



World Bank Group Fragility, Conflict, and Violence Strategy

NGO COMMUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS

On June 26, 2019, InterAction hosted the World Bank Group and 30 NGOs for a conversation on the World Bank's Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (FCV) Strategy. The consultation process provided an opportunity for NGOs and partners to provide feedback on the Concept Note that will inform their strategy.

The following is a summary of aspects of the strategy that are broadly supported by the NGOs present at the consultation, key recommendations, and a set of outstanding questions from that consultation and written feedback that members shared with InterAction.

This brief is not exhaustive and should be read as additive to, not supplanting, feedback that international or local NGOs provided to the World Bank directly.

ELEMENTS SUPPORTED BY NGOS

The U.S.-based NGO community applauds the following aspects reflected in the FCV Concept Note:

- The decision to create an FCV strategy, given the worrying trend that extreme poverty is increasingly concentrated in fragile contexts
- Emphasis on conflict prevention as cost-effective, life-saving, and stabilizing
- The focus on supporting host governments to respond to the needs of people experiencing protracted displacement
- Interest in working in sub-national areas within otherwise ostensibly stable countries, as well as in cross-border and regional "pockets of fragility" as oft-overlooked challenges
- The focus on perceptions and public opinion as important dimensions as it relates to state legitimacy and overall resilience
- Greater presence of World Bank staff located in FCV contexts coupled with an emphasis on building staff capacity and capabilities to work effectively in such places
- Openness to partnering with a broad range of civil society organizations and partners
- Willingness to experiment and take informed risks based on the local context

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Use the World Bank's political capital to hold governments in FCV contexts accountable for mistreatment of their populations, which exacerbates fragility and undermines sustainable development.

When introducing financing into an FCV context, the World Bank is no longer politically neutral. Rather than providing unfettered support to host governments, the World Bank's efforts to generate state legitimacy should use the provision or withdrawal of funding and influence of its institution to help hold governments accountable to their people. Supporting civil society in FCV contexts, even when working with host governments as the main interlocutors, can help prevent the growth of shadow systems of patronage, rent-seeking, and elite bargains that inhibit otherwise healthy forms of conflict management and political settlement.

Create and implement civil society stakeholder engagement plans associated with all World Bank investments in FCV contexts.

There are myriad reasons why engaging local and international civil society beyond elite actors in each fragile context is critical to the World Bank's overall success. First, closing civic space due to rising authoritarianism is a key driver of fragility, conflict, and violence. By working with historically marginalized groups, World Bank staff would improve their understanding of the context and the ensuing program design, and send a clear signal to the host government that the World Bank will not be a party to authoritarianism, human rights abuses, violence against civilians, and atrocities.

Civil society groups often successfully advance development through nonviolent movements that challenge host governments' authority. The World Bank should position itself in such a way that does not inhibit citizens' ability to continue to voice their concerns and recognize the centrality of human rights, self-determination, and good governance. Additionally, in-country civil society organizations (CSOs) have a right to know about and participate in the identification, design, and implementation of projects. Working with CSOs early on can help identify local capacities for peace and civil society mobilization, prevent future disruptions to projects and identify fruitful investment opportunities.

Partner with INGO networks that have deep experience working in FCV contexts to build on existing local implementers' work.

InterAction's INGO members have extensive experience operating and building relationships with partners in FCV contexts and can serve as resources to the World Bank as it considers how it maps stakeholders, chooses partners, and taps into existing networks and coalitions that support its goals. World Bank interventions will likely be most effective if they work with host governments to enhance local implementers' activities, rather than launch new programs that are disconnected from on-going work.

At a minimum, apply the principle of "do no harm" across all World Bank efforts in FCV contexts.

The World Bank should ensure that standards and procedures to prevent well-intentioned interventions from doing harm are in place. These could include fully implementing the Environmental and Social Framework, Performance Standards, and due diligence processes to address the additional challenges of working in FCV contexts. In addition, the World Bank should seek to mitigate the many types of risks deferred to local implementing partners in FCV contexts, including safety, security, fiduciary, legal/compliance, reputational, operational, information, and ethical risks.

Develop a transparent process for how the World Bank will conduct assessments and monitoring in FCV contexts.

Conflict analysis should be an institutional requirement for any World Bank project working in an FCV context. This effort opens the door for exploration of how fragility will be assessed in detail in each context, and what the trip wires will be for reassessing a particular context.

Country selection and program design should account for the ways in which histories of armed conflict, civil war, and persistent instability have marginalized groups in society, the proximate and underlying causes of fragility (and violent conflict), and the many different types of fragility a country can experience, building on the OECD's five dimensions – political, social, security, environmental, and economic.

Fully integrate gender into World Bank programs and operations in FCV contexts.

Build upon the Women, Peace, and Security agenda and recent advances in peace research on gender to ensure the strategy accounts for how people of different genders experience conflict and violence, and how gender is integrated into World Bank interventions.

Protect civilian populations from violence, deprivation, and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).

Those working in fragile contexts must consider and address the protection risks of violence, coercion and deliberate deprivation facing groups and individuals, including persons with special needs, children, women, LGBTI people, marginalized religious and ethnic communities, and human rights defenders, among others. It is essential to have continuous context-specific protection analysis that is based on the perspective of the affected population. Priority must also be given to the prevention of SEA, with clear systems for risk mitigation, reporting, and accountability.

Add internally displaced persons (IDPs) as a key underserved category of over 41 million people globally, whose specific vulnerabilities must be addressed for development goals to be achieved.

As the World Bank develops its new strategy on addressing IDP issues, it should both consider how the FCV strategy will dovetail with it, as well as actively engage and consult local and international civil society organizations in the IDP strategy development process. While governments should be the key actor in preventing, responding to, and resolving internal displacement, the World Bank can play a role in reducing harmful state behavior that often drives internal displacement.

Mainstream climate into the FCV Strategy.

Climate change is widely regarded as a major threat to international development and humanitarian assistance, and a key dimension of fragility. Without deeper consideration for how climate change will affect FCV contexts and World Bank interventions in those places, countries will backslide in the face of unpredictable weather patterns, resulting in food insecurity and forced migration, and increasingly complex conflict dynamics. The world's poor and most vulnerable will be the first and hardest hit by climate change. The FCV strategy must unequivocally account for this.

Require the creation of sector-specific guidance as part of the strategy implementation.

To signal that this is a high-priority, cross-cutting strategy, the World Bank should ensure that all global practices/focal points consider how their work applies to reducing fragility. A few examples of relevant nexus include education during crises; water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH); global health; co-location of World Bank projects and humanitarian responses efforts (i.e., Yemen and Iraq); food security and agriculture; support for natural infrastructure and environment in conflict zones, among others.

Implement normative shifts within the World Bank to support staff in implementing the strategy.

There is tension between rigorous planning, evaluation, and accountability for staff, and cultivating a culture of learning that results in taking calculated risks, tolerating some failure, implementing flexibly, and seizing rare windows of opportunity in FCV contexts. The World Bank should consider what internal normative and bureaucratic shifts are needed to allow for both, such as the adoption of adaptive management practices, monitoring and feedback loops, and a well-articulated learning agenda.

OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS

- How will the World Bank ensure its interventions support the growth of civic space as a key countermeasure to fragility?
- How will the strategy be applied across the World Bank's activities and operations?
- How will this strategy dovetail with other donor government strategies and legislation about reducing fragility (i.e., US Global Fragility Act, EU Approach to Resilience)?
- Will new tools be created to assess fragility and resilience?
- What will the learning agenda look like? What realistic outcome-level changes can be expected over the span of 5 to 10 years or longer?
- How will the World Bank balance budgetary demands for both development of staff working in FCV countries and programs?
- As the World Bank expands its partnerships, how will partners be selected, and what is their role?
- What is the vehicle by which local and international civil society can continue to consult with the World Bank on strategy development and implementation at an international and country level?

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ABOUT INTERACTION

InterAction is a convener, thought leader, and voice for nearly 200 NGOs working to eliminate extreme poverty, strengthen human rights and citizen participation, safeguard a sustainable planet, promote peace, and ensure dignity for all people. Our members work in over 100 countries around the world.