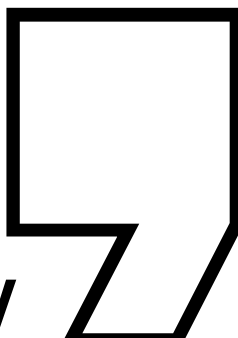


Researching livelihoods and  
services affected by conflict

# How to study capacity support to states in fragile and conflict- affected situations: an analytical framework



Working Paper 15

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June 2014

# About us

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. 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 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and international efforts at peace- and state-building.

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 (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.

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# Preface

This purpose of this paper is to outline an analytical framework that can be used to support empirical research into the following overarching research question:

How do international actors interact with the state and local-level governance institutions? How successful are international attempts to develop state capacity to deliver social protection, basic services and support to livelihoods?

The original criteria for the framework were threefold. First, it should build sensibly on existing work into capacity development by others. Second, it should make sense from a theoretical perspective. And third, it should be accessible to and useful for policy researchers (i.e. it is sufficiently rigorous but also relatively straightforward to understand and operationalise). Whilst not intending to be too prescriptive, the framework has been developed in order to provide some common structures and parameters for the generation of comparative SLRC research into capacity development in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

The framework presented here is not groundbreaking and the intention was not to design something radically new. Rather, we worked with what is already out there, drawing on and adapting existing frameworks and insights in order to develop something that suits the needs of the SLRC.

The intention is that, by following the framework, researchers will be better able to generate nuanced and layered accounts of capacity development across a range of sectors in a range of fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Synthesising the findings from these accounts in order to reach broader answers to bigger questions about capacity development will be the next stage of the SLRC research programme in two to three years' time.

# Executive summary

How to develop state capacity in a deep and sustained way is a central question facing the international community. But despite the remarkable proliferation of capacity building aid initiatives in recent years – particularly in places affected by fragility and conflict, where state weakness is seen to be especially pronounced and problematic – there is still much we do not know. Capacity continues to be a fuzzy, slippery and often vaguely defined concept, which makes studying it less than straightforward. The purpose of this paper is to assist with this complex task by sketching out an analytical framework that can be used to: (1) identify existing gaps in state capacity to deliver services; and (2) examine how international actors' capacity support programmes work in practice, and assess the extent to which they are fit for purpose in a given context. While the framework has been developed with a thematic emphasis on state capacity to carry out service delivery functions, it can also be used to study a wider set of state functions.

The starting point is that, as an object of study, 'capacity' is too big and too intangible a concept. This makes it difficult for researchers to engage productively and critically with questions around capacity development. Drawing on key insights from the existing literature, we argue that what is needed is a disaggregation of the concept into a set of constituent parts. As such, our framework adopts as its analytical core the '5 capabilities' (or '5Cs') model, which emerged out of the multi-year *Capacity, Performance and Change* programme run by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM). The 5Cs model is a useful way of breaking the larger concept of capacity down into a series of more specific capabilities (or components of capacity). These capabilities are: the capability to self-organise and act; the capability to generate development results; the capability to establish supportive relationships; the capability to adapt and self-renew; and the capability to achieve coherence. Importantly, this set of capabilities encompasses the 'soft' or intangible dimensions of capacity so often overlooked in capacity building programming, such as the ability to relate and negotiate with a broad range of state and non-state stakeholders.

These represent, for our purposes, a set of entry points for the study of capacity. By focusing on the five capabilities, it is possible for researchers to identify which components of capacity already exist and which need to be developed and strengthened in order for improvements in service provision to follow. There is, however, another layer to peel away: what is it that makes up a particular capability? Drawing again on the findings of the ECDPM programme, we can say that in order for deep and sustained capabilities to exist, an appropriate mix of factors or conditions must be in place. More specifically, the evidence speaks to the need for sufficient resources, relevant skills and knowledge, conducive organisational structures, an enabling political environment, and the 'right' kind of incentives. While aid programmes often attempt to build capabilities and capacities through the transfer of resources and knowledge (for example, by providing materials and paying for training), these are not in themselves sufficient. In fact, it is often the messier and more politically difficult work of restructuring relationships and incentives that will lead to deeper, more sustained improvements.

Underpinning all of this is a series of dimensions that must be taken into consideration when researching existing gaps in state capacity or the effectiveness of international attempts to build it. First, capabilities and capacities exist at three different levels of the state: the individual level (states are made up of people); the organisation level (states are made up of departments and ministries, which are in turn made up of people); and the system level (states are made up of systems, which are in turn made up of departments and ministries, which are in turn made of people). Researchers should be explicit about the level at which they are studying capacity, and not assume that improvements at one level equal improvements at the next. Second, capabilities and capacities – as well as the outcomes of capacity building programmes – are strongly mediated by features of the sociopolitical and historical

context. In particular, the way in which states are 'put together' and function can have profound implications for where investments in capacity are made and whether they are sustained over time. Researchers should therefore pay close attention to the broader landscape in which state capacity exists. Third, capabilities and capacities are gendered. As noted, systems and organisations are made up of people and operate according to particular sets of embedded social norms and informal institutions, some of which may limit the genuine participation of certain groups of individuals. Researchers should observe the ways in which capacity building programmes treat gender – do initiatives, for example, attempt to reform organisational cultures that privilege certain voices over others? – and ask whether capabilities and capacities to deliver equitable and gender-sensitive basic services exist or are being developed. Thus, a gender lens involves looking at both the process of capacity development (are women's capacities being built and is programming being carried out in a gender-sensitive way?) as well as the service delivery outcomes of capacity development programmes (has state capacity to deliver equitable basic services increased?).

# 1 Introduction

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), SLRC was established in 2011 with the aim of strengthening the evidence base and informing policy and practice around livelihoods and services in conflict. Led by ODI, SLRC partners include: the Centre for Poverty Analysis in Sri Lanka, Feinstein International Center (Tufts University), the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, the Sustainable Development Policy Institute in Pakistan, Disaster Studies of Wageningen University in the Netherlands, the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research (NCCR), Focus 1000 in Sierra Leone, and the Food and Agriculture Organization.

The key research questions identified for SLRC research are:

- 1 What are people's perceptions, expectations and experiences of the state and of local-level governance? How does the way services are delivered and livelihoods are supported affect people's views on the legitimacy of the state?
- 2 How do international actors interact with the state and local-level governance institutions? How successful are international attempts to develop state capacity to deliver social protection, basic services and support to livelihoods?
- 3 What do livelihood trajectories in conflict-affected situations tell us about the role of governments, aid agencies, markets and the private sector in enabling people to make a secure living?

The purpose of this short paper is to outline an analytical framework for SLRC researchers working on the second question above (RQ2), which focuses on how capacities to deliver services and support livelihoods are built (or undermined). It is hoped that the framework will be used both to inform the design of primary research studies under the RQ2 workstream as well as to guide the analysis and interpretation of data generated through SLRC research. The paper is structured as follows. The remainder of this section provides background to RQ2 and offers concise definitions of key concepts and terms. Section 2 sets out the main criteria and parameters we would expect our analytical framework to adhere to. Section 3 introduces the conceptual basis for the framework, (the 5Cs model), illustrates the analytical framework in visual form, and provides an explanatory narrative of how the different parts of the framework link together. Section 4 concludes.

## 1.1 Background

As we argue in the analytical framework paper for SLRC's first overarching research question (Wild et al., forthcoming), although state building is a complex process, in practice it has tended to be viewed through the lens of capacity development. International actors have attempted to, 'establish, reform and strengthen state institutions' where these have been eroded (Caplan, 2005, in Rocha Menocal, 2010), and it is only relatively recently that much attention has been paid to questions of state legitimacy.

One of the standard modes of international engagement in supporting services, livelihoods and social protection continues to be framed around the idea of developing capacity. A basic programme approach aims to develop the capacity of government to a point where international aid actors can hand over to authorities and exit with sustainable capacity in place. So, for example, international NGOs will attempt to shift away from direct delivery of health services by developing the capacity of health ministries and local health officials. Or various types of independent service authority or project management unit will be created to substitute for weaknesses in state delivery capacity but with technical assistance to enable line ministries to gradually take more responsibility for implementation.



Literature reviews and stakeholder consultations carried out by SLRC in 2011, however, suggest a lack of evidence around the effectiveness of international attempts to develop government capacity. They suggest a perception that capacity development efforts are often ineffective. Pritchett and de Weijer (2010: 1), for example, talk about wishful thinking insofar as ‘much of the planning for fragile and conflict states is premised on assumptions about the speed at which state capability can be built that are not empirically grounded’. It is the naivety of this kind of approach, combined with the presence of institutional incentives that focus on form rather than function, which ‘lead to persistent implementation failure’.

Research in this area could therefore be of direct practical utility in informing more appropriate modes of engagement between international actors and national and local authorities. It should help to generate information on how international actors (such as donors and aid agencies) view their role in supporting state building and peace building and how national governments negotiate with aid actors about what capacities need to be strengthened and supported with what sort of assistance. By linking evidence on what works in developing state capacities with people’s perceptions of governance, we will seek to show what types of state capacity serve to strengthen state–society relations.

## 1.2 What is capacity development?

Although the international community has acknowledged that ‘capacity [is] a *sine qua non* of resilience, development and peace’ (Rosen and Haldrup, 2013: 7), it nonetheless remains a fuzzy concept – and there is a remarkable degree of uncertainty around how it might be developed in a deep and sustained manner. James and Wrigley (2007) note, for example, that capacity development is ‘a mystery’ and full of ‘nagging doubts and unanswered questions’. Their summary from four years of practitioner reflections was that capacity development is: confused, being rarely defined or even translated; contested, as different stakeholders have different agendas; contextual, as it differs in different contexts and cultures; counteracted by an aid system that inhibits capacity development; and complex, being ultimately about change in human systems.

Given this, we clearly need to tread carefully in defining key terms and in how prescriptive we are about how and what we will research. So one of our starting points should be to acknowledge this confusion in our analysis of whether capacities are being built or undermined in the institutions and organisations, which we focus on within the SLRC countries.

There is, however, some merit in starting with an agreed set of basic definitions. We therefore propose using the following, drawing on (Simister and Smith, 2010):

- *Capacity*: The ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully.
- *Organisational capacity*: The capability of an organisation to achieve effectively what its sets out to do.
- *Capacity building*: A purposeful, external intervention to strengthen capacity over time.
- *Capacity development*: A process whereby people, organisations or society as a whole create, strengthen and maintain capacity over time.

We are interested in all of these dimensions of capacity: whether capacities are developing or not, whether attempts by external actors to develop capacities are working or not, and whether particular organisations have the capacities to effectively deliver services or support livelihoods.

We are also concerned with whether and how these individual, organisational and institutional capacities add up to bigger processes of state building. So a definition of state building (OECD, 2008) is also needed: ‘purposeful action to develop the capacity, institutions and legitimacy of the state in relation to an effective political process for negotiating the mutual demands between state and societal groups’.

## 2 How to make the framework fit for purpose

After consultation with SLRC partners, comments from external reviewers and a selective review of key literature on capacity development, it is clear that any framework we use or develop must meet a number of criteria. We present and discuss below seven distinct requirements the framework must be equipped to deal with. Using these as a series of starting points will ensure our framework is fit for purpose.

### **2.1 It needs to recognise that governance capacities are complex and multi-layered**

SLRC Research Director, Rachel Slater, and NCCR had an initial workshop to debate a possible framework in Nepal which drew on previous work by Bishnu Upreti and colleagues (Upreti et al., 2010) and suggested a need to focus on the policy, regulatory, organisational, institutional and implementation aspects of capacities across the complex range of state and non-state actors involved in governance arrangements for service delivery and who form the institutional environment within which livelihoods are pursued.

Pritchett et al. (2012) similarly talk about capacities as occupying an 'ecological space' comprising three constituent elements: agents (leaders, managers and frontline staff); organisations (firms, NGOs, line ministries); and systems (the broader administrative and political apparatus under whose jurisdiction the activity falls). This approach recognises the relations between the three levels – the actions of agents, for example, are mediated by the norms, procedures and mandates of the organisations in which they work – but also acknowledges that capacity is not developed in a linear fashion (i.e. simply developing the capacity of agents does not necessarily translate into higher aggregate capacity at the organisation or systems levels). Further, by using broad categories (systems, organisations, agents), it is possible to avoid a state-centric bias: a system, for example, is composed of multiple organisations, not all of which will necessarily be official state structures.

Governance capacities are also multi-layered in the sense that they are shaped by factors present at different levels or in different domains. Through case study research in multiple countries, Barma et al. (2012) conclude that three major categories of factors help explain why some institutions work and others don't: inner institutional workings; the external operational environment; and the sociopolitical and historical context. Thus, while capacity development activities might help to address some of the technical or managerial factors associated with inner institutional workings, properly understanding their effectiveness will also require an examination of the historical evolution of the state and the nature of its 'partnerships' with various stakeholders (our consideration of the political marketplace below develops this discussion).

### **2.2 It needs to be able to recognise that service delivery mechanisms and modalities may look very different and work in different ways from one context to the next**

We know from our series of literature reviews that the reality of the governance of service delivery and livelihoods in conflict-affected situations is highly complex, involving a mixture of state, non-state and international actors. Building on work on institutional multiplicity (Hesselbein et al., 2006) and hybrid political orders (Boege et al., 2008), Thea Hilhorst in Wageningen's work in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) explores the need to reconsider approaches to service delivery in conflict-affected situations:

Gaps in state presence in fragile states do not lead to institutional voids, but instead to institutional multiplicity where different structures with different normative frameworks exist in parallel or

compete with each other for legitimacy, resources and popular support. These include state, aid, churches, rebel groups, and self-help groups. DRC is a prime example of this, the state has largely left education and health care to churches and the lack of state delivery of services has led to high levels of private health services. These insights begin to lead to a rethinking of models of service delivery, to less state-centred models, considering arrangements where different service providers are all involved in systems of service delivery. In South Kivu, for example, innovative output-based health financing brings together state, INGO and private partners in one system of health care. Often, however, service delivery continues to be organised in parallel ways where services may become uneven and undermine each other's viability.<sup>1</sup>

So we know that we are not interested in researching capacity development in a simplistic, linearly defined sense of international organisations developing the capacity of selected government organisations. We want to be able to capture the multiplicity of actors involved in service delivery and the complex web of institutions, organisations, policies and laws which influence how services are managed in different contexts.

Closely related to this is the argument developed by Lant Pritchett and others that state-building practices have tended to be preoccupied with form over function, leading to a situation in which organisations resembling ideal-typical Weberian state structures are transplanted into all manner of developing country settings ('isomorphic mimicry'). This preoccupation with form over function, Matt Andrews (2013) has recently argued, skews incentives for proper reform, encouraging governments to signal a willingness to modernise (for example, through the submission of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers) rather than making genuine efforts to reorganise the institutional structures necessary to improve performance. Thus, the theory of change underpinning much of the current system is one of 'accelerated modernization via transplanted best practices', and one which, time and again, leads to widespread implementation failure (Pritchett et al., 2012).

The key message here is that it is important not to conflate form with function: just because organisations and institutions might look different to those in Western Europe, it does not necessarily follow that performance is weak .

### **2.3 It needs to be able to take into account the difficult realities of everyday governance and politics**

The recent DFID-funded Africa Power and Politics Programme (APPP) concluded that aid approaches to governance have traditionally focused either on trying to make governments perform better or on trying to develop citizens' capacity to hold governments to account. It argued that it was more important to bring different actors together to 'convene and broker' approaches to collective problem solving around key public goods such as basic services, and that 'governance challenges aren't about getting one set of people to behave better, they are about both sets of people being able to find ways of acting together collectively in their own best interests'. Similarly, recent work by the Overseas Development Institute concludes that 'external agents may be most valuable when they bring domestic and donor stakeholders together behind a common agenda to facilitate a sufficient momentum for change', suggesting that outsiders can often have an important role to play in the form of a 'technical facilitator' (Tavakoli et al., 2013: 12). The same study also suggests that external actors can also help to develop capacity by creating the space for country actors to work through blockages and constraints in an iterative and flexible way (see also Andrews et al., 2012).

Building on these insights, capacity development should be less about developing state capacity to deliver or civil society capacity to hold the state accountable and more about developing collective problem-solving capacity across the multiplicity of state and non-state actors involved in delivering services and supporting livelihoods. A fundamental problem with traditional approaches to developing

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from SLRC internal inception report. For a similar discussion, see Hilhorst's published work (Stel et al., 2012).

government or civil society capacity is that they often fail to take into account how local level governance actually works and are based on the sort of 'wishful thinking' that we cite in our inception report.

As Baker and Scheye (2007) argue in relation to justice and security:

It would make more sense to recognise the nature and composition of the post-conflict and fragile state without imposing on it an idealised Western conception of what the state should be; acknowledge its inherent weaknesses and limitations; accept the ways in which state and non-state actors inter-penetrate, mingle and merge, and then, attempt to strengthen the performance and capacities of those who actually deliver most the security and justice in addition to building state capacities.

## **2.4 It needs to focus on what's different about developing capacity in fragile and conflict affected situations**

We need to retain a focus on the particular challenges raised by trying to develop capacity in contexts affected by conflict, whilst guarding against assuming that all of the issues in a conflict-affected context are to do with conflict. Domingo (2009) notes that many of the challenges of capacity development in conflicts apply in low capacity/low income contexts more generally but provides a good summary of some of the particular issues that conflict may create:

- Fragility produces heightened levels of conflict, mistrust and/or intolerance between a number of social and political actors. This undermines the possibility for cooperation across different groups or political actors to work towards a common purpose.
- A fragmented, divided and polarised political context complicates efforts to enhance ownership of capacity development as it raises political questions as to whose ownership and to what purpose.
- In contexts of political fragility, hybrid political orders are often dominant, with informal rules co-existing and competing with formal rules and institutions. The latter have either been marginalised or destroyed as a result of conflict, or they were never embedded in robust state-society relations or perceived as legitimate by most social and political actors. The former have varying levels of acceptance: they may derive from traditional and community structures of authority, or they may be the result of the colonisation of state territory by political contenders, warlords or criminal organisations. Capacity development needs not only to work with formal state structures but also to engage with different systems of rules that shape governance structures at different levels.
- Capacity development should be sensitive to the complex patchwork of state and non-state actors who constitute the political landscape, to how they are positioned in relation to one another and to the systems of rules that make up the hybrid political order. Fragility is both the cause and effect of incentive and interest structures that constrain the motivation for 'buy-in' to positive state building. Capacity development thus needs to work with 'destabilising' actors and stakeholders as much as 'stabilising' ones: not just reformers but spoilers too.
- Fragility often means rapidly changing circumstances and shifting political allegiances between political actors who are interacting in uncertain times. Capacity development in fragile states requires being able to adapt to highly fluid and unpredictable conditions.
- Centre-periphery relations tend to be especially problematic, so capacity development activities need to think beyond state-centric processes and across national and sub-national levels.
- To the extent that fragility is caused by fractured state-society relations, capacity development should aim to enhance voice from below to enable bottom-up engagement with state building and governance.
- Work by Anten et al. (2012) has also shown how different aspects of fragility and conflict-affectedness can shape the nature and effects of capacity development activities. They talk about how various kinds of state – collective interest states, redistributive states and weak states – give rise to different kinds of political marketplace: that is, the space in which political

groups bargain with each other and compete (sometimes violently) to secure control of resources and decision-making power. Further, different systems of decentralisation or devolution can result in very different priorities for building state capacity at different levels of government. In other words, the way in which government is structured can influence choices about where state investments in capacity are made.

Also of relevance here is Moore's (2011) research into the sources of revenue which states are able to draw on in an era of economic globalisation: if rents can be accrued through international transactions, they there may be less incentive for political groups to invest in the development of domestic public institutions that are well connected and accountable to citizens. This work makes it clear that capacity development should not just be about technical issues, such as staffing and management policies, but should also be about the nature of power and politics, and the way in which decisions to invest in state capacity are made.

## **2.5 It needs to be gender sensitive**

As is the case with all SLRC research, gender should be central to how we think about research capacity development. However, there has been relatively little examination to date of capacity development frameworks from feminist perspectives (Hambly and Sarapura, 2009). Given that 'the most challenging dimensions of development involve allocation of roles, resources and rights based on public interpretations of human relationships which are inherently operating in the private sphere' (ibid.: 7), the absence of gendered approaches to, and examinations of, capacity development frameworks is both frustrating and short sighted.

Designing a gender sensitive analytical framework means going beyond purely quantitative assessments of women's presence and roles in organisations before and after capacity development activities have taken place (e.g. by looking solely at formal staffing policies). While it is certainly relevant to ask whether a capacity development programme takes into account and addresses gendered issues, it is also important to consider the mediating effects of institutionalised gendered norms and practices. We'll therefore need to pay attention to how the organisations and institutions that we want to research are gendered. Are the capacity development objectives and activities of international actors gender sensitive and what are the gender consequences of how they are approaching capacity development? In asking whose capacities are being built it will be important to pay attention to the different experiences of men and women within organisations and institutions, as well as to both men's and women's capacity to implement gender-responsive services.

## **2.6 Whether capacities are being developed or undermined needs to be an open question for research**

Whilst international aid often sets out to develop capacities, in practice it can also undermine local capacities. International organisations can inappropriately substitute for state and other local actors, can suck up scarce funding and poach skilled people who might otherwise work for the state. So, in researching capacity development, we need to analyse whether or not capacities are in fact being built and whether they may also be being undermined. We also need to be sensitive to the fact that this might not be an either/or proposition. Some capacities at the individual or organisational level might be being built at the same time as other capacities are being undermined.

## **2.7 It should allow connections to be made with the analytical framework for SLRC's first overarching research question on state legitimacy**

Although we draw a distinction between capacity and state legitimacy, it is important to recognise that the two are not disconnected. The relationship might not be linear, but there are multiple mechanisms – in theory, at least – through which processes associated with, and changes in, state capacity might affect legitimacy. For example, recent work by The Asia Foundation on sub-national conflict in Asia

suggests that improved capacity to provide education services may challenge a state's legitimacy in conflict-affected areas if the curriculum is delivered in the national language only (Parks et al., 2013). And just as capacity can affect legitimacy, the reverse is also true. Where there is enhanced legitimacy – through, for example, better and more participatory systems of state accountability – the incentives for political will to deliver equitable services are strengthened, potentially resulting in improved capacity in this area. Subsequently, international attempts to strengthen central state capacities, without paying attention to the political implications of doing so, may therefore produce adverse effects on legitimacy and authority in particular parts of state territory and for particular parts of the population.

It thus makes sense for us to try and link our analytical approach to RQ2 on capacity with that to research question 1. In RQ1 we are concerned with how support to services and livelihoods contributes to state building, and particularly to state legitimacy. Taking the key dimensions of state building and state legitimacy that we propose for RQ1, we can ask how capacities across those dimensions are developing:

- Has the visibility and penetration of the state in the arena of service delivery increased over time? Has aid played a role in enabling the capacity of the state to be more visible?
- Is the way in which services are delivered becoming more standardised over time? Are state capacities to deliver a standard package of services increasing and what is aid's role within this?
- Has the capacity to accommodate critical elite interests and to include the previously excluded (politicisation) increased over time?
- Have capacities to enable greater accountability, collective action, collaboration and participation in the delivery of services increased over time?

What we are not suggesting here, however, is that researchers using the framework presented below are obliged to integrate questions about the relationship between capacity and legitimacy into their work. Rather, the framework needs to be able to handle this dimension should some researchers wish to explore it.



## 3 What the framework looks like

Having set some requirements, the next question is then: how do we make sure we take them all seriously? How do we ensure that whatever framework we adopt is fit for purpose? In taking this question forwards, it is useful to recognise that there are already a number of options out there for us to draw on. So, rather than creating a framework from scratch, it makes more sense for us to explore what already exists.

### 3.1 Introducing the 5Cs model

Following this, and for reasons discussed below, our capacity development framework draws heavily on the ‘five capabilities’ (or 5Cs) model. This model emerged out of the multi-country ECDPM study of capacity and capacity development.<sup>2</sup> To the degree that an organisation, a network of organizations, or a system develops and integrates these capabilities, capacity – in the broad sense of being able to achieve a desired collective purpose – is generated and enhanced. According to Morgan (2006: 8-16), the five capabilities are:

- *The capability to self-organize and act.* Actors are able to: mobilize resources (financial, human, organizational); create space and autonomy for independent action; motivate unwilling or unresponsive partners; plan, decide, and engage collectively to exercise their other capabilities.
- *The capability to generate development results.* Actors are able to: produce substantive outputs and outcomes (e.g., health or education services, employment opportunities, justice and rule of law); sustain production over time; and add value for their clients, beneficiaries, citizens, etc.
- *The capability to establish supportive relationships.* Actors can: establish and manage linkages, alliances, and/or partnerships with others to leverage resources and actions; build legitimacy in the eyes of key stakeholders; deal effectively with competition, politics, and power differentials.
- *The capability to adapt and self-renew.* Actors are able to: adapt and modify plans and operations based on monitoring of progress and outcomes; proactively anticipate change and new challenges; cope with shocks and develop resilience.
- *The capability to achieve coherence.* Actors can: develop shared short and long-term strategies and visions; balance control, flexibility, and consistency; integrate and harmonize plans and actions in complex, multi-actor settings; and cope with cycles of stability and change.

Also useful in helping to frame our thinking around these issues is a paper by Derick Brinkerhoff (2007) on ‘Capacity Development in Fragile States’. Brinkerhoff notes that in difficult environments the capability to self-organise and act is often limited with systems that are unresponsive or stuck. Actors that do have capabilities to act are often using them to maintain power and control and to withhold power and resources from other groups. Capacities to establish supportive relationships are often limited to particular groups, leading to exclusion, exploitation, social divisiveness and the build-up of grievances amongst those excluded. Brinkerhoff argues that the five capabilities become especially useful for assessing how the state and citizens interact. States without the capabilities to establish supportive relationships and achieve coherence might fail to engage positively with their citizens (with potentially negative consequences for state legitimacy) and to forge political coalitions around particular issues for collective action (Barma et al., 2012). It is also important to point out that the 5Cs can be developed at different levels (individual, organisation, system), although improvements in capabilities at one level will not automatically generate improvements at another.

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[http://www.ecdpm.org/Web\\_ECDPM/Web/Content/Navigation.nsf/index2?readform&http://www.ecdpm.org/Web\\_ECDPM/Web/Content/Content.nsf/7732def81dddafa7ac1256c240034fe65/87cd422a58eb517cc12579ea0053c1e7?OpenDocument](http://www.ecdpm.org/Web_ECDPM/Web/Content/Navigation.nsf/index2?readform&http://www.ecdpm.org/Web_ECDPM/Web/Content/Content.nsf/7732def81dddafa7ac1256c240034fe65/87cd422a58eb517cc12579ea0053c1e7?OpenDocument)

So, the broad notion of concept can be usefully broken down into a set of five constituent parts, with each part representing a different capability to ‘do something’. But what is it that makes up a particular capability? Drawing again on the findings of the ECDPM programme, we can say that in order for deep and sustained capabilities to exist, an appropriate mix of factors or conditions must be in place. More specifically, the evidence speaks to the need for sufficient resources, relevant skills and knowledge, conducive organisational structures, an enabling political environment, and the ‘right’ kind of incentives. We list these out below with some additional information on what kind of interventions might be appropriate for addressing constraints on each (Brinkerhoff, 2007):

- *Resources (who has what)*. Interventions designed to increase resources might focus on budget support or provision of equipment.
- *Skills and Knowledge (who knows what)*. Interventions designed to enhance skills and knowledge might focus on training, technical assistance or technology transfer.
- *Organisation (who can manage what)*. Interventions designed to strengthen organisation might focus on restructuring, civil service reform or decentralisation.<sup>3</sup>
- *Politics and Power (who can get what)*. Interventions designed to address politics and power might focus on legislative strengthening, community empowerment or civil society advocacy development.
- *Incentives (who wants to do what)*. Interventions designed to realign incentives might focus on sectoral policy reforms, improving the rule of law or strengthening accountability structures.

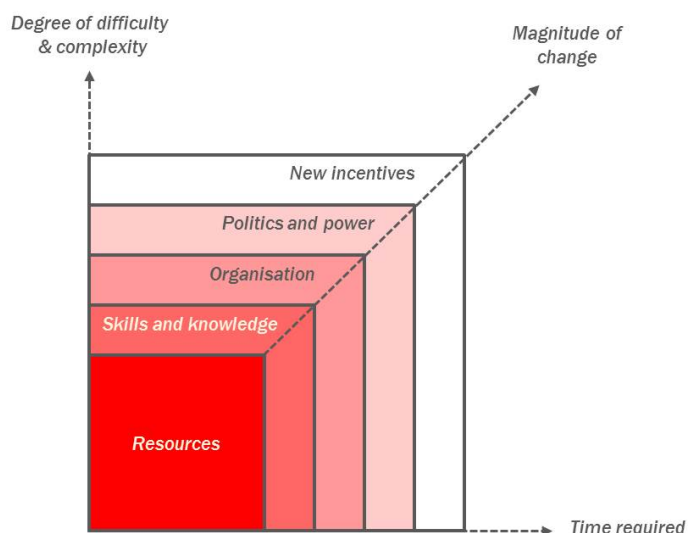
While aid programmes often attempt to build capabilities and capacities through the transfer of resources and knowledge (for example, by providing materials and paying for trainings) – partly because keeping capacity development focussed on these technical and more easily measured performance targets is simpler and more in tune with donor reporting requirements (see Figure 1) – these are not, in themselves, sufficient conditions for stronger overall capacity. It is in fact often the messier and more politically difficult work of restructuring relationships and incentives that will lead to deeper, more sustained improvements. Brinkerhoff (2007) concludes that, too often, rather than developing capacity, ‘vicious cycles of capacity disintegration are set in motion’ and that the ability of external actors to ‘find a firm footing for ownership of reform and capacity development is highly circumscribed’. What is needed, therefore, is for capacity development practitioners to recognise which particular mix of targets needs to be addressed in a particular context. While it may be preferable to address all five, constraints of various kinds often prevent this in reality.

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<sup>3</sup> In our framework, we refer to ‘organisation’ as ‘management’ when conceptualising targets. Since we are already talking about ‘organisation’ elsewhere in the framework – in the sense of agents, organizations and systems – we have done this in order to avoid mixing up terminology.



**Figure 1: Targets for capacity development by degree of difficulty, time required and magnitude of change**



Source: Brinkerhoff (2007)

A clear value of this way of framing capacity development targets is that the multi-layered nature of capacity is captured. Even if very little is being done in practice to address, say, political incentives, the framework encourages the researcher to at least ask the question. Using this approach enables us to identify the areas in which capacity development activities are most concentrated as well as the areas which are being neglected.

Further, while the gendered dimensions of capacity are generally overlooked within the literature, this framing of capacity development invites researchers to ask whether there are differences in gender for each target. There are a number of questions we might ask:

- Are resources allocated to gender equality?
- Do staff have sufficient skills and knowledge to deliver gender-responsive services (e.g. is gender training in place?)
- Are organisations gender-sensitive (e.g. what positions do women hold in organisations?) Are there constraints on women in organisations (e.g. due to childcare or other socio-economic barriers?)
- Are women represented in politics? Are power holders gender-sensitive?
- How does gender equality shape incentives? Or are incentives in place to promote gender equality?

Asking questions such as these will help researchers identify whether the foundations of capacity in a particular context are weakened by the presence of gendered gaps or constraints.

So, to sum up, if we take forward the idea that services are governed by ‘multi-stakeholder processes’ (Stel et al., 2012) and the APPP idea that governance should be more about convening collective approaches to problem solving (Booth, 2012; Booth and Cammack, 2013), then the focus of the 5Cs on how different actors relate to each other seems important. The capabilities for developing supportive relationships and achieving coherence have particular resonance. Traditionally, capacity development has focused on capacities to do things – or to generate development results – but the 5Cs approach might help us to illuminate capacities to manage the sort of relationships between actors that are at the heart of how services are actually governed in conflict-affected places.

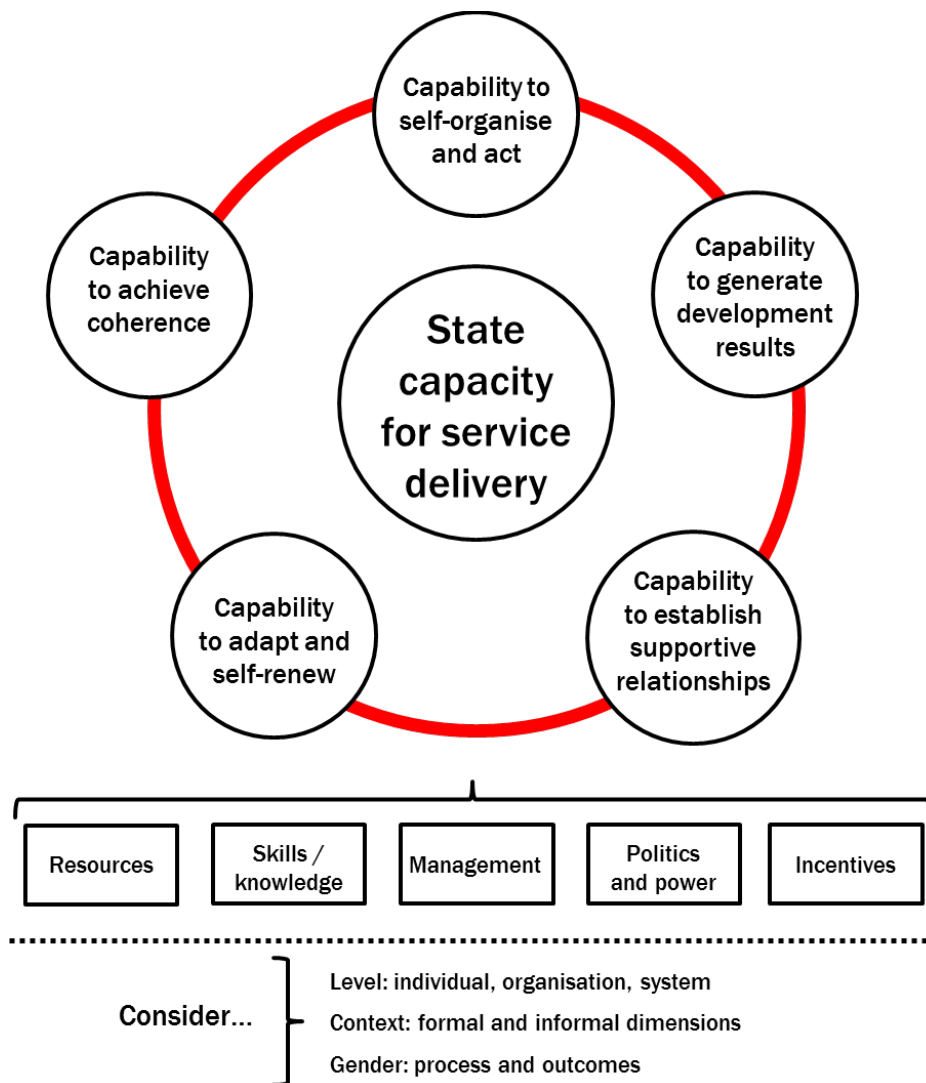
For the complex web of state and non-state institutions and organisations, we’d be asking how their capacities across the 5Cs change over time. We would also be asking about the influence that

international aid actors have on local organisations and institutions, and whether they are undermining or developing capacities across these different dimensions.

### 3.2 The framework visualised and explained

Based on the parameters and requirements outlined in Section 2, a selective review of key literature on the topic, and critical discussions held during SLRC’s partner workshop in February 2013, we present here an analytical framework that can be used by researchers to examine and assess (external) activities to develop state capacity to deliver services in fragile and conflict-affected situations. The framework draws heavily on the 5Cs model outlined above, but tweaks this approach by adding in a few additional dimensions and layers. The visualised framework presented on the following page is accompanied by an explanation of how the framework addresses each of our requirements.

**Figure 2: A Visualised Analytical Framework for SLRC Research into RQ2 on State Capacity for Service Delivery**



We explain below the various elements of the analytical framework visualised in Figure 2. In order to demonstrate how our framework is fit for purpose, we refer directly back to each of the requirements listed in Section 2 when discussing the relevant parts of the framework. Clicking on the hyperlinks of each highlighted sentence links back to the original requirement.

One obvious way of starting with the framework is by focusing in on a particular intervention or form of capacity support provided by an external actor. In order to understand the relationship between an activity and capacity development processes and outcomes, it will often be necessary to retrieve or

generate information on the specifics of programme design. As Rosen and Haldrup (2013) show, when it comes to working in difficult environments, inflexible 'grand' designs may not do capacity development programmes any favours.

The framework then asks how the activity addresses each of the '5Cs' – if at all – and examines in which particular way the activity seeks to address one or more of the capabilities. The horizontal boxes in the visualised framework refer to the five targets discussed above: resources; skills and knowledge; organisation/management politics and power; and incentives. These different targets imply varying degrees of difficulty, timescales and magnitude of change (see Figure 1), and as we know, many capacity development activities having tended to focus on the quick wins, shying away from attempts to alter the more structural aspects of capacity (politics and power, incentives). SLRC research under the RQ2 workstream will help us determine whether this holds true for ongoing efforts by international actors to develop state capacity for service delivery in conflict-affected situations. It is through this kind of approach that we hope our research into capacity development will help shift discussion and practice away from a preoccupation with technical concerns and towards a more in-depth consideration different dimensions of capacity.

Beneath the dotted line are three key factors for researchers to consider. The first is 'level' ('individual', 'organisation' or 'system'). Drawing on the work of Pritchett et al. (2012), Barma et al. (2012), Upreti et al. (2010) and others, these refer to the level(s) at which the capacity development activity is taking place. Is the activity aimed at developing the capacity of individuals (ministry staff, managers, district officers, etc.), organisations (firms, NGOs, ministries) or systems (the broader administrative and political apparatus under whose jurisdiction service delivery falls)? It is important to differentiate between these levels, but also to recognise that capacity development efforts at one level may have a range of (unintended) effects, positive or negative, at another. We cannot assume that positive changes at, say, the individual level automatically or necessarily translate into improvements at the next level. As Hambly and Sarapura (2009: 3) point out, while the different levels of capacity development (individual, organisation, system) have long been viewed by development policy as individual 'blocks' of investment and activity, with improvements at one level expected to inform positive change at another, the 'challenge is that this rarely happens ... Sustained investment is difficult to procure, and pressures to change shift the policymaking agenda before capacity can be developed across all levels'. Ensuring that we separate out each of these levels ensures that our research recognises the [complex and multi-layered nature of governance capacities](#).

The second factor to consider is context. The social, political and historical features of particular places will mediate the effectiveness of international actors' efforts to reorganise and strengthen state structures – not least because it can be difficult for outsiders to perceive the distinctions between capacity gaps and weak or non-existent political will. This context is made up of political processes, the political marketplace, societal sources of legitimacy, and state–society relations (Barma et al., 2012). As discussed above, the political marketplace refers to the way in which political groups emerge to take control over key resources and decision-making processes through negotiation, bargaining and coercion (see Anten et al., 2012; de Waal, 2009). This concept is based on the idea that multiple groups are interested in the control of the state apparatus, which therefore generates an element of competition for political power. The composition and nature of the political marketplace – that is, the kinds of groups visible on the landscape, the way in which they interact and negotiate with each other, and the main sources of revenue that are available to draw on – may have important mediating effects on capacity development activities ([which may or may not look different in places affected by fragility and conflict](#)). For example, if the nature of the political marketplace creates a durable disincentive for investment in effective and sustained state capacity by domestic actors, then programming which focuses solely on resources or knowledge and skills may be inappropriate. It is also particularly important to recognise that there are both formal and informal dimensions of the sociopolitical context. While formal characteristics may define the *form* of state structures, for example, it may be that the

actual way in which things are done – the *function* of state structures – is heavily influenced by informal norms and processes (Barma et al., 2012). In many instances, we might see this phenomenon manifest itself locally in the form of hybrid service delivery mechanisms, which is why [our framework does not assume that services are provided in a linear, simplistic or universal manner](#). Acknowledging the dynamic and informal nature of governance also means that our research must look at how people interact and behave in the first place, rather than assume they act in a particular way. Subsequently, the framework encourages researchers to explore the [everyday realities of politics and governance](#), and the ways in which these mediate the effects of capacity development activities.

The third and final factor to consider is gender. [There are gender dimensions to each of the 5Cs](#). For example, in seeking to understand whether a government department is capable of establishing supportive relationships within its own organisation, we might want to know how actively women employees are contributing to decision-making processes in comparison to their male counterparts. Alternatively, if we were interested in the capability to self-organise and act, we would want to know if the women in a particular organisation have the capacity to organise themselves and others, or whether their efforts are constrained by pre-existing patriarchal governance structures still present within the system. Thus, while international actors might be able to improve state capacity for service delivery in some overall sense, the process of doing so will feature some highly gendered dimensions. Keijzer et al. (2011) argue that it is not necessary to incorporate gender specific indicators into the 5Cs model; rather, it is more important that the model is applied sensitively, and that the gender dimensions of each of the 5Cs are effectively brought out. To that end, we present below a series of questions that researchers might consider when applying the framework:

**Table 1: Bringing out the gendered dimensions of the 5Cs**

Capability	Potential questions to bring out gendered dimensions
Capability to self-organise and act	<p>Are women organised by others, or are they actively involved in acts of organisation?</p> <p>What types of positions do women hold in the organisation? How involved are women in decision making processes? Are their voices listened to and acted upon?</p>
Capability to generate development results	<p>Do development results benefit women and men equally? Are gender specific outcomes actively pursued?</p> <p>Are resources available to support gender equitable outcomes? Do staff have the necessary skills to promote gender-sensitive outcomes? Are gendered forms of knowledge integrated into policy and programming?</p> <p>Are development results evaluated with gender equality in mind?</p>
Capability to establish supportive relationships	<p>Are men and women within an organisation treated equally? How prevalent is gender-based discrimination? Do both men and women actively participate in decision-making processes?</p> <p>Is there space for discussion and deliberation over gender-based issues (both internal and external)?</p> <p>Are there support networks for men and women working on the 'frontline'? Is there capacity to work with informal actors / networks to promote gender equality?</p> <p>What resources / skills do external partners need to deliver gender responsive services?</p>
Capability to adapt and self-renew	<p>Do the institutional or systemic 'rules of the game' prevent gender equality and are they resistant to transformation? Is there an open culture of learning and adaptation within an organisation?</p> <p>Are there strategies in place, which explicitly aim to pursue gender equity either internally or externally?</p> <p>Are organisations aware of gender issues – either internally (within the organisation, staffing, decision-making etc.) or externally (outcomes and impacts of the organisation's activities) – and, if so, do they actively respond to them?</p>
Capability to achieve coherence	<p>Are there dedicated staff responsible for coordinating gender-related activities within the organisation and externally?</p> <p>Is there a gender strategy in place?</p>

Finally, what we are interested in examining is the way in which a particular capacity development activity shapes a particular outcome – state capacity for service delivery. We do not assume that this refers exclusively to the capacity of the state to deliver services itself. Rather, we view capacity and capacity development through a broad lens, acknowledging that successful capacity development may

also mean improvements in state capacity to regulate the actions of providers, to manage relationships, to forge political coalitions around service-related issues, to transfer resources to local institutions in an efficient manner, to embed appropriate grievance mechanisms into service delivery modalities which enhance client accountability, and so on. We also do not assume that capacity development activities will automatically generate positive outcomes and, as such, we are interested in the ways in which such activities might unintentionally undermine state capacity for service delivery. Thus, we do not want SLRC research projects to narrow their scope by focusing only on positive outcomes. Rather, [we are interested in the various trajectories capacity development activities take, whether they generate positive, negative or negligible effects.](#)

## 4 Conclusion

This paper has presented an analytical framework that can be used to research international engagements to strengthen the capacity of states to deliver services in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. More specifically, the framework has been developed with the following overarching research question in mind:

How do international actors interact with the state and local-level governance institutions? How successful are international attempts to develop state capacity to deliver social protection, basic services and support to livelihoods?

The primary purpose of the framework and this paper, therefore, is to provide analytical support to SLRC researchers carrying out empirical work within this research theme. It is intended to help inform the design of primary research studies, guide analysis of appropriate data, and promote analytical coherence across the different country programmes. However, we also hope that the discussion and framework presented here are of interest and use to the wider research and policy community. State capacity is one of the big questions facing those working within international development, and there remains plenty of uncertainty regarding effective ways of developing the capacity of weak states in a deep and sustained manner.

Our framework is not ground-breaking, nor is it intended to be. We have drawn heavily on the valuable findings of previous studies and research programmes, synthesising relevant insights and layering them accordingly. Our framework adopts as its core the '5Cs' model developed by the ECDPM, and, in this respect, we owe much to the Centre's multi-year study on Capacity, Performance and Change. Where necessary, we have made efforts to bring out certain dimensions of the model more strongly, but many of the fundamentals remain the same.

Finally, we encourage researchers to apply the framework critically. This is by no means the final word on analytical approaches to studying capacity development, and refinements will only be identified through robust assessments of how far the current framework takes us. To that end, we hope that researchers will use the framework in their studies but also challenge it based on their empirical experiences. Being open about its strengths and shortcomings will enable us in the future to revisit the design of the framework and to re-examine how fit for purpose it is.

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