(How) can delivering basic services lead to conflict transformation?

Presentation to expert meeting on Heath Systems Strengthening and Conflict Transformation in Fragile States
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Outline

- Can delivering basic services contribute towards state-building?
- Evidence from the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium inception phase
- Implications
Basic services and conflict transformation

- Focus on state-building (state legitimacy and state capacity)
- State capacity – the supply side: how to ensure that the state can deliver basic services (health, education, water and sanitation, social protection)
- State legitimacy – strong intuitive logic:

  *Delivering basic services contributes to state legitimacy and by extension to state-building*
State capacity

- When to move from humanitarian system of non-state provision to state stewardship and / or provision of services?
- What programming to support?
- Who to work with and through? (e.g. formal government architecture or other sources of governance)
- How to deliver (through joint / pooled funds? Direct budget support? Projectised work with NGOs?)
- E.g. Basic Package of Health Services
State legitimacy – the intuitive case

Delivering basic services (health, education, water and sanitation, social protection) contributes to state legitimacy and by extension to state-building

- Has become received wisdom - many international agencies (bilaterals, IFIs, INGOs) make this assumption in their programming
- Compelling securitisation / stabilisation agenda (‘hearts and minds’) has a strong influence on programming
- Interesting and compelling theory ... but is it true?
SLRC: 3 research questions

- Does support to services, social protection and livelihoods build state legitimacy?
- How to build state capacities to deliver services and social protection and support livelihoods?
- (How to effectively support people to build more resilient livelihoods as they recover from conflict?)
What evidence do we have?

Inception report (including stakeholder consultations)

Seven country and three global literature reviews (including one on what we know about basic services in fragile and conflict-affected situations)

Systematic Review Briefing Paper (looking at a particular approach to literature review that attempts to avoid bias, subjectivity and received wisdom)
Education: what do we know?

- SLRC systematic review on school feeding: evidence of positive impacts on food security, nutrition and enrolment but low number of studies and not framed around conflict.
- Education can be an ‘ideological battlefield’: where competing political groups attempt to assert their values and interests, and there is some evidence that schooling inequalities (perceived or material) can contribute to conflict (Nepal).
- It is argued that improvements in the education sector can contribute to reform processes in the security sector (through police training) and electoral system (through citizenship education).
- Little is known about the actual impacts of education reform on wider state-building processes.
Social protection: what do we know?

- Several recent evaluations of social funds and large-scale CDD programmes in conflict-affected situations
- Too many small programmes but some positive impacts on welfare at a scale that matters:
  - Higher incomes and cash earnings (Philippines, northern Uganda)
  - Lower levels of food insecurity and higher levels of school enrolment (Nepal, Yemen)
- Some evidence on governance:
  - Improved attitudes towards the government (Afghanistan, Sierra Leone)
- Mixed evidence on social cohesion and stability at local level:
  - No change (Afghanistan, Sierra Leone), mild positive change (northern Uganda), negative change (Philippines)
Water: what do we know?

- Generally poor levels of clean water access and provision in conflict-affected countries, and poor and marginalised urban communities are often not reached by reconstructed public supply networks (Kabul, Luanda, Monrovia)

- Aid-financed water supply projects can lead to increased water consumption, lower prices and improved quality (Angola)

- SLRC systematic review on water committees: very low number of studies but evidence of positive impacts on water safety, hygiene practices, sustainability and women’s empowerment

- Some anecdotal evidence that community water projects – where locals are directly involved in decision making and management – can lead to a stronger sense of citizenship among those involved
Health: what do we know?

- Evidence is emerging fast: e.g. Contracting out: new evidence from Afghanistan
  - Large-scale contracting has been associated with substantial increases in curative care use
  - According to survey data, contracted health services in Kabul province rated ‘good’ by majority of users
  - But, level of funding in Afghanistan is unmatchable in most places

- While health systems strengthening can in some cases contribute to state-building within that sector, there is very little robust evidence that it can contribute to wider state-building processes (e.g. state-society relations)
Why do we know so little?

- It’s a relatively new agenda
- Strength of the securitisation / stabilisation agenda means little operational pressure to challenge
- Even theorists has not fully unpacked the perceptions – legitimacy – state-building causal chain
- Complexity and heterogeneity - still an overwhelmingly western view of governance
- Research and impact evaluation is very difficult (logistics, programme rather than impact evaluations, some qualitative case studies but few representative quantitative data sources)
Implications

- Get the role of health in perspective (only tackles one source of legitimacy: output or performance)
- Get the priorities right: state-building as a secondary objective / do no harm?
- Set realistic expectations / timelines: are we trying to tackle mortality and morbidity driven by conflict, or everything?
Researching livelihoods and services affected by conflict

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