(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?**

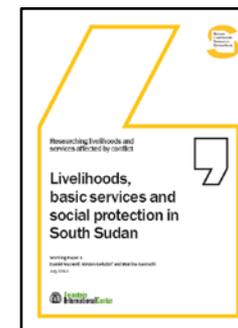- **(How to effectively support people to build more resilient livelihoods as they recover from conflict?)**

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

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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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