

Institute for Human Security

The Institute for Human Security (IHS) at The Fletcher School, Tufts University focuses on the security and protection of individuals and communities while promoting peace and sustainable development. To achieve this, IHS catalyzes collaboration between and creates synergies among the fields that place people at the center of concern: conflict resolution, human rights, humanitarian studies, and political and economic development. Our research, education, and policy engagement emphasize the following principles: protection and promotion of the rights of at-risk populations, empowerment of people, and promotion of responsible government and institutional practices.

For more information on the research project, please visit fletcher.tufts.edu/Institute-for-Human-Security/Research/Building-State-Legitimacy

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC)

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

Material presented in this policy brief is excerpted from Richard Mallett, Jessica Hagen-Zanker, Rachel Slater and Georgina Sturge, "Surveying livelihoods, service delivery and governance: baseline evidence from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda," Working Paper 31 April 2015, available at www.securelivelihoods.org/publications_details.aspx?resourceid=354&Page=3 http://www.securelivelihoods.org/publications_details.aspx?resourceid=354&Page=3

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Surveying Service Delivery and Perceptions of Governance: Baseline Evidence from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda

KEY FINDINGS

- There is no linear or consistent relationship between people's access to basic services and their perceptions of local or central governance legitimacy.
- In terms of people's perceptions of governance legitimacy, it does not matter if state or non-state service providers provide basic services.
- High quality services, and genuine, transparent, inclusive and accountable mechanisms to address complaints within basic services increased people's positive perceptions of governance legitimacy.

Study Overview

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) aims to generate a stronger evidence base on how people in conflict-affected situations (CAS) make a living, access basic services like health care, education and water, and perceive and engage with governance at local and national levels.

At the centre of SLRC's research are three core themes, developed over the course of an intensive one-year inception phase:

- State legitimacy: experiences, perceptions and expectations of the state and local governance in conflict-affected situations
- State capacity: building effective states that deliver services and social protection in conflict-affected situations
- Livelihood trajectories and economic activity in conflict-affected situations



The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the lead organisation. SLRC partners include the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) in Sri Lanka, the Feinstein International Center (FIC, Tufts University), Focus1000 in Sierra Leone, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Humanitarian Aid and Reconstruction of Wageningen University (WUR) in the Netherlands, the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research (NCCR), and the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Pakistan.

In 2012/13, the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium designed and implemented the first round of a panel survey in five fragile or conflict-affected countries, generating cross-country data on people's livelihoods, their access to and experience of basic services and their perceptions of government. This policy brief synthesises the findings on people's access to basic services and perceptions of governance legitimacy, of the DRC, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda baseline surveys, which were delivered to a total of 9,769 households in September-October 2012 (for DRC, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) and in January 2013 for Uganda.

Drawing on sets of descriptive statistics and regression analyses run at country level, the analysis sets out to identify key trends, similarities and differences across the five countries, in relation to three broad lines of enquiry: factors associated with better/worse levels of wellbeing and 'livelihood outcomes' (food security, asset ownership); factors associated with having better/worse access to basic services or transfers (health, education, water, social protection, livelihood assistance); factors associated with better/worse satisfaction with these services; and factors associated with holding more positive/negative attitudes towards government.

We should keep in mind that these findings provide just a snapshot at one moment in time. In 2015, we went back to the same respondents and interviewed them for the second round of the panel survey. When this analysis is complete (in late 2016) we will be able to measure changes in people's livelihoods, their access to services and their perceptions of government over time, and will therefore be able to make stronger statements about the factors that possibly determine these.

Perceptions of Local and Central Governance

State legitimacy is a complex, difficult-to-measure concept. We have attempted to generate a series of proxy indicators of state legitimacy by asking respondents in each of our countries' sample populations about their perceptions of government. The existing literature suggests that this is a viable approach to the study of what is ultimately an intangible and fuzzy dimension of statehood (Carter, 2011; Herbert, 2013; Hilker and Kangas, 2011).

The kinds of questions we asked respondents generated information on government performance (as measured by citizens' attitudes) and people's levels of trust and confidence in the government. In terms of our analysis, we are most interested in what kinds of factors explain statistical variation in perceptions – or, in other words, what factors appear to influence the way people think about their government, and whether there are any patterns that emerge from one country to the next regarding these influencing factors.

Except in Sri Lanka, respondents have overwhelmingly negative perceptions of local and, particularly, central government. For instance, only between 4% (Pakistan) and 36% (Uganda) felt the central government cared about their opinion. Except in Sri Lanka and Uganda, at least two-thirds felt the priorities of local government never or almost never reflected their own. These findings do not necessarily suggest central government is doing a 'worse job': local government organisations are in theory more closely connected to local populations, even if they fail to provide much in the way of tangible development gains, and this proximity/visibility may explain the more positive perceptions. It may be the case that the greater physical and hierarchical distance between people and the central layer of government potentially has a limiting effect on its capacity to build legitimacy. Or, in other words, households may associate public goods delivery with whichever level of government is most visible to them, regardless of who delivered them, and their perceptions are shaped accordingly.

Basic Services and Perceptions of Governance

One of our strongest findings is that an individual's overall satisfaction with a service or transfer depends heavily on how well specific aspects of that service are run; access to the service (in terms of distance to a service or transfer receipt) is largely irrelevant. For example, respondents' experience with basic services suggests factors such as 'satisfaction with the availability of medicine' and 'satisfaction with the number of teachers' are strongly and positively associated with higher levels of overall satisfaction with those services. Quality, as opposed to simple presence, is the most important factor.

Furthermore, whether or not someone has access to a particular service, social protection transfer or type of livelihood assistance does not appear to matter much in explaining perceptions of the government. Instead, we see presence of grievance mechanisms and possibilities for civil participation strongly influences perceptions of the government – even if these are not effective in practice. Taken together, these findings suggest there is potentially something about the way in which public services can act as a channel through which citizens and public authorities interact (Van de Walle and Scott, 2011).

Our survey data suggest that there is no straightforward relationship between access to basic services and welfare transfers and people's attitudes towards the government. One popular way of conceptualising legitimacy is as a performance-based outcome. That is, states become legitimate in the eyes of their citizens by making and meeting promises of social and material improvement (Burnell, 2006). Things like service delivery, job creation and so on then take on an instrumental dimension; while they have a certain intrinsic value, they are conceptualised here as a means to separate ends (state legitimacy). Improvements in service delivery are thus framed as vital components of state-building strategies – we might put this crudely as 'buying legitimacy through giving stuff'. By our measures of access to services and transfers, however, it is clear that simply 'getting something' is not sufficient to 'buy legitimacy'. We find no apparent relationship between people's access to health or water services and their views towards either local or central government. That is, those with better access to these services do

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not tend to be any more likely to have better perceptions of the government. When we look at access to social protection, there is slightly more evidence of a positive relationship, but it does not hold for every country and is only applicable at the central government level. In short, our survey data do not provide convincing evidence that people's views of government legitimacy can be robustly explained by the fact that they are simply receiving something.

If we push the analysis further, however, it becomes apparent that the quality of what people are getting does in fact matter. Evidence from three countries shows that the more problems experienced with services over the past year, the worse respondents generally thought about the government. This suggests that people do care about whether their public services are functioning properly; in other words, it is false to assume that the simple presence of a health clinic or primary school is sufficient to substantially change the way people think and feel about the government. Our evidence here is in line with findings from other countries (Sacks and Larizza 2012).

However, we find what are probably the clearest relationships when we consider participation and accountability characteristics of public services. There is fairly strong evidence from our surveys that the inclusiveness of service delivery is often associated with how people view the government. For example, in three countries we find that the existence of grievance mechanisms within public services – essentially, complaints procedures – is significantly related to more positive perceptions of the government. What's more, our findings suggest that actually using the grievance mechanisms does not appear to be a necessary condition for this relationship to hold; their simple presence seems to matter in and of itself. On a very similar note, in every country apart from DRC we observe statistical associations

between levels of civic participation vis-à-vis service delivery and perceptions of the government.¹ More specifically, when respondents attended a community meeting about services (or knew of such a meeting), or when they were consulted about services in their community, they were more likely to think better of the government.

Taken together, these findings suggest there is potentially something about the way in which public services can act as a channel through which citizens and public authorities interact (Van de Walle and Scott, 2011). Opening up this route – allowing citizens to ‘see’ their system of government at work in a tangible, everyday manner – appears to influence the way people think about their state. In a sense, this is perhaps less about the services themselves, and more about the kinds of mechanisms that promote engagement and exchange between citizens and formal state. More broadly, our survey findings quite clearly suggest that investigating the detail of service delivery – the specific ways in which services and transfers are designed and implemented – as opposed to simply asking whether people have access to something, appears to be a fruitful line of enquiry.

¹ It is important not to make the assumption that participation in community meetings in DRC necessarily indicate a lively and active civil society. Instead, it must be recognised that since the Mobutu era, participation has been a critical way of getting support (for example food aid) and attending meetings in the hope of receiving support has become embedded in regular activities at community level.

Further resources

Surveying livelihoods, service delivery and governance: baseline evidence from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda, 2015

www.securelivelihoods.org/publications_details.aspx?resourceid=354&Page=3

Lisa Denney, Richard Mallett and Dyan Mazurana, “Thematic Paper on Peacebuilding and Service Delivery,” United Nations University Centre for Policy Research, February 2015

www.ccopab.eb.mil.br/biblioteca/documentos/UNU_Thematic%20Paper%20on%20Peacebuilding%20and%20Service%20Delivery%20Final%20Clean.pdf

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