Researching livelihoods and
services affected by conflict

Perceptions of livelihood services delivery:

A study of fisher
communities in post-war
north and east of
Sri Lanka

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Geetha Mayadunne and Mira Phillips
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About us

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) aims to generate a stronger evidence base on how people make a living, educate their children, deal with illness and access other basic services in conflict-affected situations (CAS). 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 under conflict

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Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium
Overseas Development Institute
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
United Kingdom

T   +44 (0)20 3817 0031
E   slrc@odi.org.uk
W   www.securelivelihoods.org

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Contents

Acronyms

ADF	Assistant Director of Fisheries
CEPA	Center for Policy Analysis
DS	Divisional Secretariat
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FI	Fisheries Inspector
KPI	Key Person Interview
SLRC	Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium

Abstract

A study of fisher livelihood services in the post-war north and east of Sri Lanka reveals mixed experiences and perceptions of government service delivery. Service delivery constraints arising from limitations in human and financial resources as well as problems of politicisation and inadequate consideration of how the war affected people's abilities to access services are important factors in shaping these experiences and perceptions. However, beyond these factors persists a conflicted sense of national belonging and identity that looms over and shapes perceptions of livelihood services.

1   Introduction

The Sri Lankan Civil War, which ended in the east in 2007 and in the north in 2009, had profoundly adverse impacts on coastal fishing communities, which continue to suffer in its aftermath. Fisheries in the north and in war-affected areas of the east suffered badly during the war due to large-scale displacement, the establishment of high security zones, restrictions on fishing, limited access to landing sites (Shanmugaratnam 2005), destruction of infrastructure, and rent-seeking by various armed actors as part of the war economy (Sarvananthan 2002). The result was the 'de-development' of the northern and eastern fisheries industries, placing them at a technical and economic disadvantage compared to their southern equivalent, which continued to develop and expand during the war.

The need to support the rebuilding of livelihoods in post-conflict communities has achieved greater recognition, especially given decreasing income and rising indebtedness (World Bank 2012; Ministry of Finance and Planning 2011, 2012; WFP 2012; IRIN 2013). Given these vulnerabilities and risks, livelihood service delivery is an important tool for helping communities emerge from the difficulties they had to face during and after the armed conflict. The delivery of public services has also been posited as a central mechanism through which people and the government are brought together, potentially contributing to state legitimacy (DFID 2012; McLoughlin 2013; OECD 2010). As such, recent conflict-related state-building efforts have begun to look into the extent to which service delivery can impact people's perceptions of the state (DFID 2012).

However, the evidence from literature (e.g. Carpenter, Slater and Mallett 2012; McLoughlin 2014; Wild, Menochal and Mallett 2013) suggests that because people's perceptions of the government are highly context-specific and determined by factors other than public service delivery, links between service delivery and state legitimacy are not easily generalised. This is germane to the Sri Lankan context, where service delivery persisted through the war period, although much affected, and where post-war service delivery has been compounded by contestation around issues of reconciliation, redistribution and justice. Thus, it is pertinent to examine how service delivery in Sri Lanka has managed to deal with the unique challenges that war poses.

The research methodology for the study involved: (1) an analysis of quantitative data drawn from a survey of post-war communities in the north and east and (2) qualitative data drawn from key person interviews and focus group discussions in coastal communities in Jaffna, Mannar and Trincomalee. The qualitative data was analysed by testing two interconnected frameworks that posit certain factors in service delivery as critical in terms of state legitimacy. The first framework looks at micro-level factors – namely, how people experience service delivery – while the second examines meso-level factors that may have an impact on how well the state is able to establish itself as a legitimate actor in the eyes of the community.

In analysing the qualitative data in line with these frameworks, this study aims to examine their relevance in the context of Sri Lanka and consider whether in a post-war setting there are other issues that need to be considered. As such, a macro-level analysis of the political, social and economic context will be undertaken to determine other factors beyond service delivery with a bearing on state legitimacy. The paper begins with an in-depth description of the conceptual frameworks, followed by a discussion of the macro-level context setting. It then proceeds with the micro and meso-level analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data.

2   Conceptual framework and methodology

This section draws upon Mcloughlin (2013) and an unpublished paper by Wild, Menochal and Mallett (2013), adapting the latter's frame of the nexus between service delivery and state legitimacy. This study suggests that people's perceptions about the government are shaped by their experiences at three distinct levels. The local or micro level is concerned with how people experience service delivery; the meso level is concerned with how services are delivered by the government; and the macro level is concerned with narratives and contestation regarding the historical and current features of state–society relations including, in the context of this study, ethnic conflict and war.

Wild, Menochal and Mallett (2013) discuss four key dimensions of service-delivery experiences at local level that shape people's perceptions of legitimacy:

- **Visibility:** How people at local level see the delivery of services; the attribution of access to and experiences of services to the government; trust in the government's capacity to deliver; and people's prior expectations of service delivery.
- **Politicisation (or neutrality):** Inclusiveness in accessing and experiencing services free of political favouritism.
- **Accountability:** Access to and experiences with grievance and redress mechanisms.
- **Participation:** The existence of an enabling environment and capacity for collective action and collaboration.

Van de Walle and Scott (2011) note that institutional processes of service delivery through which socio-political processes are practised mediate and shape perceptions of state legitimacy. They suggest that the structure and form of service delivery can be framed around three processes:

- **Penetration:** Using service delivery – playing the role of an interface between citizens and the state – to aid in 'the process of establishing the presence, authority and visibility of the state' (9).
- **Standardisation:** Homogenous or 'similar administrative procedures for all citizens' (10). As these standardised and readily identifiable public services become present in a particular state or territory, they should contribute to the formation of a common identity and instil a sense of togetherness and cohesion.
- **Accommodation:** A process of reconciliation or settlement that helps foster loyalty to the state and 'act as a safeguard against the development of competing centres of power within the state' (Migdal 2001: 75, cited in Van de Walle and Scott 2011).

At the macro level, people's perceptions of the government are likely to be shaped by the historical features of state–society relations, how people experienced the conflict and how they are experiencing the post-conflict situation.

2.1   Methodology and data

Analytical framework: People's access to and experience of livelihood services will depend on both supply and demand factors. Jacobs, Bigdeli, Annear and Damme (2011) suggest that supply-side factors include aspects at the meso level, such as institutions, policies, technical and statutory requirements for eligibility of service, implementation processes, and human, technical and financial resources available for service delivery. On the demand side, factors include awareness of entitlements, eligibility, costs, the complexity of transaction procedures, political power relations, household and individual dynamics, and the level of trust between the service provider and the recipient (Jacobs et al., 2011). While many of the factors are interlinked and cross cutting, they can be broadly classified as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Factors affecting access and experience of services

Access (demand) side	Delivery (supply) side
• Individual factors, e.g. gender, age, education, ethnicity and economic status of the service recipients • Location, current status of residence (never displaced, displaced and resettled, still displaced) • Information on service provision • Availability of services • Eligibility to receive the service • Affordability (e.g. ability to bear financial and economic costs) • Complexity of transaction/process • Inclusion/exclusion through power relations • Language of communication, caste barriers • Getting the correct quantity and at the right time • Ability of the service to make a difference in the recipient's life (e.g. improve production in the case of livelihood services)	• Institutions • Policy • Technical and statutory requirements for eligibility (e.g. collaterals for loans, boat registration for fuel subsidy) • Process of delivery (e.g. making people aware of service availability, documentation requirements, transaction procedure, service fees) • Implementation (e.g. supply of service, financial, human and technical resources, language of communication, delivering the right quantity at the right time)

While the above factors explain people's access to and experience of livelihood services, to analyse the formation of perceptions we use an analytical framework (Table 2) based on the conceptual form discussed in Wild, Menochal and Mallett (2013).

Table 2: Analytical framework

Level of Analysis	Focus	Dimension/factors	Cross-cutting
Micro	Local experience of service delivery	Visibility	How experiences and perceptions vary by ethnicity, location
		Politicisation	
		Accountability	
		Participation	
Meso	Service delivery at state–society interface	Penetration	
		Standardisation	
		Accommodation	
Macro	Other factors shaping people's perceptions of the government	State–society relations	
		Conflict	
		Political settlement	

Adapted from Wild, Menochal and Mallett (2013)

Data: The micro-level analysis was based on both quantitative data from a survey of fisher households in Jaffna, Mannar and Trincomalee districts and qualitative data from Key Person Interviews (KPIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with fisher communities in the same locations.

The quantitative survey this paper draws on was carried out in 2012 by the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) as part of a Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) global research programme exploring livelihoods, access to and experience of services, and people's perceptions of governance in conflict-affected areas. The survey involved 1,377 households in 12 Grama Niladari Divisions in the districts of Jaffna, Mannar and Trincomalee. The sampling strategy was purposive and random. Households were randomly selected from war-affected Districts, Divisional Secretariat Divisions and Grama Niladari Divisions. Given the focus on fisheries livelihoods, it was necessary that all the locations selected had a substantial concentration of fishing populations.[1]

The main data collection tool in the qualitative study was focus group discussions (FGDs). FGDs were held in 16 locations in Jaffna, Mannar and Trincomalee districts (Annex 1). Each FGD consisted of at least nine persons engaged in fishing-related occupations. Some groups were mono-ethnic and others multi-ethnic, and some groups had a gender mix while others were exclusively men or women. The FGDs were facilitated using a checklist of discussion topics. The interviews included state actors and NGO personnel (Annex 2), and were based on a checklist of topics. The meso-level analysis was based on literature and on the qualitative data from KPIs and FGDs, while the macro-level analysis was based on a review of the relevant literature.

There are certain limitations in the study which affect the analysis. The study focused on livelihood services delivered to fishers by the central government[2] or contracted by the central government to the local government or private sector, including extension and training, fisher loan schemes, fisher insurance schemes, fuel subsidies for fishing crafts, access to fisheries infrastructure (harbours, anchorages and landing sites), and fishing and marketing facilities. It is mainly fisher*men* who access these livelihood services, which reveals that there is a gendered component to fishing as a livelihood. For instance, it emerged from the FGDs that only fisher women have access to microfinance, which reveals that credit was not provided for 'fishers' but only for women.

Though outside the scope of the present paper, it is important to investigate the impact of patriarchal social relations on fishing practices and its political economy in general. Of particular concern is how this leads to privileging of male fishers and the ways in which women's roles as fishers are diminished not just socially but also in policy and service delivery.

There is little information as to what women do for a living in the communities where the data was collected – whether they are fishers or whether they are employed in an income-generating activity. What did come from the FGDs regarding gender relates to the above discussion of whether women's roles as fishers are diminished and further, what constitutes a 'fisher'. This implies that women may not be considered fishers, even if they participate in fishing activities such as collecting prawns. Apart from this interesting observation, the data was insufficient to adequately discuss gender differences in the perceptions of fisher service delivery.

There are limitations with the FGD tool, especially when there is substantial heterogeneity in experiences among the FGD participants. While responses are often noted as though one person was speaking, there are discrepancies, which suggest that these experiences are not shared by all the participants. Lack of sufficient contextual analysis of the respondents' lives, and insufficient understanding of the life history of respondents – what their lives were like before, during and after the conflict – further limit the possible analysis of the data. Many of these limitations can be traced to the methodological challenges of using FGDs as an effective data collection tool in under-researched locations.

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[1] In addition accessibility, security and the feasibility of carrying out the data collection also determined the locations surveyed.

[2] The information on fisheries sector service delivery by the provincial ministries of fisheries in the Northern and Eastern provinces (MALDILF, 2012, MAFRIT, 2012, MFARD, 2012) showed that the main focus of provincial ministries was on inland fisheries, and so their role in the delivery of services to coastal fisheries was significantly low compared to that of the central government Ministry of Fisheries.

3 Analysis and discussion

3.1 Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data (micro-level)

Visibility

Visibility concerns how people experience the provision of services by the state. Relevant here is whether beneficiaries know of services offered and how to access them, and their level of satisfaction with these services.

In the quantitative survey people reported low access to services (Table 3). Among 647 households that were engaged in fisheries as the primary occupation, only 20.2 percent reported receiving the fuel subsidy and 8 per cent reported receiving extension services. Furthermore, only about 1.2 percent of households reported receiving loans, insurance or infrastructure services. Except where the fuel subsidy is concerned, the quantitative data do not bear out the state's role as the primary service provider. For example, though the provision of extension services is a main service provided by the government, only 12 out of the 53 households that reported receiving extension services acknowledged that they got the service from the government, while 40 reported that the extension service was provided by NGOs. In summary, quantitative data showed that the government's visibility in service delivery was mixed. The qualitative data in the three areas of study at times point to similar levels of knowledge of certain services while also revealing differences in how people experience the provision of these services. In addition, the data from KPIs also suggests differences between how authorities and beneficiaries perceive the state of service delivery. Overall, the qualitative data suggest low levels of visibility, which can be attributed to problems with both supply and demand.

Table 3: Reported access to livelihood services

Service	No of households reported receiving service	Reported service provider		
		Govt.	NGO	Other
Fisher fuel subsidy	131 (20.2%)	129	1	1
Fisher extension services	53 (8%)	12	40	1
Fisher skills training	8	3	5	0
Loans/credit	7	2	3	2
Fisher financial management	7	0	4	3
Fish harvest transport	10 (1.5%)	5	0	5
Fish market infrastructure	4	4	0	0
Ice factory	2	1	1	0
Landing sites	4	3	0	1
Roads	4	4	0	0
Beacon lights	8	1	0	7
Total no of households engaged in fisheries as primary economic activity	647			

Source: SLRC Baseline Survey data 2012

The fuel subsidy, provided to help fishers cope with the rising price of oil, was mentioned in every FGD and respondents displayed knowledge about the requirements for the subsidy. However, there were key issues relating to access, such as the eligibility criteria, the inconsistency of the service, and the costs associated with access. On the supply side, the qualification criteria, which require that fishers possess boat registration and documentation, indicate an inadequate consideration of the beneficiaries' context. FGD and KPI data from all three districts note that accessing the subsidy is difficult due to the wartime procedures of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, who prohibited fishers from purchasing boats from companies, forcing them to buy them from other people, sometimes as far as Negombo. This has made it difficult to access the subsidy because fishers possess boats registered in someone else's name. In order to arrange a transfer, fishers need permission from the previous owner, which entails travelling to the latter's location and paying them a fee. A Fishing Inspector (FI) from Kuchchaveli DS Division, Trincomalee, said that they do try to help fishers to find supporting documentation, but that if this was not possible, they had no choice but to reject the application for the subsidy. While requiring documentation may be a standard practice, the requirements appear to be onerous given the war-affected context that the fishers operate in.

For some respondents who possessed boat registration, other issues, such as inconsistency in the provision of the subsidy, remained a concern. Respondents in most FGDs in Jaffna said that the subsidy had been stopped without explanation for two months, while respondents in an FGD in Manthai West DS Division, Mannar, reported only being able to access the subsidy intermittently between 2012 and 2013, before it was discontinued completely. This same FGD also revealed perceptions that officials intentionally denied people services, which further weakens visibility.

Other problems flagged included difficulties in physically obtaining the subsidy stamp and the fuel. To access fuel, the Fisheries Inspector (FI) for each area must sign a stamp for each beneficiary. In Jaffna and Trincomalee, respondents said that their FI would situate themselves in the most populated village or a location of convenience, requiring people from outside that village or location to have to spend money on transportation to obtain the stamp. Additionally, in discussing the collection of fuel, many respondents in these two districts said that they had to pay for separate transportation because fuel could not be taken on public transport. A respondent in an FGD in Kuchchaveli DS Division, Trincomalee, recounted a story in which one fisher from their village had gone to the FI and collected stamps for multiple people; he was subsequently arrested by the police. Such requirements to travel means sacrificing time that could be spent working, which is a problem for people whose livelihoods are already unstable. As KPIs reveal, there is usually only one FI assigned to cover a large area, meaning they do not have the resources to visit villages individually. This points to a possible problem of governance, which undermines how well people experience service provision. However, uneven experience with the subsidy was not necessarily the norm across all three districts. Interestingly, two FGDs in Musali DS Division, Mannar, reported that while the subsidy was no longer available, they had had no difficulty in using it when it was in operation.

Access to extension and training was low, which KPIs attributed to service delivery personnel lacking the required knowledge combined with the FI's inability to cover a large area. Interviewees said the number of FIs assigned to deliver services was too low and these officals were further constrained by the financial and physical resources available. As a result, training was mostly provided by NGOs. However, dissatisfaction with this training was apparent in all three areas of interest. Respondents lamented that the training was too short, inconsistent in operation, and mostly focused on GPS training, as opposed to things like engine repair. In Manthai West DS Division, Mannar, a respondent revealed that the Grama Nilhadari had not yet followed through on a promise to provide training for at least 10-15 people. This respondent also articulated the importance and the need of proper training:

We are doing experience-based fishing not knowledge-based. Here people are performing at 70 percent capacity in fishing. If they are with provided training their performance will increase up to 100 percent in fishing. (FGD, Manthai West, Mannar)

Regarding experiences with loans, insurances schemes and pensions, the qualitative data indicate inter- and intra-district differences in terms of visibility. Respondents in two FGDs in Manthai West DS Division, Mannar, revealed diverse experiences on access to services. In the first FGD there were comments about the need for greater awareness of 'each system,' while in the second, respondents said that at least 90 percent of people were receiving benefits and that a seminar to raise awareness had taken place. Similar differences were evident in an FGD in Valikamam North DS Division, Jaffna, where a few respondents were aware of the process of getting insurance, while others had no knowledge at all. This indicates that unevenness in service delivery is not only present within districts and DS divisions, but also within communities. A consideration of beneficiary differences, such as language, was also lacking in some areas. For example, in Valikamam North DS Division, Jaffna, one respondent said they were made aware of the bank's high interest rates, while another had had to sign forms in English despite not knowing the language and so ended up paying much higher interest rates than anticipated.

In Vadamarachchi East DS Division, Jaffna and Kuchchaveli DS Division, Trincomalee, some told how people had repeatedly submitted documents to the relevant authorities to access loans and insurance but had not heard anything. Respondents also mentioned the use of political influence as a means to achieve easier access to loans. Thus, even following the rules and regulations does not guarantee access to services.

Issues of eligibility again complicated access to benefits. Fishers in all three areas discussed how the state bank, the Bank of Ceylon, had agreed to provide loans through the Deewara Diriya loan scheme, but that accessing these loans was difficult. KPIs revealed that this was due to reluctance on the part of bank managers to hand out loans because of the poor credit history of many beneficiaries.

Mannar and Trincomalee respondents also mentioned poverty and unstable livelihoods as complicating access to insurance and loan schemes. Furthermore, the Bank of Ceylon requires that beneficiaries have at least two government officials as guarantors for a loan. This is another obstacle. Information from KPIs indicates a disconnection between the regulations of the Bank and the government, as the latter had mandated that guarantors were not necessary for the loan scheme. These requirements have meant that fishers have had to find other means to support themselves. In Kuchchaveli DS Division, Trincomalee, people have resorted to taking loans from big businesses or pawning their jewellery. Indebtedness to informal financial institutions in this area has taken its toll, with FGD participants recounting stories of the psychological damage caused by debt and harassment at the hands of collectors.

Even where higher levels of knowledge exist about certain services, variations in service delivery and strict eligibility criteria are a major issue for how these services are accessed and perceived. These variations have been acknowledged by the government and attributed to the enormity of the work that needs to be done, which is compounded by the limited resources available. However, the eligibility requirements for benefits such as fuel subsidy and loans reflect a failure to account for the post-conflict context in which beneficiaries are situated. It is doubtful whether conflict-affected people can be expected to have a good credit history and a stable income or possess things such as proper documentation for their assets. Improving people's experiences in accessing services demands a greater assessment of their context so as to provide solutions that do not further perpetuate their vulnerability.

Politicisation

Politicisation resulting in exclusion and discrimination will affect how people perceive the government. The quantitative survey did not provide data on politicisation or its exclusionary or discriminatory impacts, but the issue arises in multiple forms in the qualitative data.

Both community FGDs and KPIs with officials reveal that there is local-level political interference in decisions regarding fisheries services and other infrastructural development. In Vadamarachchi East DS Division, Jaffna, one FGD accused the Assistant Government Agent (AGA) of discrimination when it comes to housing projects, saying 'he is doing housing projects for his area people only, not for us'. An official in Kuchchaveli DS Division, Trincomalee, while noting that there is no political favouritism and all fishers are treated equally, admits that 'in the case of infrastructure construction, politicians interfere by wanting to have those in areas they select'. Greater transparency in choosing locations where infrastructure is provided can address such grievances as well as perceptions of discrimination.

Perceptions of politically motivated discrimination relate to other aspects in service delivery as well. For example, in Trincomalee, which is an ethnically mixed district, there is a strong perception that Sinhala fishers control the main fish market.

> *They say that three races are living in this area but there is only one market and the Sinhala people rule it. Whatever we [have] done, we have to be under them, they will say 'our country, our government'. (FGD, Kuchchaveli DS Division, Trincomalee)*

A wider issue raised in both Jaffna and Mannar Districts relates to the perception that the government permits 'outsiders' to fish in local waters. There are varying degrees of 'outsider,' such as others from other districts in the north and east, those from the south, and migrant fishers from India. Fishers in Mannar lamented the increase of Jaffna fishers in their waters, while local fisherman in all three districts resent the presence of migrant fishers. While the latter issue represents the resumption of a pre-conflict practice, there is a widely held perception that this is a politically motivated intrusion, given that complaints are often ignored, with respondents commenting that the relevant agencies and actors do not care about the presence of outside fishers.

FGD data show that northern and eastern fishers see the southern fishers as intruders. This is likely to be a result of their belief that they are being out-fished by the southern fishers, which is especially pertinent given that the war retarded the northern (and some parts of the eastern) fishing industry. It appears that the communities see the 'south' as the 'other' who shouldn't be accessing their resources. It must be observed that throughout the discussions, respondents would refer to the government or the 'south' as 'they', indicating an absence of national identity or feelings of loyalty towards the state.

This situation is further complicated by the fact that fisheries' officials do not seem to recognise such discrimination or politically motivated preferences. They note that there are certain areas where fishing is restricted, and only those 'permitted' may fish in such areas. Many fisheries officials state vehemently that there is no ethnic bias favouring the southern or Sinhala fishers in terms of access to these high-security zones in the sea. However, the criteria for obtaining permission are not clear, particularly as the navy polices these areas and decides whether or not to allow fishermen access.

Similar grievances were also voiced in relation to other outsiders, especially Indian fishers operating in northern Sri Lankan waters. In Vadamarachchi East DS Division, Jaffna, fishers state that they have informed the fisheries department and AGA about such outsiders but have heard that 'they are coming with our government officers' help'. They had also complained to the Army and Navy that fishers from India, China and Singapore are destroying resources but both are reported to have said that 'this is a state issue and that they cannot intervene'.

Accountability
Accountability concerns the existence of complaint-making and grievance redress mechanisms, their form and functioning and how they are perceived. The quantitative data showed that of the 647 primary fisher households, 205 (31.7 percent) faced service delivery issues, and out of those only 116 (56.6 percent) knew how to make a complaint.

The qualitative data, on the other hand, suggests that fishers know how to make a complaint. According to the officials, fishers may either complain directly to the FI serving them at a grassroots level or they can complain through the fisheries society in each village or to higher levels. In the FGDs, the fishers corroborated this and stated that they could complain to the FI, Assistant Director of Fisheries (ADF), Divisional Secretariat (DS), *Pradeshiya Sabha* (divisional councils) and ministers. In Vadamarachchi East DS Division, Jaffna, the fishers spoke of having telephone access to the FI and other points in the government system to make complaints. However, the multiple points for submitting a complaint may suggest lack of clarity about the mechanism. Further, it is not clear if they had in fact made complaints regarding fisheries services and the extent to which they were satisfied with the outcome.

Complaints were made mainly regarding the lack of resources, such as a lighthouse, harbour, ice rooms, market buildings, rest rooms for fishers, access roads to the community and to the beach, educational facilities and so on. Again, these complaints had been lodged at various levels of the government, but in most cases the fishers were not satisfied with the outcome. The government's ability to provide such capital-intensive infrastructure as lighthouses, harbour and ice facilities at every location is limited, which the fishers recognise. In Trincomalee, one community noted that:

> There is no lighthouse and authorities have not responded to requests about this. They remark that the Galle and Gandara side have [a] very big lighthouse but not us. They have also asked for lights but the response they got was that it would waste electricity and affect the government. (FGD, Kuchchaveli DS Division, Trincomalee)

The KPIs reveal that often the local fisheries officials do not have the mandate to provide these resources. As one FI in Samudragama, Trincomalee noted, 'they can complain to the ADF or to the HO. So far, nobody has complained. What they have are not complaints, but requests, which we can't often help.'

There is also a widespread feeling, corroborated by the KPIs, that some infrastructure decisions are made on the basis of local politics. This practice continues despite complaints from the neglected communities.

Participation
Participation concerns the capacity for local-level collective action and collaboration, free of coercion, between and within different groups and communities in relation to service delivery, which may assist in forming perceptions of the government. The quantitative data showed that out of the 647 primary fisher households, only 120 (18.5 percent) reported the existence of community meetings on livelihood service delivery during the 12 months preceding the survey, with 106 reporting participating in the meetings. Most KPIs commented on the high capacity for collective action and collaboration and the helpfulness of the fisheries societies in this regard. However, this is not necessarily supported by the qualitative FGD data.

By the end of 2012, more than a third of active marine fishers in the conflict-affected areas were members of fisheries societies. Fisheries societies came into existence in 2011 and there are currently 72 in operation. FIs use these societies to conduct meetings and facilitate the delivery of services. Societies are also expected to function as redress mechanisms through which fishers can engage in collective action or express their grievances. Each society is represented by its elected council at the District Fisheries Organisation. The National Federation of Fisheries Cooperative Societies (FCS), formed and governed by the cooperative society act No 5 of 1972 of the Department of Cooperative Development (Amarasinghe, 2006), is a parallel community based-organisation.[3] The mandate of fisheries societies is much broader than that of the FCS in that it goes beyond facilitating the welfare of

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[3] Data on FCS membership of marine fishers are unavailable.

fisher communities to creating a more direct link with the government's fisheries livelihood service delivery hierarchy.

The extent to which the societies actually function as substantive participatory bodies is unclear. The KPIs in all three districts often claim that the fishers can complain to the society, but give no further details or examples. In fact, a few FIs even say that no one in the areas they cover has complained. While there is a general awareness among FGD respondents regarding the ability to make complaints to and to participate in the fisheries societies, they usually mention the societies in relation to accessing certain services, such as fuel subsidy stamps or letters of approval for loans. Similar to KPI data, much of the FGD data did not detail their experiences in interacting with the fisheries society in the context of collective action. However, a respondent in Kuchchaveli DS Division, Trincomalee, told enumerators not to tell 'them' that they are airing their grievances in public. Though the identity of 'them' is not known, this discomfort with airing grievances may be indicative of the fact that substantive participation is not always possible.

Among those who did comment, experiences varied. Some respondents in Jaffna corroborated the KPI data saying that FIs will communicate with them via the fisheries society, and others in Mannar revealed their positive experiences in lodging complaints with the body. However, there were fishers who did not receive any responses to their complaints regarding issues such as the presence of outside fishers. Additionally, as was mentioned in the section on accountability, respondents often reported lodging complaints with other authorities, such as their FI or the Assistant Director of Fisheries (ADF), and not with their respective society. The ability to act collectively seems to be limited in these areas, and this is evidenced by a lack of inclusion once complaints reach higher levels of authority:

> *If we have any complaints we inform the ADF through the FI. The ADF organises meetings and discusses the complaints. We do not know what happens to the complaints which go beyond the ADF. (FGD, Musali DS Division, Mannar)*

As touched upon above, the infrequency of FI visits is an obstacle to the visibility of service delivery. It also has impacts on participation. In an FGD in Vadamarachchi East DS Division, Jaffna, respondents said that they lacked confidence in the abilities of their FI if the FI did not visit them at least once a month to discuss various issues. Furthermore, in Musali DS Division, Mannar, FGD respondents said they had no representative at the Mannar Fisheries Federation. The inability of fishers to voice concerns with their FI and a lack of representation in participatory bodies inhibits their capacity to organise in a meaningful way. Furthermore, most KPIs noted the existence of a 'progress monitoring system,' wherein relevant officials discuss and assess the progress of service delivery every two weeks. No further information was given as to if or how beneficiaries are included in these discussions. Additionally, if FI visits to communities are infrequent, it is unlikely that FIs can compile an adequate bi-weekly progress report relating to these communities.

3.2 Analysis of quantitative and qualitative data (meso-level)

Penetration

Penetration concerns the effectiveness of the state in establishing itself in communities via service delivery and whether this has a positive impact on the relationship between the state and citizens (Van de Walle and Scott 2011). The penetration of the state is directly related to the visibility and the accessibility of the services it renders. However, as previously discussed, the visibility and the accessibility of the state services is inconsistent. Several FIs corroborated what emerged from the FGDs, namely that the number of FIs and other relevant officials operating in the area was inadequate, leading to a lack of visibility and problems with access. However, many KPIs reveal that difficulties in reaching fisher communities were often overcome by communicating with fishers through the fisheries society. For example, one FI in Kuchchaveli DS Division, Trincomalee, said that by communicating with fishers through the fisheries society, fishers were not affected by his occasional absence.

Focus group data, however, does not completely support this, instead revealing unaddressed complaints and a lack of awareness about services. For example, in an FGD in Vadamarachchi East DS Division, Jaffna, fishers commented that they first heard about the fisheries insurance through the newspapers, not through the fisheries society. Even with the existence of fisheries societies, there are indications that respondents are still unhappy with the infrequency of FI visits. Respondents in the same DS division in Jaffna said that they receive no benefits from their FI, who rarely visits, with one person remarking, 'he came to our annual meeting and we forgot his face'. This suggests that the weak penetration of the FI has negative consequences on how state service delivery is perceived. KIIs said that programmes were taking place to provide instruction on rules, regulations, safety, fishing methods, and so forth. These programmes do not seem to be penetrating communities effectively because while some beneficiaries reported awareness about services, many wanted more information.

Although one could assume that the lack of visibility of state services and problems with access to them would create a strong preference for non-state services, our data indicate that this is not the case. In some areas, fishers appreciated the presence and assistance of NGOs in terms of training, livelihood assistance and housing reconstruction; in others, their efforts were viewed as ad hoc. Similar views existed regarding service delivery from the state. The polarised attitudes towards the NGOs and the state were evident in discussions on training in two FGDs from Valikamamam North DS Division, Jaffna. Many respondents in the first FGD preferred NGOs because 'government officers are focused on their own work,' while those in the second FGD said that government training would be better because it would run for a longer period of time. Other respondents had no preference, saying 'we are 100 percent ready to give our full support to people who come here to help us' (Vadamarachchi East DS Division, Jaffna), but view the lack of development on whole as a sign that they are not a priority.

Thus, the presence and adequacy of the service may be more important than who delivers it. Service provided over the long term, devoid of irregularities and inconsistencies, would represent such 'adequate' service.

Standardisation (homogeneity): Standardisation concerns the existence of standard procedures and homogeneous service delivery to all. The literature review provided some evidence of standardisation and homogeneity in service delivery, with service delivery being well institutionalised by the Fisheries Ministry (MFARD). There are legally enforceable regulations in which non-discrimination and inclusiveness are key, with every fisher entitled to receive services through the FI assigned to their geographic area. Interviews with fisheries officials show that they do not perceive any discrimination in provision of fisheries services and they state categorically that they do not engage in any discrimination in relation to ethnicity.

Despite these intentions, the post-conflict situation may create certain anomalies even when standard procedures are in place. For example, there is variation in the fisheries facilities available to the different communities. Given the magnitude of conflict-related damage to infrastructure, the process of replacing these facilities is slow and contested, with communities accusing the government of neglect when others get facilities before they do. Due to resource constraints, many FIs are asked to cover an area that is too large for them to service effectively, which results in complaints regarding variations in service levels.

> Sometimes, due to resource constraints I am not able to meet all the fishers personally. But I organise meetings of fisher groups across my area and deliver services. Yes, lack of resources money and manpower is the main problem in ensuring homogeneity. (KPI, Kuchchaveli DS Division, Trincomalee)

Finally, Tamil and Muslim fishers complain that certain forms, such as applications for loans and insurance, are given to them in Sinhala or English, which they cannot understand.

These issues suggest that in a post-conflict situation delivering services in a standardised manner as you would in non-conflict areas may not be enough to address the resource shortfall in the aftermath of violence and widespread destruction, especially when this has occurred over a long period of time.

Accommodation: Accommodation concerns the process of reconciliation in binding people to the state. Gill (2003, cited in Van de Walle and Scott 2011) argues that public services can be used as a means of accommodating and thereby solidifying support for the state. In post-conflict societies that exhibit tension between various groups, particularly across ethnic lines, accommodating the specific needs of groups through service provision may be useful in promoting greater cohesion (Van de Walle and Scott 2011). The quantitative data did not reveal anything pertinent to the discussion of accommodation in the north and east of Sri Lanka. The qualitative data, however, reveal that accommodation has not occurred to a large extent.

The various other elements of the two tested frameworks feed into the process of accommodation. For example, fishers lamenting the Sinhala invasion of their markets or inadequate responses to complaints reflect problems of politicisation and accountability, which will impact the level of loyalty people have to the state. Additionally, low levels of visibility, few mechanisms for collective action, or standardised practices that fail to account for differing circumstances of beneficiaries, will also undermine substantial accommodation.

Negative views of other ethnic groups (evidenced when northern and eastern fishers refer to Sinhala fishers as 'the other') are indicative of the far-reaching and enduring impacts of the conflict; these views could also be compounded by how services are delivered. As discussed abve, the fact that the conflict impeded the growth of fishing in the north and east means that special considerations are needed to accommodate fishers in these areas. Van de Walle and Scott (2011) believe that service provision that can facilitate social mobility will be important for 'binding people to the state'. In the case of the coastal communities in the north and east, this would mean service provision that privileges fishers in these areas. While this might seem antithetical to building cohesion, it is necessary in a context where certain groups have fallen behind. As such, services that include stringent eligibility criteria, while standard practice, may do little to improve the situation of fishers most affected by the conflict. This in turn may negatively shape their feelings towards the state, particularly if it fosters a sense that they are not a priority:

> *No one is concerned about us – government or NGO. They are telling us we have a small amount of people than other places. (FGD, Vadamarachchi East DS Division, Jaffna)*

Of course there are many contextual factors, discussed in the macro section, which influence how people perceive the state beyond service delivery. The state may have little control over these and this indicates that service delivery is not the only way to achieve accommodation.

3.3   Social, political and economic context (macro-level)

Literature (e.g. Abeyratne, 2004; Carment, 2007; Dharmadasa, 1981) suggests that colonial Ceylon, especially during the British period, saw ethnic communities[4] experience uneven development and inequality in terms of access to social and economic opportunities. Post-colonial Sri Lanka saw colonial legacies of ethnic division continuing to be nurtured by an ethnicised politics that eventually led to three decades of violent ethnic conflict.

Northern and eastern fishers' perception of the central government and the southern fishers as the 'other' indicates the continued importance attached to ethnic identities and concomitant ideas of belonging that shape their perceptions of government, irrespective of the quality of service delivery. In

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[4] Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic state with a Sinhalese majority and Tamil, Moor and other ethnic minorities.

addition to the aftermath of decades of ethnic conflict and polarisation, the constraints and stagnation experienced in the wartime economy have only heightened perceptions of exclusion (e.g. Abeyratne, 2004; Hettige, 1992, 2002). Moreover, these perceptions are likely to have been accentuated when these fisher communities saw the yawning gap between themselves and fisher communities less affected by the war, especially those from the south.

One of the key issues emerging from this study is that fisher communities in the north and east see their lived realities, including fishing-related service delivery, as refracted by a range of macro issues. Firstly, there are legacies of disadvantage as a result of being trapped in the war economy, including decades of militarisation and a poorly institutionalised and arbitrary regulation. Secondly, the social organisation of fishing communities was significantly affected by war and displacement. Moreover, institutionalised modes of cooperation, such as cooperatives and societies, have found it hard to adapt to a complex post-war environment. Thirdly, the post-war context itself continued to be politically fraught as the end of the war did not really bring peace and stability. Post-war political competition in the north and east is being shaped by bitter contestation over many war-related justice claims. Therefore, grievances are increasingly seen as being addressed through patronage politics rather than through an autonomous and independent state system.

In addition to these complexities, the now well-documented large-scale incursion of Indian fishers renders the macro context more complicated. As Bavinck (2015: 12) notes, in the northern fisheries, governance:

> is murky and infected by power struggle. In many instances, the military has the last word. Governance is severely fragmented, horizontally and vertically, and plagued by issues that lie outside the competence of authorities; frequently these issues are also reflected outside the fisheries field (Scholtens and Bavinck, 2014).

4   Summary and conclusions

This study tested two frameworks for analysing service delivery in terms of both supply and demand in an attempt to identify how people in the northern and eastern coastal communities of Sri Lanka perceive fisher service delivery by the government, and how in turn, this may impact state legitimacy. The frameworks analyse both micro- and meso-level factors that influence how service delivery is experienced. An analysis of micro-level factors suggests that people's experience of service delivery is influenced by the visibility of the service, whether or not delivery is politicised, and to what extent they are able to find redress and collectively mobilise to voice and find solutions to their concerns. The meso-level framework suggests that the state's success in creating a positive relationships with beneficiaries may depend on how deeply it is able to penetrate communities via service delivery, whether or not it provides standardised services, and to what extent it accommodates differing groups.

The elements that each framework touts as being important for service delivery are interconnected. It is evident that visibility and penetration mutually influence each other, while politicisation undoubtedly has an impact on levels of service standards across locations. Wholly homogenous service delivery, however, may undermine loyalty to the state if it prevents the diverse experiences of certain groups from being accommodated. Furthermore, when it comes to accountability and participation, the ability to air grievances and achieve redress is tied to the ability of beneficiaries to participate with relevant actors and work collectively to solve problems.

This study finds that six years after the end of the civil war, respondents in the communities in the three districts have had mixed experiences with service delivery by the government. There appears to be a gap between fisher perceptions of service delivery and what institutions and relevant actors think they are delivering. This is mainly due to resource constraints, difficulties in accessing services, and poor communication, but there are also examples of ethnic and location-based discrimination and politicisation. It is difficult to say whether fishers prefer service delivery by the government as opposed to service delivery by other sources (such as NGOs), but the qualitative data imply that the desire for adequate services is of greater importance than who delivers them.

Importantly, this study also found that even in areas where service delivery is generally visible, accountable, participatory and free from politicisation, positive perceptions can be undermined by other macro-level factors. Primarily, these factors relate to wider post-war political, social and economic grievances and justice claims. As such, state and international development actors should revisit conceptual frameworks regarding the connection between service delivery and state legitimacy, especially when they are used to analyse communities emerging from war and conflict. For instance, the focus should not just be on adequate service delivery but also on reconciliatory efforts and inclusive growth, as people's experience with the former may be hampered if the latter are ignored. Additionally, a more comprehensive and nuanced framework that can address common conflict-related problems, and which is flexible enough to account for specificities among conflict-affected beneficiaries, will be useful in adequately capturing experiences relating to livelihood service delivery.

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