

**What matters
to people when
recovering
from conflict**

Phase I: 2011 - 2017

The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) is a global research consortium exploring livelihoods, basic service delivery, legitimacy, and behaviours in conflict-affected situations. Funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), Irish Aid, and the European Commission, the SLRC was established in 2011 with the aim of strengthening the evidence base around recovery after conflict, in order to inform policy and practice.

The first phase of our research (2011 – 2017) explored questions on state legitimacy, state capacity, and livelihoods trajectories. We learned that livelihoods recovery and state-building are turbulent, non-linear, processes – and supporting them requires more than technical ‘best-practice’ fixes. Policy and programming need to be adept at interpreting what issues matter locally, navigating politics, building relationships, and responding to ever-changing situations.



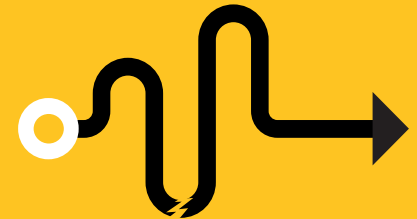
Our findings

Our findings challenged a number of commonly-held assumptions about how people recover from conflict and the relationship between individuals, services and the state:

- Access to and satisfaction with services does not automatically lead to improved perceptions of government. Instead, we found that it is the 'how' that matters when it comes to the question of whether service delivery can enhance state legitimacy.
- Livelihood recovery is neither automatic or linear after conflict. We observed that although food security on average increased after the end of conflict, the overwhelming majority of households continued to 'churn' in and out of food security.
- After conflict ends, people often struggled to perceive their lives as getting better. This perception persisted even when indicators showed that security, access to services, and infrastructure were improving. An overarching sentiment is that communities feel that they cannot recover from war. Peacebuilding and conflict prevention need to help create environments that are not just peaceful, but that people actually experience as being peaceful.

Find out more:

- *Tracking change in fragile and conflict-affected situations: lessons from the SLRC panel survey*
- *How to support state-building, service delivery and recovery in fragile and conflict-affected situations'*
- *5 ways to support state-building, service delivery and recovery in fragile and conflict-affected situations*

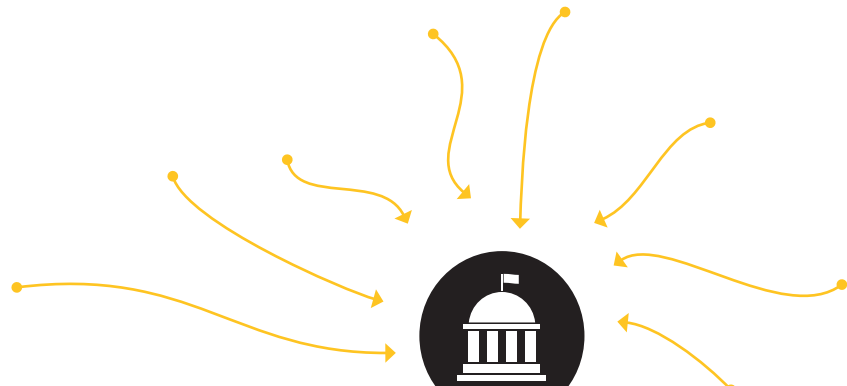




Phase II: 2017 – 2019

Our Phase I research findings brought to the fore unanswered questions about why livelihoods continue to be volatile, why there is such a gap between how people perceive a situation and how they behave in it, and what it is that makes the relationship between service delivery and state legitimacy so complex. These questions formed our research agenda for Phase II:

1. What are the underlying reasons for continued livelihoods instability in post-conflict recovery situations?
2. How does the experience of conflict link to how people experience trust, fairness, and expectations of the future as part of their recovery?
3. How does service delivery influence the negotiation of state legitimacy?



1. What are the underlying reasons for continued livelihoods instability in post-conflict recovery situations?

- Credit can help to smooth household consumption, it can also mean that people accumulate debt, that their lives become more unstable and that they become more vulnerable to shocks. This fuels a pattern of livelihood improvement and reversal ('churning'). Access to credit needs more attention, as do the ways in which households access credit.
- Many development programmes encourage entrepreneurship as a livelihoods strategy, particularly in post-conflict settings. Yet, entrepreneurship is often not a choice but a coping mechanism and may increase livelihoods volatility.
- Migration is overwhelmingly not an agent of change in the country of origin. Instead, migration amplifies existing gender, family, economic and social relations. It is not automatically the disruptor it is imagined to be.

Paying back the money is very difficult because we don't have a decent income, so everyone in the household is anxious and sad and wondering how we can possibly earn this money to pay back the loan.

– Woman head of household,
Afghanistan



2. How does the experience of conflict link to how people experience trust, fairness, and expectations of the future as part of their recovery?

- It is often assumed that people in conflict settings will act out of self-interest. However, our research in Uganda suggests that conflict may in fact make people more collaborative. The gap between perception and action makes it difficult for people to feel that their community is working together towards recovery.
- Standards of what people consider to be fair are higher when people are reminded of the conflict. Therefore, making people feel included and treated fairly is extra challenging in a post-conflict setting.
- People in post-conflict settings look to the future for change. This means they are less likely to take action today. This may suggest that one challenge of recovery is that waiting is more reasonable than risking an investment in time or resources in the present.

Our mixed-methods behavioural research in Uganda

We had 700 people play behavioural games on tablets to test what they considered to be fair or reasonable. By having a prime and control group, we found that simply speaking about the time of the conflict had a measurable impact on behaviour. This highlights the power that the conflict – or the memory of it – has to shape behaviour.



3. How does service delivery influence the negotiation of state legitimacy?

- State legitimacy is not transactional: where the state delivers certain services and in return citizens grant the state legitimacy.
- The state exerts power through the delivery of services, for example, through specifying who qualifies for a service and who gains employment in the delivery of services. Legitimacy emerges from the negotiation of how that power is exerted.
- Legitimacy emerges when power is exerted according to rules (formal and informal), and those rules align with shared beliefs about how power should be exerted.
- Addressing people's needs is important in itself but may not deliver increased state legitimacy. Addressing what people feel is important may have a greater impact on improving state legitimacy.

Hospitals are the worst place to visit. They never treat you as humans. They treat you on the basis of money in your pocket. I never have enough money to give them that's why I get scared of going to hospitals and prefer sitting at home.
– Female sharecropper, Swat Valley, Pakistan



Download our research and find out more:
securelivelihoods.org/findings-second-phase-2017-2019

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Cover: Conducting livelihoods interviews in Afghanistan. SLRC, 2014.

Page 2: Sri Lankan fabric shop. Gayathri Lokuge/SLRC, 2018.

Page 4: Money changer at the bazaar displays his currency, Afghanistan. Institute for Money, Technology and Financial Inclusion, 2010.

Page 5: In the Acholi Quarter, Kampala, the most common livelihood activity for women is bead-making. Annika McGinnis.

Page 6: Swapping aid for trade in northern Uganda. Pete Lewis/DFID, 2011.

Page 7: Men cycle on an unfinished road, Gulariya, Nepal. Clare Cummings/2018.

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