

# Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium

Researching livelihoods and services affected by conflict

## Background

The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) aims to provide a stronger evidence base about how people make a living, educate their children, deal with illness and access other basic services in conflict affected situations (CAS). Providing better access to basic services, social protection and support to livelihoods matters for the human welfare of people affected by conflict, the achievement of development targets, such as the MDGs, and international efforts at peace and state building.

### What is the problem?

The existing literature on service delivery, social protection and livelihoods in conflict affected states tends to provide generic overviews of issues rather than more rigorous empirical and context-specific analysis. It offers useful principles for those working in conflict affected states, but more concrete research is needed to translate these into strategic policy and practical programming advice. SLRC will aim to help fill these gaps.

### What will this research tell us?

This research consortium will aim to provide insights into five core questions:

- How do people make a living and what potential is there for economic growth in conflict situations?
- How do people access basic services and social protection in conflict affected situations?
- What governance arrangements work best for providing support to livelihoods and growth, and access to basic services and social protection?
- Do improved livelihoods, growth and access to services and social protection

contribute to state building or peace building? If so, what institutional arrangements contribute most effectively?

- How can external actors (including aid) best support livelihoods, growth, access to services and social protection in ways that promote human development and contribute to state building?

### What is SLRC focusing on?

The research will focus on three interlinked thematic areas and one crosscutting area:

#### **Theme I: People's and community responses**

This theme will focus on generating better information about poverty and vulnerability in conflict affected situations, and contribute to an improved understanding of people's and communities' own responses to conflict. The latter entails an understanding of community interactions with state and private actors, including the corporate sector, aid agencies and military actors, to access resources and secure their livelihoods.

#### **Theme II: Governance of state institutions, policies and interventions**

State building, peace building and the improvement of wellbeing are desired

outcomes of engagement in CAS, and this is reflected in much of the existing literature as well as in the OECD DAC Principles of Good Practice. However, there is only a limited understanding of whether or how the delivery of basic services, social protection and livelihoods programmes can contribute to state building. There is need for a robust evidence base on how interventions to improve basic services, livelihoods and social protection can either impinge upon, or contribute to, efforts to build peace, state legitimacy and dynamic state-society relations. This should inform operational decisions on which services to prioritise, how services are delivered, and by whom.

#### **Theme III: Aid - roles of aid agencies and non-state actors**

The humanitarian imperative to meet short-term basic needs is sometimes recognised to entail substitution for governments, and there is emerging experience in CAS of NGOs acting as implementing partners for governments. There are strong arguments that non-state actors who deliver services must do so in a manner that does not undermine the legitimacy of the state and that long term capacity development is needed at the beginning of support. There is a need for greater attention to how international aid actors can reconcile simultaneous commitments to: development principles, such as ownership and alignment; conflict affected state principles to state building; and humanitarian principles of independence and neutrality in CAS.

#### **Theme IV: Cross-cutting - Building blocks for livelihoods, basic services and social protection**

The literature on the different building blocks required for secure livelihoods and pro-poor growth in CAS is growing rapidly. However, it tends to be focused on individual sectors or instruments rather than on assessing the range or combination of building blocks that is required. Specific questions on delivering basic services, social protection and support to livelihoods, and on issues including

gender, social exclusion and accountability, cut across each of these three themes.

#### **How will the research be done and where?**

The countries that will be the main focus of the consortium will be Sri Lanka, Nepal, Afghanistan, Pakistan, DRC, Uganda and South Sudan. However, these may be revised following the inception period. Additionally, this does not preclude further one-off research in other countries.

As part of the one-year inception phase we are working on a series of evidence papers, comprehensively reviewing the existing literature and undertaking consultations with a wide range of stakeholders. There are two global evidence papers planned: one on livelihoods and growth in CAS; and one on services and social protection in CAS. In addition, three regional papers will be produced: one on DRC, Sudan and Uganda; one on Pakistan and Afghanistan; and one on Sri Lanka and Nepal. The evidence papers will incorporate elements of the systematic review methodology to ensure a rigorous and comprehensive review of all of the available literature, a clearly documented and replicable review process, and an analysis of the quality of the evidence on which the literature is based.

Consultations with people likely to be involved in and using the research, such as donor and government officials, aid agency staff and civil society representatives, are being held in each of the seven focus countries as well as at a global level with individuals from donor and international organisation headquarters. The evidence papers and stakeholder consultations started in April 2011 and will carry on through 2011.

Following the inception year, SLRC proposes to use a range of methods, including qualitative and quantitative (q-squared) methods at household and

individual level, political economy and drivers of change assessments of policy processes, and participatory impact assessments of interventions.

Key aspects of the research will include:

- **Longitudinal mapping of livelihoods, basic services and social protection programme coverage.** This will cover six countries and will take place in the second and fifth years of the project to allow analysis of changing access to services and social protection and support to livelihoods over time. It will provide a solid empirical basis from which to explore the interlinked themes of the SLRC and form the basis of the methodological approaches and innovations in the research described below.
- **Assessment of impacts of investments in social protection, basic services and livelihoods on wider security and peace- and state-building objectives in different contexts.** This will generate a solid empirically based understanding of the relationship between citizens and state in CAS.
- **Political economy analysis** of winners and losers from investments in basic services and social protection as well as participatory impact assessments. The aim is to identify what types of building blocks, delivered to which groups of people, by whom, in what kind of CAS, have the greatest positive impact on security and peace.
- **Incorporating analysis of agency into research.** Poor people are often seen as passive beneficiaries of support in discussions about humanitarian and development efforts in CAS. However, community-based resources

are often the backbone of social protection and livelihoods in times of conflict. Peoples' perspectives will be gathered systematically through a mixture of quantitative (e.g. service user surveys, Citizen Report Cards) and qualitative methods building on ODI/CPRC- and CEPA-pioneered approaches (including life histories, q-squared methods and participatory impact assessments).

- **Going beyond the disaggregation of data.** The knowledge generated by SLRC will be disaggregated by a range of characteristics, including sex, age, livelihood, location, ethnicity, caste, race and poverty level. This will involve a disaggregated examination of outcomes in relation to access to basic services, livelihoods and social protection in CAS. SLRC will also seek to understand, through gender and social exclusion analysis, how and why policies and programmes have had differentiated impacts, and how future initiatives can ensure wellbeing improvements across income, social and livelihood groups.
- **Tackling questions that are frequently ignored in CAS.** SLRC will focus particularly on questions about when and how to start thinking about achieving equitable growth in places where growth is assumed to be a) non-existent, b) always inequitable, and/or c) the cause of conflict and fragility, and on questions of how to work with, or around, predatory state.

#### Who will undertake the research?

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the lead organisation with four

other core partners: the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA), Feinstein International Centre (Tufts University), and Save the Children UK. The core consortium will be complemented by a network of affiliates consisting of The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Disaster Studies of Wageningen University (WUR), The Nepal Research Group (NRG), The Small Arms Survey, and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

This research consortium forms part of an integrated package of research and will work closely with three other research consortia being commissioned by DFID in 2011 – one looking at governance, security and justice in conflict affected states, one on effective states, and a fourth on effective taxation.

SLRC provides important opportunities for the capacity development of: the individuals and the institutions that comprise the consortium. We will aim to develop a community of practice focused on researching livelihoods, social protection and basic needs delivery within CAS. During the inception year, a capacity building strategy will be developed.

### **How will the results of the research be made available?**

SLRC will develop a gender-mainstreamed research uptake and policy engagement strategy during the inception phase, with the goal of ensuring that findings inform and shape policy thinking at global, regional and national levels. It recognises that engagement and communication are in themselves powerful drivers of transformative change. This involves a number of activities such as collaborative research, capacity building, public engagement, consultations, and academic publications.

### **How can I find out more?**

We welcome engagement with this research consortium from all stakeholders: governments, aid agencies, other researchers and citizens in states affected by conflict. Do get in touch if you would like more information about the programme. The Director of SLRC is Paul Harvey ([paul.harvey@humanitarianoutcomes.org](mailto:paul.harvey@humanitarianoutcomes.org)). The Research Directors are Rachel Slater ([r.slater@odi.org.uk](mailto:r.slater@odi.org.uk)) and Priyanthi Fernando ([priyanthi@cepa.lk](mailto:priyanthi@cepa.lk)).