Markets, conflict and recovery

Findings from the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium

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Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium

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Cover photo: a man walks through the market in Muzaffargarh. © Zackary Canepari.

Preface

The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) aims to generate a stronger evidence base on state-building, service delivery and livelihood recovery in fragile and conflict-affected situations. It began in 2011 with funding from the UK's Department for International Development, Irish Aid and the European Commission.

At the centre of SLRC's research are three core questions, developed over the course of an intensive one-year inception period in which the consortium set about identifying major evidence gaps:

- To what extent and under what conditions does the delivery of basic services and social protection contribute towards state legitimacy in fragile and conflict-affected situations?
- How do external actors attempt to develop the capacities of states in fragile and conflict-affected situations to deliver better services – and how fit for purpose are the dominant approaches?
- What do livelihood trajectories in fragile and conflict-affected situations tell us about how governments and aid agencies can more effectively support the ways in which people make a living?

From 2011 to 2016 – the duration of SLRC's first phase – the consortium implemented packages of quantitative and qualitative research across eight countries affected by fragility and conflict to varying degrees: Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and Uganda.

This paper is one of a series of 'synthesis reports' produced at the end of SLRC's first phase. These reports bring together and analyse all relevant material on SLRC's overarching research questions, with a view to drawing out broader lessons that will be of use to policy makers, practitioners and researchers. There are five in total:

- Service delivery, public perceptions and state legitimacy. A synthesis of SLRC's material on the first overarching research question above.
- Service delivery and state capacity. A synthesis of SLRC's material on its second overarching research question.
- Livelihoods, conflict and recovery. A synthesis of SLRC's material on its third overarching research question.
- Markets, conflict and recovery. A more focused synthesis of the role that markets and the private sector play in processes of livelihood recovery. It links to and informs the 'Livelihoods, conflict and recovery' report.
- Tracking livelihoods, service delivery and governance. A synthesis of SLRC' cross-country survey findings, drawing on two rounds of data collection with the same respondents.

Although specific authors were responsible for the analysis and writing of each synthesis report, all must ultimately be considered products of a collective, consortium-wide effort. They simply would not have been possible without the efforts and outputs of SLRC's various partner organisations. They include the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in the UK, the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) in Sri Lanka, Feinstein International Center (FIC) at Tufts University in the USA, the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Pakistan, Disaster Studies at Wageningen University (WUR) in the Netherlands, the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research (NCCR), Focus 1000 in Sierra Leone, and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Acknowledgements

Richard Mallett and Adam Pain wrote this report, drawing on a range of studies carried out at the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium. The report is therefore the product of a collective effort.

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Finally, many thanks to the rest of the Consortium members, and particularly those based at the Overseas Development Institute for their continued support throughout the project.

Acronyms and glossary

AREDP	Afghanistan Rural Enterprise Development Programme
CARD-F	Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development–Facility (Afghanistan)
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICAI	International Commission on Aid Impact
ILO	International Labour Organization
LMIC	Lower Middle Income Country
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Sri Lanka)
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army (Uganda)
M4P	Making Markets Work for the Poor
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (India)
NSP	National Solidarity Programme (Afghanistan)
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PFM	Public Financial Management
PRDP	Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (Uganda)
PTA	Prevention of Terrorism Act (Sri Lanka)
RAIP	Rural Access Improvement Programme (Afghanistan)
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SLRC	Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
TWP	Thinking and Working Politically
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	United States Dollar
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

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Executive summary

Helping economies recover in the aftermath of war is a top policy priority for international donors and aid agencies, motivated by perceptions that persisting economic grievances are capable of sliding countries back into violence. Post-conflict economic programming is often aimed at resuscitating markets and developing the private sector. Alongside efforts to improve individuals' employability and entrepreneurial capacities sit reforms designed to clean up the economic environment, making it easier to do business. Despite the weight of such issues, there is surprisingly little evidence on whether these are the right 'vehicles for recovery'. Understanding post-conflict economic recovery, and particularly markets' role in this process, remains limited. Aid is increasingly channelled towards 'fragile and conflict-affected situations', a large share of which is likely to be spent on economic development. There is thus a real need for more rigorous analysis of how external actors can best support the recovery of affected individuals, households and communities.

What we did

Established in 2011, the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) has been carrying out empirical research into processes of state-building, service delivery and livelihood recovery in eight countries. Within the Consortium's broad package of livelihoods research, a particular work stream examines the role that markets – and people's engagement with them – play in processes of micro-economic recovery. A total of 18 research papers on this theme have been produced, geographically concentrated in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda, but also including insights from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Jordan and Pakistan. This report synthesises these studies in order to: i) identify overarching findings and lessons; and ii) formulate recommendations and principles that aim to support policy-making in fragile and conflict-affected situations, particularly in relation to economic recovery and market programming.

What we found

The 18 studies have looked at commodity markets, market infrastructure and labour markets. Three overarching findings emerge from analysing the evidence on these various market 'types'.

First, **economic transitions after conflict are often uneven, rarely inclusive and occasionally violent**. While places recovering from conflict are often thought to enjoy a 'peace dividend', the studies found little evidence of such a scenario. In countries like Sri Lanka, post-war economic growth has been relatively strong, at least in relation to the standard macro-level metrics (gross domestic product, or GDP, often being the foremost indicator). But, by and large, this growth has proven to be remarkably jobless, characterised by a concentration of investment and opportunity in the hands of a few, while an 'outcast' or 'invisible' majority continue to eke out some basic level of survival in poorly paid, back-breaking and frequently precarious forms of work.

Second, **markets of various 'types' are always regulated – but not only, or necessarily, by formal rules and legislation.** Initiatives such as the World Bank's *Doing Business* index assess the constraints binding private-sector development, focusing on formal legislation that might be missing (such as the enforcement of property rights) and the presence of bureaucratic red tape that produces inefficiency and raises transaction costs (such as excessive taxation). What is largely missing from these approaches is recognition of the *informal* modes of regulation. More specifically, SLRC's research provides evidence of markets' social regulation, both in terms of people's access to opportunities and the terms of their participation once 'inside' (which is where they tend to be). Social regulation is less visible than formal rules and legislation, and thus harder to decipher. It operates along vectors of identity, including gender, caste, ethnicity and age. In the cases reviewed here, and in parts of the wider literature, it sharply affects access to markets and the returns different groups of people can hope to receive from them.

Third, **markets are inextricably linked to power and politics.** Markets are not neutral spaces of exchange, but – as the material reviewed here confirms and supports – permeated extensively by power relations. This is true in at least two ways. On the one hand, the 'big P' politics that determines where and how those in positions of political and economic power allocate resources. This, in turn, relates to existing work showing how the presence of basic conditions for growth depends on the nature of the political settlement, and specifically on how different holders of power relate to each other. On the other hand, the 'smaller p' politics already introduced in the preceding point, refer to the role of social norms, expectations, relationships and networks in shaping whether and how people are able to engage in markets.

What it all means for policy

Based on these overarching findings, as well as the more specific pieces of evidence and analysis from which they emerge, five key policy recommendations are formulated. These are primarily designed to assist those working on market support and private-sector development in post-conflict settings, and should be seen as key principles for policy-makers to keep in mind while they go about their business.

1. Pay closer attention to the substance and trajectories of economic transitions out of war

Post-conflict environments often sustain underdevelopment and continued forms of violence, which ought to be of major concern from a peacebuilding perspective. Key messages for policy-makers include:

- Do not assume that 'peace dividends' automatically trickle down evenly throughout society.
- Invest in better understanding how transitions, and processes of recovery more broadly, play out differently for different groups of people.
- Consider using alternatives to GDP as a way to more accurately measure the strength, quality and evenness of post-war economic transitions.

2. Rethink the links between work and violence

Unemployment is often simplistically framed as a driver of violence and insurrection, but research suggests the relationship is significantly more complicated and multidimensional. There is thus a need to:

- Recognise the many ways in which violence and the world of work are connected, beyond the unsubstantiated claim that unemployment creates conflict. This means looking at structural violence in the workplace, gender-based sexual harassment and abuse, and the various channels through which experiences of violence shape people's economic choices and behaviours.
- Pay greater attention to how people are incorporated into (rather than just excluded from) markets, and specifically to the ways in which their participation might be linked to a range of negative outcomes.

3. Stop treating everyone as entrepreneurs-in-waiting. Start engaging with markets' 'demand side'

Most economic recovery programmes attempt to develop individuals' capacities to engage in markets. This is known as 'supply side' programming, and includes interventions such as vocational training, skills development and microcredit. While it may be part of the solution, evidence suggests it receives a disproportionately large share of the policy focus.

- Ask not only what individuals can bring to the market, but what the market can bring to individuals. What types of working conditions are in place? What kinds of relationships does the market require people to enter to secure work? To what extent can exploitative practices and employers be held to account? Engaging with such questions will help build a better understanding of the 'demand-side' dimensions of markets, which are often overlooked.
- Look more closely at the economic opportunities available to post-conflict societies – including formal, wage-based labour – as well as how these are distributed throughout society.
- Consider options for structural economic transformation, which are likely to be necessary for job creation at scale.
- Facilitate labour migration, for example, through visa schemes and temporary work permits. Evidence shows that increasing people's access to overseas labour markets, even temporarily, can be one of the most effective ways to support recovery 'back home', where economic opportunities may be few and far between.

4. Build more detailed, contextual understandings of how markets are regulated

If markets are fundamentally political, then more should be done to diagnose the way that different kinds of power structure their workings.

- Power analysis needs to be multidimensional. Markets are shaped by formal rules and regulations, the political settlement, informal taxation and local institutions. The relative importance of each will depend upon context, but analysis must remain open to the possibility – or rather, the likelihood – that all of them matter.

- Institutions should be treated with the care and significance they deserve. This is not always the case: institutions are often acknowledged, but poorly elaborated.

5. Think and work politically to secure more people-centred market outcomes

Being able to incorporate the lessons of power analysis into programming depends on having the right tools and approaches. In many cases, these already exist and, if adapted to the issues at hand, are perfectly applicable.

- The standard 'vehicles for recovery' are not, by themselves, fit for purpose. They need to be supplemented with additional approaches.

- The 'making markets work for the poor' (M4P) approach is well set up to engage with the power-based constraints of 'real markets', and to identify possible practical actions. Its application should be more fully extended to labour markets, and specifically towards attaining of 'decent work' outcomes (note the newly created *ILO Lab*, geared towards this very purpose). The focus should not be only on breaking down technical barriers to labour market access, but also on addressing the underlying causes of widespread 'bad work'.

- Policy-makers should extend their application of 'thinking and working politically' (TWP) approaches to the world of post-war economic recovery. In addition to helping secure external investment, as some research has already documented, the evidence on TWP proves it is possible for external actors to act in ways that help build in-country coalitions for change, sustain momentum on particular reform issues, and broker dialogue between otherwise disconnected stakeholders. From the perspective of decent work, using such an approach to support progress on minimum wages, conditions in the workplace, legal redress, stronger worker representation, and guaranteed work schemes, would all make sense.

1 Introduction

Nowhere is economic development a more pressing challenge than in countries recovering from war. An ever-expanding body of evidence points to the many ways in which violent conflict disrupts and suppresses economic activity at multiple scales – from the livelihoods of individuals and households to performance at the national level, typically quantified through impacts on gross domestic product (GDP) (Blattman and Miguel, 2010; Mallett and Slater, 2012).

After signing peace agreements comes the monumental task of revitalising these spheres of economic activity. For aid agencies and other development actors, that means helping affected countries and their governments rebuild what has collapsed – and doing so relatively quickly. Part of what drives this urgency is the idea that stagnation and underdevelopment in the post-conflict phase can easily push countries back into violence. Of particular concern are large populations of unemployed youth, especially young men, to whom a lack of jobs is seen to lower the 'opportunity cost' of (re-) participating in armed insurrection (Stewart, 2015).

The usual outcome is a range of aid-funded reforms and interventions to try to engineer economic development, legitimised by a relatively well-accepted understanding that this is a process requiring active facilitation. Note, for example, the World Bank's 2011 *World Development Report* on 'Conflict, Security and Development' (World Bank, 2011), and the first-ever economic development strategy of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), released earlier this year (DFID, 2017).

Central to this 'toolbox' are efforts to resuscitate markets, conventionally understood by orthodox ('neoclassical') economics as the spaces through which goods, services and labour are exchanged in accordance with the textbook logics of impersonality, rationality and meritocracy (Fleetwood, 2011; Kabeer, 2012; White, 1993). Just as with livelihoods and economic activity more broadly, conflict is generally understood to collapse markets into dysfunction, with the effect that they can no longer support positive, broad-based economic outcomes. Their regeneration is thus framed as a priority from the standpoint of both peacebuilding and economic development, critical for getting households, communities and countries back on their feet.

Market resuscitation is often pursued through a strong focus on private-sector development, around which a thriving aid 'cottage industry' has emerged. The emphasis here is on promoting business by attracting investment, removing barriers to enterprise, and encouraging people's entrance into the economy. In practice, the range of tools used to achieve these goals looks relatively standardised across contexts, and primarily includes:

- A menu of broad reforms associated with the likes of the World Bank's *Doing Business* initiative, which measures barriers to enterprise (such as excessive taxation and red tape), ranks countries accordingly (identifying the easiest and most difficult places in the world to 'do business'), and diagnoses priority areas for reform (typically through removing unnecessary regulation and enforcing various protections and rights). These are essentially about getting the 'enabling environment' right, and can be considered alongside the recent trend towards public financial management (PFM) reforms in fragile states.
- A series of more targeted, intervention-based policies. This includes specific measures such as vocational training, skills development, microfinance, microenterprise support more generally, value-chain development, and – more recently – attempts to 'make markets work for the poor' (usually referred to by its acronym, M4P). In many cases, there is a particular focus on ex-combatants, driven by the need to support their reintegration into 'normal' social and economic life. Measures within this category are largely concerned with what some call markets' 'supply-side', which, broadly speaking, refers to what people bring to the market in terms of their human, financial, physical and social capital (Flynn *et al.*, 2017).
- An emphasis on infrastructural development, including investment in things like roads, transport networks and physical marketplaces. The intention here is to improve the quality of structures and connections within the overall market system.

Although justification for such measures is based on ideas of 'best practice', developed (mainly) by the donor community through years of experience and implementation, literature reviews carried out at the inception of the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) asked serious questions about their credibility (Mallett and Slater, 2012). In particular, the quality of evidence and data underpinning claims of effectiveness was often found to be either weak or unclear (Blattman and Ralston, 2015; Gough *et al.*, 2013; Izzi, 2013). So, too, were there concerns about the toolkit's relevance and general applicability in diverse contexts.

Part of the resulting SLRC research agenda was thus tasked with better understanding how fit for purpose this kind of policy and programming is across a range of fragile and conflict-affected situations. By and large, this has not been done through focused evaluations of specific interventions and reforms, but through investigating processes of livelihood recovery at the micro level. The primary aim has been to better understand how those processes work in and of themselves – an essential step in identifying which kind of programming is most appropriate, and which seems to be missing the point.

This paper presents a synthesis of relevant SLRC research on the matter.[1] In many ways, its core purpose is to address a number of recent calls for greater insight into how markets in developing and conflict-affected countries actually work (Cramer, 2010; Fields, 2015). In doing so, it sets out to generate empirically informed insights that we hope will assist policy-makers working on market regeneration and private-sector development in post-conflict settings.

Across the eight SLRC focus countries – Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Nepal, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, Sri Lanka and Uganda – the analytical focus on markets has been most pronounced in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda.[2] Section 2 provides more detail on the specifics of this research. It gives both an overview of the relevant studies, as well as some key contextual information on the three main countries' changing economic circumstances. Section 3 constitutes

1 This paper accompanies four other synthesis reports. The first examines the relationships between service delivery, public perceptions and state legitimacy (Nixon and Mallett, 2017). The second looks at how international actors can work more effectively to develop state capacities to deliver services in fragile and conflict-affected situations (Denney *et al.*, 2017). The third, to which this report is most directly related, covers livelihood trajectories and recovery during and after conflict (Maxwell *et al.*, 2017). The fourth reports on findings from two rounds of SLRC's cross-country panel survey, providing quantitative evidence on livelihoods, service delivery and governance (Sturge *et al.*, 2017).

2 This reflects the fact that each country programme has had the flexibility and freedom to focus on strands of the SLRC research agenda that are most relevant to their context.

the analytical core of the paper, asking what the SLRC studies and relevant research from the wider literature tell us about how markets work in these particular settings, as well as the ways in which such realities cause programming to become unstuck. The SLRC programme has looked at markets of different kinds, and the section is structured accordingly:

- **Part i** looks at commodity markets;
- **Part ii** at market infrastructure; and
- **Part iii** at labour markets.

Each sub-section highlights key findings. Finally, Section 4 uses the insights from these studies – insights which tell us things about how people access and engage with markets in certain conflict-affected places – as the basis for a series of policy implications and recommendations. The underlying question addressed in this concluding section is how policy-makers might *think* differently about these issues – and what they should *do* differently. The paper identifies three overarching synthesis findings and makes five key policy recommendations.

Image: village elder, Nepal. Credit: Georgina Sturge, edited by James Mauger.

2 Background: an overview of the SLRC market studies and key contextual information

A core element of SLRC's mandate between 2011 and 2016 was to establish, through empirical research, a more rigorous understanding of how individuals, households and communities rebuild – or not – after conflict. As a result, the Consortium has produced a diverse body of research that engages with the question of livelihood recovery.

Within that broad work stream, one line of research has sought to understand the role that markets play in processes of livelihood recovery, reflecting the emphasis on market resuscitation and private-sector development objectives in post-conflict programming. This section provides i) greater detail on the SLRC 'market studies', which are drawn mainly from **Afghanistan**, **Sri Lanka** and **Uganda** and supplemented by insights from **DRC**, **Pakistan** and **Jordan**; and ii) some brief descriptions of the socio-economic circumstances of the three country contexts primarily under review here.

2.1 Overview of the studies

The SLRC **Afghanistan** programme generated most of the Consortium's empirical material on commodity markets in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Minoia *et al.* (2014) published the first of these, focusing on onions as their sectoral case study. In Afghanistan, onions are a cash crop with a market that offers comparable returns to opium poppy. They provide an example of a high-value vegetable crop grown in a well-resourced area with good market access, and one that is seen to offer potential for driving agricultural growth (World Bank, 2014). The second study was on saffron (Minoia and Pain, 2016), which is seen to play a similar role but offers particular opportunities for women (World Bank, 2011) and is not located in the same cultural zone as onion cultivation. Additionally, there are two studies on labour and petty trading – one in Kabul (Pain and Mallett, 2014), the other in Kandahar (Minoia and Pain, 2015) – which consider urban and rural work in Afghanistan's informal economy.[3] The Afghanistan market studies were designed to be linked to a household livelihood trajectory panel study carried out in some of the same sub-national locations (Pain and Huot, 2017).

3 The study on tailoring in Kabul (Pain and Mallett, 2014) was a companion study to the Uganda research on urban labour and decent work (Mallett and Atim, 2014; Mallett *et al.*, 2016a).

In **Sri Lanka**, the main theme that connects the five studies is the legacy of war and conflict on core markets and those who work within them. The three papers by Gayathri Lokuge (Lokuge and Manas, in draft; Lokuge, in draft, a; in draft, b), undertaken as part of an SLRC-funded PhD at Wageningen University, combine to offer an in-depth investigation of the nature of the fishing economy around Trincomalee on the east coast of the country. They look at ethnic conflicts' legacy on the lives and access to fisheries of poor fisher men and women, and how they respond to changing power and economic dynamics. Jayasekara and Najab's (2016) study on female *beedi* (cigarette-rolling) workers in Jaffna in the north of the country and in the Tamil heartland, explores the position of women trapped in casual informal labour under adverse conditions. The final paper examines the exclusionary social and economic effects of a modernising high-level tourism industry, largely controlled by Sinhalese capital, on the local and largely Tamil population (Gunasekara *et al.*, 2016).

There are three particularly relevant studies from the **Uganda** programme, all of which were carried out in Lira – northern Uganda's second-largest urban area. Two are specifically concerned with youth (un)employment, including a study of young people's access to and experience of the catering sector in northern Uganda (Mallett and Atim, 2014) and a follow-on designed to shed light on the world of work for the town's youth more generally (Mallett *et al.*, 2016a). The third looked at a recent aid-funded regeneration of Lira's main marketplace, probing its effects on the town's vending community (Mallett *et al.*, 2016b).

While the findings from these varied market studies in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Uganda provide the central evidence base for this paper, there is also relevant material from a number of the other country programmes. This includes studies of vegetable markets in **Pakistan**, specifically in Kyhber Pakhtunkhwa (Suleri *et al.*, 2016); in eastern **DRC**, road infrastructure (Ferf *et al.*, 2014), transactional sex (Mwapu *et al.*, 2016) and the experiences of internally displaced women in local markets (Nguya, in draft); and the livelihoods of Syrian refugee women in **Jordan** (Ritchie, 2017).[4]

The majority of these studies are based on qualitative research methods, entailing in-depth case studies at the sub-national level. Occasionally, however, studies have also incorporated a quantitative dimension. For instance, Mallett *et al.*'s (2016a) study of youth employment in northern Uganda draws both on semi-structured qualitative interviews as well as a questionnaire administered to just over 300 interviewees, while Ferf *et al.*'s (2014) DRC transport study is based on a survey of more than 1,000 respondents.

Table 1 below recaps the studies comprising SLRC's evidence base on markets, highlighting which of the three main 'market types' – commodity, infrastructure, labour – each addresses, along with a short description of their methods. A series of hyperlinks are incorporated into the 'Study' column: clicking on any of these will take readers to the webpage hosting that particular study, where it should be available for download.

4 As with Gayathri Lokuge's research, the work by Gloria Nguya on the experiences of displaced women in eastern DRC was carried out as part of an SLRC-funded PhD.

Table 1: The SLRC market studies

Country	Study	Thematic focus / 'type' of market			Methods
		Commodity	Infrastructure	Labour	
Afghanistan	Street vendors in Kandahar (Minoia and Pain, 2015)			●	In-depth interviews; key informant interviews; street observation; mapping
	The saffron market in Herat (Minoia and Pain, 2016)	●		●	In-depth interviews; key informant interviews
	The onion market in Nangahar (Minoia *et al.*, 2014)	●		●	In-depth interviews
	Rural livelihoods in longitudinal perspective (Pain and Huot, 2017)	●		●	Household panel questionnaire (three waves)
	Tailoring in Kabul (Pain and Mallett, 2014)			●	In-depth interviews; key informant interviews
Sri Lanka	Tourism in Passikudah (Gunasekara *et al.*, 2016)			●	Document analysis; key informant interviews; in-depth interviews; focus groups
	Beedi rolling in Vettikadu (Jayasekara and Najab, 2016)			●	Key informant interviews; focus groups; in-depth interviews; participant observation; life histories
	Intersectionality, inequality and fisheries in Trincomalee (Lokuge, in draft, a)			●	Participant observation; in-depth interviews; life histories; census (part of a wider ethnographic study)
	Illegal fishing in Trincomalee (Lokuge, in draft, b)			●	Participant observation; in-depth interviews; key informant interviews (part of a wider ethnographic study)
	The moral economy of fishing in Trincomalee (Lokuge and Munas, in draft)			●	Participant observation; in-depth interviews (part of a wider ethnographic study)
Uganda	Catering in Lira town (Mallett and Atim, 2014)			●	In-depth interviews; focus groups
	Youth (un)employment and bad work in Lira town (Mallett *et al.*, 2016a)			●	Survey; in-depth interviews; life history case studies
	Market regeneration in Lira town (Mallett *et al.*, 2016b)		●	●	Survey; in-depth interviews; key informant interviews
DRC	Rural road reconstruction in South Kivu (Ferf *et al.*, 2014)		●		Survey; in-depth interviews; focus groups; participant observation; 'roadside counts'
	Transactional sex in South Kivu (Mwapu *et al.*, 2016)			●	Survey; focus groups; in-depth interviews
	Livelihoods of IDP women in South and North Kivu (Nguya, in draft)		●	●	In-depth interviews; participant observation; focus groups
Pakistan	Fruit and vegetable markets in Swat Valley (Suleri *et al.*, 2016)	●			Key informant interviews; in-depth interviews
Jordan	Livelihoods of Syrian refugee women in Ibid, Zarqa and Zaatari (Ritchie, 2017)			●	Key informant interviews; focus groups; in-depth case studies; participant observation
Cross-country	Informal taxation and livelihoods (Lough *et al.*, 2013)	●	●	●	Literature review
	Livelihoods and growth in conflict-affected situations (Mallett and Slater, 2012)	●	●	●	Literature review

2.2 The contexts

Markets do not all work in the same way because they are contextual. To ground the analysis and findings that follow, this sub-section offers some brief information on the socio-economic circumstances of each of the three main countries (and necessary sub-regions) synthesised in this paper.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan's macro-, meso- and micro-level agro-pastoral environments and watersheds have long defined its social and political structures and economic life. These geographical aspects, linked to patterns of ethnic identity, remain relevant to understanding the regulation of economic activity today. Well before 1978, the country had a monetised commercial economy (Hanifi, 2011) with internal trading relations structured by the trade of agricultural surplus between its major irrigated plains and the hinterlands of dryland hills and mountains. Located in the four major irrigated centres, the cities of Jalalabad, Kandahar, Herat and Mazaar-Sharif acted not only as regional trade centres, but also as the main port cities linking Afghanistan to the outside world. Trading relations stretched across the Indian subcontinent (Ferdinand, 2006) often linked to Afghan nomads' movement. The rural landscape remained largely illegible to the state (Pain and Goodhand, 2002), which derived its revenue primarily through taxation of agricultural exports and foreign aid (Rubin, 1995).

In 1978, Afghanistan's primarily agrarian economy suffered major damage through physical destruction and an estimated two-thirds of villages (Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, 1988) were bombed and irrigation structures destroyed. This led to the collapse of agricultural production and massive rural outmigration to Pakistan and Iran. The emergence of a resistance movement with high levels of external funding resulted in a rapid monetisation of the economy, sowing the seeds for the emergence of criminalised trans-border networks involved in the arms trade, smuggling and money laundering (Rubin, 2000). After the Russian departure in 1989, the rural economy was gradually rebuilt, largely by the efforts of the rural population itself (Pain, 2007: 15). However, a 'commander' economy emerged, driven by the collapse of external funding, which deepened engagement with illicit trade and an expanding war economy. Markets and trading regimes flourished, motivated by war, criminality and survival (Goodhand, 2005) in which a growing opium economy played a pivotal role. The events prior to 2001 had led to a strengthening of ethnic and regional identities linked to an expanding market economy, largely unseen by the Asian Development Bank (2002), which saw it as an economy that had come to a standstill.

Post-2001 reconstruction policy clearly laid down that growth, led by the private sector, would be the route to rebuilding the economy (Interim Afghanistan Administration, 2002; Securing Afghanistan's Future, TISA, 2004). Agricultural growth was seen to be its driving force. What emerged instead was a new rentier economy fuelled by military expenditure and reconstruction funds (World Bank, 2014a), with help from a growing opium economy. High annual growth rates, averaging 9%, were recorded for the first decade (Byrd, 2015) but were primarily in the service sectors. And with the recent sharp decline in military expenditure and declining aid flows, annual economic growth fell in 2014 to 1.3%. Agricultural growth has not occurred (World Bank, 2014a), poverty rates have not reduced (World Bank, 2014b), under-employment levels are high, and outmigration is significant.

Three features frame the current market context of Afghanistan. First, geography, ethnic identity and gender remain major aspects of market regulation, with women restricted in their ability to be economically active (although this is variable). Second, since 2001, fuelled by the rentier economy, networks of access underpinned by personalised relations have structured the higher reaches of the economy (Jackson, 2016). Third, the joint household remains the primary economic unit within which income and consumption is shared.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka's 30-year civil war ended in 2009 with a clear yet violent victory by government forces over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). More than a quarter of a million Tamils were displaced from Sri Lanka's Northern and Eastern Provinces where the fighting was concentrated. They were interned during the last years of fighting but, after it, were gradually allowed to return. In addition, a significant Muslim population, forcibly expelled from the north by the LTTE in the 1990s, has gradually resettled. The civil war was characterised by violence, insecurity, displacement and loss of access to productive resources of land and sea, jeopardising both the material and social basis of affected people's livelihoods (Fernando and Moonesinghe, 2012).

In the victory's immediate aftermath, the post-war policies of the then President Mahinda Rajapaksa did little to resolve deep grievances in the Tamil population, and Sinhala nationalist policies continued to be forcibly applied. The political and ethnic foundations of the conflict were largely denied and the challenges phrased more as requiring infrastructural development and economic mobilisation (ICG, 2010). Underlying this, however, has been a political agenda of Sinhala populations gaining greater control over land, fishing and other economic opportunities of the northern provinces. Heavy militarisation remains, along with conflict over land and other resources and systematic processes of political marginalisation.

In the years between 2010 and 2015, the country became increasingly subject to a family-based authoritarian rule under Mahinda Rajapakse and issues of reconciliation and accountability were largely unaddressed. The Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) has remained in place and unaccountable action by the military forces has persisted. Following the end of the war, however, the country saw strong economic growth driven by infrastructural development and the rise of a service economy, including tourism. This has shifted the economy from a more rural-based agricultural economy to one that is now more urbanised and driven by services. In 2015, services accounted for over 62% of GDP and agriculture contributed just below 9%, although still employing some 30% of the population. The growth has moved Sri Lanka to lower middle-income country (LMIC) status and poverty rates have fallen, although there are marked regional inequalities with the northern and eastern regions exhibiting higher levels of poverty.

The 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections unexpectedly brought a change in government, with hopes that it would address some of the key political challenges linked to ethnic relations, power-sharing, addressing the legacy of the war, and re-establishing democratic institutions and rule of law. Although there has been some progress, there are signs that it is faltering (ICG, 2016). In addition, major economic challenges are emerging: the high post-war growth rate was driven by infrastructural development financed through debt, which is becoming increasingly expensive to service and repayments now exceed annual revenue. The previous government more than doubled the public payroll and the military budget continues to rise. There is an acute need to increase revenue and reduce expenditure, which challenges any efforts to support reconstruction efforts in the Northern and Eastern Provinces, and address the conflict's causes and effects.

Uganda

Northern Uganda's 20-year war between the Ugandan government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), which ran from 1986 to 2006, is often characterised as brutal. At its peak in 2005, nearly 2 million people were living in the 251 camps across the region, including roughly 95% of Acholiland's population and one-third of that in Lango sub-region (UHRC and OHCHR, 2011). Although there are no precise figures, it is estimated that 300,000 people died as the result of conflict (Kisekka-Ntale, 2007).

The conflict's economic implications have been vast. To underline the scale of devastation, the aggregate figure of a USD 1.7bn loss over the war's course (calculated by CSOPNU [2006]) is often cited. But the specific manifestations reveal themselves more intricately at the micro level, where violence has resulted not simply in cost and loss, but in a more profound rewiring of both social life and economic activity. As Baines and Rosenoff Gauvin (2014) show in their study of motherhood and social repair in Acholi culture, 'all forms of familial relations were put under extreme strain by violence, insecurity, immobility, lack of productivity and poverty' (ibid.: 283). This in turn meant that many of the existing relationship-based mechanisms for establishing economic security – including the transfer of financial resources upon marriage and birth (ibid.) – began to weaken, the legacies of which remain visible today. Ahikire *et al.* (2014), for example, note that large numbers of men are 'reportedly still stuck in the war period situation', struggling to reassert their economic status in their household. At the same time, the diversification and the greater visibility of women's economic activity – a vestige of their being forced out of the subsistence / reproductive economy and into the labour market during wartime – remains apparent. Whether this is evidence of empowerment is questionable: in many cases, it simply reflects a huge burden of responsibility for sustaining their family, particularly given that many women are living as single mothers or are 'in relationships where spouses contribute little or nothing' (ibid.: 6).

On the economic context more broadly, many believe that, although recovery is now underway, it has been a painfully slow and uneven process. The main effort to consolidate stability and improve the economy in northern Uganda has been the Peace, Recovery and Development Plan (PRDP), which was launched in 2007 and is said to provide the overarching framework for addressing the region's post-war needs. Now in its third phase, a central pillar of the USD 606million, government-led initiative is revitalisation and development of the economy. The most recent Human Development Report for Uganda suggests that this component has had limited success, noting that despite 'deliberate efforts to reverse the marginalisation of the region', the north 'remains an eyesore in Uganda's relatively impressive national human development record' (UNDP, 2015: 22, 19). The report points to the limitations of the PRDP's 'small-step', incremental and intervention-focused approach to recovery, highlighting the lack of serious engagement with the bigger question of structural transformation. SLRC research by Levine (2015) underlines the fact that relatively little has been done since the end of the war to actively improve the lives and livelihoods of households and communities in the north.

Moreover, although the last decade or so has seen strong rates of growth – about 7% per annum between 2005/06 and 2012/13 – it seems clear that this has not been accompanied by economic transformation, such as an expansion of formal wage-sector employment (ACET, 2013). Neither does it seem that the benefits of increased growth have been shared equally: economic activity in the north might appear bustling, but there are claims that its current 'boom' – characterised by substantial cross-border trade with South Sudan, a rising presence of Indian and Chinese enterprise in the local economy, and the prospect of opportunities for big agribusiness and natural resource extraction – is mostly concentrated in the hands of a few (IRIN, 2016; UNDP, 2015).

Linked to this, youth unemployment and under-employment are considered huge problems, as a society demographically dominated by young people struggles to recover in an economy largely devoid of opportunity. Research suggests that up to 80% of northern youth are either unemployed or unemployable in the formal sector as a result of low qualification levels (International Youth Fund, 2011), finding themselves instead working in 'low-productivity subsistence agriculture and the informal sector, where returns on labour and capital are generally low' (ACCS, 2013: 26). Many have sought economic improvement by going to the towns and cities of northern Uganda – the annual urban growth rate of Lira is soon expected to hit 10% (UBoS, 2012) – where new livelihood options are being sought beyond a life tied to the farm. But the reality of the urban economy – a site of costlier living yet still constrained in the possibilities it offers – has continued to push people into low-return corners of the labour market.

3 What does the SLRC evidence tell us about how markets work?

As outlined in the previous section, SLRC research has engaged with markets of different kinds. This section, which draws out a series of synthesis findings from this work, is structured accordingly. In the first part, we consider SLRC's research into commodity markets, a theme dominated by the Consortium's work in Afghanistan. In the second, we look at the infrastructural aspects of market systems, including road development and marketplace construction – this is the shortest sub-section, reflecting the more limited extent to which SLRC has engaged with this theme. In the third part, we turn to labour markets, which features a more diverse spread of country evidence. At the beginning of each of these three sub-sections is a summary of its key points and arguments. Finally, in a brief fourth sub-section, we make a wider point about how 'real markets' work, relating the evidence discussed here to broader 'non-conflict-affected' circumstances. Throughout this section, we use bold font to indicate both key findings coming out of the synthesis analysis, as well as the names of SLRC's focus countries (in order to distinguish between this empirical material and studies from the wider literature).

3.1 Commodity markets

Policies designed to support agricultural enterprise are based on certain assumptions about how commodity markets work – and how they ought to work. In particular, lack of market information and access to credit are seen as some of the main barriers to overcome. Evidence from Afghanistan questions these assumptions. Credit is widely available, but accessed through personalised networks and therefore restricted on a 'social basis'. Producers' ability to get by, and become wealthier, is shaped more by their identity and personal connections than anything else. Politics – both small 'p' and big 'P' – is what determines outcomes, and those responsible for designing interventions need to become better at recognising and dealing with this.

Commodities are the rural economy's surplus raw materials or primary agricultural products that are bought and sold. They may or may not be processed and used as inputs to manufactured goods. How are we to understand the markets within which they are transacted, and what might the implications of this understanding be for hopes that market development in agrarian economies can drive growth, income generation and employment? In seeking to answer these questions, we draw mainly on the SLRC **Afghanistan** research. While this reflects SLRC's balance of work concerning the analysis of commodity markets, it does also mean that the findings must be seen primarily within the specific market context of Afghanistan.[5]

As one of the country's foremost rural development initiatives, Afghanistan's Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development–Facility (CARD-F) essentially adopts a value-chain model in seeking to provide input services, with infrastructural support for six key commodities, aiming to 'increase employment, income and business opportunities for rural masses' in its target provinces.[6] Core barriers to the rural economy's development are seen to be lack of information about prices and lack of access to credit, preventing farmers from risk taking and market engagement (CARD-F, 2013: 4). Notions of value added implicitly drive the commodity flow from field to market in the representation of the value chain, enhancing production, trade through 'standard practices', facilitation to acquire deals and supporting the establishment of producer organisations.[7] This model is also consistent with the World Bank's framing of markets in Afghanistan (World Bank, 2014a), which similarly views value-chain development as the key to driving growth and job creation.

CARD-F's accomplishments are framed (see factsheet referenced in footnote 4) in terms of input provision, infrastructure construction and farmers trained, rather than in terms of outcomes. These address the constraints that the World Bank (2014) also identifies, along with the need to develop efficient land markets and rural commercial credit. There is no specific account of how value-chain development will create employment, what the nature of that employment will be, and who in the rural masses will benefit from the opportunities.

The evidence from the studies on commodity markets in Afghanistan questions some of the core assumptions of the CARD-F programme, as well as other market-support programmes, such as Afghanistan's Rural Enterprise Development Programme (AREDP) (see Pain and Kantor, 2011).[8] In particular, the research suggests that the programmatic emphasis on 'lack of information about price' and 'limited access to credit' appears to be missing the point, overlooking both the social institutions that structure market exchange as well as the way in which risky contexts deeply shape people's livelihood strategies.

A characteristic of trading 'firms' or enterprises in Afghanistan is that they are strictly patriarchal family organisations working with family capital and which, reflecting Afghanistan's risk environment, rarely expand their management structure beyond the extended household. They range in scale and scope from an individual (as, say, a commodity-focused petty retailer working at village or district level) to urban-based wholesalers serving entire provinces and regions. A distinct geography of markets tethered to the patterns of ethnic identity structures Afghanistan's cultural landscape, in the process, defining individual traders' reach and scope. Cloth traders from Jalalabad, for example, do not expand to the north because of lack of connections and the associated need to keep the firm within the household network (Pain and Mallett, 2014).

Simple categories of wholesaler, retailer or processor are rarely analytically useful since they do not usefully describe what traders actually do. In the case of saffron trading in Herat (Minoia and Pain, 2016), there are instances of city traders extending down into production through lease and land acquisition, recruiting labour, overseeing processing, buying from other traders, processing, and exporting. Equally, there are large saffron growers in the district who produce, purchase others' produce, process the saffron and, through ownership of a trading company, export. Similarly, district-level onion traders in Nangarhar are often larger landowners who might sharecrop out their land or engage in diverse forms of trade – including, in one case, trading in imported cars to counteract the seasonality and risks of onion trading (Minoia *et al.*, 2014).

Can these be described as small or medium enterprises (SMEs), driven by entrepreneurial interests that characterise a more formal marketplace (Hoffman and Lange, 2016)? Certainly, for Kandahar's street vendors, propelled into the informal urban economy and ejected by conflict and drought from the rural districts, it is a

5 The Pakistan study on vegetable markets was primarily concerned with the recovery of market systems for fruit and vegetable after conflict in the Swat valley, and did not address the wider structures of a market system. The Sri Lanka studies from the Northern and Eastern Provinces are investigations of work and identity in the fishing, *beedi* and tourist markets. They were not designed to address the wider understanding of commodity markets used here, but are to some extent picked up in the sub-section on labour markets.

6 http://www.cardf.gov.af/images/factsheet/CARD-F Factsheet September 2015.pdf (accessed 5 September 2016).

7 See their Vegetable Value Chain for example: http://www.cardf.gov.af/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=81&Itemid=380 (accessed 5 September 2016).

8 http://aredp-mrrd.gov.af/eng/ (accessed 6 September 2016).

compulsive and reluctant engagement in a saturated low-return market in order to survive. For bigger traders, risk-taking and profit may well describe their motivations; in Kandahar, for example, (Pain *et al.*, 2016) an individual had moved into poultry production for such reasons. For many, however, personal objectives may relate more to household reproduction and survival. On top of this, market regulatory structures tend to keep small traders small.[9]

For saffron, a high-value light and readily transportable product, moving the product from field to market is easily and cheaply done. For onions, it is a different matter. A combination of high price volatility and thus risky markets, combined with a limited shelf life due to the product's intrinsic perishability and no cool storage facilities, means that smaller producers often give their standing crop over wholesale to the trader. The trader is then responsible for lifting and transporting the crop for a guaranteed but lower price than farmers might obtain had they harvested their crop. But then the farmers would run the risk of having to sell an already harvested crop, with traders being selective about which onions they would buy (Minoia *et al.*, 2014).

However, **extensive but circumscribed networks of informal credit lubricate the production and flow of commodities.** From the larger saffron producer in Herat who gives credit to other farmers so that they can afford the costly saffron bulbs, and the onion growers of Nangarhar who receive credit from traders, to the large onion traders of the Jalalabad vegetable market who provide credit to small traders, the system functions on personalised relationships of trust. As Thompson (2011) characterises it with respect to the Hawalla system, 'trust is the coin of the realm', founded on personal reputation. It is the inability to access informal credit that is the true mark of exclusion and destitution; but the benefits of inclusion in informal credit relations depend largely on the terms and conditions under which it is offered and what is required in return. When informal credit relations are foundational to mutual survival, consumption smoothing and risk management between households of equal status, it is an element of a distributional economy (Kjlin and Pain, 2007). Where informal credit relations underpin dependent village-level relationships between large landlords and *hamsaya* (servants) or sharecroppers, a Faustian bargain is struck, ensuring short-term survival of the dependent household at the cost of long-term wellbeing (Pain *et al.*, 2016; Wood, 2004). Where informal credit is rationed to tie farmers into production contracts or to stop smaller traders becoming bigger, as was found in the onion market of Jalalabad (Minoia *et al.*, 2014), then it becomes part of the market's regulative practices. Note should be made of the linking together – what is termed interlocking contracts – of informal agreements for credit and price-setting, reinforcing the regulative role of informal credit and thus bringing into question how far price, as the value-chain model sees it, is freely set between supply and demand.

The wider point is that **while access to formal credit is seen as a constraint to market-oriented agricultural production** (World Bank, 2014: xv), **it does not mean that credit is absent.** But does market expansion necessarily depend on more formal credit? Comparative evidence (Tilley, 2005) indicates that formal credit and its associated institutional arrangements may be more an outcome of informal credit relations' growth rather than the means by which credit supply grows. This growth of informal credit relations, in turn, depends on creating more extensive interpersonal relationships, which requires greater levels of generalised trust. Afghanistan's political instability is a key obstacle to that.

As Jackson (2016) makes clear, what has emerged in Afghanistan since 2001 is not a dichotomy between state and non-state practices or even a clear hybrid order (Meagher *et al.*, 2014), but a non-hierarchical networked order of limited access with clear regional dimensions of variable stability (North *et al.*, 2009). These relationship-based networks 'produce and regulate power through the distribution of resources' and effectively constitute the state and economy (Jackson and Minoia, 2016). **Connectivity, personalised relationships, short-term futures and compulsory engagement characterise the regulatory order.**

This does not mean that there is no bureaucratic state presence, as the rules and regulatory practices behind the registration of producer organisations in Herat illustrate (Minoia and Pain, 2016). But the performance of those rules is discretionary, heavily dependent on personalised connections and subject to the action of key brokers (as in the customs house of Kandahar) who collect and distribute rents (Pain *et al.*, 2016). At the higher reaches of regional and provincial economies, there is a complete intertwining of political and economic

9 In the DRC rural roads study (Ferf *et al.*, 2014: 40) transport owners also chose to remain small businesses because of the risk environment.

spheres. Key political actors seek economic rents through control or tariffs on trade, particularly if it is cross-border as seen in the case of the provincial police chief in Kandahar (Jackson, 2016: 13). In turn, as evidenced by the major onion traders of Jalalabad (Minoia *et al.*, 2014: 19-20), political connections ensure market control through regulatory practices that exclude competition, manipulate prices and collude on cross-border taxes. This is not a market system that systematically seeks profits to use for productive investment but rather creates rents to sustain networks.

Turbulence is an endemic feature of Afghanistan's commodity markets. Prices have been reported to show short-term volatility in the onion (Minoia *et al.*, 2014: 18), raisin (Lister *et al.*, 2004) and opium markets (Pain, 2010), reflecting collusion between the main traders. This limits the use of price correlations to test for market integration and efficiency (Jan and Harriss-White, 2012: 41), an approach that has been used to analyse Afghanistan's wheat market, leading to conclusions that it was integrated (Chabot and Tondel, 2011). Rainfall failure, as in 2008, which led to dramatic price spikes for wheat, has significant effects on supply, but as in the drought of the late 1990s, markets continue to function (Pain, 2012). More significant to the market costs and functioning are the rent-seeking practices of border officials and informal checkpoints that populate the road from the field to the market place: onion traders reported at least 26 check posts between Torkham on the Afghanistan border and Peshawar, leaving aside those between the districts and Jalalabad. The border can be suddenly closed, blocking the movement of goods. Outright theft, at least of the commodities under study, was not reported but conflict, as experienced in the districts around Kandahar, has major effects on supply.

Arguably the major shock experienced is the effect of the rise and fall of the reconstruction economy. While it was rising, largely in the service sector (World Bank, 2014b), it created employment mainly in the non-agrarian economy but which fed back into village households, increasing consumption (with improved food security). The rise of the opium economy from 2001 to 2006 had similar if not greater effects, stimulating a short-term growth of the rural economy with profits invested by farmers chiefly in consumption goods and by higher-level traders in both consumption and property and land purchases. The sharp fall of the opium economy had major effects on the rural economy (Kantor and Pain, 2012), and the decline in reconstruction funds have hit the city economies hard (Minoia and Pain, 2015), reducing trade.

It is mainly larger farmers who have adopted saffron, which is a semi-perennial crop. In some cases profits have enabled farmers to invest in expanding land holdings. As noted earlier, there are cases of Herat saffron traders buying into the rural economy and accumulating land in order to integrate production. But there is little evidence that commercialisation of commodity production (with the exception of opium poppy cultivation) has led to systematic expansion of employment and rising income for rural labour. Much rural labour is already under-employed and where households do have the opportunity to intensify production, it largely absorbs unpaid household labour. Although there is limited evidence on this dimension, it is striking that in many of the cases of larger landowners with agricultural surplus, profits have been invested primarily outside agriculture in the urban economy and trade in the service sector (although there has been some investment in grape gardens where water is available). One example of a major landowner in one of the Herat villages was found where investment back into his lands led to mechanisation (which reduced the returns to sharecroppers, who essentially became labour paid in kind) and leasing out land for saffron (that led to the eviction of existing sharecroppers) (Huot *et al.*, 2016).

Land and labour relations remain fundamentally un-commoditised and subject to market forces (Pain and Huot, 2017). Access to land, under conditions of significant landlessness, is accounted for far more by patron–client relations and non-contractual obligations than by market forces. This largely explains why processes of land accumulation and dispossession have not taken place. Wages, often paid in kind, are determined more by custom and segmented by gender, locality and age. Thus, it is social relationships, rather than market relations based on transaction costs and maximising profits, that characterises the nature of exchange and economic behaviour.

Exchange relations between producers and traders are complex and it is difficult to determine the terms of trade. However, given the rural economy's parlous state, the ways in which it is socially structured, and the extent to which many depend on those working outside it in order to survive, there is little evidence that agriculture in Afghanistan is capable of generating the surplus required to drive significant growth and employment.

There are aspirations, at least for Afghanistan (World Bank, 2014a), that production in intensive irrigated systems has import-substitution potential and opportunities to link to global value chains. This is consistent with the CARD-F programme in its focus on the development of selected value chains oriented towards commercial farms and assumptions of income and employment creation. It is envisaged that this will be driven by improved technical inputs and crop-management practices, including better on-farm water management and, to some extent, improved infrastructure for storage and transport. This is a model of technology-driven exogenous change with little attention to price formation or market structures.

But the evidence is very clear that political and non-economic institutions such as identity, class and patriarchy have an extraordinarily strong regulating role on commodity markets. Indeed, if anything, these have been reinforced over this last decade through the conditions that have given rise to and reinforced the networked state.

Thus, **while commodity markets clearly exist in Afghanistan, the regulatory role of social institutions and the politics of market places are what define them. Simple supply–demand models, where price signals efficiency, poorly characterise them.** If anything, it is the reduction in external funding and ready access to money that will push the search for alternative resources to fund political networks, and these may be found in the more valuable traded agricultural commodities. Such rent-seeking practices are unlikely, however, to promote productive investment in agriculture and stimulate the anticipated growth.

Implications for understanding and working with commodity markets

What does this all mean for how we might analytically approach an understanding of markets in Afghanistan, and find ways to engage with them that both support growth and ensure better distributional outcomes?

It is surprising that the stripped-down value-chain models which focus primarily on competitive conditions, price formation and performance still appear to largely frame the CARD-F approach to markets. They also characterised, at least in the early years, USAID support to markets in Afghanistan (Pain and Lister, 2007: 237). Not only have such models developed to take more account of power structures in the marketplace and distributional outcomes (Mitchell and Coles, 2011), but the emergence of the M4P approach specifically seeks to pay much greater attention to market context and market power (DFID and SDC, 2008). Indeed, the development of what is termed a market-systems approach has much in common with M4P in its focus on core market transactions, institutions, services and infrastructure (Humphrey, 2014). These models take account of market complexity, but their perspectives on the institutional landscape and rule-making practices only partially address Afghanistan's circumstances.

Moreover, with demand and supply at the core of the model, markets' role in extracting profits – which according to the World Bank's model of agrarian transformation will drive development (World Bank, 2008) – is also absent. In addition, commodity markets play a third role in exploiting labour as the evidence of the terms and conditions of female labour in *beedi* work in Jaffna, **Sri Lanka** (Jayasekara and Najab, 2016) or saffron-processing (Minoia and Pain, 2016a) make very clear.

Commodity markets therefore have to be approached and analysed as complex systems in order to understand how they function in practice (Jan and Harriss-White, 2012). This requires attention to three aspects, which are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Three dimensions of market complexity

Three core aspects of markets	Details of each aspect
The structure of market system	Elements: firms, their social organisation, technologies and location Relations: flows of commodities and money Regulative Practices: state and non-state Shocks: environmental, economic, political
Functioning in relation to agricultural production	Control of the labour process Flows of commodities Flows of money
Changes in market structure and relations over time	Exogenous: technology and price Endogenous: competition, contradictions, non-economic social institutions

Source: adapted from Jan and Harriss-White (2012: 46)

The selective examination of aspects of the market system characterising market studies in **Afghanistan** do not come close to addressing this complexity. Indeed, there are very few such studies, an outstanding exception being that of Harriss-White (2008) on agricultural markets in West Bengal. Its examination of why growth in agricultural production has not translated into the reduction of rural poverty showed that the market's social regulation led to a concentration of market power, limiting returns to less powerful actors. The work has clear lessons for Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Keeping the focus on Afghanistan, **the systemic saturation of commodity markets in both small and large politics raises fundamental challenges about whether and how external interventions can both promote growth and ensure better distributional outcomes**. M4P approaches seek systemic change in market-system performance (Humphrey, 2014), but this can hardly be achieved through working on the promotion of change in individual commodity systems. As noted in the recent International Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI) report on DFID's private-sector development strategy, there are fundamental issues of 'coming to scale' to be addressed. These are likely to be beyond the ability of 'mid-level programmes' and single agencies to achieve with even medium-term programming (ICAI, 2014: Para 2.99). Changing the incentives in Afghanistan's commodity and labour markets requires first achieving fundamental changes in its networked state, which are unlikely to happen any time soon or be easy (Jackson, 2016). In contrast, in Pakistan post-conflict market recovery through mid-level interventions appears to have been possible because of an entirely different and wider market context than in Afghanistan (Suleri *et al.*, 2016).

Of course there is a commodity market in Afghanistan from which one might draw lessons: opium poppy. Its Janus-like nature[10] (Pain, 2012) – portrayed as an evil but as one that has also created employment, food security and income for many rural households (Pain, 2010) – invites questions about what can be learnt from this. Price is certainly part of the story, but opium poppy's specific nature – its fit in the cropping system (not displacing wheat), high demand for labour, responsiveness to management inputs, storage qualities – combined with market-support structures (credit provision, farm-gate purchase) relate fundamentally to the risk environment that surrounds it. Opium poppy has been a relatively low-risk crop in a high risk-environment, not least for offering increased access to land for the many landless in Afghanistan's socially embedded land economy.

Greater attention needs to be paid to the multiple dimensions of risk and how to mitigate them. In part, as Dorward *et al.* (2004) recommend, support is needed to reduce cost and price risks and allow market transactions to thicken so that supply and demand come to play a greater role. But this does little to address markets' politically saturated nature or the broader nature of the risk environment, including overt and structural violence. Might collective action provide some means of pooling risks and strengthening agency? At the village level, there is considerable evidence of deeply structured patron–client relations where elites, particularly in well-resourced areas (those with the potential for agricultural growth) with high degrees of land inequality, often work in their own interests (Pain, 2016). They are in a position to block such action. In more marginal places, which are often food-insecure villages, collective interests feature more strongly but these are not conditions under which agricultural growth is possible.

Afghanistan has long had a market economy and, as the study on onions shows (Minoia *et al.*, 2014), despite its heavy regulatory features, it still functions and is integrated – albeit under adverse conditions – into regional markets. It works for better or worse, as the opium poppy market does, on its own terms and it is highly unlikely that external interventions will bring about systemic change. Rather than starting within the market system, as Byrd (2016) has recently argued, a good starting point would be to introduce modest tariffs on the imports of key cash crops from neighbouring countries, where agriculture is heavily supported by the state, in order to use price as a stimulus to agricultural commodity growth.

3.2 Market infrastructure

Functioning markets require appropriate physical infrastructure, connecting producers to buyers and traders to sites of demand. But building new roads and marketplaces does not always address the root causes of bad business: restrictions on travel often persist as a result of poverty, and relatively powerful traders are capable of capitalising on the opportunities and resources presented by new investments to others' detriment.

10 We are grateful to one of the reviewers for reinforcing this point.

Image: health centre, Sierra Leone. Credit: Richard Mallett, edited by James Mauger.

This section examines the limited evidence of the contribution made by roads development and marketplace construction to economic development. Two studies inform the discussion on roads. The first (Ferf *et al.*, 2014) is an SLRC study on rural road reconstruction in South Kivu in **DRC** and its effects on transport and rural livelihoods. This included a survey of 1,250 households in 2012. Although not an SLRC study, the second study by Pain *et al.* (2015) evaluates rural road improvement programme: the Rural Access Improvement Programme (RAIP) funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) over eight years in two provinces of northern Afghanistan. Sri Lanka has long had a level of functional main and secondary roads that have been absent in DRC and Afghanistan, although there was a real focus on road-building in the post-conflict period.[11]

As Dalakoglou and Harvey (2012: 459) observe, 'roads are arguably the paradigmatic material infrastructure of the twenty-first century supporting both the information society (and the ever-increasing circulation of commodified goods and labour) and extractive economies on which the production and reproduction of good and labour depends'. They are also essential to allowing state penetration and control. In turn, they can be sites of resistance (ambush and locations to place landmines) and capture (roadblocks for informal taxation).

Roads have the capacity and ambition to enhance international trade, promote the growth of national economies and provide economic opportunity for those prepared to engage with them. In an era of uneven development, road construction is seen to offer the potential to reduce poverty by promoting access to health and education and enabling economic mobility (Bryceson *et al.*, 2008). In DRC, the World Bank has argued that building rural roads will increase mobility and access to markets, connect supply and demand, reduce transport costs and increase economic growth (World Bank, 2010). SIDA hoped that its rural road programme would also improve access to social services and markets, as well as create employment opportunities (Pain *et al.*, 2015).

As Ferf *et al.* (2014) note in their literature review, the causal connections between roads and development are usually poorly elaborated, little attention is paid to the

11 https://www.adb.org/projects/37245-013/main (accessed 24 November 2016).

immediate and long-term effects, impact assessments tend to be limited, and the political economy of road construction is largely ignored – consistent with the findings of Pain *et al.* (2015). For the authorities, and often for community leaders, roads are also sites of symbolic power, as evidence of modernity. In the case of Afghanistan's NSP programme, road construction was the most frequently requested infrastructure.

But as both studies found, consistent with the earlier findings of Bryceson *et al.* (2008), **roads may be the main arteries through which social and economic development is possible** and are thus a necessary condition for market growth, **but they are not sufficient in themselves.** Certain preconditions include a sufficient density of rural road networks, a certain level of social and economic infrastructure and a level of ownership, access to vehicles and purchasing power to be able to be mobile. In the remoter parts of Samangan in Afghanistan, for instance, a donkey economy runs in parallel to modern road infrastructure because most households cannot afford any other means of transport (Pain *et al.*, 2015). In DRC, poverty and informal taxes also restrict movement and mean that most people still walk along the edge of the largely empty roads (Ferf *et al.*, 2014).

Roads are one aspect of infrastructural development. Market buildings are another. Like roads, these are not neutral sites of physical infrastructure that help automatically promote inclusive, modern economic life as might be assumed. As Mallett *et al.* (2016b) found in their study of the Lira Main Market in **Uganda**, completed in 2015 as one of seven municipal marketplaces designed and built with international funding to promote market activity and support trade, infrastructure is a political resource both for national- as well as local-level politics. At the national level, its symbolic value is seen as doing something for the poor and as a vote winner. For local-level politics played out between the municipal authorities and local power holders, it is a source of economic rent. For the municipality in particular, it was seen as a new potential source of revenue and as a way to formalise the informal street-vendor economy. But it also gave certain public employees in the municipality an opportunity, in league with key local powerful market players, to manipulate the allocation of space within the market. The biggest players got to control multiple market trading bays, which they could then sub-rent for profit or claim the prime trading spots for themselves. Incidentally, Nguya (in draft) observed a similar pattern of inflated sub-renting by (relatively) powerful traders in her SLRC-affiliated PhD study of markets in eastern **DRC**.

The Lira street vendors, encouraged to embrace modernity and pay through various service charges for the provision of services for the poor, were multiply disadvantaged. Working in a saturated low-return risky segment of the market where flexibility and a local customer base was essential, they found themselves moved to the less visible and second- and third-best places in the new marketplace. Poorly designed to meet practical trading needs and disciplined by the physical sub-sectoral organisation of the marketplace – in turn constraining vendors' diversity and flexibility – the realities of the regenerated market meant many traders lost their old customer base, faced higher costs and struggled to make ends meet. Some have already moved back out to the streets to trade. Thus, **the physical marketplace**, to borrow from Kabeer's (2012) characterisation of the labour market, **is not a neutral space of pure economic exchange but embodies and reinforces patterns of existing social, economic and political inequality.**

The marketplaces in **Afghanistan** demonstrate this even more strongly. Exclusively occupied by male traders, which Uganda's Lira Main Market is not, they are often a location of specific ethnic enclaves – the Kuchi market with its group of Kandahari traders in Herat is one example, the Hazara *peron tambon*[12] market in Mazaar is another (Pain and Mallett, 2014: 6). The political elite have built many since 2001 with the profits from opium and cross-border rent. In Mazaar, traders have been forced into them through coercion and deprivation of services in older trading centres (Pain, 2011). In the main vegetable market in Jalalabad, built with aid funds (Minoia *et al.*, 2014), there are two buildings – the trading building, which is, in turn, supervised from a second, where a key trader has secured the contract from the municipality to oversee the market and collect taxes through his representatives on goods that move through it. He is also the broker from whom international trading licences to trade across the border can be secured, a position only made possible by his networks of relationships to the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, facilitated through connections to a previous provincial governor.

12 A traditional kind of men's garment

3.3 Labour markets

According to neoclassical economics, labour markets are relatively neutral spaces of exchange. Although institutions are acknowledged, they are not usually central to analysis. Supporting a wider body of literature, SLRC's evidence on labour markets shows that these are intensely regulated spaces – predominantly through informal means beyond the state's reach. So too are they often responsible for maintaining various forms of poverty and violence. Thus, it is not necessarily people's exclusion from the labour market, but the way in which they are incorporated into it, which presents the central policy challenge.

It is often said that the poor's only asset is their labour (Fields, 2015). This mantra is hardwired into international development policy, resulting in a system that is, in the words of James Ferguson (2015), all about 'putting people to work'. From this follows a range of interventions designed to facilitate people's entrance into the labour market, often through support to the accumulation of human capital (e.g. via education and skills development) and entrepreneurship (e.g. via microfinance and business training) (Flynn *et al.*, 2017; Gough *et al.*, 2014; Izzi, 2013). In places affected by or vulnerable to conflict, these measures are further animated by the optics of liberal peacebuilding, which has a strong tradition of framing job creation as an antidote to social disorder, violence and rebellion, particularly among young males (Sommers, 2015).

In exploring the micro processes of livelihood recovery, several SLRC studies have engaged with labour markets as key spaces through which those processes play out. Concentrated primarily in **Afghanistan**, **Sri Lanka** and **Uganda**, this research provides insights into the ways in which people access labour markets in transitional contexts, the terms of their participation, and the consequences for their livelihoods. Three findings in particular emerge from the synthesis analysis.

The first is that **the world of work is always governed, even where formal state regulation is completely absent.**

Supporting and extending an existing body of literature (Fleetwood, 2011; Granovetter, 1985; Guérin *et al.*, 2015; Peck, 1996; Polanyi, 1992; Portes, 2010), SLRC's research shows that regardless of the formal modes of regulation, labour markets in fragile and conflict-affected situations are typically structured by less visible forms of social regulation. This is true both for questions of access and participation, and the manifestations are visible in a variety of ways (Sommers, 2015).

One common theme is the restriction of access on the basis of gender, seen most explicitly in **Afghanistan's** labour markets. In Kabul's tailoring sector, for example, there is clear evidence of gender inequality in the workings of the market (Pain and Mallett, 2014). For young men and their families, while tailoring is often viewed as a good enough livelihood, it is really more a Plan B than an absolute aspiration; a trade worth learning and having in case other opportunities fail to arise, or when times get tough. A fairly structured apprenticeship scheme is on offer, through which the necessary skills can be acquired in a relatively linear way (although family connections with the 'teacher' is often the means by which this happens).

For young women, on the other hand, participation in the tailoring sector represents something much more, as it is one of the few possible routes into the urban labour market – largely because it can be practised in the private space of the household. And here it is not simply a case of finding a mentor. For many, enduring restrictions on women's economic activity mean that access to tailoring must first be negotiated with the family. Indeed, in contexts that have traditionally restricted female mobility in public and productive economic space – a manifestation of intensely patriarchal modes of market regulation – the research from Kabul suggests that a woman's entrance and continued participation in the labour market depends on her relationships with male family members. Moving beyond the spatial and economic limits, it seems, first requires winning the support and approval of fathers, brothers or husbands.

Negotiating of these particular relationships – bargaining with patriarchy, as Deniz Kandiyoti (1988) puts it – is a key part of the process through which new forms of women's economic activity become socially and locally legitimate, as well as a strategy to manage risk: the tailoring research from Kabul finds that women entering the labour market without patriarchal approval can then, precisely because of that action, be subject to stigmatisation, domestic violence and even ostracism (see Jayasekara and Najab, 2016 for similar findings from Sri Lanka). Naila Kabeer (2011) has observed similar trends in Bangladesh, suggesting that securing access often involves carefully balancing what she calls autonomy (stretching the limits of social norms) and affiliation (whilst simultaneously complying with the rules of the household). The way in which that particular balancing act plays out can result in either blocking or enabling the entrance to the labour market.

But this is not the only dimension of access. Restrictions on women's mobility also affect the nature of their tailoring participation, manifesting themselves in the form of: a narrower and poorer quality range of tailoring skills (generally) relative to men; an inability to 'shop around' for more cost-effective suppliers and more generous buyers, linked in turn to a basic unfamiliarity with the geographical layout of the city's marketplace; and years of unpaid labour by way of 'skills acquisition'. In a sense, this amounts to a gendered informal tax (see Lough *et al.*, 2013 for more on informal taxation), whereby female tailors' efforts are likely to accrue far less than their male counterparts.

Of course, it is not just Kabul's tailoring sector that is subject to social regulation. Research by Sylvia Chant (2013) suggests that these kinds of gendered limits on the use of space, skills and returns characterise informal work in cities across the global South more generally. So too are aspects of this visible in the formal and informal economies of a wider range of contexts, including those in more 'economically advanced' countries (see sub-section iv).

The SLRC evidence further suggests that social regulation can take multiple forms depending on the context. For example:

- In northern **Uganda**, children in households undergoing domestic collapse (separation, divorce, death, abandonment) often end up in the labour market at a young age, particularly those who are living in poverty (Mallett *et al.*, 2016a). The same study finds that women who become sex workers often do so because of a breakdown in social relationships and the subsequent loss of support networks. This finding is reflected by SLRC's research into transactional sex in **DRC**, which similarly finds that both poverty and family conditions frequently underpin women's entrance into the 'trade' (Mwapu *et al.*, 2016).

- In Trincomalee in **Sri Lanka**, the combination of gender and ethnicity determines the extent of women's participation in the fishing industry (Lokuge, in draft, a), while (fluid) moral and religious beliefs are also understood to play a regulatory role, rendering certain fishing practices and behaviours more legitimate than others (Lokuge and Munas, in draft).

- In conservative sections of Syrian society, 'traditional' ideas about male honour are bound up in women's conduct, which consequently restricts their ability to work outside the home. Upon displacement to neighbouring **Jordan**, however, Syrian women are sometimes forced by socio-economic pressures to transgress these norms, engaging in paid work both within and outside the home (Ritchie, 2017). But while this is arguably a sign of greater freedom and empowerment, 'notable levels of domestic and community intimidation and resistance' directed towards Syrian women continue to place limits on their economic agency (ibid.: 23).

- Internally displaced women in eastern **DRC** often rely on market trading for basic survival – if little beyond that – but their ability to participate in that activity first depends on establishing and cultivating networks through their neighbours (Nguya, in draft).

- Similarly, in **Afghanistan**, the capacity of Kandahari street vendors to set up appears to depend on 'help from friends and relatives [to] enable small loans [and provide] introductions to key people' (Minoia and Pain, 2015). Indeed, evidence from the wider Afghanistan programme highlights the vital role of personality-based networks across multiple scales and spheres, confined not simply to small-scale enterprise but also to much larger-scale trading, public goods provision and the workings of authority more generally (Jackson, 2016).

It thus emerges that social norms, values and ties are an organic part of what regulates people's access to the world of work, beyond the presence of formal governance mechanisms (this point also comes out strongly in relation to other themes of SLRC's research agenda – see Box 1). This is not in itself either a good or a bad thing; it is simply a reality. What we can say is that the *specific nature* of those norms, values and ties, to some degree, defines an individual's labour market outcomes. This is the case for both access to work as well as the content of participation. We can also say, drawing on Ritchie's (2017) research in **Jordan**, that the social regulation of work is not static but sensitive to changing circumstances – conflict and displacement, for example, are often capable of reconfiguring gender roles in relation to household economic activity.

The question, then, is not whether forms of social regulation exist, which would reveal little about how labour markets work, but rather to what extent the nature

Box 1: The role of social regulation across SLRC's research

Under the second of SLRC's overarching research questions, the Consortium has studied what state capacity to deliver services looks like, and how international actors might work more effectively to help develop it in fragile and conflict-affected situations. The synthesis of this research shows that while capacity is often thought about in terms of tangible assets and structures – service-delivery facilities, human resourcing, payroll systems – in practice, capacity is ultimately shaped by human behaviours, which are in turn heavily dependent on social norms, expectations and relationships (Denney *et al.*, 2017). For example, government health workers receive biomedical training with the aim of developing their technical competence to diagnose and treat patients. But where staff have poor relationships with the communities they are supposed to serve (e.g. by holding dismissive attitudes towards patients) or perform illicit activities (e.g. charging patients for medicine that should be free at the point of service), a government's capacity to provide health services is undermined. This is not a result of technical incompetence or absence of rules, but of the nature of relationships between users and providers.

of social regulation facilitates, suppresses or exploits different people's economic activity, and how this might be changing over time.

The second finding from the SLRC labour market studies is that **the phenomenon of 'bad work' appears widespread – and is perhaps as much a problem as unemployment.** From a policy perspective, this means that the challenges associated with being *in* work are often just as serious as those associated with being *out* of work.

As just discussed, social regulations affect what parts or segments of the labour market people can access, but they rarely result in exclusion in an absolute sense. Rather, they are part of what determines the type and quality of work that is available to different individuals, alongside other factors such as the structure of an economy and the kind of legislation in place.

Because their survival depends on it, poor people usually have no option but to work (Fields, 2015). This situation has been reinforced over recent decades: since the de-industrialisation and casualisation phases of the 1970s, and particularly in African countries, 'traditional' models of social security provision based on extended family networks and rural–urban migration have become both less widespread and less dependable (Young, 2015). In their place, new forms of what Ferguson (2015: 100-1) terms 'survivalist improvisation' have emerged where, rather than producing goods and services, people engage in a practice of 'distributive labour' which 'seeks to secure a transfer of resources from those who have them to those who don't'.

Thus, the poor in developing and fragile countries are often already incorporated into the labour market, concentrated heavily in its informal sector (Gough *et al.*, 2013; La Porta and Shleifer, 2014). Echoing other research (for example, Deranty and MacMillan, 2012), the SLRC studies point to the need to examine the terms on which this incorporation is based. In other words, what is the nature of an individual's participation, and how does that shape their labour market outcomes?

The findings of SLRC's labour studies suggest that in many cases it is the terms themselves that actually constrain someone's capacity to get by or prosper. In other words, they are part of what make (and keep) poor people poor. This is perhaps best illustrated by the research from Lira in northern **Uganda**, which looks at both young people's experiences of i) waged employment in the catering sector (Mallett and Atim, 2014), and ii) casual work, including 'own-account' employment, in the town's labour market more generally (Mallett *et al.*, 2016a). In the former, catering was selected as it is widely perceived to offer the possibility of decent work, which the young people interviewed across the two studies tended to define as involving decent and fair pay, acceptable working conditions, and dignity – a similar mix of 'instrumental' and 'intrinsic' features found in studies elsewhere (Monteith and Giesbert, 2016; see also Box 2).

Box 2: What do young people in Lira town, northern Uganda, consider to be a good job?

The following quotes from interviewees encapsulate what young men and women in Lira town, northern Uganda think constitutes 'decent work'.

> *One which is not exploitative; where the pay is commensurate with the amount of work put in.*
>
> *Apart from the salary – a job which you do in a very good working condition; where you are not exploited; where rights are expected.*
>
> *Where you are respected, not coerced, not sexually exploited, that gives you time to do other stuff.*
>
> *I consider this job to be a good job and like it. I get paid regularly, able to meet all my basic needs, not overworked and treated well, part of the management so have a say on how the business is managed on a daily basis.*

Extracted from Mallett and Atim (2014: 14).

Yet, the findings from the 2014 SLRC catering study suggest a sector characterised quite differently. More specifically, they showed that:

> *(1) workers' incomes are not typically earning enough for them to achieve their life goals; and (2) participation in the catering sector has a range of negative impacts on welfare and wellbeing. The catering labour market is, for many, characterised by chronic job insecurity, an absence of workers' rights, long hours, demeaning attitudes from others in the community, and – especially for young women in the mid- and lower tiers of the sector – exposure to different forms of sexual and physical vulnerability. (Mallett and Atim, 2014: 31)*

In the second of the two studies, researchers found that young people eking out an existence on the margins of the urban labour market had been economically mobile for many years, often participating in the world of work since childhood. This in turn raises two points.

The first is the role that adverse incorporation plays in characterising the participation of the poor in labour markets. Adverse incorporation refers to the ways in which people are 'locked into' positions of economic disadvantage, working and earning but at the same time excluded from better-off spaces of the market. Indeed, it is partly the very nature of what such people are doing which makes it difficult to move into something transformatively different. The study identified a number of mechanisms of adverse incorporation, which have also been observed in other contexts. They include:

- *Early school drop-out*. Leaving school early not only deprives young people of educational attainment – which, as SLRC's survey work in northern **Uganda** shows, is linked to positive livelihood outcomes at the household level (Mazurana *et al.*, 2014a) – but also appears to mark the beginning of a life on the labour market's bottom rungs. Naomi Hossain (2009) has looked at the links between drop-out and social exclusion in Bangladesh, similarly finding that parents' decision to take children out of school early to supplement household earnings 'incorporates children into labour markets on adverse and unfavourable terms'. This includes participation in 'hazardous, physically demanding, demeaning and low-paid forms of work'.

- *Breakdown of the family structure, particularly at a relatively early age*. This relates to early labour market entrance, sometimes into illicit activity. According to the study's survey of 324 young people in Lira town, 32% of respondents grew up with a single parent (while 23% grew up with neither), 43% reported being physically abused by a parent or guardian, and 39% reported growing up with an alcoholic parent or guardian. As mentioned above, this is not a problem specific to northern Uganda.

- *Pejorative and possibly discriminatory attitudes held by the rest of society towards certain population groups*. Such groups often include youth from poor backgrounds and people involved in what society considers 'deviant' work. Such attitudes are associated with negative perceptions of those people's employability, hence further shutting off opportunities to them and potentially inducing 'negative' or 'low-aspiration' behaviour (see also Moser and Holland, 1997; World Bank, 2015).[13] Similarly, Ritchie's (2017) SLRC work on Syrian refugee women in **Jordan** suggests that intimidation and resistance from the local community can constrain their ability to secure better, less piecemeal forms of economic activity.

- *An absence of personal connections to influential figures, such as business people, politicians or state officials*. Among SLRC's participants in Lira, this was a commonly cited reason for failing to obtain 'good jobs', which indicates wider patterns of distribution – in **Uganda** and elsewhere.
- *Continuous exposure to bad work*. According to some research, this can contribute to a normalisation of 'negative working conditions' and a psychological internationalisation of those as acceptable (Thozur *et al.*, 2007).

It is particularly revealing that, despite the high degrees of mobility observed in young people's work histories – moving from one job to the next on a fairly regular basis – mobility tended to be confined to a segment of the informal economy where insecurity, relatively bad pay and aspects of exploitation are all widespread. Thus, while participation in the labour market is the norm for many, opportunities for escape can be extremely limited.

A central reason for why that is the case forms the second point: the absence of alternatives to casual, informal labour. This problem concerns the huge numbers of poor people around the world who have borne the brunt of jobless growth. This includes those who have, for the most part, left agriculture, whether through coercion and expulsion or by choice, and ended up in towns and cities where decent work opportunities are few and far between. Options there are limited, largely consisting of fiercely competitive and low-return forms of self-employment in saturated markets on the one hand, and badly paid, unstable, unprotected employment on the other (Meagher, 2016: 493).

Where (half-)decent opportunities do exist, they are subject to a politics of distribution. SLRC research in **Sri Lanka**, for example, shows how the post-war expansion of the luxury tourist industry in Passikudah has almost completely failed to embed itself in the local economy, with the promised transformation of work opportunities simply not borne out by the evidence (Gunasekara *et al.*, 2016). As the authors explain, 'While some jobs have been generated, it is clear that (1) they are far fewer in number than what was and is still claimed by government officials and company owners, and (2) jobs for locals tend to be low-paid, at the bottom end of the wage pyramid and in many cases precarious' (ibid.: 26). Further, and as already mentioned, access to some of the better work opportunities in both **Afghanistan** and **Uganda**, at least in the case-study contexts, are dependent on the existence and maintenance of personal relations with key political-economic figures.

The central message from this is that, as Diane Elson (1999) has argued so compellingly in relation to their gendered dynamics, labour markets both embody and reinforce existing patterns of social, economic and political inequality. An individual's incorporation into the labour force cannot be automatically read as evidence of empowerment or as a transition into higher income and status: the stratification of opportunity and return is, in many ways, simply an extension of wider forms of categorical dis/advantage (Kabeer, 2012; Tilly, 1999). In other words, there is little that is coincidental about who gets the better jobs and experiences the better terms – and who does not.

The third and final finding in this section is that **work and violence are often closely related, but often in ways that differ from the dominant policy framing of these issues.**

Contained within the liberal peace thesis is a tendency to set work and violence up as conceptual opposites. The popular framing of war as 'development in reverse' (Collier, 2003) establishes a crude dichotomy that has nonetheless proven remarkably influential: that employment is good and peace-promoting, while unemployment is bad and conflict-enabling (Cramer, 2015: 6; Stewart, 2015). Underpinning this perspective is a rational-choice logic which constructs participation in the world of work and participation in the world of violence as 'either / or' options for living one's life, and the basis for selecting where one best achieves material gain (the 'opportunity cost' argument).

Certainly, there is evidence from specific times and places suggesting that there may be some basis for the idea that unemployment can contribute to large-scale violence. But

13 This partly relates to what Cramer (2015) calls 'referred violence', where victims of structural (or some other form of) violence then become perpetrators of violence themselves. Essentially, a situation where 'violence gets passed around a society' (ibid.: 3).

the orthodox, dualistic framing of work and violence does not take our understanding of these issues very far, with the evidence suggesting a far more multi-dimensional relationship than is often assumed.

In a recent think piece for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Christopher Cramer (2015) argues that labour markets are among the sites where order may be 'violence in disguise'. This is a vital insight, because it suggests that war-to-peace transitions may not be the linear processes that many people imagine. In the ideal scenario, peace agreements are signed, violence evaporates, people gain employment, and development flows. But, in reality, this transition can be characterised as much, if not more, by continuity as by transformation. For example, Cramer describes how actors involved in the perpetration or maintenance of violent conflict are often the same ones who end up doing quite well in the 'post-war' economy. Jackson's SLRC research in **Afghanistan** illustrates this. As she argues, 'Personality-based networks of access, often centred on former *mujahedeen* commanders, form the bedrock of social, political and economic life' (Jackson, 2016: vi), with many of those individuals taking up key positions in the provincial centres of political and economic power. Similarly, Oosterom (2016) has shown how the degree to which young Zimbabweans are able to make a living in the local informal economy is a function not only of their skills, or indeed of the demand for labour, but also of their capacity to navigate potentially violent actors. This is particularly the case in conflict-affected contexts.

The 'violence in disguise' that Cramer describes can take other forms too, but in order to see them, one needs to look at the content of people's participation in the labour market as well as the nature of their labour relations with others. In the research on catering in northern **Uganda**, we see that young people are exposed to a range of exploitation, including: sexual mistreatment / extortion from customers and managers (which may or may not have a transactional dimension); long working days, exerting physical stress and often necessitating late-night commutes (seen, if through the centre of town, as highly risky); and disadvantageous practices on the part of employers, such as late payment and / or cutting of wages when unforeseen business costs arise (thereby making it harder to meet basic needs and sustaining the conditions of poverty). These aspects of exploitation are, in turn, established and maintained by the state of labour relations between employers and employees and, more specifically, by how workers are perceived and treated. The evidence from Lira town suggests that young people, not only in the sector but in the urban community more generally, are often viewed as lazy, unreliable, fickle and greedy – all characteristics which lend themselves to a construction of the young worker as essentially disposable. As one restaurant manager told the authors, catering is a 'hire-and-fire business … You cannot be sure of yourself' (Mallett and Atim, 2014: 22).

The Lira studies also suggest that past experiences of violence can lead people towards economic choices and behaviours they might never otherwise have considered – for example, participating in sex work or joining a street gang – which can in turn make them more vulnerable (Mallett *et al.*, 2016a). Indeed, there is a wider but limited evidence base which illustrates some of the impacts of violence and conflict on labour markets. At the macro level, these impacts can include an expansion of the labour force and a reorientation of gender roles as the dislocations of war forcibly relax the accepted gender-based division of labour (for example: Ahikire *et al.*, 2012 on northern Uganda; Fernando and Moonesinghe, 2012 on **Sri Lanka**). More specific experimental research shows how exposure to violence can affect economic preferences, for example, risk-taking behaviour and investment decisions (Badiuzzaman and Murshed, 2015; Voors *et al.*, 2012). The third Lira study further shows how conflict and violence often accompany attempts at economic regulation: not only did the newly regenerated marketplace manage to create tension and division within the town's vending community, but new trading rules have been enforced through the application of municipal force, with units razed and bullets deployed (Mallett *et al.*, 2016b).

Finally, the research from Sri Lanka paints an in-depth picture of how certain labour markets actively produce and sustain structural violence for some of the poorest workers (Jayasekara and Najab, 2016). The case study of women in the *beedi* industry shows that corporate subcontracting practices enable both 'accumulation by exploitation' and a relinquishment of all labour obligations, from minimum wages to insurance to collective bargaining. The extremely low pay that women take home subsequently means that, simply to survive, they find themselves working until they die (a situation referred to as 'necrocapitalism'). The structural violence of their situation is produced in part by the double burden of shouldering both productive and reproductive economic activities, which, it is argued, can be considered 'itself violent in that it seriously undermines [the women's] physical and psychological wellbeing' (ibid.: 18).

What all this evidence amounts to is a need to look at the relationship between work and violence in a more nuanced way than the liberal peace thesis suggests. We see that, rather than existing as a dualism – both in terms of constituting i) alternative preferences for living one's life, and ii) pure correlates of peace and conflict – the worlds of work and violence are intimately connected. Violence in fact runs through the labour market, variously guiding people's economic choices, preserving order and hierarchy, and characterising economic life in the absence of 'decent work' opportunities. As such, a new perspective on this relationship means moving beyond the narrow preoccupation with war and large-scale violent conflict (Cramer, 2015), towards an appreciation of the fact that violence is, in many ways, a fundamental dynamic of labour relations in more 'banal' settings.

3.4 A final wider point

The central point underlying the discussions in these three sub-sections is that the governance of markets – and particularly non-state, informal governance – is a common phenomenon, not limited to 'conflict-affected' or 'developing' countries. Although the SLRC empirical evidence on these issues is drawn from a limited number of contexts, all of which can be considered fragile or conflict-affected, the broader evidence base strongly suggests that around the world, markets of all kinds are subject to multiple non-state forms of overlapping regulation.

Take labour markets. We have seen here how 'networks of access' are often vital to securing economic opportunities, and incorporation into these networks depends to a large degree on the individual's social position in relation to others. That social position is typically a function of identity, shaped by gender, ethnicity, caste, class, location and kin. The specific ways in which those characteristics – or specifically their intersectionality, as documented by SLRC's work in **Sri Lanka** (Lokuge, in draft, a) – affect the nature of one's network in/exclusion depends in turn on historically and culturally determined power relations (Cassen *et al.*, 2010). This explains differences in 'who can do what' from one place to the next. If we look at the acceptability of women's work, there is a clear regional contrast between many sub-Saharan African countries, where 'areas of relative autonomy for women' can quite easily be found, and societies in South Asia, which are characterised more profoundly by 'classic patriarchy' (Kandiyoti, 1988: 274). But so too is there variation within countries, highlighting the significance of a scalar perspective in understanding labour markets. In **Afghanistan**, for example, there is evidence that the gendered regulation of women's economic mobility varies in accordance with both geography – the presence of comparatively liberal, 'Iranian influenced' values in the Herat region has apparently increased the acceptability of women's work (Minoia and Pain, 2016a) – and ethnicity, with some evidence suggesting greater economic visibility of Hazara women in public spaces compared to women from other groups (Pain and Mallett, 2014).[14]

But while the specific nature of labour market access may be a function of historical and cultural context, social regulation is a reality across a range of places and economies. On the acceptability of women's paid work, for example, 2009/12 Gallup World Poll data from across 67 developing countries shows that 20% of men and 10% of women disagree that women 'should be allowed to hold any job for which they are qualified outside the home' (in Hunt and Samman, 2016: 22). In **Afghanistan** and **Uganda**, we have seen how patronage and connection can affect the distribution of economic opportunity. This phenomenon is not limited to just a few settings in the global South: recent Italian research shows that politically connected firms benefit from lower interest rates, particularly when they have politicians on their boards (Infante and Piazza, 2014).

What, then, about the influence of unwritten codes and customs? We need look no further than London's financial district in the City, with a new report by the UK's Social Mobility Commission suggesting an 'unwritten regulatory framework' governing what people should and should not wear can affect their chances of success (in Davies, 2016). For men, wearing brown shoes appears to be particularly detrimental to their upward economic mobility. At the same time, situations of economic precarity – not too unlike those seen by Mallett and Atim (2014) in northern **Uganda** – can be found at the other end of the UK labour market, where 'zero hour contracts' represent the latest form of job insecurity.[15] The manifestations of labour 'hyper-flexibilisation' and 'super-exploitation' (Valencia, 2015) can be observed, it seems, around the world.

14 Hazaras constitute an ethnic minority in Afghanistan, and have been exposed to a long history of violence and persecution in the country (Barakat and Wardell, 2001). It is possible that the less restrictive modes of gendered regulation are a consequence of the group's marginalised status, which makes simply getting by on a daily basis even more challenging. Lokuge's (in draft, a) research on fishing labour markets in eastern Sri Lanka finds a similar scenario in relation to poor Muslim women, whose public participation in the industry appears more accepted/able than the participation of 'higher class' Sinhalese women.

15 According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), there were nearly one million people in the UK on 'zero hour contracts' in 2016.

4 Conclusion and policy recommendations

There is a substantial policy focus on economic development in places affected by fragility and conflict, particularly in the aftermath of crisis. This is not new, but rather becoming increasingly pronounced.

To take but a few notable examples, DFID's first economic development strategy, released in 2017, underlines both the importance of supporting war-affected economies and its intention of doing so. Confirming that a 'significant proportion' of its 'fragile state' budget will be focused on economic development in the coming years, the strategy positions such investments as instrumental to promoting peace and stability around the world, as well as part of the solution to tackling 'mass, unmanaged migration and protracted crises' (DFID, 2017: 23-4).[16] In its latest *States of Fragility* report, the OECD updates its 'violence lens', used to analyse the factors driving armed violence and identify options to prevent it, with an added focus on the role of socio-economic marginalisation and horizontal inequality in driving conflict. It emphasises the need for policy-makers to address these issues by working on behavioural change and social norms, particularly in relation to 'young people, with the most to lose and gain' (OECD, 2016: 138). Indeed, this focus on youth permeates the wider policy literature on peacebuilding, with young people simultaneously framed as both the 'makers' (propelling countries out of fragility through entrepreneurial spirit and youthful energy) and 'breakers' (descending into violence and insurgency should their economic expectations not be met) of peace deals. The economic dimensions of peacebuilding are further emphasised by the inclusion of employment generation and livelihood promotion as the fourth 'Peacebuilding and State-building Goal' of the *New Deal*, a move which has attracted the commitment and support of the International Labour Organization (ILO) (ILO, 2014).

The resuscitation of markets, which are often thought to collapse under the weight of war and instability, is considered central to the objective of stimulating economic growth and development. As such, market regeneration and the associated practice of private-sector development attract huge attention and investment from international donors. These resources are channelled into a range of policies and programmes, the overarching objective of which is to get market-oriented economic development going again in the hope of locking in broader processes of peacebuilding, recovery and stabilisation.

16 DFID's budget for fragile states is pegged at a minimum of 50% of its overall budget for each year until 2020.

We see this line of thinking in all three of the market 'types' covered in this paper. In the (post-)war economy of Afghanistan, new opium-substitution crops such as saffron are cast as the 'silver bullet', not only to 'cleanse' rural commodity markets of violence, but also to provide livelihoods for all. Facilitating the incorporation of young people (and particularly young men) into the labour market is seen as an essential first step in post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery, their otherwise disconnectedness viewed as a major security threat. And no recovery would be complete without investments in the physical apparatus of market infrastructure, bringing the market into depleted, war-ravaged environments through new roads and buildings.

However, the evidence generated by SLRC over the past five years, and synthesised here, raises questions about the viability of many of the standard 'vehicles for recovery'. There are doubts about how well attuned interventions such as microfinance, vocational training and value-chain development are to the socio-economic environments in which they are implemented, at least in the studies and contexts under review. It is this disconnect between programme logic and contextual reality – what Pritchett (2015) might term an incoherence in design[17] – which causes many such interventions to come unstuck. This is partly related to the fact that there are never any economic blank slates: contrary to the dominant narrative, markets do not evaporate as conflict unfolds, but continue to exist in distorted (yet still-structured, still-regulated) forms throughout cycles of violence. Indeed, they are often sites of violence in their own right.

4.1 Summary of key synthesis findings

Several lessons emerge from SLRC's research into commodity markets (Section 3.1), market infrastructure (Section 3.2) and labour markets (Section 3.3). Taken together, these form the basis for a set of overarching synthesis findings. Three stand out.

First, it is clear that economic transitions after conflict are often uneven, rarely inclusive and occasionally violent. Most of SLRC's research in this area has focused on post-conflict and recovery situations. Such contexts are often thought to be the recipients of a 'peace dividend' in reference to the progress and returns that supposedly accompany improved stability. But the cases reviewed here show little evidence of such a scenario. Although countries like Sri Lanka and Uganda have certainly performed well after wars ended against the standard macro-level metrics (GDP being the foremost indicator), there are some major caveats to this growth. Looking at the livelihoods of, and jobs available to, many of the people living in these areas, there appears to be very little in the way of a dividend. Instead, what emerges is a pattern of jobless growth, characterised by a concentration of investment and opportunity in the hands of a few, while an 'outcast' or 'invisible' majority continue to eke out some basic level of survival in poorly paid, back-breaking and frequently precarious forms of work (Fields, 2015; Sommers, 2015). Thus, although large-scale violent conflict is certainly capable of suppressing and distorting economic activity in various ways (Blattman and Miguel, 2010; Mallett and Slater, 2012), the idea that 'peace = development' appears far less robust – or at least significantly more complicated – than often assumed. What seems clear is that, without active intervention, economic circumstances do not automatically improve for everyone following a peace agreement. Moreover, the overriding preoccupation with economic growth as both a performance metric and recovery objective means that less attention is paid to the actual politics behind growth and its distribution (Williams *et al.*, 2011), or to the substance of people's livelihoods. As Cramer (2015: 9) points out, neither governments nor development agencies have tended to prioritise the creation of 'dignified types and conditions of employment after the formal end of wars'. As such, the same pattern of jobless growth unfolds from one place to the next (Li, 2013), resulting in what Diana Cammack (2016) refers to as situations of 'peace and underdevelopment'.[18] But although 'peace' might characterise the overall situation, SLRC's research suggests that workplace-based forms of structural violence are often pervasive – another indication of complex transitions out of war.

Second, markets are always regulated – but not necessarily by formal rules. Initiatives such as the World Bank's *Doing Business* index and methodologies like 'growth diagnostics' assess the constraints binding private-sector development. While influential, and certainly valuable, these tend to focus on formal legislation that might be missing (such as the enforcement of property rights) and the presence of bureaucratic red tape that produces inefficiency and raises transaction costs (such as excessive taxation and

17 Pain (2016) draws extensively on Pritchett's framework, deploying this concept of in/coherence, in his examination of the NSP's effects in Afghanistan.

18 Cammack applies this phrase specifically to Malawi, which although not 'conflict-affected' in the conventional sense, nonetheless displays aspects of fragility.

overly long registration times). What is largely missing from these approaches is recognition of the *informal* modes of regulation, which are apparent across a wide range of contexts – not just those affected by conflict (Guérin *et al.*, 2015). The SLRC research provides evidence of markets' social regulation, both in terms of people's access to opportunities and the terms of their participation once 'inside' (which for the most part is where they are). Social regulation is less visible, and thus harder to decipher. It operates along vectors of identity, including gender, caste, ethnicity and age. In the cases reviewed here, and in parts of the wider literature, it sharply affects access to markets and the returns different groups of people can hope to receive from them. The evidence from SLRC's Afghanistan research is perhaps the clearest example of this, particularly in relation to the effects of gender on access, participation and returns. But the wider role of social norms, relationships and connections in shaping such outcomes is visible too in economic settings of a quite different nature, as research into the workings of Wall Street and the City of London affirms (Davies, 2016; Ho, 2009). Failing to acknowledge and address this reality is to misunderstand, intentionally or otherwise, the way 'real' markets work, leading to inappropriately formulated policies (see Fleetwood, 2011 on the need for a more sociological perspective on such matters).

Third, markets are inextricably linked to power and politics. This third key finding follows on closely from the previous two. In 1993, Gordon White argued for the need to pay much closer attention to the politics of markets, cautioning against the 'policy distorting' tendency of neoclassical economics to view the market as a 'flexible, atomistic realm of impersonal exchange and dispersed competition, characterized by voluntary transactions on an equal basis between autonomous, usually private, entities with material motivations' (White, 1993: 1). Although economic policy is somewhat less 'power blind' than it used to be, White's general argument still applies today. Markets are not neutral spaces of exchange, but – as the material reviewed here confirms and supports – permeated extensively by power relations. What kind of power are we talking about, given that multiple forms exist at any one time? To simplify things, the 'big P' politics determines where and how resources are allocated – the sectors and industries that receive (or miss out on) political attention and therefore funding, often state-subsidised (such as extractives in places like Sierra Leone). This relates to existing work showing how the presence of basic conditions for growth depends on the nature of the political settlement, and specifically to how different holders of power relate to each other (Williams *et al.*, 2011). Then there is the 'smaller p' politics, which refers to the role of social norms, expectations, relationships and networks in shaping whether and how people are able to engage with markets. As SLRC's research illustrates, 'small p' politics is somewhat indifferent to whether major investments are successfully secured (see Gunasekara *et al.*, 2016 on the tourism industry in Sri Lanka), or whether new pieces of market infrastructure are built (see Mallett *et al.*, 2016b on one such case from northern Uganda), steering economic behaviour and distributing opportunities in particular ways, regardless of how economies are structured 'from above'.

4.2 Policy recommendations

What should be done with these lessons? In the interests of supporting more attuned policy-making in fragile and conflict-affected situations, particularly in relation to post-conflict economic recovery, we conclude with five policy recommendations based on both the SLRC evidence and wider literature. These are not intended as a blueprint for how to design the 'perfect' market intervention, should such a thing exist, but rather as key principles for policy-makers to keep in mind as they seek to support processes of economic development in post-war settings.

1. Pay closer attention to the substance and trajectories of economic transitions out of war

While evidence shows that countries emerging from conflict often enjoy strong rates of aggregate economic growth, there are no guarantees that its benefits are spread throughout society. In fact, this is typically not the case. Post-conflict growth tends to be unevenly distributed and remarkably jobless, meaning that the economic needs and interests of large sections of society continue to go unaddressed – sometimes years after the signing of formal peace agreements, as the case of northern Uganda amply demonstrates (UNDP, 2015). And while there does not appear to be any straightforward relationship between the health of an economy and participation in violence (Cramer, 2010; Dowd, 2017; see also *Recommendation 2*), from a peacebuilding perspective it would be unwise to ignore any dynamics which create, sustain or reinforce horizontal inequalities and the socio-economic marginalisation of certain groups after war's end (Alesina *et al.*, 2016; OECD, 2016).

As a starting point, then: **do not assume that peace dividends automatically trickle down evenly throughout**

society. Distribution occurs in line with the logics of how markets are structured, which is, in turn, primarily a question of power and politics – as *Recommendation 4* suggests, these things must be understood in context. This is a critical first step towards relevant policy design.

Linked closely is **a need to better understand how transitions, and processes of recovery more broadly, work differently for different people.** Evidence from SLRC's cross-country, longitudinal panel survey suggests that some sections of society experience faster rates of post-war accumulation than others (Sturge *et al.*, 2017), which, in turn, underlines a broader point about the way historically rooted, durable inequalities pattern processes of post-conflict development (Langer *et al.*, 2012). So too can the micro-economic consequences of violent conflict last long into the future, as 'persistent losses in human capital' constrain economic agency years after the event (Mueller *et al.*, 2017: 33). Where populations have been differently affected by violence, it is likely that such human capital losses will be concentrated within particular groups of society, leading to a slower rate of recovery.[19]

Part of what this also entails is **asking whether we are using the most appropriate indicators for measuring the strength, quality and evenness of post-war economic transitions.** By and large, national-level GDP remains the dominant indicator of economic performance (Henderson *et al.*, 2012). But not only does this tell us relatively little about how economic processes are playing out at more granular levels, it also has very little to say about the quality of growth – a dimension at least as important as its quantity (Langer *et al.*, 2012: 8). Alternative metrics should therefore centre more on the actual lives and livelihoods of affected populations. Examples might include: people's own subjective assessments of economic progress, current life satisfaction, and likely future direction and status (Angus Deaton's [2008] work using Gallup World Poll data is illustrative); estimates of the number of people in 'decent work', definitions of which are becoming increasingly sophisticated and concrete (for example, Deranty and MacMillan, 2012); and *Enterprise Survey*-esque questionnaires designed to ask individuals and households about the changing barriers to, and returns from, economic activity as transitions unfold (including both formal *and* informal constraints).

2. Rethink the links between work and violence

In conflict-affected situations, the policy literature tends to frame the relationship between economic opportunity and participation in violence as one-dimensional and uni-directional. Influenced by the 'opportunity cost' and 'occupational choice' arguments of some economists, it is widely assumed that an absence of work is partly what motivates an individual's decision to rebel: put simply, the economic advantages of joining an insurgency and engaging in violence outweigh those of not doing so (Cramer, 2010; Stewart, 2015). In the aftermath of war, creating economic alternatives to violence – particularly among young people, and particularly among young men (Sommers, 2006) – is thus a common priority, framed as a way of preventing relapses into conflict.

Critiques of this view suggest that while it may contain some elements of truth, for practical purposes it is too reductive and sweeping to be of any real use. For one thing, there is simply not enough empirical evidence to confirm such a simple line of reasoning. For another, the general failure to recognise nuance – in terms of the wide-ranging variation evident within homogenous categories such as 'youth', the multiple forms of violence that exist in reality, and the multidimensional nature of 'work' (Dowd, 2017) – is not a helpful starting point for appropriate policy design.

Findings from the SLRC market studies support the need to **drop the simplistic framing of 'unemployment → violence', and instead recognise the many specific ways in which violence and the working world are connected.** Just as violence is not exclusively the domain of wars and insurgencies, so too should ideas about work stretch beyond the question of whether someone is unemployed. This becomes clear when we look closely, as ***Recommendation 1*** proposes, at the substance of war-to-peace transitions, and specifically what kinds of work people are engaged in. SLRC's research in Uganda is particularly illustrative, revealing a seemingly widespread situation of 'bad jobs' in the absence of more formal waged opportunities. Even in 'peacetime', the research suggests that violence continues to run through the urban labour market, albeit in somewhat less visible forms than during periods of conflict. According to the study:

19 As one example, SLRC's survey work in Uganda suggests that households suffering 'serious crimes' during the war continue to do worse – in terms of asset ownership, food security, access to basic services – a decade after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2006 (Mazurana et al., 2014b).

> ***[Violence] is structurally present in the lowest segments of the labour market, where precarious jobs are the norm. It takes on a gender-based dimension in certain workplaces, with women in the catering sector, for example, exposed to a spectrum of sexual harassment and abuse. And its presence within the intimate spaces of family, partnership and marriage can lead people towards economic choices and behaviours they might never have otherwise considered.*** (Mallett *et al.*, 2016a: 24)

Further SLRC research from the labour markets of Afghanistan (tailoring) and Sri Lanka (*beedi* rolling) provide additional evidence that a number of post-conflict contexts are best characterised by situations of negative peace, which offer freedom from direct war-related violence but sustain the dynamics of underdevelopment and permit other forms of violence (Galtung, 1969). Seen alongside the fact that 800 million people worldwide are classified as 'working poor', these findings suggest that **a stronger focus on the way people are incorporated into markets – and analysis of the negative consequences that often produces – is much needed.** Indeed, while the evidence base in this area remains patchy, studies from a number of settings, including 'stable ones', suggests that it is sometimes the experience of bad work itself that motivates people to participate in violence (Cramer, 2010; Grogger, 1998; Machin and Meghir, 2004 in Izzi, 2013).

3. Stop treating everyone as entrepreneurs-in-waiting. Start engaging with the 'demand side' of markets

A great deal of post-conflict economic policy is based on the principle of promoting people's insertion into markets. This approach is conceptually informed by what some refer to as a 'residual' view of poverty, which sees economic destitution as the result of exclusion from markets and related processes of accumulation (Hickey and du Toit, 2007). Interventions attempt to address this problem by enhancing what individuals can bring to the market, thereby facilitating their incorporation. This is known as 'supply side' programming. It involves measures like vocational training, skills development, microcredit and enterprise support, typically with a view to building people's entrepreneurial potential. In conflict-affected contexts, it is often aimed at particular 'at risk' categories of the population, such as youth and ex-combatants.

Within the broad policy area of economic recovery and development, supply-side programming attracts the lion's share of attention (Gough *et al.*, 2013). As one illustrative example, between 2002 and 2012, the World Bank spent around USD 9 billion on nearly 100 skills training programmes alone (Blattman and Ralston, 2015). But there is growing recognition, evident in the wider literature and supported by SLRC's evidence, that these are often not the most appropriate vehicles for post-conflict recovery. The fact that effectiveness reviews of self-employment / entrepreneurship programming continue to make somewhat pessimistic assessments of their 'transformative potential' is perhaps a case in point (Blattman and Ralston, 2015; Burchell *et al.*, 2015).[20]

Recent analysis of youth programming by Flynn *et al.* (2017: 42) concludes that policies need to stop 'individualising' young people – i.e. treating them as rational economic agents who are capable of overcoming broader structural constraints – and start rediscovering the 'issue of demand for labour'. Their argument, which is backed up SLRC's work, is that simply developing individuals' economic capacities to engage in the market is not enough to tackle the problems of poverty and precarity. If anything, to support people's entrance into the market is, in many cases, to facilitate their exposure to a range of new risks.

What is needed are more rigorous efforts to change the way the market itself works, which is a necessary step towards improving the quality of people's participation and the extent of their returns. Such an approach would be more in line with a 'relational' view of poverty, which sees negative outcomes rooted in the uneven and exploitative economic relationships people often get locked into – for example, between employer and employee or landowner and farmer (Hickey and du Toit, 2007). Depending on the specific context, practical approaches in this vein might seek to introduce stronger labour legislation or promote the enforcement of existing rights within the workplace; in some cases, they might attempt to create more spaces of accountability and options for legal redress. These are just the tip of the iceberg, but illustrate what might be considered (see also *Recommendation 5*).

Engaging markets' demand side also means **looking more closely at the economic opportunities available to people, including the way they are distributed across society.** Self-employment initiatives set out to support

20 Evidence on the effectiveness of self-employment programming tends to be drawn from 'stable' contexts, owing to the real lack of rigorous evaluation on these issues in conflict-affected settings (Holmes et al., 2013).

livelihoods and boost growth by helping people generate their own opportunities – it is individuals themselves who are assigned the role of job creators (Gough *et al.*, 2013). The question of whether the economy has anything of much value to offer individuals tends to be asked far less, reflecting what Alice Amsden (2010) has called the 'jobs dementia' of development policy. The resulting contradiction is that aid agencies continue to develop the employability of poor people, equipping them for the world of work, even when there are no decent jobs available and an abundance of opportunities that pay only at the level of bare subsistence (Amsden, 2012).

It is not clear that a focus on education is the solution to this, appearing as it does to slightly miss the point. Indeed, it is the very mismatch between higher educational attainment and jobless economies that is often capable of producing conflict, as Li (2013) points out in relation to the protests at Tahrir Square and Mcloughlin's (2017) latest research shows in post-colonial Sri Lanka. What much of this ultimately highlights is **the need to pursue pathways towards structural economic transformation**, even though, as Flynn *et al.* (2017) point out, these are hardly obvious (to paraphrase, 'if they were known, more countries would be travelling them' [ibid.: 42]).

In the absence of structural change, or at least during the wait for it, **one practical option that would be likely to produce both rapid and large economic effects would be to facilitate labour migration.** While the industry of international labour migration often leaves migrants themselves to shoulder the costs and risks involved – as SLRC's research into migration from Nepal and Pakistan illustrates (Hagen-Zanker *et al.*, 2014) – the returns to participating in stronger overseas labour markets are frequently enormous, far outweighing those that can be achieved through skills development and vocational training at home. Michael Clemens has perhaps done more work than anyone on migration's role as a key instrument of economic development for the poor. In some of his most recent research, Clemens looks specifically at migration's role as an economic recovery mechanism. Examining a US-led initiative to provide a limited number of Haitians with temporary work visas following the devastation of 2010's earthquake, Clemens and Postel (2017) report remarkable individual-level impacts, summed up by *The Economist* (2017):

> ***The benefits [of the intervention] were mind-boggling: the temporary migrants earned a monthly income 1,400 percent higher than those back in Haiti. Most of their earnings flowed back home in the form of remittances … [The study's] findings match those for a similar scheme that offered temporary agricultural work in New Zealand to people from Tonga and Vanuatu. That policy was assessed by economists at the World Bank as 'among the most effective development policies evaluated to date'.***

Of course, the economic benefits of such initiatives – which sit alongside other migration-related options including resettlement-quota expansion and circular migration schemes – are not limited to the participating individuals. As mentioned above, large shares of earnings are typically remitted, supporting not only immediate household members, but also the local economies of areas struggling to recover after conflict. Furthermore, the potential recovery effects of labour migration and remittance-sending are not necessarily limited to economic revitalisation: recent research from Mali shows that, when collectively organised, remittances from Malians living in France can contribute substantially towards the provision of schools, health centres and water facilities in 'villages of origin' (Chauvet *et al.*, 2015). The impacts on processes of recovery are thus potentially multidimensional.

Some bilateral donors might find it politically difficult to commit to a migration-centred approach to economic recovery, particularly as overseas aid appears to be increasingly applied as a tool to *prevent* migration from poor, conflict-affected countries and regions. At a time when aid spending is widely coming under increasing domestic pressure and scrutiny, this may therefore be challenging to push through. But from the perspective of people attempting to rebuild their lives after conflict, it would promise immense opportunities for recovery.[21]

4. Build more detailed, contextual understandings of how markets are regulated

If thinking and working more on the demand-side dimensions of markets is any kind of possibility, one starting point must be to develop fine-grained understandings of how they function in the first place, eventually leading to a diagnosis of what realistic market reform might look like.

21 It might also, as Clemens and Postel (2017) report, generate substantial economic gains for populations in 'host' or 'receiving' countries.

Evidence shows that markets of various kinds are structured in complex ways, not just in fragile and conflict-affected situations but across a range of contexts. The textbook logics of neutral, merit-based exchange rarely hold true, at least not in an absolute sense. This is because markets are permeated by power and politics; they do not sit alongside institutions, but are rather deeply infused with them. The primary effect is a regulation of the market that can be hard to decipher accurately when applying an orthodox neoclassical lens – but which nevertheless demands understanding as a vital step towards appropriate programming.

The system of regulation that results is typically multi-layered. This means **investing in better knowledge of the different types of power and politics that structure markets.** Power analysis needs to focus on a number of levels, and open to the possibility that constraints on access, participation and returns may have multiple origins – some of which will be harder than others to do something about, entailing a need to be realistic and selective in programming. Although there are various ways in which one might approach a scale-based power analysis of the kind needed, the **minimum dimensions to look at include**:

- *Formal state rules and regulations*. As evidenced by the *Doing Business* reports, governments can have a strong role in shaping the economic enabling environment in terms of the taxes enforced, the bureaucratic procedures put in place, and the levels of confidence they instil in private-sector development. Even in places where governments may lack capacity in certain areas, their actions still affect the workings of markets and behaviours of economic agents.
- *The nature of the political settlement*. This is perhaps the best way of encouraging a focus on the informal ways in which ‘big politics’ shape markets. Referring primarily to the balance and arrangement of political power among different actors, political settlement analysis can help observers understand why and how economic resources and opportunities are distributed across different groups within society. While the political settlement is often discussed as a phenomenon or process ‘located’ at the centre of state power – i.e. to the agreements between national-level elites – the concept has analytical weight beyond this. Work on ‘secondary political settlements’ shows how arrangements among powerful local elites, often including traditional elites tied strongly to local communities through informal institutions, similarly structure governance below the national level, with implications for the workings of markets within villages, towns, districts and provinces (Parks and Cole, 2010).
- *Informal taxation*. A literature review carried out by SLRC revealed the various forms of informal tax in fragile and conflict-affected situations (Lough *et al.*, 2013). This can include payments demanded by state officials outside the regulatory apparatus (e.g. unlicensed fees at point of service, extortion at roadblocks), taxes levied by non-state actors such as insurgent groups (e.g. LTTE in Sri Lanka or Hizbollah in Lebanon), and cash or in-kind payments enforced through local norms and institutions (e.g. labour contributions towards public / club goods provision). When administered forcefully and excessively, such taxes can deter certain kinds of economic activity.
- *Institutions, comprising embedded patterns of social norms and expectations, at the micro level*. Market outcomes – including degrees of access, terms of participation, and extent of returns – are often strongly mediated by identity. This is evident at both the community level, where social relationships, expectations and perceptions can essentially shut off certain opportunities and spaces to certain people depending on the nature of norms, as well as the household level, where re/productive divisions of labour can often prove quite durable (typically most pronounced in relation to gender, although intersectional considerations are of course paramount).

Underpinning an analysis of this kind is the need to **handle institutions with the care and importance they deserve.** Institutions capture some of the more ‘hidden’ and ‘invisible’ forms of power John Gaventa (2006) has talked about in his influential work on participation, which are time and again shown to structure human agency. But while we know they are important, recent sociological work on labour markets highlights the failure of orthodox economic models to take institutions seriously, glossing over socio-economic realities due to their preoccupation with generality and universality (Fleetwood, 2011). Rather than fully understanding the deep effects of institutions on markets, the neoclassical approach tends to treat them simply as constraints on a rational actor’s maximising action – a bolt-on to the more standard analysis of supply / demand and pricing mechanisms. This is inadequate for appropriate policy-making: institutions and their effects demand full elaboration, reflecting Fleetwood’s (ibid.)

observation that labour economics does not just have to be a branch of maths and statistics.

5. Think and work politically to secure more people-centred market outcomes

Once policy-makers are armed with a rigorous power-based analysis of how 'real markets' are structured and regulated, the next question is what to do with that information. More specifically, what alternative practical options might be realistically pursued other than the standard toolkit of training, credit and *Doing Business*-esque reforms? It is often hard for donors and aid agencies to change their approaches to programming, especially when interventions have become so routine and familiar. In SLRC's synthesis report on state capacity, the authors explore how the political economy of the aid industry can create barriers to changing organisational ways of working (Denney *et al.*, 2017). As with attempts to develop state capacity to deliver services, the same is almost certainly true in economic recovery programming. Yet this does nothing to dampen the fact that **alternative approaches need testing**. The issues at stake are too big for this not to happen.

Of course, this does not mean having to reinvent the wheel. Several things already being done could realistically be tweaked, strengthened or applied differently. Following the lead of *Recommendation 4* – to take the power and politics of markets more seriously – there are at least two ways in which future programming could be usefully adapted.

The first is to **build on, sharpen and extend the M4P approach.** M4P is fundamentally about understanding how markets might work more effectively for poor people by adjusting the rules and regulations that increase risk, limit returns and constrain access and choice (Johnson, 2013). Its focus is on the market system as a whole, entailing analysis not just of the various actors comprising the market (the 'units', to borrow the language of SLRC's synthesis report on state capacity), but also the forces that structure economic relationships. This includes both things like contracts and legislation as well as informal institutions (DFID / SDC, 2008). The approach is therefore relatively well set up for what is needed, and can be considered – at the very least – a good starting point for programming. In order for its analytical power to be fully realised, analysts need to ensure that power and politics are fully elaborated in their application of the approach. This means looking at multiple scales and potential origins of market governance, as described above. Unfortunately, approaches emerging from New Institutional Economics (M4P being one of these) sometimes tend to downplay or 'box in' institutions' true role in regulating economic behaviour (Fleetwood, 2011). This needs to be avoided.

It is also worth noting that M4P has so far been mainly applied to programming concerned with commodity markets and value chains. While there are cases of wider treatment, they appear far less prominent than those concerned with agriculture and production. One practical way forward would therefore be to extend the application of M4P to labour market programming. The ILO has recently begun to do this through its *ILO Lab* project, using a market-systems approach to improve decent work outcomes. Echoing the messages of this synthesis report, the *ILO Lab* argues that the 'underlying reasons for indecent work cannot be solved by trainings of new government regulation alone', and that what is needed are attempts to 'identify, address and remove system-level constraints [including enterprise practices, market demand, business-to-business relationships, social norms and existing rules] inhibiting the growth of more inclusive markets' (ILO, 2016: 1). Similarly, Wild *et al.* (2017) point to examples of real innovation in DFID's application of market-systems approaches. Although they find a number of these are stronger in addressing technical market failures than in dealing with underlying political blockages, the cited case of DFID's private-sector development programme in DRC appears especially noteworthy, particularly in its embrace of systems and complexity thinking (ibid.: 16). It would make sense to continue to support such innovations, while also keeping an open mind about the need for possible experimentation with and adaptation of the standard M4P approach.

A second step towards more appropriate policy could be achieved through an **extended application of the 'thinking and working politically' approach to development programming**. As with the M4P recommendation, this is about working with existing tools – and adapting them as necessary – rather than coming up with something from scratch. The 'thinking and working politically' (TWP in shorthand) approach is concerned, alongside a number of similar agendas, with encouraging more practical engagement with the politics of development.[22] It aims to

22 These include the 'doing development differently' manifesto (see Wild et al., 2016), the 'problem-driven iterative adaptation' approach, which grew out of work at Harvard University (see Andrews, 2013), and 'adaptive development' (see Wild et al., 2015).

make practical sense of things we have known about 'how change happens' for several years, incorporating both a *politically informed* approach to programme design – that is, building in recognition of the ways power and politics structure development processes and outcomes – as well as a *politically smart* approach to implementation. This means doing away with blueprint-type plans, being willing to adapt methods and goals should changes in circumstance demand it, and maintaining an awareness of what it is possible to achieve given the political realities that prevent certain decisions from being made and certain actions pursued (Booth, 2015).

The TWP approach has already been broadly applied in a number of contexts and sectors, from governance and accountability programming in Nigeria (Booth and Chambers, 2014) to tax and health reform in the Philippines (Sidel, 2014). More recently, we have also started to see it being put into action within the domain of economic development. Of particular note is the case-study series presented and edited by David Booth (2016), which examines the experiences of 'politically smart' engagement by DFID with extractives in Nigeria and hydropower in Nepal. Some of the key messages emerging from this nascent body of work relate to the importance of identifying tangible, specific outcomes rather than chasing more loosely defined reforms of a grander scale; the key role that aid agencies can play as backers, brokers and facilitators of dialogue, which sometimes means 'arm's length' or 'behind the scenes' engagement; and the need to stay on top of fast-moving political changes, which can create opportunities for reform as rapidly as they might shut them down (ibid.; Wild *et al.*, 2017).

Some of the existing TWP cases demonstrate how the approach can be used to help developing country governments secure big investments in key areas of the economy (for example, Laric and Waddell, 2016 in Booth, 2016). The findings from SLRC's market research suggest there is also a need to explore how TWP might be applied in relation to how such investments play out, after they have been secured. In northern Uganda, for example, the research showed how a market-regeneration project to the tune of USD 8 million helped create new opportunities for comparatively rich, well-connected traders to further consolidate their wealth and power at the expense of poorer vendors (Mallett *et al.*, 2016b). The point being, attracting investments and securing projects is one thing, ensuring that their positive effects reach the lives and livelihoods of 'end users' is quite another.

Investments, projects and reforms might help increase the quantity of work available to society, but as both SLRC and wider research demonstrates, the challenge here is not just one of numbers. Vulnerable and precarious employment is often the norm, and it is far from clear whether increases in the demand for labour are capable of disrupting such a status quo. Instead, what is arguably needed more than anything else are TWP-type approaches that attempt to bring tangible improvements to the *quality* of work available within the labour market. As just a few examples:

- *Labour rights and legislation*. The evidence on TWP proves it is possible for external actors to act in ways that help build in-country coalitions for change, sustain momentum around particular reform issues, and broker dialogue between usually disconnected stakeholders. From a decent work perspective, using such an approach to support progress on minimum wages, conditions in the workplace, accountability channels and legal redress would all make sense.

- *Bargaining power of workers*. Trade unions and worker collectives are a politically contentious issue in many countries, but they offer one realistic way of guaranteeing and defending workers' rights. Initiatives such as Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) attempt to raise the voice and secure the rights of informal workers by providing relevant support to local organisations, but are often based in 'stable' contexts.[23] TWP approaches could be used to build similar versions of this model in places recovering from conflict.

- *Guaranteed work schemes*. Public employment programmes such as the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in India guarantee a minimum number of work days per year to rural households. Such initiatives can act as vital social safety nets when economic times get tough, but also have the potential to drive up wages if they are large enough in scale (Muralidharan *et al.*, 2016). TWP approaches potentially have a role to play here, not only in supporting the introduction of works programmes in recovery settings, but also in guaranteeing the quality of labour being offered.

23 See www.wiego.org for more information.

The findings and recommendations presented here underscore a single overarching point about the need to take the links between politics and economics more seriously. Or more specifically perhaps, about how power and politics shape all aspects of economic life, in multiple ways and at multiple levels. This has typically not been the case, as Langer *et al.* point out in their recent volume on horizontal inequality and post-conflict development:

> ***Conflict resolution is still considered to be a largely political issue, separate from the economic content of reconstruction and recovery, which is left to technocratic experts preoccupied largely with the standard tools and goals of stabilization and growth*** (Langer *et al.*, 2012: 8).

As both SLRC's research and evidence from the wider literature show, the role and resuscitation of markets is too important to be left exclusively to technocrats. It demands practical policy approaches that are grounded, relevant and fit for purpose – and the only way these will come about is if we are willing to grapple with the politics and sociology of how 'real' markets work.

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