legitimacy of the state?

2. How do international actors interact with the state and local-level governance institutions? How successful are international attempts to build state capacity to deliver social protection, basic services and support to livelihoods?

3. What do livelihood trajectories in conflict-affected situations tell us about the role of governments, aid agencies, markets and the private sector in enabling people to make a secure living?

While SLRC are drawing on a range of methodological approaches to help answer these research questions, a quantitative survey is particularly relevant to addressing two of the above: RQ1 on legitimacy and RQ3 on livelihood trajectories.

In operationalising our research for RQ1, in each of our core countries we are focusing on generating empirical, field-based evidence to address the hypothesis that improved access to services contributes to state-building through positive effects on state-society relations and state legitimacy at the local level. Given the centrality of perceptions of legitimacy to definitions of state-building (see Haider, 2011), research that asks conflict-affected populations what they think about states is clearly critical. The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Development Research Centre on Citizenship talks about starting with 'the perceptions of citizens themselves and [...] how they interact with and view the institutions that serve them' and contrasts this approach with many other approaches to development which impose rigid constraints on the role of citizens (Benequista and Gaventa, 2011). Differentiating between the experiences, perceptions and expectations of women and men, and between different social and demographic groups, is fundamental to strengthening our understanding of how state legitimacy is built (or undermined) – particularly so given inter-group variation in priorities relating to access to basic services and other public goods. Our approach therefore centres on documenting and analysing people's views of

the state in conflict-affected situations – particularly in relation to their experiences of service delivery – and observing how perceptions shift (or not) over time.

The use of a quantitative survey also helps us work towards answering RQ3 on livelihood trajectories. Although good in-depth case studies on livelihood strategies can often be found in some contexts, these usually represent little more than snapshots confined to particular places and particular times. Qualitative case study approaches also tend to be insufficiently linked with quantitative survey data. SLRC are attempting to address some of these gaps or imbalances by undertaking rigorous, longitudinal livelihoods research. Our aim is to build a picture of how people make a living in particular contexts and track how this changes over time. Moreover, we want to go beyond the standard measures of consumption, income etc. and look at people's wellbeing in a broader sense. This means, amongst other things, starting from the 'end user' perspective and asking which, if any, aid interventions or government policies and programmes are making a difference in people's lives. So, a major element of RQ3 is its longitudinal focus – looking at livelihoods trajectories and how livelihoods strategies shift over time. We want to know whether people are recovering or starting to build stronger and more secure livelihoods, are stuck in poverty or are sliding into destitution, and how this is affected by the broader political, economic and security environment.

Finally, given that SLRC are committed to generating findings that are of maximum utility to policymakers, we need to produce datasets that are representative at scale, that provide information on multiple social groups, and that reflect a broad range of experiences.

Thus, in thinking about how to start implementing the SLRC research agenda, a large-scale quantitative survey emerged as a clear choice of method. While such an approach would not be able to systematically answer all three research questions in itself, it would get us part of the way for RQs 1 and 3.

3 The Design Process

Once it was decided that a quantitative survey would make sense within the context of SLRC's research agenda, a core team at ODI kick-started a design phase which would last several months.

The process involved a number of stages. Of particular importance was a two-day workshop hosted by SLRC in central London in June 2012, which was attended by selected individuals with particular experience and expertise in survey design and implementation, including staff from the Asia Foundation, FAO, the Igarape Institute in Brazil, as well as a number of internal SLRC partners (see Box 1: A brief description of the SLRC survey workshop). The aims of the workshop were: to help establish the specific objectives of the survey; to decide what type of survey methodology would be most appropriate / produce the most added value; and to address a number of 'design puzzles' identified in advance by the core survey team at ODI. These included: longitudinal panel or cross-sectional; feasibility of combining livelihoods and perceptions in a single survey (where the former has households as the unit of analysis and the latter individuals); sampling for maximum research uptake; and the feasibility of generating cross-country findings. We explore some of these 'design puzzles' in greater depth below.

Background research prior to the workshop was informed by, and built on, some initial work carried out SLRC's partners in South Sudan. There, FAO were in the process of implementing a household survey of their own which was designed to gather data on people's livelihoods. SLRC were able to integrate a small number of specially designed modules into the FAO survey instrument, which were developed by Martina Santschi. These modules focused on experiences of basic services, perceptions of the security situation, and perceptions of governance actors. In constructing appropriate questions to include in the SLRC modules, Martina spent some time going through existing survey instruments implemented in both stable and conflict-affected situations. Members of the ODI survey team were involved in this process, and it proved useful for generating some initial lessons for our own survey (for example: the importance of linking

perceptions with experiences; the need to be careful when using complex, subjective terms, such as 'trust' and 'satisfaction').

Box 1: A brief description of the SLRC survey workshop

On 13-14 June 2012, the SLRC team at ODI convened a survey design workshop in London. This workshop brought together a set of experts (see below) experienced in designing and managing surveys in fragile/conflict-affected states from both within SLRC and outside. The purpose of the workshop was to assist SLRC in the design and content of our survey, drawing on the participants' experience and expertise to generate ideas, insights and recommendations.

A team at ODI, led by Rachel Slater, had prepared a background paper in advance of the workshop, clarifying the need and purpose of both livelihood and perception surveys in answering the overarching research questions, and raising a number of "design puzzles" which had arisen during their discussions. The main activity of the workshop was to draw on participants' input to enable SLRC to reach conclusions on these issues.

The design puzzles included:

1. How to adapt a generic survey to specific country contexts
2. Unit of analysis
3. Type of longitudinal analysis
4. Sample size and sampling
5. Truth and accuracy

Participants were assigned different puzzles and worked in groups for the rest of the first day to clarify the issues, share their own experiences, critique the analysis and the proposed solution, and to note insights and recommendations. They then fed back to the whole group on any conclusions they had reached or further questions that they had.

While acknowledging that the nature of the design puzzles made it difficult to look at each one in isolation, each group was able to make some specific suggestions both for possible ways forward and/or the right questions to ask.

The second day was focused more on the content of the surveys, based on: the SLRC research questions/sub-questions; the evidence required to answer those questions; the analysis needed to deliver the evidence; the data required; the general module content; and the survey questions that needed to be asked. Again, participants worked in groups to look at the two research questions which the surveys will contribute towards and addressed the question "What data do we want to generate from the surveys which will help answer SLRC's research questions?" and "How can we ensure truth and accuracy, control quality and manage ethical and security issues?"

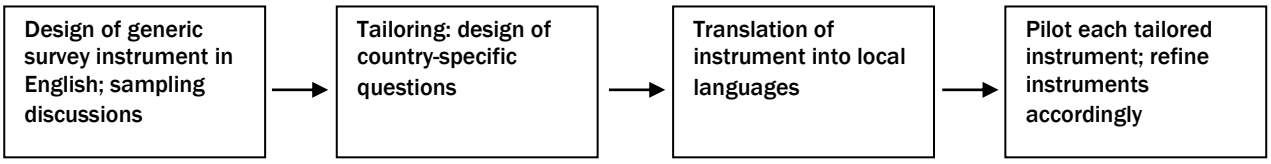
A workshop follow-up paper summarising the discussion and decisions made was drawn up by the core survey team after the workshop.

Participants: Martina Santschi (SLRC), Qasim Shah (SLRC), Adriaan Ferf (SLRC), Jessica Hagen-Zanker (SLRC), Paul Harvey (SLRC), Simon Levine (SLRC), Richard Mallett (SLRC), Rachel Slater (SLRC), Marco D'Errico (FAO), Tom Parks (The Asia Foundation), George Varughese (The Asia Foundation), Sunil Pillai (The Asia Foundation), Robert Muggah (Igarape Institute)

Conversations, suggestions and decisions emerging from the workshop were captured by the team, written up, and circulated to Consortium partners together with a proposed schedule for moving forwards with the process. Put crudely, the remainder of the design phase – that is, up until the beginning of fieldwork –

included the stages outlined in Figure 1 below. We spent about eight weeks in total on the design stage from late June to late August 2012.

Figure 1: Design phase from workshop to fieldwork



We now explore some of the key aspects of survey design encountered at various stages of the process sketched out above.

3.1 How to combine (household-level) livelihoods modules and (individual-level) perceptions modules

As mentioned, our survey aims to address two different parts of the SLRC research agenda – RQ1 and RQ3 – so there are two different sets of questions we needed our survey to target.

Given that RQ1 centres on the 'intangible' or 'demand-side' elements of state-building – state-society relations, local legitimacy of political orders, expectations of government responsibility – a methodological focus on people's perception and views is necessary. For generating data at scale, a perception survey – at an individual level – was therefore an obvious choice of method. As DFID (2010: 30, emphasis added) argue, 'Monitoring progress towards PBSB [peacebuilding and state-building] objectives will often come down to measuring changes in community knowledge, attitudes or perceptions', and perception surveys are considered a useful tool for exploring difficult-to-measure, subjective issues such as trust, satisfaction and expectations.. Michelson (2011), for example, recently used perception surveys to study the effects of public goods provision on state-society relations in rural China. Further, although they have been most commonly applied in non-developing, stable contexts, perception surveys have increasingly been used in fragile and conflict-affected settings to explore a range of complex issues, from service delivery in Bosnia and Herzegovina (World Bank, 2009) and policing in Southern Sudan (Lokuji et al., 2009) to local government in Pakistan (Arif et al., 2010) and democracy in southern Thailand (The Asia Foundation, 2010).

On the other hand, RQ3 is all about tracking people's livelihoods during and after conflict – what assets to they draw on, what response strategies do they employ, how do they successfully create secure livelihoods? For this purpose, a more 'traditional' livelihoods survey was needed. This type of survey typically takes place at the household level and seeks to obtain information on the assets of a household, their access to services, income and levels of vulnerability and food (in)security. However, being interested not only in people's assets but also what they do and what can either support or undermine their strategies, our livelihoods survey needed to go beyond the standard measures and indicators found in existing templates: income, consumption and expenditure. We wanted to gather information on what, if any, government or aid policies and programmes are affecting their lives rather than just basic data on nutrition, health etc.

Realising that our research questions necessitated two different types of survey created a challenge: how would we be able to integrate the two of these, if that was even possible? And, if not, how could we at least ensure that they sat comfortably alongside each other?

At the core of this problem is an issue relating to unit of analysis. Traditional livelihoods surveys typically select the household as their unit of analysis and the household head as the respondent (the definition of head will depend on the survey). The justification for this is that the household head is most likely (out of all household residents) to know the answers to a wide range of survey questions relating to household

expenditure, income and so on. It is assumed that, for example, the daughter of the head would not be able to give accurate answers to these questions. This principle is fine for the livelihoods component of the SLRC survey, but if we were always to interview the household head we would end up with a skewed sample for the perception survey. Ideally, we wanted to achieve a good cross-section of the population (e.g. gathering the perceptions of young adults, men, women, children) for the perception surveys, which would not be possible if we were to only interview household heads. So, there is a trade-off if the two types of surveys are combined. Either we interview household heads in order to gather accurate information on livelihoods but then skew our perception survey sample, or interview alternative members of the household in order to achieve a less biased sample but then risk obtaining inaccurate livelihoods information.

Discussions at the survey workshop suggested there were four possible solutions to this problem.

1. *Split the interview*

   One option was to conduct the livelihoods survey with the household head and then, once completed, select another respondent from within the household for the perception survey. This would mean that the samples for both the livelihoods and perception surveys would be appropriate, but presents two major practical challenges. First, in practice it is incredibly difficult to find one willing respondent within a household, yet alone two, and to switch respondents half way through an interview – in other words, we are not sure how practically feasible this would be. And second, if we were to design our survey as a panel (see section 3.2), then we would have to track two separate individuals from the same household years later, which would invariably create logistical problems.

2. *Livelihoods 'lite'*

   Another option was to design and implement a livelihoods survey that does not demand in-depth knowledge of the household budget. In other words, design a livelihoods 'lite' survey that features more basic questions. The advantage of this would be that individuals other than the household head could be interviewed, thus minimising bias in the perception survey sample and overcoming one of the key shortcomings associated with a full livelihoods survey. To supplement the livelihoods 'lite' survey data, observational information would also be collected by enumerators before or after undertaking the survey (for example, noting the material of the floor or roof, which could be used as a proxy for household wealth) – this would help build up a fuller picture of a household's situation. This is the solution we eventually decided on.

3. *Accept that the perception survey sample is biased and caveat findings accordingly*

   It was possible that, ultimately, there would be no feasible way we could ensure the right sample for both the livelihoods and perception surveys. In this event, we would go ahead with a full livelihoods survey with the household head and use the same individual for the perception survey. While this would skew the perception survey sample, it would produce more accurate livelihoods data.

4. *Have two different surveys*

   The final option would be to administer the livelihoods and perception surveys completely separately. So we would have one sample for the livelihoods survey and an entirely different one for the perception survey. This would help guarantee optimal samples for each and we could still carry these out in the same villages or local areas, just with different households. The main disadvantage to this is that we would be increasing our operating costs, potentially quite significantly. We would also risk losing the link between people's livelihoods and their views of governance, which could be of real interest.

In the end, after much internal discussion, the SLRC survey team decided to go for the second option – livelihoods 'lite' – concluding that this approach presented the lowest trade-off. Furthermore, this option would allow us to generate datasets which capture the links between livelihood indicators, people's experience of services and perceptions of governance actors – we considered this to be of major importance. However, this also created a further issue to deal with: question ordering within the survey schedule. To take one example, SLRC are, as mentioned, interested in investigating citizens' satisfaction

with public services. However, research by Van de Walle and Van Ryzin (2011) suggests that the ordering of questions in surveys has important effects on reported satisfaction. In particular, it appears important to ground perceptions in experiences of respondents.[1] For example, in the UK, perception surveys regarding the NHS show that those who have used the NHS are significantly more satisfied with the service than those who have not used it (IPSOS MORI, 2011). It seems, therefore, that ordering should take into account the need to elicit information on individuals' experiences before asking them about their attitudes and perceptions. The same principle also applies when wanting to examine the link between service delivery and views of governance actors. Combining livelihoods and perception modules into the same survey instrument therefore required us to think carefully about the order in which questions were asked.

Box 2: Developing the perceptions modules

The FAO-led survey in South Sudan was the first of the household surveys to be implemented, and the survey tool was initially designed to capture livelihoods information, but not people's perception of the state, or of the quality of services offered. At a workshop held in Rome in December 2012, the SLRC team for South Sudan decided to develop a simple index of factors that would give a simple score for respondents' perception of governance and services, and the link between the two. The list of factors included in the index was strongly influenced by questionnaires of other research projects studying perceptions and satisfaction, including Martina Santschi's (independent) PhD research, which was conducted in a different part of South Sudan. The development of the index was influenced by similar work that other members of the team had done in areas not related to perceptions of the state.

The list of factors in the participation index developed included: the frequency of participation in local governance forums (community meetings, public hearings, etc.); reasons for attending; and perceptions of the impact that their participation had. Then respondents were asked about their perceptions of how much local government officials listen to the population and take their views into account. Finally, respondents were asked their views on the quality of various governmental functions, including service provision, planning, local taxation, and whether the taxation resulted in better services.

A second set of questions asked about general perceptions of performance of government and public institutions. This specifically included questions about perceptions of corruption, informal "fees" for services, the role and influence of traditional leaders in local governance, and perceptions of local security.

Creating a likert scale of answers to these questions enabled the compilation of answers from individual questions into an index. This resulted in several indices: one on participation, one on perceptions of services, and one on general perception of local governance.

The other SLRC surveys were developed on the basis of the South Sudan survey, using similar perception questions and ordering of questions.

3.2 The decision to go longitudinal

It was decided early on that the SLRC survey would involve two rounds. One of the Consortium's main strengths is having the time and funding to generate longitudinal research that tells us something about how and why change occurs. However, we still faced a decision, as, broadly speaking, longitudinal survey research can be implemented in two ways: 1) using a panel survey design, in which the same individuals within households are interviewed at all survey rounds; and 2) using a multiple cross-sectional design, in which a different sample is used for each survey round meaning each sample is only interviewed once.

Doing a panel survey is intrinsically valuable because it allows one to interview the same households and individuals at different intervals in time, so allows one to observe changes and impacts over time. Further,

[1] This is something that also emerged as important in the earlier background work for the FAO survey modules.

interviewing the same households allows one to control for unobserved heterogeneity (variables that cannot be measured and that are constant over time) – for example, a household's willingness to take risks. This improves the quality of subsequent quantitative analysis by reducing bias. For these reasons, panel survey designs are generally considered more valuable than multiple cross-sectional designs, even though they face various problems associated with attrition (see Box 3: Recognising and addressing attrition).

Box 3: Recognising and addressing attrition

Panel data samples tend to suffer from attrition – that is, households dropping out of the second or third survey round (for example, because they have moved). Attrition is a problem if: i) attrition rates are high; and ii) if attrition is non-random. High attrition rates mean the sample is smaller, which undermines the precision of research. Non-random attrition means that the people who are more likely to drop out have different characteristics from those that stay in the sample; this may lead to so-called attrition bias. For example, in places affected by large-scale violence and war, there may be a survivorship bias – those that survived the conflict may be systematically different from those that did not (e.g. they may be fitter).

Attrition bias is a problem because it can affect the external and internal validity of a study. In terms of external validity, a biased, reduced sample means the sample is no longer representative of the population (Miller & Hollist, 2007). On affecting the internal validity of the study, when the variables affecting attrition are correlated with the outcomes of interest, the analysis will be biased (Outes-Leon and Dercon, 2008). However, non-random attrition does not necessarily lead to attrition bias. Attrition bias depends on the model specification – i.e. which variables are selected as the outcomes of interest – and can be tested for by using a number of standard econometric tests. Furthermore, even if attrition bias is present in the sample, it can be corrected using econometric procedures (Miller & Hollist, 2007).

Depending on the study, attrition rates can vary from 0.5%-23%. Generally, attrition rates are assumed to be higher in unstable, violent contexts as the risk of relocation and death is much higher.[1] It is therefore important to build in mechanisms to keep attrition low. Furthermore, there is also the option of replacing 'drop out' households in order to keep the overall sample size at the original level. While the panel sample would still be as low as the sample without replaced households, a rotating sample design has the advantage of achieving a bigger sample for cross-sectional analysis (with greater analytical power).

Reducing attrition rates and tracing households is generally expensive. It is mainly expensive in terms of survey team time. In order to reduce costs, rules can be set up on how much time / how many phone calls should be spent to trace households that have moved. A decision will have to be taken if households that have moved to different locations should still be included in the survey. This depends on the objectives of the survey. Finally, it is suggested that the survey instrument is designed so that it can also work as an independent survey, in case a follow-up survey is not possible (for example due to changes in the political situation). As Eck (2011: 167) points out, 'If the researcher does decide to take a longitudinal approach, he/she should be careful to design the first wave of the study so that it will still be useful in and of itself'.

During the workshop, participants discussed the advantages and disadvantages of doing a panel survey in fragile and conflict-affected situations. We agreed that the panel element really adds value compared to other surveys, as it would help us find out how household's livelihoods and perceptions are changing over time. Further, while there are already many cross-sectional and one-off surveys in conflict-affected situations, very few panel surveys have been conducted in such contexts. However, deciding to go longitudinal via panel is not an easy or straightforward option to make, and a number of questions regarding design and implementation realities must be first considered. These include:

- Selecting what kind of panel survey to do, as it possible to track either people or locations. In terms of locations, one could decide to do a 'panel' at the village / social group level and interview similar households in the same village / social group in the second round. However, there are likely to be differences in livelihoods experiences even within these social groups, and being able to understand these differences is important for the research study.

- Accounting for attrition. Various measures can be taken to minimise drop-out in the second round. For example, one can track sim cards, as people tend to keep their phone numbers. It is also useful to focus on households, rather than individuals, as it is rare for the whole household to move.
- Defining samples for tracking. It is possible to only carry out a panel for a sub-sample of the overall sample. The advantages of this kind of approach would be that it is cheaper to track a smaller number of households and would allow for more detailed livelihood questions (which may be too expensive or time-consuming for the entire sample). There are a number of disadvantages to this approach, however. The results from the second round would not be representative at the study level anymore. They would be trickier to disaggregate, as the sample size would probably be too low to achieve statistical significance. It is also questionable on why we would interview people in the first round but then do not utilise that data in the panel element of the survey. We would in a sense 'waste' data.

3.3 From generic to specific: tailoring the survey to context

SLRC is carrying out research in seven core countries.[2] Our proposal was to generate a generic survey instrument which could then be tailored to each individual country context. The reasons for this included:

- We would not be doing nationally representative surveys but instead delivering surveys in a small number of districts / provinces in each country. If the samples did not have national coverage and were not nationally representative, we would be comparing a set of districts, not countries. To then try and compare across countries would leave us susceptible to comparing, for example, a relatively well-resourced district with a poorly-resourced one in a different country.
- Patterns of livelihoods vary widely in the study areas (e.g. mainly pastoralist, mainly non-agricultural, mainly fisheries) and to address all elements of people's livelihoods in all study areas would require a prohibitively lengthy schedule.
- We did not anticipate wanting to aggregate the data and make comparisons between, for example, women and men across all countries. Nor did we anticipate being able to achieve a uniformity of indicators and values across all countries that would allow a sensible comparison.

It was unlikely that we would deviate radically from the original proposal as a result of discussions during the workshop – we knew that we would have to tailor each survey to country contexts and we also knew that one of the ways in which we could add value was to capture comparisons across different places, which necessitates having a degree of similarity among the surveys. Rather, the real questions that were discussed were: what kind of balance between 'generic' and 'tailored' do we need to strike?; and how do we achieve this in practice?

We discussed the composition of the survey: what would it look like? It was suggested that the comparative questions could comprise somewhere between 75-90 percent of the survey. In order to start building a list of relevant comparative questions, it was advised that we start by going through existing survey instruments and extracting questions that we could use or adapt ourselves. The rest of the survey would feature contextual questions, and much of the 'contextualisation process' would involve finding ways to tailor questions, terms and definitions. Particularly for the governance aspects of the survey, we needed to be able to get respondents to 'pass judgement' on a variety of actors and institutions (e.g. how responsive the local council is to complaints or how much trust people have in the police), so appropriate wording was a necessity.

[2] Our survey will not be implemented in Afghanistan (where we will follow up on the existing AREU panel in 2013) and South Sudan (where we have piggybacked on an FAO survey).

Figure 2: Designing the generic survey

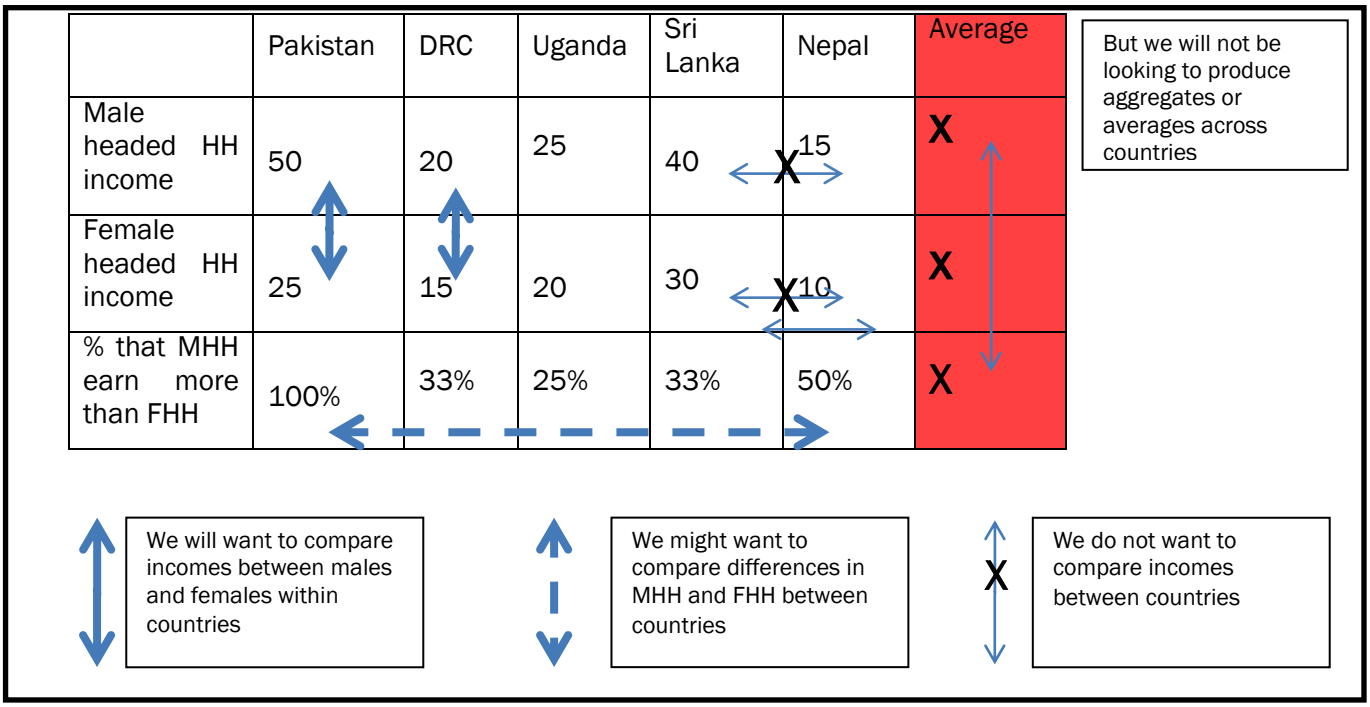
It was recognised that being able to capture information about non-state actors and informal institutions would be a particular strength of the SLRC survey – these aspects are often missed by existing surveys. However, there is a wide range of non-state actors and informal institutions both within and across countries, making it difficult to generate comparisons between SLRC's focus countries. One way to address this issue of heterogeneity would be to have a 'composite' measure of 'non-state' or 'informality' that decomposes into country-specific categories. So, for example, while the Uganda and Pakistan surveys would both have questions on 'non-state' actors and 'informality', the specifics of those questions would look different for each country (e.g. the list of actors would be different for each). This will allow us to capture contextuality, but also to make a few general comparisons across countries in terms of the role of informal institutions and actors. This is the tailoring principle we decided to follow throughout.

We had a similar discussion about tailoring in relation to which services, or bundles of services, we needed to ask about. It was agreed that we need a core (health, education, water) to enable some comparison, but beyond that it was appropriate to allow each country to focus on any additional services deemed important. Our livelihoods section followed a similar principle: the basic structure and questions were similar for all countries, but wording and possible options and responses were tailored to specific country context.

Finally, we discussed what kind of comparisons we want to achieve. We needed to be open from the outset about how far our surveys would take us and what we really mean when we talk about 'comparison'. We are not aiming to generate a system of universalist rankings and we are not looking to produce averages or aggregates across countries. Context is too much of an overriding factor to allow us to do this, and in any case, it probably wouldn't lead to anything particularly interesting or meaningful.

What we instead attempted to do was to design a survey that would allow us to identify some general trends and identify some caveated similarities or differences between our countries – as a hypothetical example, Figure 3 highlights the kind of comparisons we would like to make and the kind to avoid. It is, therefore, important that we are always clear about the nature of our surveys and to caveat our findings accordingly.

Figure 3: Highlighting the nature of SLRC survey comparisons: hypothetical example of monthly income data



There were also some differences between surveys. Additional modules were added for some countries to address their specific research areas of interest. For example, a module on fishery was added to the Sri Lanka instrument and a detailed module on disability to the Uganda instrument. Further, some questions had to be cut or changed in some countries because they were culturally inappropriate (for example, some questions on shocks experienced by households were dropped from the Sri Lanka instrument).

In practice, the tailoring process took several weeks and involved considerable discussion between the survey team at ODI and SLRC's country partners. While the need to tailor (sometimes large) parts of the survey was recognized, so too was the importance of maintaining coherence across countries in order to enable appropriate comparison in the analysis.

Figure 4. Tailoring the Uganda survey

3.4 Sampling

We originally estimated that the SLRC survey would cover about 1,000 households in two districts of each country, but the exact sample size and sampling strategy was discussed further both during and after the survey workshop. One consideration that we discussed extensively was geographical coverage of the survey within the countries. A survey in two districts may or may not have wider national policy relevance. As a result of this discussion, we expanded the sample beyond two districts in some of the countries, for example to three districts in Nepal and Sri Lanka and two sub-regions in Uganda (totalling 15 districts), to ensure greater policy relevance. In DRC, on the other hand, there was no demand for a broader dataset and due to the great geographical, social-demographic and cultural differences in the two originally selected districts (South Kivu and Equator) any comparison between them would have been meaningless, hence a decision was made to focus on South Kivu only.

In general, a larger sample is a better representation of the population (Gertler et al., 2011), but (ideally) at a minimum, the sample should be big enough to be able to detect differences in outcome variables for the population of interest with sufficient analytical power. Apart from being able to measure statistically significant results, we also had to decide if we wanted a representative sample and, if so, at which level of analysis. Eventually, we agreed to aim to achieve: i) a statistically significant sample at the study and village level; and ii) a representative sample at the village level. Based on our existing knowledge and background research, this kind of sampling approach seemed to be quite unusual in fragile and conflict-affected situations, where many surveys seem to achieve neither a representative nor a statistically significant sample. In designing the country level sampling strategies, we generally followed the same principles as in stable contexts, with some flexibility in the process to account for lack of data.

The sampling strategy was designed to select households that are relevant to the main research questions, while also being able to draw statistically significant conclusions at the study and village level (at 95 percent confidence level). This was done by combining purposive and random sampling at different stages (see Box 4: Sampling method definitions). A clustered sampling strategy was employed involving two stages: in the first stage, clusters (i.e. villages) were selected, and in the second, households within those clusters were selected. In order to locate the specific groups of interest and ensure variation in the sample, districts, sub-districts and villages were purposively selected using specific criteria relating to levels of conflict and service provision. In most countries, the survey did not attempt to achieve representativeness at the country or district level, but we did aim for representativeness at the village level through random sampling. Households were randomly selected within villages so that results are representative and statistically significant at the village level and to ensure that a varied sample was being selected.

Box 4: Sampling method definitions

Random sampling – randomly selecting the households to be interviewed from the sampling frame (e.g. using random number generators).

Cluster-sampling – the population is divided up in clusters (e.g. localities) and a random sample of clusters is selected. Then all units within that cluster or a random sub-sample are sampled. This has the advantage of cost-savings as a greater number of households close to each other are interviewed but also means there will be less diversity as households living close to each other are likely to have similar characteristics.

Purposive sampling – the population to be interviewed is directly selected on the basis of specific criteria.

As to be expected, lack of reliable and recent data meant that calculating the required sample size in many of the countries proved challenging. Up-to-date and reliable population data is not available in many places affected by conflict due to out-of-date censuses, large-scale displacement and political sensitivities around population data. As an alternative, we looked for rigorous but pragmatic solutions. These included:

- In DRC, we did not have access to detailed village-level population data before the fieldwork started. We calculated the overall sample size and agreed on the number of villages and then calculated sample sizes for average small / medium / large villages. Once the population size in a village had been determined, the sample size was then based on the tables prepared in advance.
- In Pakistan, we relied on informal local-level data sources.
- In Northern Uganda, very little data was available and we used old census data and updated it using population growth data from studies conducted by the UN.

As mentioned, panel surveys are particularly rare in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Part of the reason for this is that panel surveys are at risk of attrition – that is, when households drop out of subsequent survey rounds – and it is assumed that because conflict often results in displacement, attrition is too high in conflict-affected situations. This study being a panel survey changes the sampling strategy in one significant aspect: the sample needs to be large enough so that in the second round it is still statistically significant. Given that previous panel surveys in low-income but stable countries have shown attrition rates of 10-20 percent (see also section 2.3), to be on the safe side, we increased the required sample size by 20 percent to account for possible attrition. This ensures that the sample in 2015 will still be statistically significant. However, if attrition is non-random, it may not be a representative sample anymore.

Figure 5. Learning to use GPS trackers in Nepal

We also put a number of other safeguards in place to minimise attrition and to enable tracking of households in 2015. All respondents were informed that this is a panel survey and we asked for a phone number of a household member or neighbour to track the respondent down for the second round. Enumerators also noted characteristics of the house and the area around the house (e.g. distance to service point) and were equipped with GPS trackers to note the GPS location of the household (Figure 5)[3]. We may need to put additional measures in place to retain our sample (e.g. getting in touch with the respondent on an annual basis).

To randomly select households within a village, one needs household listings. Due to some of the issues outlined above (e.g. displacement, sensitivities etc.), it was also difficult to access household listings in some of the countries. To overcome these data gaps in some instances, teams were able to construct household listings themselves, for example in DRC, the survey team spent about one day in each village to compile a detailed household listing, together with heads of villages and other people with knowledge of households in the village. In other instances, a quasi-random approach was used, for example in Uganda. The sampling approach involved enumerators walking in random directions for a random number of minutes (up to 25 minutes) from the main path in the middle of the village (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Spinning pen to determine random direction in Uganda

As we have discussed earlier on, we do not just want to interview household heads in order to ensure a varied sample for the perception surveys. Instead we aimed at interviewing different demographic groups within the household. While not strictly part of the sampling (as our sampling unit of analysis is the household), this did have implications for the fieldwork. In all countries we aimed for a particular share of the sample to be female and this share

[3] This was not possible in Pakistan, and only to some extent in Sri Lanka, due to strict regulations on the use of GPS trackers.

was monitored throughout the fieldwork. This share was based on the pilot and hence took account of local cultural sensitivities and possibilities. The share ranged from 30 percent in Pakistan to 50 percent in most of the other countries. Enumerators were trained how to reach female respondents, e.g. by varying the time of the interview. In terms of other demographic groups (e.g. different age groups), we did not set specific shares, but encouraged enumerators to interview a varied sample. In practice, it turned out to be quite difficult at times to get respondents of the required gender, for example in Pakistan only the most experienced enumerators managed to interview women. In other countries, on the other hand, it turned out to be easier to interview women, rather than men and the gender ratios turned out to be skewed in the other direction (see Table 1 below).

In most cases – once the sampling strategy had been set in place – sampling worked very well. Enumerators were generally able to find the selected households. In some cases it was a bit harder to find the right household, for example in Nepal people were often known by their nicknames in villages, rather than their official names on the vote register and it took quite long to reach households (up to four hours in Nepal). Response rates were extremely high, ranging from 98 to 100 percent. However, two teams were faced with unexpected sampling challenges. in Sri Lanka the team found that in one village, part of the resettled population were living in a mosque, waiting for land to become available. Again, we chose to be pragmatic, but as rigorous as possible (given the circumstances). We did not exclude the village (as permission for the survey had been given for a limited number of villages), but instead attempted to quasi-randomly select households within the mosque. The Nepali team reached one ward in Rolpa, where a large share of households had migrated and it was not possible to interview a sufficient number of households. In order to reach the required sample another ward was selected in the same VDC (the lowest local administrative structure), using the same criteria as previously and the missing households were randomly selected in the new ward.

Table 1. Information on the samples

Country	Sample size	Level of representativeness	Response rate	Share of female respondents
DRC	1,259	Groupement & chefferie level	98.73%	56%
Nepal	3,175	Ward level	99.94%	56%
Pakistan	2,114	Union council level	100%	34%
South Sudan	797		100%	
Sri Lanka	1,377	GN division & district level	100%	62%
Uganda	1,844	Village & sub-region level	99.94%	63%

4 The Implementation Process

With the main phase of design coming to a close, attention was directed towards implementing the survey through piloting and fieldwork. This section describes the piloting and training aspects of the implementation process.

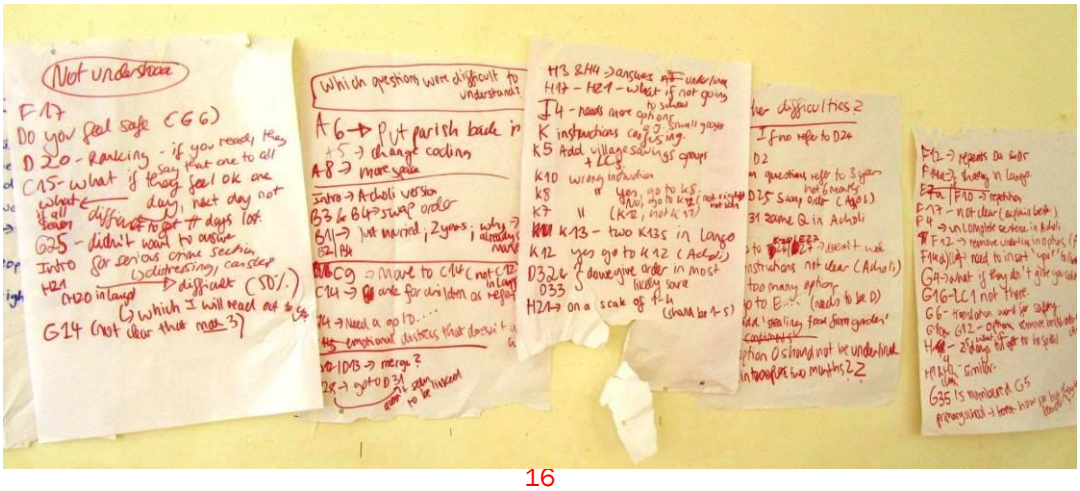
4.1 Piloting

Given that we had designed a combined livelihoods and perception survey and that we were implementing it across a range of conflict-affected contexts, we placed great emphasis on the piloting stage. We used piloting to not only test each survey instrument, but also to assess the data entry process and the analytical value of the collected data. We also picked up on potential security issues or risks. All countries conducted a pilot in one of the survey districts (but not in a village selected for the fieldwork), interviewing about 50 households.

Figure 7. Explaining the pilot to village leader and gathered crowd in Uganda

In terms of testing the survey instrument we looked for mistakes in question numbering or instructions, missing questions, and problems with question order. We also looked at the nuances of language in great detail – we picked up on translation mistakes, which questions were difficult for enumerators to read, and which questions were difficult for respondents to understand – and reflected on the overall length of the interview.

Figure 8. Reviewing the pilot in Uganda



To further understand the utility of the data for the upcoming analysis, we entered the data from all the pilots. This was a useful test for the data entry process and data entry forms.[4] We then tabulated and analysed every single question to determine whether it would be useful for analysis in the baseline reports. We also used this information to reduce the number of options for some particularly long categorical questions.

The pilot was successfully conducted in all five countries and, in each case, led to the revision of the survey instruments. Most changes were minor, often involving the rephrasing of certain questions or some renumbering. In some cases, we decided to remove particular questions in order to account for local sensitivities that were picked up during piloting (e.g. in Sri Lanka, asking whether households had experienced a fire in the last three years was considered bad luck by some respondents). In other cases, questions required modification (e.g. in Sri Lanka, we added an introduction to the food security module in order to explain that the questions are not meant to be judgemental, which we found to be a view held amongst certain groups). In many cases, the pilot interviews took up to two hours or more, so we also attempted to reduce the length of the questionnaires.

4.2 Training

Although we used experienced enumerators and fieldwork supervisors in all five countries, implementing the survey proved challenging for a number of reasons. First, the survey was complex and multi-layered; by combining a perception and livelihoods survey, enumerators were required to solicit factual information, as well as opinions. Second, some questions touched on highly sensitive issues, such as views towards government and experiences of crime and violence. Third, as with all surveys, there is a risk of family or neighbours gathering during the interview, which may bias an individual's responses, particularly for perception questions. Finally, given that this survey was conducted in conflict-affected contexts, we had to place particular emphasis on how to deal with potential insecurities.

In order to thoroughly prepare enumerators for the fieldwork, we conducted in-depth enumerator trainings that lasted up to five days (Figures 9 and 10). Apart from discussing and practising the survey instrument at length, we included sessions on sampling, safety and security in the field, village protocol, interview techniques and gender awareness. In order to address the challenges discussed above, we integrated the following into the training sessions:

- In order to prepare enumerators for the complex and multi-layered survey instruments, we conducted intensive training, including multiple rounds of practice by all enumerators and role-plays (to show potential mistakes).
- In order to prepare enumerators for asking sensitive questions, we had in-depth sessions on interview technique, including discussion of tone and volume of voice when asking questions.
- We had training modules on safety and potential dangerous situations and briefed enumerators on actions to take in potential emergencies.
- As neighbours or family gathering can bias perception questions, we paid particular attention on how to prevent other people from joining the interviews and, if they do, how to prevent them from giving their opinion and answering instead of the respondent.

[4] A number of partners used the CSPro data entry software for the first time.

Figure 9. Practising interview technique in Uganda

Figure 10. Role play in Nepal

While we were generally satisfied with the training, there are some things we would do differently next time. In DRC for example the training was too short on balance. In Uganda, the enumerators did not just practice with each other, but also spent one day in the field, which was considered very effective. This is something we would also like to attempt in the other countries next time.

5 Did It Work and Was It Worth It?

Yes and yes. We encountered some big challenges throughout the process, but we have:

- Successfully implemented the survey in all countries, both according to schedule and without major security incidents
- Developed the capacity of SLRC partners (ODI included) in specific areas of panel survey design, planning and implementation
- Generated original data across a range of fragile and conflict-affected situations, which is already proving to be of interest to a variety of stakeholders

In this section, we identify a number of issues that have been raised by partners as either concerns or points about how successful the survey has been. We focus on five questions: are the findings interesting enough and of high enough quality to justify the effort?; did it work to combine two types of survey?; did the cross-country element work?; how well have we worked together as a Consortium?; more broadly, what have we learned about doing surveys in conflict-affected situations?

5.1 Are the findings interesting enough and of high enough quality to justify the effort?

In many respects, this is a difficult question to answer at this stage. The survey instrument was purposely designed as a panel survey, meaning that the most (likely) valuable findings will be generated after the second round of the survey has been completed in 2015/16 and the longitudinal data analysed. With that

important caveat in mind, we can already identify three ways in which the first round of our panel survey is generating returns.

First, we are already seeing a demand for the baseline survey results. In Nepal, for example, the DFID country office is requesting the survey data to help it prioritise policy and programming activities across different sectors, as well as to understand differences in vulnerability across different parts of the country and different social groups. In DRC, we have also had positive responses to a presentation on the data and requests for further information from various actors in Kinshasa, including the DFID country office, various NGOs, and the scientific community. The Uganda survey has also generated a promising level of interest, something which has likely been helped by our decision to increase the sample size in order to achieve representativeness at a greater scale (see Box 5: Making the survey relevant to policy makers in Uganda, by Dyan Mazurana).

Box 5: Making the survey relevant to policy makers in Uganda, by Dyan Mazurana

The key to making our work relevant and interesting to policy makers in Uganda is the fact that we are representative of approximately 1.5 million people in Acholi subregion, and 2.13 million in Lango subregion. We are also the first representative survey of Lango, and we are definitely the first to compare all of Acholi and all of Lango subregions (on any topic). The fact that we can speak with data about what people in those sub-regions have experienced, are experiencing, and their perceptions regarding their own recovery and the role of local and central government in that recovery has drawn interest from the Government of Uganda itself at the regional, sub-regional and central levels, the top development partners, the United Nations, and key research institutes in the country. Furthermore, because there is tension and lack of a coherent vision about around how to move forward regarding the serious crimes and harms suffered in the region within the general overall reconstruction and development of the region, our work provides very useful information that compares how households that have experienced serious crimes and harms during the conflict are faring in the recovery of their livelihoods and access to basic services compared to households that are conflict-affected but did not suffer serious crimes.

Second, and despite frequent assertions that we will never see enough change over three years in the provision of basic services to get useful results from the survey, our experiences in the field suggest that service delivery will change in at least some of our survey sites (Slater, 2012).

Third, we are already finding some important or surprising nuggets of information in our findings that are useful for challenging received wisdom or making us think about our research questions in slightly different ways. Examples include:

- Across countries, respondents held consistently low perceptions of the central government, particularly when in relation to other governance actors (e.g. local chiefs in DRC)
- Across countries, respondents held consistently better perceptions of local government compared with central government
- In Pakistan, the findings on food security do not appear to match the findings of other studies carried out in similar localities (see Box 6: Food security findings from Pakistan).
- We are seeing unexpected findings on the links between service delivery and perceptions of governance.

Box 6: Food security findings from Pakistan

Data from the Pakistan survey suggest that 33% of the surveyed households in Lower Dir and Swat can be classified as food insecure to varying degrees i.e., 23% were moderately insecure, 8% were food insecure and about 1% of the households were highly insecure. This finding is inconsistent with results from other studies. For example, a study conducted in 2009 estimated that 54% of the population of Swat and 64% of Lower Dir is food insecure (SDPI, SDC & WFP, 2009). Likewise, in 2010, World Food Programme Pakistan conducted a food security assessment in crisis-affected areas of KP and FATA, which revealed that Malakand division and FATA were the most disadvantaged in terms of food crop production (WFP, 2010). This difference can be attributed to the methods of estimation of food insecurity. Generally, food security is determined on the basis of three pillars (variables) of food security viz. food availability, access and absorption with various indicators for each variable (WFP, 2006). But here we estimated coping strategies index, which doesn't directly measure food (in)security – rather, it measures the extent to which households employ negative coping strategies to deal with food insecurity. Further, in the previous studies, the food security index was calculated by using macro (district) level data rather than household data. Another reason for different results may be that we conducted this survey during September-October, which is at the beginning of the winter season – people may have stored enough food for winter and thus perceive themselves to be food secure.

Source: Shahbaz et al. (2014)

5.2 Did it work to combine two types of surveys?

From the outset we recognised that trying to combine perceptions and livelihoods questions, with their two different units of analysis, would require trade-offs. Some trade-offs have included having less control over the sampling for the perceptions questions (for example, not being able to obtain perceptions from the very young or very old (who are less able to answer questions about household livelihoods, assets and finances)). It was also felt by enumerators in some countries that, due to the broad coverage of issues (asset portfolios, livelihood activities, experience of using basic services, exposure to shocks, participation in public meetings, perceptions of governance actors, and so on), it was difficult for some respondents to answer all questions by themselves. That said, the majority of interviews were conducted with one respondent only.

The bottom line, however, is whether we have been able to generate reliable data that can be: i) used to describe household livelihood status and individual perceptions of governance actors; and ii) used to explain household livelihood status and individual perceptions of governance actors. Our data has allowed us to produce interesting and relevant findings on livelihoods and perceptions of governance, even at the baseline level (see Mallett et al. 2015).

As mentioned above, it may be difficult for particular respondents to answer some of the livelihood or access to services questions. In order to analyse whether our twin approach has worked, we have compared the household / livelihoods information given by men and women and respondents in different age categories, and asked whether there are statistically significant differences between them. We have selected a number of indicators that are easily comparable across countries that relate to households assets and livelihoods, as well as measures of access to basic services and social protection.

This tells us if there are systematic differences in the way men and women / respondents of different ages (on average in the same or similar circumstances) report on livelihoods. The results are presented in the Tables 2 and 3 below.

Table 2: Household and livelihoods information by gender of respondent

	DRC			Nepal			Pakistan			Sri Lanka			Uganda		
Respondent gender	**Male**	**Female**	**Total sample**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total sample**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total sample**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total sample**	**Male**	**Female**	**Total sample**
Morris index	38.18***	24.69***	30.5	20.97***	18.69***	19.69	6.19	6.16	6.18	2.00*	2.08*	2.05	7.78***	6.30***	6.85
Food insecurity index	11.99**	12.82**	12.46	3.18	3.27	3.23	2.44	2.6	2.49	0.55	0.56	0.56	18.67	19.65	19.29
HH owns any land	0.99**	0.97**	0.98	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.53**	0.47**	0.51	0.83**	0.77**	0.79	0.93*	0.91*	0.92
HH owns house	0.82***	0.72***	0.76	0.89	0.88	0.88	0.86	0.87	0.86	0.05	0.07	0.06	0.92*	0.89*	0.9
Need to pay informal payments for health	0.14**	0.10**	0.12	0.06	0.07	0.07	0.02	0.02	0.02	8.19	8.23	8.22	0.1	0.08	0.09
Distance to boys' primary school you use? (in mins)	49.75	53.52	51.87	24.12	25.39	24.86	9.92	9.92	9.92	8.17	8.34	8.28	52.9	52.47	52.62
Distance to girls' primary school you use? (in mins)	55.41	54.56	54.94	23.48	23.92	23.74	8.1	7.76	7.98	1.67	1.67	1.67	51.44	52.25	51.96
# shocks experienced in past 3 years	1.75**	1.94**	1.86	2.34	2.3	2.32	1.49	1.49	1.49	0.13	0.1	0.11	6.28***	5.56***	5.83
Need to queue for water	0.4	0.45	0.43	0.12	0.11	0.11	0.19	0.18	0.18	0.29***	0.36***	0.33	0.77	0.77	0.77
HH receives at least one social protection transfer				0.35***	0.40***	0.38	0.25	0.24	0.25	2.91*	2.75*	2.81	0.05*	0.03*	0.04

Note: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%; measuring statistically significant difference from mean

Table 3: Household and livelihoods information by age category of respondent

	DRC				Nepal				Pakistan				Sri Lanka				Uganda			
Respondent age category	**<=30**	**30-50**	**>50**	**Total**	**<=30**	**30-50**	**>50**	**Total**	**<=30**	**30-50**	**>50**	**Total**	**<=30**	**30-50**	**>50**	**Total**	**<=30**	**30-50**	**>50**	**Total**
Morris index	31.78	29.16	30.69	30.65	20	19.51	19.68	19.7	6.59***	5.50***	6.79***	6.16	2.67*	2.98***	2.61***	2.81	7.07	6.96	6.25***	6.85
Food insecurity index	12.46	12.7	11.61*	12.4	2.89**	3.34	3.42	3.23	2.19*	2.68*	2.46	2.49	2.12*	2.01*	2.07	2.05	18.05***	19.3	21.48***	19.28
HH owns any land	0.97*	0.99	0.99	0.98	0.97*	0.96	0.95	0.96	0.52	0.47***	0.56***	0.51	0.48***	0.55	0.63***	0.56	0.90**	0.92	0.95***	0.92
HH owns house	0.69***	0.77	0.91***	0.76	0.88	0.88	0.89	0.88	0.85	0.84***	0.90***	0.86	0.73***	0.81	0.82	0.79	0.85***	0.91	0.97***	0.9
Need to pay informal payments for health	0.09**	0.16***	0.1	0.12	0.08**	0.06**	0.07	0.07	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.06	0.07*	0.04**	0.06	0.11**	0.08	0.07	0.09
Distance to boys' primary school you use? (in mins)	48.26	53.11	58.17	52.04	24.55	25.51	23.8	24.86	9.66	10.94***	8.55***	9.9	7.89	8.22	8.75	8.2	51.92	54.57	49.54	52.76
Distance to girls' primary school you use? (in mins)	53.18	52	65.40***	54.76	22.52	24.51	23.82	23.74	7.26*	9.31***	6.59***	7.97	7.74	8.42	8.26	8.27	52.44	52.98	49.36	52.06
# shocks experienced in past 3 years	1.81	2.03***	1.63***	1.85	2.29	2.38	2.26	2.32	1.41**	1.56***	1.46	1.49	1.57*	1.65	1.78**	1.67	5.93	5.81	5.67	5.83
Need to queue for water	0.45*	0.43	0.35**	0.43	0.12	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.19	0.19	0.17	0.18	0.14	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.77	0.78	0.76	0.77
HH receives at least one social protection transfer					0.35**	0.38	0.4	0.38	0.19***	0.27**	0.26	0.25	0.22***	0.33	0.41***	0.33	0.02**	0.04	0.07***	0.04

Note: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%; measuring statistically significant difference from mean

Essentially, the results show that for the selected indicators there are some significant differences in the information given by men and women and across age categories. In terms of geographical variation, we see that there are greater number of significant differences by respondents in the two African countries (DRC and Uganda), than in the Asian countries (particularly in Nepal), especially in terms of gender.

In terms of gender differences we see that where there are significant differences, men generally report a greater number of assets and land/ house ownership (with the Morris index in Sri Lanka being an exception)[5], with patterns on other differences not being consistent. In terms of assessing access to services (distance to schools; the need to queue for water), there are generally no differences, with the exception of social protection receipt.

In terms of age of the respondent, there are less clear patterns, but we see that younger and older respondents are more likely to give responses that are significantly different from the mean response than middle-aged respondents. Access to services is again quite consistent across age categories (with the exception of DRC and Pakistan). There are numerous differences in terms of asset ownership and food insecurity. In general, younger respondents are less likely to report house or land ownership.

This analysis illustrates that the identity of the respondent – more specifically, the gender and age – systematically affects survey responses to particular questions. This has important implications for respondent selection when conducting household surveys, particularly in relation to sampling design. The conclusion here is not that men give 'more truthful' answers to survey questions, or vice versa, but rather that it clearly matters who is asked: we cannot simply assume that different members of the same household will provide uniform answers to supposedly 'objective' survey questions (such as questions about number of assets owned). Although it is hard to be sure, this may have affected the consistency and quality of some of our data. We will explore the implications of this analysis in greater in-depth in a separate piece of follow-up work.

5.3 Did the cross-country element work?

Adapting a generic survey to specific country contexts – without losing the opportunity to generate some strong comparative analysis between countries – has been one of the most difficult challenges throughout the survey design process. In particular, we found it very difficult to get the balance right between: a) designing and implementing a survey that would generate policy interest and produce new evidence (that is, not replicate existing work) at a country level; and b) design and implement a survey that was consistent enough across countries to ensure that the SLRC generates the strong comparative analysis and generalizable lessons for policy that are critical for the SLRC to be successful as a cross-country, multi-year research programme.

The need to strike an appropriate balance created a tension across the Consortium, with country teams keen to include interesting and relevant contextualised questions and modules, and the ODI coordination team trying to maintain a high degree of cross-country convergence. This tension produced a number of disagreements and difficult negotiations over the precise content of the survey, and we have had to recognize and manage trade-offs where specific elements of the survey would have been very different (and probably more useful) if designed for only a single country (see Box 7. Negotiating content in the Sri Lanka survey instrument, by Gayathri Lokuge and Box 8: Choosing comparative measures and indexes that are valid in eastern DRC, by Adriaan Ferf).

[5] For Uganda we have tested if this could be linked to female-headed households being worse off and have excluded all female respondents, that are household heads, from the analysis. We find similar patterns, albeit with smaller differences.

In order to have indicators that are easily measurable and comparable across countries, we included a number of indicators that may have been a bit too oversimplified on balance. For example, we used a simple and one-dimensional indicator to measure access to health: distance in minutes to the health centre last used. Initial regression results have shown that this is quite a difficult indicator to interpret. While this gives us a good indication of accessibility, on reflection a composite indicator that also takes account of other dimensions of access may have been more valuable.

Box 7. Negotiating content in the Sri Lanka survey instrument, by Gayathri Lokuge

Getting the balance right for the Sri Lanka survey instrument was made difficult by two main factors. First, the commitment that CEPA had made to the Department of Fisheries, the government partner who is an important stakeholder in terms of policy influence and in facilitating data collection in the war-affected areas. And second, the need to generate data that could be used to test certain hypotheses and explore key certain issues as identified through the review of literature on fisheries (the chosen 'sectoral' livelihoods focus for Sri Lanka), such as the (lack of) involvement of women in the fisheries-related activities. Combined with the feedback we received from a Sri Lankan fisheries sector expert, as well as CEPA's own experience of conducting large surveys, we felt compelled to negotiate for more country-specific and fisheries-specific data. The result was several rounds of detailed and rather drawn-out discussions over e-mail and, when the teams recognised that e-mail discussions were further complicating the issue, over Skype. However, in retrospect, we feel that the rapport building that had already taken place at the start of the Consortium's lifespan (through various meetings and a two-week training session involving participants from all country partners) enabled these discussions to take place in a mutually respectful, productive and constructive manner.

Box 8: Choosing comparative measures and indexes that are valid in eastern DRC, by Adriaan Ferf

What I regret is that I did not know enough about existing surveys which had already been carried out in eastern DRC. Using parts of these existing survey instruments would have increased the validity of our survey findings in DRC by allowing for comparison with other datasets; we could have also used the validation of their proxies especially with regard to assets/income. Looking back, I suggest that it should be the first question to ask from the different countries what main surveys are done in the country, and, more specifically, which particular measures and indexes tend to be used. For example, the Morris Index could well be fantastic for cross-country comparative purposes, but I have no idea whether it has been used in DRC. And I have no idea whether it has been validated in the DRC.

Tensions and trade-offs were also encountered during the analysis stage. From a cross-country perspective, trying to ensure that all countries were consistent in their use of independent variables when running regressions proved difficult. From a country perspective, there have been understandably frustrating limits on the kinds of analyses partners have wanted to run and findings they have wished to probe. This trade-off has been at its most visible when a country dataset throws up a particularly interesting or surprising result; while country teams have sometimes wanted to explore this result further, it has been important from a cross-country perspective that each country produces the same basic set of regression tables (as a minimum requirement) first, before exploring other directions. Being insistent on this has sometimes generated frustration amongst partners. This procedure has also been difficult in terms of ensuring a high-quality quantitative analysis in all countries: cross-country differences in the number of observations for certain variables has meant that in some countries the regressions do not explain as much variation as in others.

Based on country reports and the synthesis report (Mallet et al., 2015), the following similarities can be noted (for full findings see the published baseline reports):

- Data across countries suggest that conflict isn't the only thing that local people have to deal with on a day-to-day basis: households face various daily stresses (health problems, inflation, livestock

disease), natural disasters (flooding) and crimes (cattle rustling, physical attacks), suggesting that conflict forms just one element within a broader landscape of risk and vulnerability. Or, to put it another away, countries may be affected by conflict, but they are not defined by it.

- Respondents' perceptions of the government are generally fairly negative, with frequently low proportions of country samples reporting, for example, that the government cares about their opinions. However, generally speaking, people's perceptions appear to vary according to level of government, with local actors tending to be perceived more positively (or, at least, less negatively) than central actors. We can observe this trend, to varying degrees, in DRC, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- While we might expect the quality of services to be consistently low across conflict-affected situations, respondents generally reported fairly well against satisfaction indicators. For example, in Pakistan, the majority of respondents reported that they were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' overall with their health centre, boys' school and girls' school. Similarly, in DRC, 38 percent of respondents reported that they were 'rather satisfied' with the overall quality of the school, 29 percent 'satisfied', and 3 per cent 'very satisfied'.

5.4 How well have we worked together as a Consortium?

There have been areas where we have worked together very well as a Consortium, and other areas which will require improving upon when we come to implement the second round of the survey in 2015/16. Generally, we have worked well together, for example:

- We worked together as a team through every single stage of the survey process, from initial design through to analysis and write-up.
- There has been lots of shared problem solving. Learning from the experiences of one country team enabled the ODI survey team to apply lessons to other countries, and, on some occasions, problem solving took place between country researchers directly (for example, researchers from the Nepal team helping researchers from the DRC team overcome issues with CS Pro software)

However, communicating over distance is difficult to do well consistently, particularly when a large team is involved. This sometimes resulted in confusion amongst partners about who was or should be doing what (that is, uncertainty about roles and responsibilities), which could have been better addressed if there had been more face-to-face time. The implication of this is that a greater portion of the budget should be set aside to enable more in-person contact.

Further, owing to the centralised way in which the survey process was structured (arguably necessary in order to achieve a strong cross-country element), there was relatively little communication across countries, apart from a few cases of shared problem solving. The majority of communication went via ODI, which is perhaps unsurprising, but meant that interactions across the Consortium tended to be channelled through the centre, suggesting that relationships between country partners might not have been strengthened as much as they could have been.

Finally, in terms of quality control, a number of countries had members of the ODI team in the field to supervise fieldwork supervisors and check completed questionnaires on the spot, for instance in Pakistan. This greatly improved quality of the data. Quality control in the field was difficult, if a member of the core team was not able to be present in the field (e.g. South Sudan). Next time it may be better to have smaller survey teams, as they can be monitored more easily.

5.5 What have we learnt about doing surveys in conflict-affected situations?

We can identify three key lessons about doing surveys in conflict-affected situations.

First, and perhaps unsurprisingly, security-related issues create obstacles to fieldwork, some of which are more foreseeable than other. In some countries, our ability to use GPS trackers was limited by the suspicions of particular authorities. In DRC, poor security in a local hotel led to the theft of survey funds. In Sri Lanka, respondents were arrested. In Nepal, female enumerators faced threat of abduction. In South Sudan, ongoing conflict in Jonglei, combined with UNDSS rules, made physical access very difficult. All of these presented real challenges to ensuring that fieldwork was carried out in a safe and ethical manner.

Second, and related to the first point, the survey turned out to be more expensive in some of the countries (DRC). The implication here is that we need to allocate a sufficient budget next time, especially given that the security situation can change extremely quickly.

Third, it's not all about conflict. Although classified as conflict-affected in many respects, we have learned that the areas we are working in should not be defined by violent conflict in an absolute sense. Shocks produced by natural disasters, for example, are often experienced with greater frequency than shocks associated with conflict. There are implications here for survey design when working in conflict-affected environments.

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