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World Bank.

Tracking change in fragile and conflict-affected situations

Lessons from the SLRC panel survey

Tracking change in fragile and conflict-affected situations

The SLRC longitudinal panel survey: what is it for?

In 2012, researchers from the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) surveyed almost 10,000 people across five countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda. Three years later, in 2015, research teams went back to the same towns, villages and communities to track down and interview the very same people once more. They were successful in 86% of cases: more than 8,400 of the original respondents were found and re-interviewed, thus enabling us to directly observe individual and household change over this three-year period.

The reason for going to these lengths was to understand how processes of post-conflict recovery and state-building play out in some of the world's most challenging contexts – and to equip policy-makers and practitioners with better information about how to support those processes.

The SLRC also aims to bring the experiences and views of people on the ground more sharply into focus in debates about policy and programming. Too often, strategies for peace- and state-building are guided by abstract, de-contextualised, blueprint thinking. Forms of governance that have proven effective in certain places and at certain times are simplistically transferred to different settings, where they are found to be incongruous and detached from the local realities of how people make a living, access public services, and relate to authority.

The SLRC panel survey is an attempt to help ensure that decision-making about recovery and state-building is aligned more closely with the experiences, perceptions, interests and needs of those who have lived through – and often continue to live in – conflict.

A lot rides on getting these policy decisions right. An estimated two billion people live in countries affected by fragility, conflict and large-scale violence, and by 2030 it is predicted that 60% of the world's poorest people will be concentrated in such countries (OECD, 2016). According to the World Bank (2011: 1), insecurity is the 'primary development challenge of our time', and major aid agencies are increasingly committing large shares of their resources to engagement in 'fragile states'. As one example, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) is committed until 2020 to spend at least 50% of its annual budget in places affectedby conflict and fragility.

It is important that these expanding investments are informed by high quality evidence – and particularly by careful, contextualised understandings of what states and societies recovering from conflict need, and what kind of programming is most likely to work in achieving such recovery. At a time when aid spending is coming under mounting public pressure domestically, it is more vital than ever to ensure policy effectiveness.

Adapted from the full synthesis report (Sturge *et al.*, 2017), this briefing summarises what we have learned from two rounds of survey data collection and analysis across the five countries. It presents key findings for the surveys' main thematic areas: livelihoods and wellbeing, service delivery, and governance. Drawing out the implications of these findings, it also puts forward concrete policy recommendations within each thematic area, as well as some wider reflections by way of a conclusion. First, however, it provides some essential information about the survey itself.

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The SLRC survey: what you need to know

As a multi-year programme, SLRC has been centrally concerned with questions of transition, particularly in relation to what processes of livelihood recovery and state-building look like following periods of conflict. It has sought to do this from a primarily micro-level perspective, interested less in the 'big picture' machinery of transition (power-sharing deals, formal agreements, rules and reforms) than in the way such things translate (or don't) into actual change in the lives of individuals and households. Are citizens getting better or worse off over time, or simply stagnating? Do they think more positively about their government as transitions unfold? What drives these changes? And how do rates of progress and decline vary across different social groups?

Understanding change of this nature is possible only when appropriate evidence exists. This, in turn, requires the availability of reliable longitudinal data that allows us to measure shifts, fluctuations and consistencies in a range of indicators between at least two points in time. Wide-ranging literature reviews carried out during SLRC's inception phase found that this type of data is sorely absent in conflict-affected contexts (Carpenter *et al.*, 2012; Mallett and Slater, 2012). While established and rigorous longitudinal research exists in many developed and developing countries, the challenges of carrying out data collection in volatile, insecure conditions – and doing so consistently over time – make panel data particularly hard to come by in so-called 'fragile states'.

To this end – and featuring as a core element of our research agenda – SLRC has established longitudinal panel surveys in five countries that have each been affected by conflict and

fragility to varying degrees. We designed our panel to consist of individuals. To date, two rounds of data collection have been carried out – one in 2012, and again in 2015[1] – with different sample sizes across the countries.

The round-one sample sizes were inflated to allow for attrition of up to 20%. This means that the sample remains representative at a specific administrative or geographical level in each country, even when some respondents drop out of the sample because they cannot be re-interviewed for whatever reason. As the figures in Table 1 show, actual attrition rates ranged from 10% (Nepal) to 16% (DRC), and, overall, 8,404 of the original 9,767 respondents were re-interviewed in round two. This means that our survey teams managed to find six out of every seven individuals they sought to re-interview in 2015, which is respectable given the challenges associated with tracking down respondents in comparatively volatile and fluid contexts. Furthermore, sampling weights were incorporated into the analysis in order to deal with those individuals who did drop out by round two.

Table 1: Number of respondents per country and panel wave

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

The 'panel' aspect of the surveys – whereby we define our panel as including *exactly the same respondents* in both rounds, as opposed to a cross-sectional approach where a new sample of respondents is generated each time – gives the SLRC survey additional analytical value and scope. It allows us to: i) directly track changes in people's lives over the two- or three-year study period; and ii) identify factors that share an underlying association with those changes. Compared to the more standard cross-sectional approach, this enables us to better explore and understand potential causal relationships. It also allows us to build a multidimensional picture of development and change over time, generating information on three broad themes:

■ People's **livelihoods** (income-generating activities, asset portfolios, food security, and constraining and enabling factors within the broader institutional and geographical context).

■ Their access to and experiences with **basic services** (education, health, water) **and transfers** (social protection and livelihoods assistance).

■ Their relationships with **governance processes and practices** (civic participation and perceptions of major political actors).

All surveys focused on specific districts or sub-national regions and so are not nationally representative – for example, in Pakistan we focus on conflict-affected parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, whilst in Uganda we look at sub-regions in the north that were profoundly affected by war. This must be kept in mind when interpreting the findings. However, it should also be pointed out that achieving nationally representative findings was never the original intention. Rather, we sought to test and explore a number of relationships – for example, between exposure to shocks and asset accumulation, or between changing access to services and perceptions of government – and ask whether there is any consistency in these relationships across diverse contexts.

The findings that appear in the following pages are derived from statistical analysis of the survey data. The data was examined on a country-by-country basis and then compared, rather than pooled together across countries. The analysis draws on a combination of descriptive statistics and (primarily) regression techniques. The full synthesis report by Sturge *et al.* (2017) contains all relevant information for those interested in more detail on the methodology underpinning the surveys – both in terms of their design and implementation, as well as SLRC's analytical approach.

What did we find?

Livelihoods and wellbeing trajectories in conflict and post-conflict settings

How do people fare after conflict has 'officially' ended? To what extent does the return of stability generate a peace dividend that trickles down to individuals, households and communities? And what factors are associated with local-level recovery?

The SLRC survey sheds some light on important policy questions such as these, having been designed to capture changes in wellbeing and livelihoods over time. Here, we highlight three key findings and their implications for policy.

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1   The exception is Uganda, where the first round of data collection was conducted in January 2013, and the second round was brought forward to 2015 to avoid interviewing at the time of the presidential elections in 2016.

1 Most households experienced changes in food security, indicating a high degree of 'churning'.

Analysis reveals rather striking 'churning' trajectories in the food-security status of many households (see Figure 1). By this, we mean that while some households have seen improvements in food security, relatively equal numbers have seen theirs worsen. This suggests that household wellbeing is characterised by vulnerability and instability: whilst substantial and potentially transformational improvements are possible, so too are situations where households backslide rapidly.

Thus, the aggregated picture of gradual progress – which we observe in most countries between 2012 and 2015 – conceals some quite differential rates, and indeed directions, of post-conflict recovery. The panel approach has been critical in this regard: we would never have discovered this nuanced picture using cross-sectional survey data.

A further round of the panel survey will allow us to confirm whether households remain on their 2012–2015 trajectories in the medium to long term, or if they continue to churn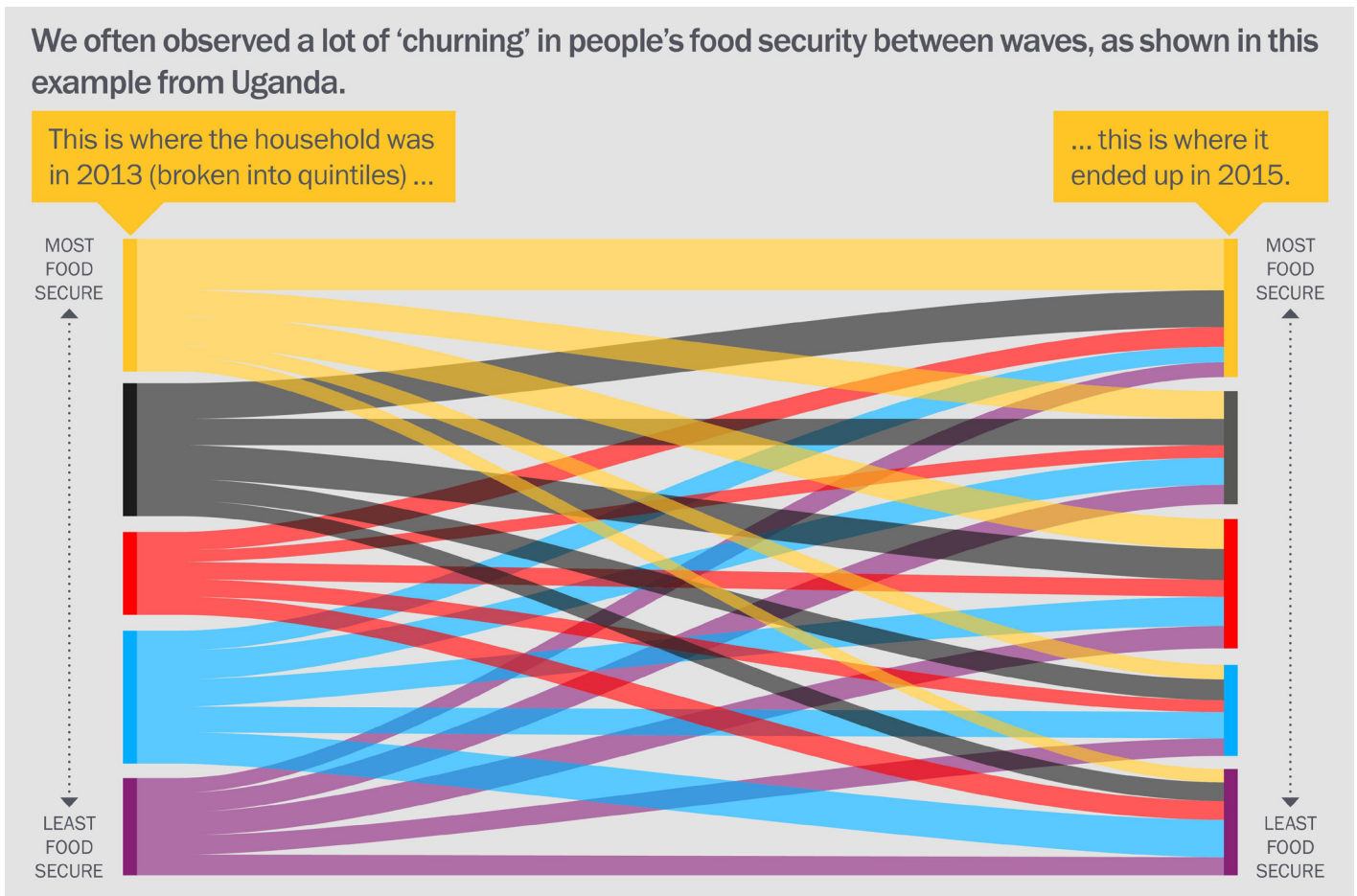 over time. This would also enable us to explore whether households can use assets to become better off, or whether they remain caught in a low-level equilibrium trap.

Overall, the key message here is about timelines and trajectories. Recovery and decline can be relatively rapid, but the extent to which households are able to stay on upward trajectories of livelihood improvement can be influenced by the diverse shocks and stresses that households in conflict-affected situations continue to face. The levels of churning and complexity of interactions between different factors suggest that getting households onto positive wellbeing trajectories and into secure and sustainable livelihoods will be a protracted process – and one that is likely to be frequently disrupted.

Policy implication:

The SLRC survey findings show that we can't assume that improvements in wellbeing and livelihoods – and indeed the broader processes of economic recovery – are steady, linear or durable. Policy-makers need to think about programming

Figure 1: Changes in food security in Uganda

We often observed a lot of 'churning' in people's food security between waves, as shown in this example from Uganda.

This is where the household was in 2013 (broken into quintiles) …

… this is where it ended up in 2015.

MOST FOOD SECURE

LEAST FOOD SECURE

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that is more able to respond to household vulnerability: this means doing more to help to prevent vulnerable households from sliding into poverty, including the provision of safety nets. Furthermore, given the high levels of churning we see in people's fortunes, investing heavily in complex methods to determine vulnerability and targeting assistance may be ineffective and counterproductive. Simple, more categorical approaches may be more appropriate.

2 Households generally increased their ownership of bulky household assets over time, but this may not be a simple case of 'putting down roots' in response to reductions in armed conflict.

The majority of households in all five countries reported a change in assets, with most showing increases in ownership. Among these assets are bulky, durable, domestic items such as beds, tables, mattresses and fridges. These investments are seen alongside reported declines in fighting between 2012 and 2015.

It is possible that investments of this nature tell us something about the course of war-to-peace transitions: expensive and unwieldy assets can prove burdensome during periods of instability, both singling out those households as potentially lucrative targets of violence, and also rendering forced or unplanned migration more problematic. Conflict and instability potentially act as deterrents to investing in such items. The removal of these deterrents might encourage some households to 'put down roots' in places that offer stronger prospects of predictability and lower levels of risk.

That said, there is a counter-intuitive dimension to our finding. In many cases where individuals report less fighting in their local area, they do not report feeling any safer – either within their villages or when travelling further afield. This demonstrates that the sources of (or threats to) safety are numerous in fragile situations – from violent armed conflict to domestic violence – and suggests that there is not a simple relationship between the physical, 'objective' presence of stability and the more 'subjective' individual perception of one's surrounding environment.

Policy implication:

More focus is required in programming both on reducing conflict and addressing what drives people's broader perceptions of safety and security. Feeling safe – and the behaviours that this produces – may depend not just on an absence of war, but also on positive measures to deal with wider issues of crime, violence, instability and environmental stress.

3 Some households have acquired assets through 'adverse livelihood strategies', such as taking on more debt, but further analysis is needed to understand this relationship.

The survey also explores how households acquire more assets, and several explanations have emerged that call for more data and further analysis. In particular, debt levels are generally high across most countries (see Table 2). Specific evidence from Sri Lanka suggests that some households are going into debt in order to buy assets, and this may also be the case in other contexts. However, whether this is a positive or a negative development is unclear: on the one hand, it suggests greater pressure on household budgets, but on the other hand, many households appear to have used this extra capital to, in some senses, get 'better off'.

Table 2: Incidence of household debt across rounds

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

Note: Asterisks indicate where the difference in the percentage who are in debt is statistically significant across waves, where ***$p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$

So too with livelihood diversification, which is often framed as a route out of poverty. Among our respondents in DRC and Uganda, for example, we have seen an increase in the uptake of casual labour, as part of a general trend of livelihood diversification.

But given the nature of casual work, as well as the reasons why people often undertake it, we need to be cautious when interpreting the positive 'value' of these shifts in livelihood activities. Livelihood diversification can be a good thing – in some circumstances. The real question is what forms of economic activity individuals and households are branching out into, and the reasons underpinning this expansion.

In some cases, the shift is driven by the need to simply survive, and may produce a range of negative livelihood outcomes in the medium to long term (as well as exposing individuals to situations of precariousness and exploitation in the present).

Policy implication:

The analysis on debt and livelihoods highlights the importance of more local, context-specific analysis and deciphering what happens at the individual, household and community level. Policies and programmes aimed at supporting socio-economic recovery need to pay more attention to local power dynamics, better understand how

markets work, and – most importantly of all – recognise that it is not conflict alone that we need to understand. Rather, it is the intersections between conflict and other wider influences on livelihoods and wellbeing – especially health, environmental shocks, economic opportunities, and social-identity markers like gender or ethnicity – that matter for improving people's wellbeing.

Access to and experiences of basic services, social protection and livelihood support

Education, health and water services are all important for people's recovery after conflict. Transfers, such as social protection and livelihood assistance, can also play a vital role. The SLRC survey was designed to generate information on people's access to basic services (using journey times as a distance-related indicator of access) and transfers (using receipt as the indicator), as well as their experiences of them (using a combination of subjective and objective indicators of quality). Importantly, we sought to examine how these things change over time. Two key findings emerge.

1   The experience of using a service – especially how they do it – influences people's satisfaction.

On the whole, satisfaction with services is relatively high across both rounds of the survey, and, where people's judgements change over time, they mostly become more positive. Furthermore, in four out of five countries (the exception is DRC), the average number of problems reported by respondents either fell or remained the same across survey rounds.

Analysis shows that people's overall satisfaction with a service is associated with a series of characteristics related to how that service is run, rather than how easy it is to access the service. In other words, the experience of *using*, as opposing to *accessing*, the service appears to strongly influence overall satisfaction.

Who delivers services also matters for satisfaction – but not in a consistent way. For health services, for example, respondents in Nepal and Uganda who switched to a government-run health centre between survey rounds became less satisfied with that service. For water, respondents who made the switch to government-run facilities in Uganda and committee-run ones in DRC became more satisfied, while those who switched to facilities run by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Pakistan became less satisfied. The evidence highlights the importance of deciphering the local contextual factors that underpin or drive these changes, and of recognising the differences between service sectors.

Unsurprisingly, there is also evidence from a number of countries that experiencing a problem with a service in round two (when no problems were experienced in round one) is linked to lower satisfaction.

However, by far the clearest and most consistent results relate to respondents' satisfaction with specific characteristics of a service, such as waiting times at health clinics or teacher attendance at schools. Across all countries, those who changed from 'dissatisfied' to 'satisfied' with specific characteristics of their health service reported in round two that they were more satisfied with the health service overall. This may not appear surprising at first glance. However, it must be pointed out that assessments of satisfaction with health services in the UK show that perceptions are often driven by factors other than direct experiences at clinics and hospitals (such as media narratives and portrayals) (IPSOS MORI, 2011).

Policy implication:

Given that the quality of the services that people use arguably matters more than the ease with which they access them, donor agencies will achieve more if they reorient their programming to focus as much on ensuring sustained and effective high-quality services as they do on infrastructure projects to reduce the time and distance to access schools, water and health posts.

2   Coverage of social protection varies and is generally low for livelihoods assistance. Perceived impacts are mixed.

The share of households receiving any social-protection support by survey round has stayed fairly constant (Table 3), with two exceptions (Sri Lanka and DRC, which increase and decrease respectively). Within receiving households, however, we see a similar pattern of churning to that described for food security – some households lost access to support, while others began receiving it. Thus, there is a relatively high degree of moving 'in and out' of social protection over time. Given that the surveys were conducted in mostly rural, previously conflict-affected areas – where households face a high number of shocks and stresses – there are questions here about the extent of formal support to vulnerable households. However, the picture is perhaps better interpreted as one of growing coverage that is not always well sustained – for those households who received transfers in 2012, a large share also received them in 2015 in Nepal (70%), Pakistan (65%) and Sri Lanka (77%) where programmes are more established and have greater coverage. In DRC, 31% of those receiving transfers in 2012 reported receiving them again in 2015, while the figure was lower still in Uganda at 26%. In both African countries, social-protection programmes are fledgling, and receipt of transfers

Table 3: Household access to social protection over time

	Proprotion receiving social protection by round (%)		Proprotion switching into or out of social protection (%)			
	Round 1	Round 2	Received it in both rounds	Received it in neither round	Started receiving it between rounds	Stopped receiving it between rounds
DRC	29.9	20.0	9.2	59.5	10.6	20.7
Nepal	38.0	38.6	26.6	50.9	11.7	10.9
Pakistan	25.3	30.9	16.4	60.9	14.5	8.3
Sri Lanka	33.0	53.4	25.3	39.2	28.0	7.6
Uganda	17.0	17.3	4.4	71.3	14.1	10.3

may be through emergency programmes in many cases.

In addition to patchy coverage (particularly in our survey sites in Africa), those households that do receive a transfer are frequently dissatisfied with its impact. For all countries, at least one third to half of respondents across both survey rounds stated that 'the social-protection transfer is too small to make a difference'. This is potentially linked to: the fact that some of what is described as social protection may be more akin to periodic transfers delivered as part of an emergency or humanitarian response; the poor timeliness of the transfer (with many respondents stating that the transfer is often delivered late); or the low monetary value of the transfers themselves.

In terms of livelihoods assistance, even though the majority of survey households worked in agriculture across both rounds and faced a range of shocks, it seems that most received little long-term support. The majority did not receive livelihood support in either round of the survey, and those that did, churned in and out of participation.

At the same time, however, we see higher levels of satisfaction with livelihood assistance than for social protection. Around two thirds or more of respondents across all countries stated that the livelihood assistance that they received 'improves their livelihood'.

Policy implication:

Policy-makers need to focus on making social protection and livelihoods support more effective by seeking ways to increase coverage and transfer values, and also by making transfers more predictable and reliable. This is important for ensuring that such interventions achieve greater impact, and, better still, meet the expectations that are often attached to them.

What influences how people think about government?

Given that state legitimacy is viewed as a fundamental outcome for donors and aid agencies as they seek to support state-building in fragile and conflict-affected situations, the SLRC survey set out to shed light on the relationship between service delivery and state legitimacy.
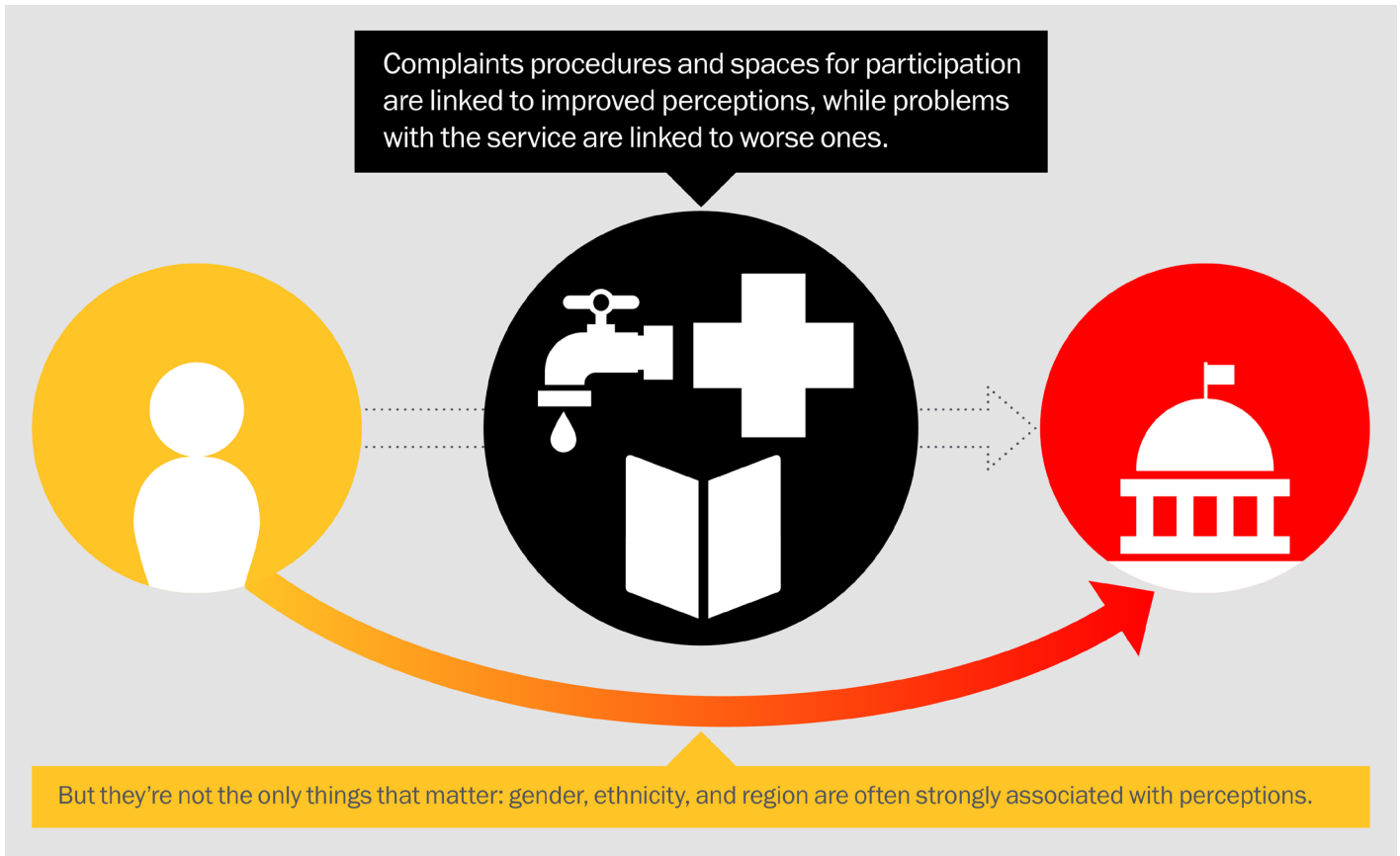
Primarily, we did this by testing and exploring factors that are associated with changes in people's attitudes towards government. While this doesn't tell us everything about legitimacy – this is a notoriously complicated thing to measure – it does tell us something, particularly about the first few steps along an assumed causal pathway in which delivering services changes people's views of government, such that they accept its legitimacy.

Three key findings stand out from the analysis (see Figure 2 also).

1 Identity and geographical location make a big difference in people's perceptions of government.

Some of the strongest underlying associations with people's perceptions of government relate to aspects that do not change over time. Whereas aggregate measures of people's perceptions (and other proxies of legitimacy) can mask inter-group variation, our disaggregated data on ethnicity and geography represent consistently strong variables across the regression analyses. They suggest that there are both identity-based and territorial aspects to legitimacy. This is important because it raises the question about whether the government is only considered legitimate by specific groups and categories of people. The very fact that such variation exists, demonstrates that legitimation is neither an even nor straightforward process.

Figure 2: 'Is better service delivery linked to more positive perceptions of government?'

Complaints procedures and spaces for participation are linked to improved perceptions, while problems with the service are linked to worse ones.

But they're not the only things that matter: gender, ethnicity, and region are often strongly associated with perceptions.

Policy implication:

Donors need to manage their expectations about their ability to realign and improve people's perceptions of government via external investments in things like service delivery. This may be possible in some circumstances – if done carefully and fine-tuned for the context. Processes of legitimation are ultimately filtered through structural, identity-based factors, however. Simple scale-ups in service coverage seem unlikely to override these deeper issues.

2   Accountability mechanisms and opportunities to participate matter more for perceptions of government than access or satisfaction with services.

Our data show no statistically significant correlations between changes in people's access (measured in journey time) to health, education and water services, and changes in their perceptions of government actors. There are also no statistically significant associations between receiving livelihood assistance and perceptions of government. Starting to receive social protection between survey rounds has a few statistically significant associations with changing government perceptions, but these examples vary between countries and levels of government.

So, although our analysis does not support the idea that improvements in access necessarily generate more positive perceptions of government, it does show that, under certain circumstances and conditions, particular aspects of public-service provision may shape the way in which people think about their government. As we have seen, this does not include distance-related access. Nor does it include satisfaction, for the most part – although we do find isolated cases (for instance becoming satisfied with the health service between waves is associated with improved perceptions of government in a few cases).

There is evidence from both survey rounds that opportunities for participation (knowing about and attending consultations) and the presence of accountability platforms (like grievance mechanisms) are associated with better perceptions. Experiencing problems with a service is associated with worsening perceptions of government actors, particularly in Pakistan. At the same time, however, having knowledge of grievance mechanisms or attending meetings about services is associated with improved perceptions in Nepal, Sri Lanka and Uganda.

Overall, the evidence shows that people care less about who provides services – for example, we find little support for the widespread assumption that delivery by non-government

actors worsens perceptions of government – and more about the quality of those services, especially the nature of their direct encounters with service providers. Problematic service delivery potentially affects not just people's relationships with and attitudes towards local-level providers – whoever they might be – but also attitudes towards the government itself.

Policy implication:

There are many good justifications for improving access to services, but the idea that to do so leads to a state-legitimacy dividend should not be at the top of that list. Donors might better focus on delivering services on the basis of their importance for people's wellbeing and for developing human capacity, especially in conflict-affected situations. They should also recognise that, while there can potentially be secondary impacts of service delivery, the route to these comes from focusing on *how* services are provided. This means: ensuring that people are consulted about service delivery or participate in decision-making; supporting the development and maintenance of accountability mechanisms; and recognising that perceived fairness matters. At the same time, the evidence suggests that, in most situations, donors can stop worrying about the assumed de-legitimating effect of delivery by non-government actors.

3 **Bad service delivery can undermine perceptions of government, but questions remain about the dual processes of legitimation and de-legitimation.**

We see from the evidence that the association between service delivery and perceptions of government may not always be positive. The relatively strong and consistent finding that any kind of problem with basic services shapes views of government tells us a number of things. At the most basic level, it shows that people care about the services they are getting, and that problematic service delivery potentially affects not just people's relationships with providers, but with government itself.

The state-building policy agenda assumes that, given the right investments and attention, service delivery can play a positive role in building state legitimacy. But the data clearly suggest that people care most about the quality of services provided. The fact that problems with services seem to share a stronger underlying association with perceptions relative to several other aspects of service delivery (e.g. access) suggests that a bad experience in the past can affect perceptions months or years later. 'Bad' service delivery can undermine people's perceptions of government – and potentially have a delegitimating effect.

Policy implication:

From a state-building perspective, scaling up access – for example, enrolling more children in school, bringing health facilities physically closer to communities – is only one

part of what needs to be done. An emphasis on quality is important for state legitimacy, as well as better development outcomes more broadly. If done 'badly', and if citizens perceive their treatment as being unfair, there is potential for a delegitimation effect to follow. It is thus in donors' interests to take a 'do no harm' approach to service-delivery programming.

The SLRC survey: what have we learnt?

Two overarching implications emerge from across the different themes covered in the survey.

The first is about **the importance of horizontal inequalities – those related to identity (gender, ethnicity or caste, for example) – and geography.** These appear more important for legitimation and recovery than do domestic or international aid policies and programmes. We find, for example, that ethnicity and geographical location at baseline are strongly associated with perceptions of government, suggesting there are both identity-based and territorial aspects to legitimacy. This association with ethnicity is country-specific, which raises the question of whether the government is only considered legitimate by specific groups and categories of people. Other outcomes are also strongly correlated with identity and geography, for instance access to services. Further analysis could usefully focus on how far ethnicity, geography and gender affect the churning and extensive variation that we find in much of our sample.

The second implication is that, whilst donors may be moving away from simple, transactional approaches to state-building ('deliver services, get legitimacy') – as evidenced, for example, in DFID's new framework for building stability – the findings of the SLRC survey suggest that **wherever the solutions to building stability and supporting economic recovery are to be found, they are likely to be messy and complicated.** The SLRC survey takes us beyond the truism that conflict dynamics are neither linear nor simple, and stresses how all manner of shocks, not solely those related to conflict, continue to disrupt socio-economic recovery, and how certain outcomes (for example, reduced conflict and improved safety) do not always run on parallel tracks. Just as Zaum *et al.* (2015, following Acemoglu and Robinson, 2012) assert that, in frameworks for working in fragile and conflict-affected situations, 'all good things don't necessarily go together', so the SLRC survey suggests that, in the conflict-affected situations that we have studied, good things don't necessarily run in the same direction.

Beyond the lessons for policy-makers and practitioners that have emerged from our research, we have one final reflection about evidence and methods when working on or in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Despite the difficulties, the experiences of establishing longitudinal panels in DRC, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda suggest **we can recalibrate our expectations of data collection in fragile or conflict-affected countries.**

A combination of luck and good design has allowed the SLRC to deliver a robust and valuable panel dataset in some particularly difficult contexts, where quantitative research and longitudinal analysis is often assumed to be too difficult, too expensive and too risky.

We faced our fair share of challenges along the way. In addition to the regular technical challenges – such as how to interview around religious festivals in Nepal, or how to ensure that the observance of Ramadan by respondents in Pakistan and Sri Lanka did not bias our data on food consumption – we also lost a planned sixth survey country after the baseline was completed when our work in South Sudan was curtailed by violence from late 2013 onwards. In other countries our research teams experienced thefts, threats and the bugging of phone calls to respondents by national security services, and had to navigate curfews, protests and blockades.

Despite these challenges, however, the panel data has proved enormously valuable. It has allowed us to build an understanding of the dynamics of people's lives, which would not have been possible using a cross-sectional approach.

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