Researching livelihoods and
services affected by conflict

Are public services
the building blocks of
state legitimacy?

Input to the World Bank's 2017
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Cover photo: a woman gets a health check-up in
rural Afghanistan. Credit: Graham Crouch / World
Bank

About us

The **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 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 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

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the lead organisation. SLRC partners include the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) in Sri Lanka, Feinstein International Center (FIC, Tufts University), the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Pakistan, Disaster Studies of Wageningen University (WUR) in the Netherlands, the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research (NCCR), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).
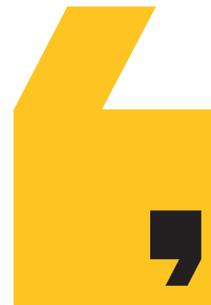
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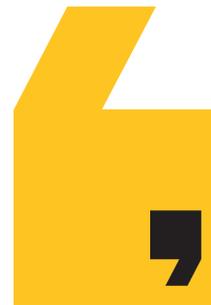
How do political actors gain the trust, confidence and consent of those they seek to rule? One prominent argument holds that the provision of public services is a key building block of state legitimacy – an argument that heavily influences development programming, particularly in countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence. This paper presents empirical evidence from survey and qualitative case study data on the relationship between people's experiences of service delivery and their perceptions of government from eight conflict-affected countries. The evidence demonstrates that, contrary to the dominant discourse, there is no clear linear relationship between people's access to services and their perceptions of state actors. Instead, legitimacy appears to be linked to both performance (what is being delivered) *and* process (how it is being done), as well as shifting norms, expectations and experiences of service delivery. This paper frames these findings in relation to the differing theoretical conceptions of legitimacy as a function of output, process or relational factors. These frameworks complement important aspects of the World Bank's 2017 World Development Report 2017 on *Governance and the Law*.

Acknowledgements

Acronyms

DAC	Development Assistance Committee	**ODI**	Overseas Development Institute
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)	**OECD**	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo	**SLRC**	Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium
FCAS	Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations	**VDC**	Village Development Committee (Nepal)
GN	Grama Niladhari (Sri Lanka)	**WDR**	World Development Report
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance		

Contents

1   Introduction

This paper explores relationships between service delivery, public perceptions and state legitimacy in fragile and conflict-affected situations, analysing a substantial body of empirical evidence gathered in recent years by the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC).[1] It was originally written in early 2016 as a background paper for the World Bank's 2017 World Development Report (WDR), which was in turn published earlier this year under the title *Governance and the Law* (World Bank, 2017a). This paper should also be considered a precursor to a fuller synthesis of SLRC's empirical material on this issue by Nixon and Mallett (2017). The fuller synthesis was carried out after the writing of this background paper, and thus draws on a more complete catalogue of SLRC evidence – not all of which is referenced here.

A prominent line of argument – heavily influencing development programming, particularly in countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence – holds that the provision of public services is an important building block of state legitimacy. While there is limited evidence for this orthodoxy, and considerable nuance regarding the foundations of state legitimacy in the literature, the positioning of service delivery as a gateway to greater state legitimacy continues to occupy a central position in the state-building policy agenda (Carpenter et al., 2012; Mcloughlin, 2015a).

Legitimacy describes a situation where citizens 'believe in the state's right to rule over them and are willing to defer to it' (Gilley, 2009 in Mcloughlin, 2015b). Beyond its positive normative associations, this condition has important practical implications. Policy-makers are particularly concerned about legitimacy because it is seen as a shortcut to more concrete outcomes of concern, such as stability or compliance (for example, in tax collection). The greater the legitimacy that institutions and associated public actors enjoy, the less they must rely on other means of securing given behaviours such as coercion or co-optation. In the terms of the framework of the 2017 WDR, legitimacy is considered the most efficient route for institutions to play their essential and 'primordial' roles of generating commitment, coordination and cooperation (World Bank, 2017a; 2017b).

This concern is especially salient in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Furthermore, where international

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[1]   The evidence presented in this paper is based on research by members of SLRC in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and Uganda. This research can be found at www.securelivelihoods.org.

intervention has been extensive or long-lasting – most recently in Afghanistan and Iraq – interest in how to secure legitimacy has spread beyond peacebuilding and development communities to national foreign ministries and militaries. Such attention – as embodied in debates around counter-insurgency and stabilisation – has given the issue of legitimacy increased political prominence. Putatively positive examples (the National Solidarity Program in Afghanistan being among the most emblematic) are seized upon and spread to discussions in other countries such as Syria and Libya, though sometimes more in form than substance.

The 2011 WDR on *Conflict, Security and Violence* emphasised 'delivering early results' in building confidence among citizens in order to create space for more sustained institutional transformation (World Bank, 2011: 128). The New Deal for Fragile States, also agreed in 2011, outlines five key Peace and Statebuilding Goals to guide the mutual efforts of domestic governments and their international partners; the first and last of these goals are 'legitimate politics' and 'revenues and services' (International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, 2011: 2). Legitimacy has become central to thinking about how states can transition out of conflict and instability towards more sustainable development, and is also seen as being linked to a state's capacity to deliver certain services.

The work covered in this paper was, in part, borne from widespread interest in this issue, and introduces an important empirical dimension to the discourse. There is

relatively little evidence systematically relating concrete aspects of public service delivery and state performance to the less tangible areas of public perceptions and beliefs about state actors. This paper describes findings generated by SLRC – see Box 1 – that can aid understanding of how aspects of service delivery shape people's perceptions of government, and begin to explain why these relationships are far from straightforward.

The evidence has its limitations: it is not a comprehensive test of all models and approaches to conceptualising and measuring legitimacy, but rather focuses on perception-based indicators. It is also not a rigorous comparison of all kinds of services. Most importantly, at the time of writing, only the results of a single round of the panel survey described in the next subsection were available for analysis. The quantitative data presented is thus cross-sectional in nature, not longitudinal. A second round of the survey has been conducted, the findings of which are described in Sturge et al. (2017).

In terms of structure, the next section of this paper introduces the theoretical underpinnings of the policy link tested here between the provision of public services in conflict-affected settings, people's perceptions of government, and legitimacy. Section 3 introduces the evidence from the SLRC survey and associated qualitative research. Section 4 reflects on this work in relation to a wider range of theoretical literature on legitimacy, and connects it to the framework for understanding institutional performance and governance featured in the WDR 2017.

Box 2: What is the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC)?

SLRC is a six-year global research programme exploring livelihoods, basic services and social protection in conflict-affected situations, and funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), Irish Aid and European Commission. It is led by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London and comprises nine research partners based in both developing and developed countries. The SLRC has three research themes:

- 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.

The SLRC was, in part, motivated by a desire to generate more and better evidence on state-building processes in conflict-affected situations. To investigate these themes, a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods have been applied. The centrepiece of the SLRC is a longitudinal panel survey across five fragile and conflict-affected settings. This survey has two rounds, targeting the same respondents in each round, and therefore illuminating in detail changes to livelihood, access and experience of services, and perceptions of government at local and national levels. For a full description of the survey methodology and first round results, see Mallett et al. (2015). For the panel findings, incorporating analysis of two rounds of data, see Sturge et al. (2017)

2 Legitimacy and the state-building orthodoxy
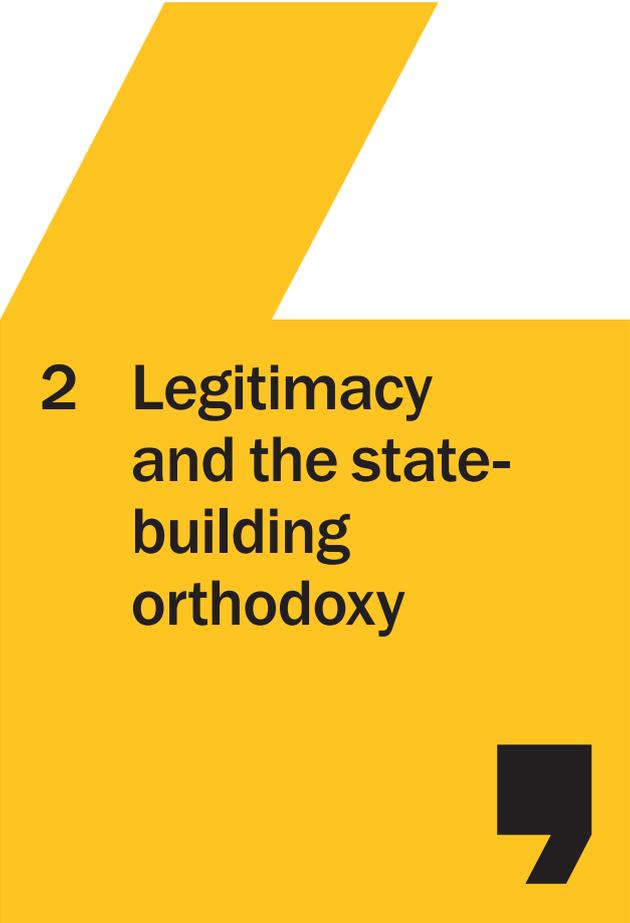
Over the last decade, the framing of service delivery as a way to build state legitimacy in fragile and conflict-affected situations has become increasingly influential, arguably coming to dominate certain aspects of development programming in these settings. Though this perspective is not monolithic nor universally shared, it is a point of view that is clearly embodied in the link between service delivery and legitimacy adopted by many development and stabilisation programmes. In this section, we examine the basis of this orthodoxy and identify the received wisdoms that underpin it.

2.1 The 'capacity deficit' model of the fragile state

Dominant understandings of legitimacy have been heavily influenced by Max Weber's theory of the state. Weber's ideal type of rational-legal bureaucracy has influenced a positive understanding of the state in terms of institutions and service delivery. In this model, the 'norm' comprises a system of functioning nation-states enjoying mutual international legitimacy and internal legitimacy between rulers and the ruled. The existence of variously named 'collapsed', 'weak', 'failed' and 'fragile' states is thus – implicitly or explicitly – conceptualised as a departure or pathology in relation to this normative model. These categorisations became increasingly prominent in the discourse around aid since the early 1990s, particularly after the successive failures of UN and US-led peacekeeping efforts in Somalia (Zartman, 1995).

Since 2001, the narrative that fragile states can be the source of international security threats has combined with arguments that poverty is increasingly concentrated in states suffering from persistent conflict and weak institutions. This has created a strong push for increased aid to places affected by violence, conflict and fragility (Collier, 2007). Many bilateral and multilateral aid organisations have explicit targets for assistance to such situations, although different definitions are applied from place to place. For example, the latest UK overseas development assistance strategy echoes previous guidance by calling for 50% of aid to be targeted for fragile and conflict-affected states and regions, and links this allocation with crisis prevention, national security and the concentration of poverty in these settings (HM Treasury and DFID, 2015).

This emphasis on state fragility has also been echoed in aggregate development assistance flows. Between 2000 and 2015, official development assistance (ODA) from Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries to

'fragile states' almost doubled per capita. Since 2007, the 50 countries on the 2015 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) 'fragile states' list account for more than half of all ODA (OECD, 2015: 22). However, the allocation of this assistance is highly skewed: since 2002, 22% of ODA to countries affected by fragility and conflict has been directed to Afghanistan and Iraq alone. This weighting is reflected in the central position that international experiences in these two countries now play in shaping the narrative on how to 'rebuild states' in the twenty-first century (OECD, 2015: 22–23). A large part of that narrative has focused on how to harness development programming in order to establish stability, particularly by connecting citizens and state through service delivery (Herbert, 2014).

In short, 'fragile states' have been conceived as states that fail to fulfil a set of core functions, leaving a 'sovereignty gap' which needs to be 'fixed' or 'filled' (Ghani et al., 2005; Ghani and Lockhart, 2008). A lack of state capacity is widely considered a key factor in their weak legitimacy – while, conversely, redeveloping capacity is considered a means of rebuilding legitimacy. Figure 1 below illustrates.

2.2   Understanding legitimacy in terms of 'sources'

The 'capacity deficit' approach to legitimacy is a specific instance of a broader tendency in international development theory and practice to categorise sources of legitimacy (Bellina et al., 2009; Clements, 2008). The

OECD's influential report (Bellina et al., 2009) on how to build legitimacy in places affected by fragility and conflict reflects this tradition, conceptualising legitimacy in terms of sources which reflect some of Weber's original categorisation. These include the following:

- Input or process legitimacy is the legitimacy tied to agreed rules of procedure through which the state takes decisions and organises people's participation. In the OECD typology, these rules may be formal (e.g. enshrined in the constitution) or based on customary law and practice, combining elements of Weber's rational-legal and traditional categories.
- Output (sometimes described as 'performance') legitimacy refers to the legitimacy conferred on an authority through the goods and services that a state delivers.
- Beliefs refer to political ideologies, religion and tradition that influence how people perceive an authority.
- Finally, international legitimacy is legitimacy gained from recognition of sovereignty by external actors.

The OECD report is clear that no state relies on a single source of legitimacy. However, conceptualising legitimacy in terms of its sources has contributed to the idea that increasing one type of legitimacy could contribute to the overall legitimacy of a state. Hence, increasing the output legitimacy of a state through improving access to services should theoretically contribute to the overall legitimacy of a state.

Figure 1: The 'capacity deficit' model of the fragile state
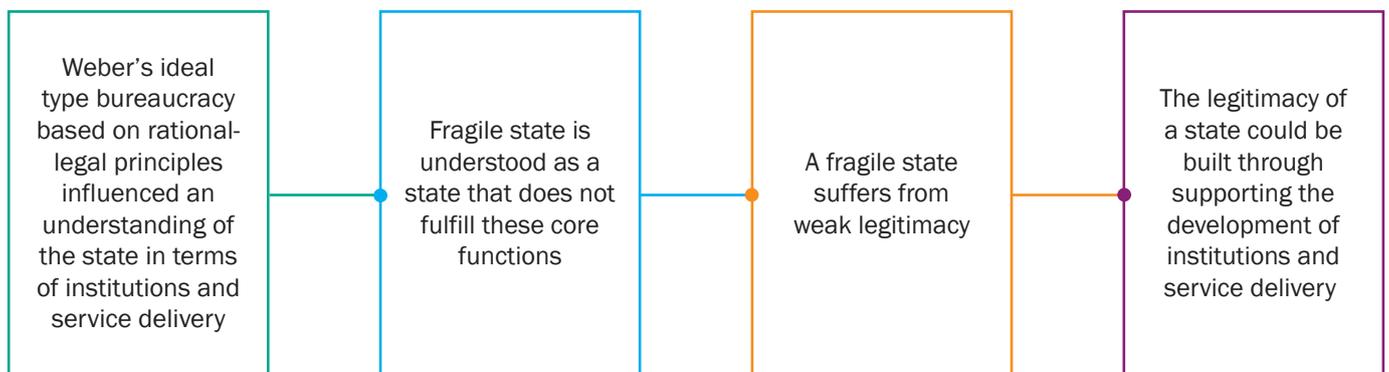
2.3 State 'penetration' and legitimacy

An important corollary of the approach to understanding state legitimacy just described is that it implies that service delivery may contribute to state legitimacy through 'penetration', or the visible presence of state institutions. There is a long tradition of analysis – much of it critical – of public services as an important instrument in the process by which states establish efficient presence in and control of the national territory and socialise its inhabitants (e.g. Duchacek, 1970; Newman, 2006; Paddison, 1983; Scott 1998). In simple terms, public services are a way to make the state visible to its citizens – they are citizens' direct line to government (Van de Walle and Scott, 2011).

In this view, through frequent interaction, people come to an understanding of the nature and purpose of the state.

Where services are provided equitably and efficiently, the state will come to be understood as a benevolent authority which takes care of its citizens in exchange for taxes and loyalty. Although such a 'social contract' is clearly somewhat of a caricature, the influence of this model is evident in the repeated mantras of 'connecting people with the state' and 'bringing government closer to the people'.

In summary, the understanding of legitimacy presented in this section underpins a great deal of development and stabilisation programming in countries affected by conflict and fragility. It is based, in turn, on the assumption that an important channel to establish or re-establish state legitimacy in such settings is through the restoration of state capacity to deliver certain core functions, including services.

3 Evidence from SLRC

The overarching question driving SLRC's research on service delivery and the state is framed as follows:

> *How does the way services are delivered and livelihoods are supported affect people's views on the legitimacy of the state?*

From the outset, the intention of the research was to test potential links and relationships, and to uncover the nuances of these (should they exist in the first place). That is, under what conditions *might* we observe the sort of positive experience put forward by the state-building orthodoxy, and what might condition or change that picture? The SLRC panel survey was designed to explore several specific hypotheses concerning these potential relationships, presented in Box 1.

As can be seen from these hypotheses, the SLRC study *does not measure legitimacy directly*. In fact, there is no agreed single way to take such a measurement. In a careful exploration of this problem, McLoughlin (2015b: 1) describes that since one 'cannot observe it directly', legitimacy 'reveals itself through thoughts and behaviours'. SLRC's approach has primarily been concerned with people's thoughts: specifically, on their reported perceptions of government. The way in which these perceptions were specified is explained further below. What is crucial to emphasise here is that these perceptions cannot and should not be considered equivalent to legitimacy, a concept that is far more contested and ambiguous.

Box 1: Selected research hypotheses[2]

- Respondents living in households that have better access to basic services, social protection, social protection or livelihood assistance have more positive perceptions of the government.

- Respondents who have a more positive experience with basic services have more positive perceptions of the government.

- Respondents who have access to grievance mechanisms within public services have more positive perceptions of government.

- Respondents with higher levels of civic participation have more positive perceptions of government.

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2   For the full set of hypotheses, see Mallett et al., 2015: 8-15.

The hypotheses in Box 2, and the evidence presented below, therefore present a picture of the relationships between various factors – both objective and subjective – and people's reported perception of government at national and local levels. To test these hypotheses, SLRC has implemented packages of quantitative and qualitative research in eight countries, all of which are affected by conflict and/or fragility to some degree. At the core of the approach is a five-country longitudinal panel survey, administered twice to exactly the same respondents with a roughly three-year interval separating the two waves.

In this section, we first explore the findings from the first wave (baseline) survey.[3] We then move onto a discussion of SLRC's qualitative research findings on this theme. This work generates a more sensitive analysis of the (potential) relationship between service delivery and legitimacy, paying closer attention to difficult-to-measure concepts such as norms, expectations and trust. It serves as a more contextualised complement to the large-N analysis offered by the survey.

3.1 Quantitative findings

Variations in sampling strategies, as well as contextual differences between countries, mean that pooling all data into a single dataset was not possible. Instead, analysis was run at the country level using a standardised analytical framework and method developed by the SLRC core team (see Table 1). Synthesis work involved researchers looking across the country-level findings in order to identify notable patterns or stark differences (for more information, see Mallett et al., 2015).

In this sub-section, we draw primarily on the results of country-level regression analyses – where perception of the government is selected as the dependent variable – and, to a lesser extent, on descriptive statistics. Where regression results are cited, in all cases these refer to *statistically significant* associations at either the 1%, 5% or 10% level. Statistically insignificant results are not mentioned.

As already described, the survey focused on relating various factors to respondents' perceptions of government. These perceptions were measured through a set of common questions across all five countries:

■ To what extent do you feel that the decisions of those in power in the government reflect your own priorities? *[Respondents asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5]*

■ Do you agree with the following statement? 'The government cares about my opinions.' *[Respondents asked to select either 'no' or 'yes']*

In all countries, respondents were asked about their perceptions of both local and central government. Thus, each of the above questions was asked twice: once in relation to local government, and once in relation to central government.[4] It is these questions that form the basis of the dependent variables.[5]

Table 1: Basic information on each SLRC country survey

Country	Sample size (# of households)	Number of villages	Level of representativeness	Response rate	Share of female respondents
DRC	1,259	9	Groupement and chefferie level	98.73%	57%
Nepal	3,175	24	Ward level	99.94%	56%
Pakistan	2,114	22	Union council level	100%	34%
Sri Lanka	1,377	12	GN division and district level	100%	62%
Uganda	1,844	90	Village and sub-region level	99.94%	63%

3　At the time of writing, analysis of data from the second round was underway but incomplete. However, it has now been done and can be found in Sturge et al. 2017).

4　In some countries – DRC, for example – respondents were also asked about a wider range of governance actors, including customary authorities such as local kings and chiefs. However, we do not report on those findings here.

5　Minor variations to phrasing and language were adopted by each country team with maximum standardisation as the agreed objective

There is an important methodological issue here that influences the applicability of these questions to the measurement of legitimacy. In theory, legitimacy describes 'approbation of the state's *rules of the game*, or the underlying system of rules and expectations from which the actions of government derive', rather than the specific actions of government (Mcloughlin, 2015b: 3). However, there is a field-based methodological problem whereby surveys have been shown to have great difficulty adequately and consistently distinguishing the concepts of state and government, particularly across contexts as diverse as the SLRC study sites (Guerrero, 2011; Mcloughlin, 2015b: 5). The survey items attempt to tackle this question through the terminology of government, but focus on general assessments of government functioning rather than approval of specific actions.

Subsequently, regressions were run against four separate dependent variables (one based on each of the four questions). Part of the analysis, therefore, involved reading across the four regression outputs in order to establish patterns and consistencies, as well as to prise out variations according to the level of government. In the reporting below, where appropriate we clarify which dependent variable we are referring to, referring to them as the 'reflect priorities' and 'cares about opinion' dependent variables.

3.1.1 Does access matter?

In order to estimate people's access to services, the SLRC survey adopted simple proxy measures. For education, health and water, the survey asked respondents how long (in minutes) it takes to reach the facility they use most frequently. In the cases of livelihoods assistance and social protection, respondents were simply asked whether they had received a transfer in the past year. While these have their limitations as proxy measures of access, they are implementable in the context of a large household survey and are useful indicators of service presence. This approach reflects the emphases in the capacity-deficit model on measures of state performance and penetration.

Across the five countries, we find no consistent or linear relationship between respondents' access to services and their perception of the government. In most cases – that is, in most countries and for most services – there is no statistically significant relationship between these variables. This also holds when we consider local and central government separately.

Some exceptions do exist. For example, in Nepal (Upreti et al., 2015) and Sri Lanka (Mayadunne et al., 2015), respondents travelling longer to reach water sources are less likely to feel *local government* cares about their opinion. In Uganda, when respondents felt that journey time and transport costs prevented them from accessing health services, they were also less likely to agree that both local and central government decisions reflected their priorities. And in three countries – DRC (De Milliano et al., 2015), Nepal and Sri Lanka – we find that where social protection support was received in the past year (e.g. disability allowance, child grant, other types of cash transfer), respondents are more likely to agree that the *central government's* decisions reflect their priorities (although that association does not hold at the local government level).

Broadly speaking, however, there is nothing compelling in the results to suggest that *access in itself* is a consistent predictor of people's perceptions. What this implies in the first instance is that a simple expansion of the presence of services in fragile and conflict-affected areas is unlikely to change the way people think about government in a consistent way.

3.1.2 Does satisfaction matter?

The SLRC survey asked respondents about their levels of satisfaction with each of the services they used. This was done in two ways. First, respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with *particular aspects* of the service on a scale of 1 (very dissatisfied) to 5 (very satisfied). With schooling, for example, this involved asking respondents to rate their satisfaction with teacher attendance and size of class. Second, respondents were also asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the performance of the facility *in general* (again, on a 1 to 5 scale). The data generated by asking these questions constitute a proxy measure of organisational quality, as perceived by the individual. That is, while they do not promise an objective assessment of performance and quality, they do reveal how people feel about the organisation. From the perspective of wanting to know how people's experiences with services (may or may not) shape their relationship with the state, these more personalised, subjective markers of quality are arguably more important.

Relative to the access variables, there is a stronger picture here. In most countries, regression analyses identify the occasional significant association between satisfaction with a service and perceptions of a particular

level of government. For example, in Uganda (Mazurana et al., 2015), health comes out as particularly important: dissatisfaction in both a general sense and with specific aspects is associated with worse perceptions of both local and central government. In other countries too, certain aspects of the health service appear influential: in DRC, people who are satisfied with waiting times are more likely to agree that local and central government care about their opinions. A similarly positive relationship is found in Pakistan (Shahbaz et al., 2015), but only regarding the number of staff at the facility. The same goes for Nepal, but this time only when we consider the availability of equipment and medicine.

Within the variation described and the contextual differences involved, it appears that where services are provided, some aspects of perceived quality, particularly around especially salient services such as health, may impact on perceptions. However, there do not appear to be any specific variables or aspects here which consistently or uniformly shape people's perceptions. Moreover, some of the regression results run in opposing directions across countries or levels of government, suggesting other mediating factors are at work (Mallett et al., 2015: 45). There is also no consistent evidence to suggest that dis/satisfaction with services – either in general or with specific aspects – is more likely to affect people's views of one level of government more than another.

However, when the survey moves beyond relying on reported satisfaction to asking specifically if respondents had experienced a problem with any of their services over the past year there are more consistent results. 'Problem' was not defined in the survey, but left open to interpretation by respondents.

Here, we see a far stronger pattern than when we consider either access or reported satisfaction. In four countries (Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda), regression results show that the higher the number of service-related problems experienced, the less likely a respondent is to feel that local government decisions reflect their priorities. The effects are not as strong when we look at the equivalent regression for central government, but maintains statistical significance in Nepal and Sri Lanka. When we switch the dependent variable from 'reflects priorities' to 'cares about opinion', we find significant associations in three countries (Nepal, Sri Lanka and Uganda) and at both levels of government. Although not uniform across all countries, this pattern regarding problems appears relatively consistent.

3.1.3 Do grievance mechanisms matter?

Should a respondent have experienced any problems, the SLRC survey asked a number of follow-on questions vis-à-vis grievance mechanisms:

- Is there an official way to report a problem?
- Did you report it?
- Did you receive a response?

This group of questions allowed the study to isolate whether the existence of a grievance mechanism was important, independently of its use or effectiveness. Country-level regression analyses tested for whether *knowledge* of grievance mechanisms alone influenced perceptions of government by including 'Is there an official way to report a problem?' as an independent variable. The results are, again, quite consistent. In three countries (Nepal, Pakistan, Uganda), respondents who knew about such procedures were more likely to agree that both local and central government care about their opinion. In Nepal and Pakistan, the same relationship also holds when the dependent variable is switched to 'reflects priorities'.

Again, the result is not consistent across all five countries, but there is enough of a pattern for it to be of interest. It is unclear why the pattern did not appear in DRC and Sri Lanka. What's more, regression analysis only tested for knowledge of grievance mechanisms – not people's experience of using them. It is possible, therefore, that so long as they know about them, the simple existence of grievance mechanisms within services affects the way people think about government, regardless of whether they actually use them.

3.1.4 Does participation matter?

There are a number of dimensions to services that *theoretically* shape both people's judgements of service quality as well as their perceptions of the government. Access is one, although the SLRC survey data suggest the effects are, at best, sparse and weak. Then there is people's tangible experience with a service, which might include how well performing it is – levels of satisfaction and problems experienced tell us something about that. But we can also consider the way the service is run: is the provider inclusive of user feedback? How 'open' or 'closed' are they to engaging a community? These 'process' sources of legitimacy figure prominently in the literature described in Section 2.

To examine this dimension of services, the SLRC survey asked about opportunities for citizen interaction in the process of delivery. Respondents were first asked whether any community meetings had been held (by anyone) in relation to public services in the past year. The responses to that varied considerably from place to place and, again, there is little value in reporting on them alone. What is more relevant is the fact that, when meetings *were* held – and people knew about them – they generally attended.

In Sri Lanka, for example, the chances of a meeting being held varied quite dramatically from one service to the next. While as many as 56% of respondents reported there being a community meeting on health in the past year, the equivalent figures were much smaller for education (23%), water (18%) and social protection and livelihoods assistance (both 16%). However, where meetings were held, the vast majority of those surveyed attended (see Figure 2).

In a number of cases, the holding of such community meetings appears to shape the way people think about government. In three countries (Nepal, Sri Lanka and Uganda), respondents who either knew about or attended them were more likely to agree that local government cares about their opinion. The relationship holds in Sri Lanka and Uganda when the independent variable switches to 'reflects priorities'. Evidence suggests the pattern is weaker when we consider central government, but it nonetheless remains apparent.

The survey also asked respondents whether they had been consulted in any other way (aside from community meetings) about local services in the past year. This is where we see perhaps the strongest pattern to emerge from the regression analyses. In four countries (Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Uganda), those who reported being consulted were more likely to agree that local government cares about their opinion. When we consider central government, Sri Lanka drops out but the pattern holds for the remaining three. Switching the independent variable to 'reflects priorities', the regression results reveal a very similar pattern.

3.1.5 Do other characteristics matter?

Analysis of basic respondent characteristics did not turn up broad or consistent patterns (Mallett et al., 2015: 43–45). We find no consistent evidence that female respondents have systematically worse or better perceptions of the government. We also find very little evidence that exposure to conflict and shocks or experience of displacement significantly shape attitudes towards the government, which is consistent with the findings in relation to livelihoods and wellbeing outcomes. Similarly, neither education nor how well-off a household is – in terms of wealth and food security – appear to matter all that much; respondents' perceptions of the government do not seem to be dependent on individual education level or material wellbeing at the household level. If nothing else, this serves to emphasise the importance of looking at intersectional aspects of personal identity as opposed to simple, one-dimensional characteristics. Treatment of the second wave data will incorporate this intersectional analyses.

Figure 2: Percentage of Sri Lankan respondents who attended community meetings about service provision if aware of them

| 91% | 94% | 91% | 93% | 92% |
| Health | Education | Water | Social protection | Livelihoods assistance |
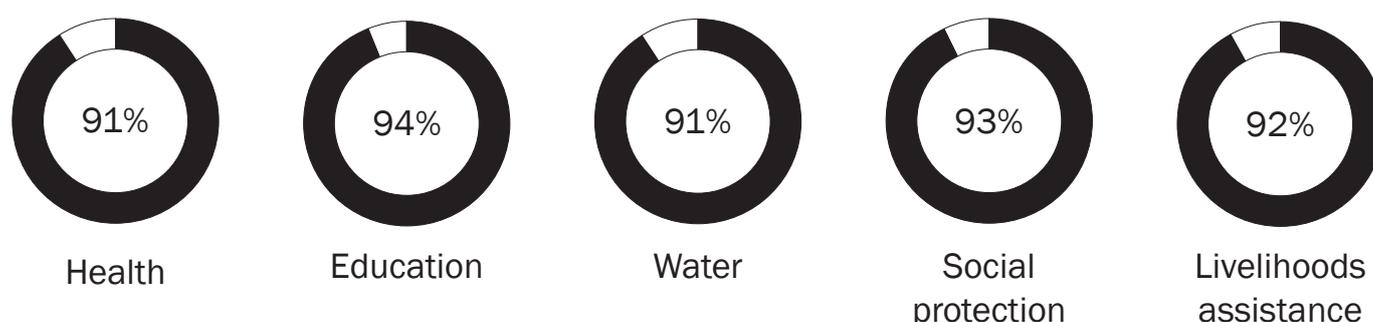
Source: Mayadunne et al., 2015.

3.1.6   Summary of quantitative findings

Taking each of the hypotheses (see Box 1) in turn, there are four findings that emerge from SLRC's (baseline) survey work on service delivery and legitimacy.

- First, when measured using a simple proxy, **access to services does not appear to be consistently associated with people's perceptions of government**. Regression analyses reveal only isolated cases of statistical significance, and no clear patterns emerge.

- Second, although slightly more convincing than the access variables, **the relationship between reported satisfaction with services** – either in general or with specific aspects – **and perceptions of government is also largely inconsistent**. Again, there are several quite isolated instances of statistical significance, but no one sector or characteristic seems capable of influencing perceptions in a linear or uniform manner.

- Third, **stronger patterns emerge when we consider a more tangible marker of performance** – problems experienced in the past year – **and routes to redress**. Problematic services often seem capable of damaging people's perceptions of government, while having grievance mechanisms in place, embedded into the service, appears to have the reverse effect.

- Fourth, **the strongest results we see are when people are involved, in some way, in the running of a service**. Opening up spaces and opportunities for community members to engage in the process of provision seems to consistently improve the way they perceive government, particularly at the local level. Thus, the strongest patterns emerge where the process and participatory dimensions of services are concerned: when people can air a grievance or feed into the delivery process. Indeed, based on SLRC's quantitative evidence, these dimensions appear more influential than the mere presence of services in shaping the way people think about government.

However, what is perhaps most striking across all these results is the lack of consistency. While significant associations emerge, they do not do so across all five study countries – participation was the strongest correlate, with positive perceptions appearing in four of the countries. The presence and direction of effects on perceptions of local versus national government is not consistent either. More effects were felt locally, but these translated to the national level in different ways. What

this variability suggests is the importance of other factors in shaping the way presence, experience and processes of service delivery relate to people's perceptions of government at different levels.

The qualitative research findings of the SLRC partners discussed in Section 3.2 – while not all directly linked to this set of research questions – provide general support for the importance of these mediating factors, along with examples of why and how they matter. These complex interactions can be illuminated through a more nuanced understanding of legitimacy in the academic and policy literature, and the model of institutional functioning explored in the WDR 2017 – both of which are examined in Section 4.

3.2   Qualitative findings

In addition to the cross-country panel survey – the 'quantitative core' of SLRC – the programme has implemented packages of qualitative research across its focus countries. These include the five survey countries, but also Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Afghanistan. These studies were not all designed to explicitly supplement or explore the survey results, as in most cases the two were designed and conducted in parallel. Relationships between services and legitimacy have been explored most directly through SLRC's qualitative work in Nepal and Sri Lanka, but there are relevant pieces of work elsewhere which we draw on here. For example, research in Sierra Leone has examined how ideas about (state) capacity building have been operationalised in the health sector.

3.2.1   Experience and process of service delivery

The qualitative research reinforces and builds upon the finding that certain aspects of the experience people have with service provision and service providers can influence their perceptions of government. In particular, people's experience of specific problems can have distinct effects, and the existence of accountability or grievance handling channels can be important.

The SLRC research in Sierra Leone demonstrates that repeated experiences of poor quality service at health clinics can undermine people's trust in the capacity of the government to provide decent care. Treatment by government health staff deemed to be rude or disrespectful can undermine people's trust in the public health system more broadly (Denney and Mallett, 2015). In particular, when experiences like drug stock-outs

or the unauthorised charging of fees are combined with what is perceived to be poor treatment by health staff (dismissive attitudes, indifference), it undermines people's willingness to use the formal service in the future. Other (non-SLRC) research by Sacks and Larizza (2012) found that decentralisation of service delivery in Sierra Leone is in itself insufficient to build citizen trust in local authorities. Instead, they conclude that 'bureaucratic honesty combined with the quality of local service provision is what really matters to citizens' (ibid.: 23). And in a study in Medellín, Colombia, Guerrero (2011) found that when it occurred *quickly*, the upgrading of basic services (infrastructure, health, education) in the city's less favoured districts improved political support for and trust in government.

In an SLRC study of water services in Rolpa, a remote district in mid-western Nepal, Acharya et al. (2015) revealed that many government-run water and sanitation facilities were not working properly. In Liwang Village Development Committee (VDC), a series of taps were installed by a government organisation.[6] There were problems with these taps from the outset, and after several months, community members opted to invest in their own supply. Elsewhere, communities clubbed together to finance and construct a new pipeline, or agreed to come together once a month to clean the community's water pipes. In many of such cases, people reported that they had attempted to communicate their concerns to local government, only to be met with inaction. What also seemed to frustrate interviewees was the fact that nothing was done in response to their complaints despite the fact they were paying the government for water services: 'There are some irregularities, but we are compelled to pay the fees regularly ... If we delay paying the bill by one day, they fine us. If we ask for repairs, they tell us to repair the damage ourselves'. Thus, where government unresponsiveness blocked maintenance through the public sector, alternative forms of provision sometimes emerged via collective action at the community level. These groups, interviewees felt, are important because they provide better chances of being able to influence service providers.

Similar instances of community autonomy in the face of government inaction were also found by a separate SLRC study of taxation in Nepal (Mallett et al., 2016). This research used survey methods and semi-structured interviews to examine how local tax systems work in communities across two districts: Jhapa to the east of the country and Sindhupalchok to the north. It found that the while most households (within the sample population) pay a marginal amount of tax – on average, formal taxes absorb less than 1% of annual income – the low rates people face are reflected in the poor state of public goods provision. Budget allocations from central to local government have risen over recent years in Nepal, and various formal Acts have theoretically devolved more power to individual VDCs and municipalities. However, a number of factors constrain the capacity of local government to collect taxes and provide quality services. These include poor resourcing, fragmented (yet still quite centralised) policy-making processes, and the informal nature of political relationships, which often override the newly introduced formal sets of rules.

Local communities are, therefore, being forced to pay extra just for adequate or necessary services, such as education and irrigation. While weak state provision has contributed to the emergence of both private provision as well as bottom-up forms of community-based collective action. This is evidenced by the fact that many individuals surveyed made donations to religious-based and local community organisations – in fact, nearly half of average annual tax expenditure at the household level went to non-government actors.

It is clear that various aspects of performance (which are always subjectively interpreted and internalised) do matter, such as availability of supplies, costs incurred and staff behaviour. The evidence indicates that this last one may be particularly important. Providers on the frontline of service delivery are often seen as local agents of the state. The nature of clients' dealings with them can shape the way they see the state, even if that is restricted to perceptions of lower levels of government. As the quantitative evidence shows, people's perceptions of government can improve for the better when they have a line of communication with the service provider. This might come in the form of a grievance mechanism or a consultation about service delivery. A number of the qualitative studies explored the avenues through which citizens might engage with government or service providers, and broadly demonstrate how relationships can be undermined by poorly functioning processes of consultation or grievance handling. Findings from the range of qualitative research also suggest that

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6   A Village Development Committee is the local administrative arm of the government in Nepal.

experiences of poor quality formal state services can push people towards alternative providers – and even into forms of self-provision.

3.2.2   Norms and expectations

The qualitative research work for the SLRC also suggests a further dimension shaping the connection between services and people's perceptions. This is the 'relational' dimension of people's norms and expectations about government and the services it provides. It is distinct from both experience and process which focus on problems and processes on the provider side; instead, it focuses on the beliefs of the users and other citizens.

In Nepal, researchers found that even well-functioning services – or, rather, perceived improvements – are not necessarily linked to a change in attitudes towards government. Drawing on 52 interviews, Tandukar et al. (2015) examined two schools in Rolpa. At one of the schools in the district capital, Liwang, parents described the positive changes they had seen in schooling since a new headmaster had been appointed. They were clearly pleased with the quality of the service they were now getting, yet they saw the state – at both the local and central government level – as having little role in this change. Instead, the importance of local leadership emerged as a key factor: 'Things have changed. We can see it too. He [the headmaster] has taken responsibility in shaping our children's future ... The credit goes to the headmaster'. Although the school in Liwang was run publicly, with cooperation from community management committees, the headmaster was not seen as linked to the state. It is possible, therefore, that this perceived separation prevented any potential legitimacy gains from being passed up the chain.

However, even where the state is more visible and connected with the process of service delivery, other factors can intervene in the generation of perceptions. In Sri Lanka, one study drawing on 62 interviews about social protection interventions across three districts (Mannar, Trincomalee and Jaffna) found that the visibility of government in the provision of various forms of social protection is high (Godamunne, 2015). The Grama Niladhari (GN) – local level public officials appointed by the central state – is generally seen as the primary provider of information about the programmes. People also typically reported going to the GN whenever they experienced a problem with an intervention. Yet, there were strong perceptions among interviewees that the continuation of patronage politics made it harder for

some and easier for others to receive social protection transfers, regardless of formal eligibility. These people saw an inequity in the process of transfer distribution; a situation in which poorer, disconnected individuals lost out as a result of bargains formed between wealthier, more powerful members of society. This finding reflects an increasing emphasis found within the legitimacy literature on the subjective or contextually specific notions of fairness:

> *There is convincing evidence across different contexts that the perceived fairness of the process by which authorities and institutions make decisions and exercise authority is a key aspect of people's willingness to comply with it*
> (McLoughlin, 2015b: 11).

A central feature of this expectation is that it is not uniform. The relational aspects of legitimacy depend as much on the 'conferee' (those granting the legitimacy) as on the 'referee' (the state or government). A study of water and sanitation services in Jaffna Town in Sri Lanka found that members of a particularly poor neighbourhood would tend to avoid the Public Health Inspector whenever they had complaints (indeed, the Inspector himself admitted this). Instead, they would go directly to political actors, because patron-client mechanisms are considered more effective than formal ones (Lall, 2015). In the Sri Lanka social protection study, women in all research sites across three districts felt reluctant to participate in public meetings organised by state officials. Interviews revealed that they would either send a male relative or would simply not attend (Godamunne, 2015). Although not implemented by SLRC, a recent study by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) for the Child Grant in Nepal found a similar pattern vis-à-vis interactions with the local formal state (Hagen-Zanker et al., 2015). According to that study, '[a] culture of "not speaking out" seems to prevent certain individuals from asking questions to and of their government' (ibid.: 54). That condition appears to acutely affect Dalit women, who felt 'helpless' in the face of a government 'formed of big people' (ibid.: 37, 38).

These findings demand that crude descriptors such as gender – which are not good predictors of perceptions in and of themselves – need to be nuanced. This can be done possibly through forms of 'intersectional' analysis in which the combination of factors such as gender, caste, locale and others is considered.

3.2.3   Summary of qualitative findings

SLRC's qualitative evidence discussed here builds on the picture sketched out by the baseline survey. In particular, the following key points can be drawn:

- The research reinforces the idea that **services can, in some senses, act as a vehicle or channel for the expression of state-society relations** (as the broader historical evidence indeed suggests – see Van de Walle and Scott, 2011). The SLRC qualitative work speaks to the potential of services to act as an 'everyday connector' between citizens and governments. Cutting across several of the qualitative studies is the importance of interaction and accountability. This, in turn, reinforces the idea that it is the *relations* embodied in (and possibly developed by) public services that really matters.

- The findings also suggest that **the generation of positive perceptions** – or indeed negative ones – **is conditioned by people's experience, expectations and attribution of a given change**. Where expectations of local government performance do not extend to education improvements – as in parts of Nepal – those improvements do not translate to altered perceptions of government. Similarly, where performance in terms of social protection payments (which we have seen can affect perceptions positively) is seen to be compromised by patronage, caste or ethnicity – as in parts of Sri Lanka – this will alter perceptions.

- And finally, **the presence of mediating factors becomes particularly important when we consider the scalar variation in SLRC's findings across local and national government**. In the Sri Lanka case, it seems that the disappointing or disempowering everyday encounters people experience with state officials generate a wider negative perception towards the local state – but not the central. In this light, it is impossible to be certain that de/legitimation processes occurring at the very local level 'aggregate up' to inform broader relationships between the state and citizens. Instead, we need models that can account for contextually specific norms and expectations vis-à-vis central and local government separately, as well as understanding the relationships between them. Section 4 discusses possible frameworks for better understanding these variations.

4 Frameworks for better understanding services and legitimacy

The quantitative and qualitative data gathered by SLRC challenge the practical orthodoxy described in Section 2. According to the findings, the mere presence of the state in the provision of services is not necessarily associated with better perceptions of government. At a broader level, the findings indicate that the dominant understanding of a 'failed' or 'fragile' state in terms of its capacity to deliver services needs to be interrogated. If we understand that an integral feature of a failed or fragile state is its lack of legitimacy, then increasing access to services will not necessarily increase state legitimacy.

The findings indicate a stronger effect on perceptions of government from the actual experience of a service. This suggests that the success of penetration depends, not on simple presence or visibility, but the process of delivery and implementation. In Bellina et al. (2009) terminology, service delivery is a component of output or performance legitimacy, but the findings here suggest there is a strong effect of the presence of grievance and accountability mechanisms. This, in turn, indicates that process-based aspects of service delivery are also important in shaping the impact of service delivery.

The effect of other process-related dimensions of state interactions on people's perceptions has also been shown elsewhere. Based on an in-depth study of how gangs constructed legitimacy in ghettos in Colombia, Lamb (2014) proposes that it is not the sources of legitimacy that an authority relies on that matter but rather the features that an authority displays. Lamb identified five features that an authority needs to display in order to generate and accrue legitimacy: predictability; equitability; justifiability; accessibility (having a say in processes for making decisions that affect one's life); and respectfulness. Lamb (2014) signals the importance of a mutual understanding of these qualities between conferee and referee in determining their impact on legitimacy. However, the emphasis on their status as qualities of authority arguably has these 'features' more closely related to concepts of process legitimacy than more constructivist interpretations outlined in the sub-Section 4.1. The exception is justifiability, which falls squarely into the category of 'shared beliefs' discussed next.

Some of the quantitative and qualitative findings from SLRC support a more 'process-oriented' conceptualisation of legitimacy. For example, in Sri Lanka, it was clear that exclusionary practices were damaging people's perceptions of local government. Other literature seems to support the idea that exclusionary practices in

the delivery of services can be damaging to perceptions of state legitimacy. Qualitative research in Liberia, Nepal, and Colombia found that unequal or exclusionary access to public goods was detrimental to citizens' views of the state's right to rule (Dix et al., 2012). In his widely cited research, Rothstein (2009) empirically demonstrates that in developed states, greater impartiality in the exercise of state power – including through service delivery – is positively associated with higher levels of trust in government. Cross-country case study research looking specifically at multi-stakeholder processes concluded it was mainly the relationships formed through them that were significant for citizens' perceptions of the state (Stel et al., 2012). In particular, these processes created space for civil society organisations to articulate citizens' demands, and to directly engage with government agencies (ibid). Tsai (2011) has also found that local state bureaucrats viewed collaboration with non-governmental organisations and local communities to implement local infrastructure services as a means of gaining citizens' trust. Moreover, some officials believed collaboration would enhance their capacity to elicit greater levels of citizen compliance with state policies.

Overall, however, the evidence lends some support to an approach to legitimacy that considers *both performance and process* dimensions. At the same time, the defining feature of the evidence from SLRC is that none of these effects work consistently. As noted in Section 3.1.6, the survey finds a number of statistically significant associations but not across all five study countries. The most relevant qualitative evidence finds that negative and positive experiences of services are mediated by expectations and norms in ways that produce seemingly contradictory effects in different circumstances. Furthermore, the evidence suggests this variation exists between levels of government as well, suggesting that there are multi-level aspects to understanding the dynamics of services and public perceptions.

As noted in Section 2, the policy orthodoxy does not reflect the broader literature on legitimacy, which displays much more sophistication. What conceptual tools are available to help better understand this, and more importantly, guide future empirical inquiry?

4.1   Relational models of legitimacy

Most conceptualisations of legitimacy – including those introduced in Section 2 – do acknowledge the importance of norms, expectations and beliefs. For example, the 2010 OECD report that has informed much policy in this

area emphasises beliefs about authority as an important source of legitimacy (Bellina et al., 2009). However, such approaches do not consider the more complex question of how norms and expectations interact with other foundations of legitimacy, such as how services contribute to the mutual construction of legitimacy between conferee and referee.

Beetham (2013), in the second edition of his seminal 1991 work, advances a conceptualisation of legitimacy that incorporates how norms, expectations and beliefs contribute to the mutual construction of legitimacy. In this view, legitimacy has three dimensions. The first dimension of legitimate power is its conformity to established rules; the second is that the rules can be justified by reference to beliefs shared by both dominant and subordinate groups; and the third is expression of consent by the subordinate to the particular power relation (Table 2).

Table 2: Three dimensions of legitimacy

Criteria of legitimacy	Forms of non-legitimate power
Conformity to rules (formal and informal)	Breach of rules
Justifiability of rules in terms of shared beliefs	Discrepancy between rules and supporting beliefs, absence of shared beliefs
Legitimation through expressed consent	Withdrawal of consent

Source: Beetham 2013, 20.

This second dimension of *justifiability in terms of shared beliefs* describes the relational aspect of legitimacy – it is generated by the alignment or lack thereof between the beliefs held by specific individuals or groups and the normative content of the rules, both formal and informal, in governing the power relation in question. This is very different from the simple – and tautological – formulation that the belief that a given form of rule is legitimate is itself a source of legitimacy. Instead, norms and beliefs have an independent status: 'a given power relationship is not legitimate because people believe in its legitimacy, but because it can be justified in terms of their beliefs' (Beetham, 1991: 11). From this perspective, the justifiability of power derives from shared beliefs, either about the qualities of the power holder, or the degree to which the power arrangement serves a recognisable general interest. De-legitimation happens when institutions or individuals exercising authority fundamentally breach social norms, or when those norms change sufficiently in relation to governing rules and

practices. Legitimacy is therefore built on justifiable rules, and likewise begins to unravel if power is used in ways that are not justified (Mcloughlin, 2015b: 5).

This approach must also be distinguished from more purely process-focused approaches in which the normative elements of legitimacy relate to more externally defined qualities, such as participation, inclusiveness or equity. In reality, even desirable qualities such as these are filtered in contextually specific ways. For example, the process-based approach does not completely account for the influence of norms in how much or what kinds of predictability, equitability, justifiability and accessibility are necessary to achieve legitimacy in different locations or among different groups. Citing the case of Iraq, Brinkerhoff et al. (2012) note that the redistribution of services to previously excluded groups in the post-war period diminished the state's overall legitimacy gains by running against the interests of previously dominant (primarily Sunni) groups. As McLoughlin (following Zaum) argues, '[p]articularly in divided societies, perceived favouritism towards one group may support the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of that group, whilst simultaneously undermining it amongst others' (Mcloughlin, 2015b: 5).

Is Beetham's conceptualisation of legitimacy useful to explain SLRC findings? The emphasis on shared norms and expectations in the construction of legitimacy explains why the household survey found so much variance in its results. Even where there were stronger associations between presence of grievance and accountability mechanisms, there was still variation

between countries. Similarly, the findings from SLRC's qualitative research show that there are many factors which condition or filter the influence that various process-related features can have on legitimacy. This is in line with Beetham's conceptualisation – citizens will not perceive an authority as legitimate unless the authority conforms to formal/informal rules that are justifiable in terms of shared beliefs, which subsequently influence perceptions. However, this general finding needs to be broken down further in order to produce a more concrete set of hypotheses for understanding and explaining the findings in detail.

4.2 Unpacking relational aspects of service delivery

Recent work by McLoughlin (2015b), again building on a substantial record of research into the question, provides a framework for more detailed analysis of how these relational aspects of service delivery influence the construction of legitimacy. Her approach disaggregates influences into three broad groups: aspects of the service itself; structures of political relations among governors and the governed; and aspects of political agency to create or undermine legitimation. The framework is illustrated in Table 3.

Here we see an expansion and disaggregation of 'shared norms and belief' into a more diverse set of analytical categories. These categories relate to different levels of mutual understandings around the importance and nature of the service in question, broad understandings of how the state should function, and the dynamic sense

Table 3: Towards a relational understanding of the links between services and legitimacy – guidance from Mcloughlin (2015b)

		Possible focus of analysis
Service	Justifiability of service delivery	Norms Procedures Outcomes
	Service characteristics	Historical and social significance Visibility and attributability
Structure	Social contract	Expectations of rights and entitlements
	Legitimacy context	State's legitimacy reservoir/starting points
	Nature of political settlement	Inclusion/exclusion of different groups
Agency	The (de-)legitimisation process	Public discourse around service delivery Politicisation of procedures/norms/outcomes

Source: McLoughlin, 2015b: 9.

of how these change, and are changed, over time by the actions of individuals and organisations. These categories open up possibilities for more grounded empirical inquiry into the intervening factors that can explain the kind of diversity seen in SLRC's research, in particular by 'not about making assumptions about what sorts of institutions *should* be legitimate, but instead discovering the underlying moral principles that make them legitimate in any given setting' (Mcloughlin, 2015b: 4). Such an approach can guide further analysis of existing data, and more importantly, shape future research agendas (indeed, McLoughlin suggests potential 'testable hypotheses' arising from the framework [ibid.: 13]).

Particularly in light of the Consortium's work on the second wave panel results (see Sturge et al., 2017), SLRC's research and evidence provides one jumping-off point for such an agenda. Already, it suggests some areas for elaboration. For example, evidence of variation between perceptions of local and national governments suggests that these categories may be further expanded to encompass territorial aspects of services, structures and agency. Just as there are variations in the identity and characteristics of the conferees 'granting' legitimacy, so too should the referee – the state – be disaggregated: '[i]n effect, the "state" is not one but several objects of legitimation', and one cannot draw conclusions directly or summarily about the effects of the legitimation of one on the others (Mcloughlin, 2015b; 4). This disaggregation has thus far tended to focus on different manifestations (organisational, ideological, identity) of the national state. From this position, it is a short step to begin to consider what shared understandings of multi-level governance shape the complex interactions between perceptions of different levels of government found in the SLRC research.

Certainly, political settlements analysis seems to have the potential to play a role in better understanding this dimension. While models vary, and are continuously in development, political settlements analysis revolves around consideration of 'the formal and informal processes, agreements, and practices that help consolidate politics, rather than violence, as a means for dealing with disagreements about interests, ideas and the distribution and use of power' (Laws and Leftwich, 2014: 1). McLoughlin identifies a link between this field and services, asserting that '[p]olitical settlements are of particular interest to the study of service delivery because they have a deterministic influence over the flow of resources between states and different social groups' (Mcloughlin, 2015b: 12).

Going beyond this connection, recent work on elaborating types of political settlements has increasingly focused on the 'vertical' dimension of legitimation between elites and their followers (Booth, 2015; Rocha Menocal, 2015). However, to-date this work has been relatively silent on how political settlements inform shared understandings of the roles and relationships between levels of government or territorial administration. It stands to reason that these understandings will condition the way differential perceptions of local and national organisations and institutions emerge.

It follows that a consideration of the nature of a political settlement – and particularly its 'vertical' dimensions – among the other categories introduced above, could help us better understand when, where and how public services generate state legitimacy across the different levels or elements of the state. Taking a wider lens, programming that aims to both provide services and link 'citizens to the state' therefore needs to take account of a range of local factors, as well as aspects of the vertical relationship between the local and national levels.

4.3 Services, legitimacy and the *World Development Report 2017*

The evidence and theory outlined above aligns well with the proposed understanding of governance and institutional performance for WDR 2017. As Section 1 suggested, legitimacy can be understood as a key determinant of the ability of institutions to perform their functions effectively and efficiently through the ability to enable consent and compliance without excessive resources, coercion or co-optation. If so, then the generation of legitimacy is a crucial parallel concern for the WDR's efforts in illuminating how external support to institutional performance can be reframed.

The WDR analytical framework expands consideration of constraints on institutional performance beyond the focus on state capacity that has tended to dominate development efforts (see also Teskey et al., 2017). This can be taken as further evidence of the need to challenge the 'capacity deficit' model of 'fragile states', as discussed earlier (and supported by SLRC's evidence). In the WDR framework, the 'capacity constraint' is supplemented by elaboration of putative 'power' and 'social compatibility' constraints. These are aimed to help assess the alignment of institutions, both formal and informal, with existing power relations, and social norms and values. What the evidence and frameworks presented in this paper provide, are some additional

avenues to explore the specific nature of those constraints. If service delivery – as locally understood – constitutes a key arena for institutions to apply their 'primordial' functions of coordination, cooperation and collective action, then understanding the mediating factors that shape legitimacy from services is a key window into better understanding these constraints. In particular, the models discussed suggest that 'power' and 'social compatibility' constraints may in fact be intertwined, as shared understandings of political structures as well as other norms and beliefs both shape the complex interaction between legitimacy and services.

The WDR emphasises a 'functional' approach, by which 'governance should be assessed in terms of its capacity to deliver on goals that society values', (World Bank, 2017b: para. 37). One limitation of the approaches to legitimacy that have informed much development programming in fragile, conflicted-affected settings is the focus primarily on the performance or capacity dimension of the state to deliver a given service. Other

approaches to legitimacy – particularly those focusing on aspects of process – emphasise features that have universal normative content, such as participation or inclusion. However, the more nuanced approaches to legitimacy, developed by Beetham and outlined earlier in this section, acknowledge that 'shared' and mutually constituted understandings of services and political structures are crucial to understanding how services do or do not contribute to changes in perceptions of government and state institutions. In a sense, asking about the 'justifiability' of services in the framework above is an example of the WDR's consideration of the 'functions' of governance. Therefore, this framework complements the WDR's own functional approach to institutional performance by foregrounding contextually specific values, norms and expectations over capacity or imported forms of governance. In doing so, legitimacy – often considered a primarily normative concern – can be made compatible with a functional understanding of governance.

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