



Researching livelihoods and
services affected by conflict

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium

Afghanistan Research Programme

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About us

The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (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), European Commission (EC) and Irish Aid. SLRC was established in 2011 with the aim of strengthening the evidence base and informing policy and practice to better support the needs of the people in conflict.

SLRC is undertaking research in eight focus countries; Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Uganda, and Afghanistan. The Afghanistan research programme is being led by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) based in Kabul, Afghanistan.

What is the focus of SLRC's Afghanistan research programme?

Decades worth of attempts to engineer a social transformation in Afghanistan from its existing social order to one more reflective of Western norms have largely failed to take root



and have often helped consolidate a rule of patronage and personalized relationships. A significant part of this failure can be attributed to the often conflicting objectives and strategies of different actors in relation to fighting terrorism, addressing insurgency, responding to the opium economy, and liberal state building. At a time of transition, critical questions about the nature and role of donor support in Afghanistan remain unanswered.

In seeking to understand the social, economic, and political marketplace at multiple levels - community, national, and international - this research project seeks to identify incentives that can drive change within local communities, development programme implementers, national agencies, and the international donor community, in order to help increase people's access to basic services, livelihoods, and social protection.

The project is structured around three research themes linked to the overall SLRC research agenda:

Village governance, service delivery and aid programmes: focused on generating a better understanding of variations in village governance that can have important impacts on the success or failure of service delivery and aid programmes.

Service delivery and capacity building of regional social orders: examining elite behaviour at the provincial and regional level and the conditions under which public goods are generated and distributed.

Economic life and livelihood trajectories: analysing the core sectors of the rural

economy and the institutional context of household livelihoods. It will examine livelihood trajectories based on a revisit to an existing panel set.


How will we carry out the research?

Village governance, service delivery and aid programmes. Secondary data will be sourced from relevant national programmes, ministries, and NGOs on programme design, implementation, and evaluation. Data on village level implementation will be sourced from agencies. Primary data on village characterization will be collected through a combination of existing secondary sources and agency records, and direct characterization through group, as well as key informant discussions at the village level. Primary data on elite behavior and local level politics will be collected through interviews with key informants.

With regards to sampling, two key dimensions will structure the selection of sites: the structural contrasts between provinces of relative equality and contrasting districts and villages within the provinces; and, distribution of programme interventions by national programme and NGO according to geographical area.

Two analytical approaches will drive research under this theme: statistically based clustering technique and qualitative analysis of key informant data.

Service delivery and capacity building of regional social orders: As a political analysis study, this will explore the relations between resources and political order. Secondary data will be sourced from academic and other research sources, public good provisions from the government, and key informants.



The sampling will be driven by the selection of regional social orders. We will aim to work in one of the four core regional centers based on geographical contrast and political factors; and a selection of at least one non-core peripheral province where there has been no political settlement.

Economic life and livelihood trajectories: This theme will build on an established panel of households through a third round restudy. The third round restudy will (a) build on the insights gained from the second round assessing household well-being and the impact of external interventions, and (b) deepen understanding of the performance of village institutions (both customary structures, the Community Development Councils introduced under the National Solidarity Programme and their inter-relationships) in relation to public good provision, as well as the inter-relation between these and district and provincial authorities, and external interventions.

We will draw on the insights of the second round restudy that challenged assumptions about the potential for market-led growth in agriculture to promote rural employment and reduce poverty. More broadly, a better understanding is needed of how markets work in practice and their social regulation. This is fundamental to exploring the nature of growth and its distributional outcomes. Case

studies of markets, through sectoral contrasts will offer insights into the role of social institutions on markets and how these link to the political order. These sectoral contrasts will cut across the urban-rural divide, and might include studies of the labour market, livestock markets, as well as of those dealing in relatively high value products such as dried fruits and nuts. This will provide a good understanding of how economic life is structured, both from an actor perspective as well as from a sectoral or market chain analysis perspective.

What will be done with the research?

Greater recognition is needed by donors in policy and practice of the socially embedded nature of state-building processes, international engagement, and livelihoods and response. As such, each of the three research components has important implications for the nature of support to be provided by the international community.

Through a combination of regular engagement with key stakeholders throughout the research process and the dissemination of compelling, accessible, and relevant research outputs, it is anticipated that the research will be used to provoke policy dialogue amongst international donors. This research project will allow for the experiences and expectations of the local communities to be conveyed to those that have the means to influence their daily lives: notably, the Afghan government and international donor community.

Written publications will be translated into the official language of Afghanistan: Dari and Pashto. They will be disseminated online and in print for free to the general public, as well as presented at roundtables and discussion groups composed of local communities, development project implementers, national bodies, and the international donor community.

Finally, we will actively seek interested stakeholders from government and specifically relevant national priority programmes, funding agencies, and implementing agencies from the outset.



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