



FRAGILITY: DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS

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Executive Summary

Fragility has become a dominant theme in development aid over the past decade. Half of the world's poor are likely to reside in fragile states by 2018, and armed conflicts typically wreak havoc in unstable contexts. These observations emphasise the urgent need for relief and development work in these places - and the significant challenges of implementing it. HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation has been engaged in fragile situations for many years, and we share other development actors' concerns that such involvement comes with specific risks and challenges. These include the sustainability of interventions, threats to the security of staff and partners, and high programme costs compared to work in more stable circumstances.

However, HELVETAS has gained valid experience over the years, and we assert that it is both necessary and possible to engage in such contexts. HELVETAS has a sound track record in conflict-sensitive programming, working in long-term partnerships and peacebuilding, and long-standing experience in governance support. We are therefore well placed to continue and further strengthen our work in fragile contexts.

Given this context, there is an urgent need for HELVETAS to take a stance in current debates and outline its working approach. This paper aims to inform HELVETAS staff, our partners and other interested parties about how HELVETAS understands fragility and about our key principles when it comes to working in fragile environments.

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1. Introduction and rationale for engagement

Over the past ten years, fragility has developed into a key concern for every major development organisation. Leading donors have made fragility considerations and conflict sensitivity a mandatory part of every phase of a project. This development stems from the international community's recognition that there are close links between a state's fragility and the prevailing poverty and insecurity in that state. As the German Development Institute (GDI) noted in 2013, the acknowledgment that fragility is a development issue may be the most crucial step in on-going international debates: **mitigating states' fragility** and fostering conditions for effective service provision is viewed as the **most essential development effort of all**. At the same time, it is regarded as extremely challenging, since it involves **addressing highly complex and inherently political questions** (Faust, Grävingsholt, and Ziaja 2013, 1).

Despite the prominence of the term, there is still no single clear-cut definition of fragility. Partly as a result of this, various institutions compile and publish **changing lists of fragile states**. Fragile states are typically seen to fail to provide basic services such as primary schooling and health care to all or part of their population. They are further described as places where state repression is prevalent due to their contested legitimacy and/or their inability to protect all their citizens from (armed) violence while upholding human rights. In some cases these problems overlap and aggravate each other, while in others one specific type of problem may predominate (Grävingsholt, Ziaja, and Kreibaum 2012, 4; Grimm, Lemay-Hébert, and Nay 2014, 198).

Among development actors, fragile states are typically discussed with respect to their usually **poor performance in regard to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**.

Poverty and Fragility:

- Of the seven countries expected not to meet any of the MDGs by the 2015 deadline, six are considered fragile states.
- In fragile states one third of the people live below the poverty line of USD 1.25 a day.
- Populations in fragile states are found to grow at approximately double the pace of non-fragile states.
- The number of fragile states among middle-income countries is increasing: some 23 of the 51 recorded fragile countries are considered middle-income states and economies according to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 2014, 15), e.g. Pakistan, Yemen.

With a clear rise in the number of fragile states and the consequences this has for an ever-larger part of the world's population, **Switzerland** has also substantially increased its support for fragile and conflict-affected regions for its current 2013-2016 international cooperation strategy period (SDC 2012). The Swiss Agency for Development (SDC) is taking an active role in the developments of the "New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States" and in integrating the relevant concerns into the post-2015 processes for formulating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDC has increasingly incorporated fragility-related questions into its various humanitarian and development planning and monitoring tools (SDC 2014; SDC and SECO 2014) and the new 2017-21 Message of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs will combine the strategies of SDC, SECO and AMS (Human Security Division) under one umbrella.

Likewise, **HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation** has recognised the "enormous and growing challenge for development cooperation" posed by fragile states in its strategy for the years 2013–2017 (HELVETAS 2012a, 26). As many as 21 out of our 33 current partner countries are considered fragile. Some of them are amongst the poorest countries; others are middle-income or transition countries (*see Appendix 1 at the end of this paper*) where HELVETAS has been active for many years. We have been closely engaged for over 10 years with fragility in terms of governance, peacebuilding and conflict transformation, as well

as within the framework of our “Three steps for working in fragile and conflict-affected contexts” (3-step Approach, HELVETAS 2014a). On the basis of long-term and community-based local partnerships, HELVETAS has gained a good reputation and trust in working contexts as challenging as those in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nepal.

HELVETAS experience in Afghanistan:

Conflict sensitivity as in the 3-Steps approach to work in fragile and conflict-affected situations is a must! This means carrying out detailed and regular conflict context assessment (actor mapping, sources of tensions/connecting elements, governance factors), in-depth coaching of staff on Resource Transfer and tracking Implicit Ethical Messages, which could erode trust and acceptance. Further crucial issues are adherence to multi-partiality and inclusiveness as well as gender, and strict engagement only on the precondition of a Code of Conduct acceptable to all stakeholders. If these principles are violated or cannot be upheld, there will be no pressure to spend the budget and a suspension of activities will be envisaged.

The discussion about fragile states and situations has been carefully **incorporated within HELVETAS’ work**. Institutionally, the fragile states debate is anchored within the Governance and Peace (GOP) team and the “Security and Fragility” Working Group (S&F WG).¹ HELVETAS (2012b) also integrated fragility concerns within its situation analysis as well as in the different country analyses as part of its Programme Credit Proposal for SDC for 2013-2016.

In fragile states, even so-called “whole of government” approaches to good governance and development objectives through the integrated efforts of foreign affairs, security and development (state) agencies have achieved only limited success so far (Welthungerhilfe 2010, 2, 4-5). Bi- and multilateral approaches by governmental and international aid agencies frequently come up short in the face of non-existent or unresponsive local counterparts in fragile states. Since Lederach’s call for new approaches in addition to traditional diplomacy in the 1990s, numerous studies and analyses have emphasised the necessity of inclusive peace- and statebuilding², despite the challenges faced in these contexts.

Why should an NGO like HELVETAS engage in fragile states and environments?

- Working in fragile and conflict-affected environments is not so much a matter of choice as a matter of fact for HELVETAS, as **more and more partner countries become fragile** (e.g. Mali, Madagascar, Tanzania).
- According to the OECD, there is a general shift of poverty from stable/resilient to fragile states, and it predicts that by **2018 half of the poor will live in fragile environments** and **two-thirds of the poor will live in fragile environments by 2030**.

An engagement in fragile contexts is necessary and possible. However, cautious and ongoing assessment of the necessary preconditions and flexibility are paramount as situations may change rapidly. Development work can achieve positive results by the degree to which it acknowledges the challenges and limitations and scrutinizes the choice of specific and meaningful approaches and interventions

¹ Fragility is increasingly an overarching topic, linked not only to GOP but also to security and overall strategic question, and so it is an open question where to position it within the organisation in the future.

² Geneva Peacebuilding Platform. 2013. Inclusivity and Local Perspectives in Peacebuilding: Issues, Lessons, Challenges.

- As an NGO, we have a particular role to play, **complementary to bi- and multilateral donors' engagements** because we are **less linked to state interests** and conditions and **tend to be more strongly grassroots-based with facilitated access to local populations**.
- HELVETAS' presence in fragile and conflict areas can help to provide a **protective shield** against human rights violations.
- HELVETAS' is able to provide meaningful assistance to support self-help initiatives that strengthen local actors and partners **in the long run**.
- HELVETAS's access can bring the opinions **of affected populations** to bear on policy discussions.
- An active civil society is essential in fragile states and has several vital roles to play. **We build on our strong partnerships with local civil society** to promote capacity development and knowledge-sharing, and help them to pursue **their own agenda**.

2. Discussing “fragile states” and “fragility”

2.1 Definitions, indexes, and conceptualisations

The term “fragility” is related to the various ways of denoting **“weak”, “failing” or “collapsed” states**. The concept of “failed states” was initially coined in a *Foreign Policy* article in 1993, against the backdrop of the collapse of Somalia and of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and attracted considerable attention (Helman and Ratner 1993). However, it was not until the 9/11 attacks that the broader theme of state weakness or failures gained political capital. Failed or weak states came to represent cradles of terrorism and therefore threats to the security and stability of Western states. “Fragility” eventually broke through in the mid-2000s as a less derogatory and more neutral term than state failure, weakness or collapse (Faust, Grävingsholt, and Ziaja 2013, 4-5; Grimm, Lemay-Hébert, and Nay 2014, 198-199).

Since then, various **definitions** of what constitutes “fragile states” and “fragility” have developed, the OECD's and the World Bank's (WB) being the most prominent. Compared to earlier, rather static and state-focused definitions, recent formulations suggest a greater concern for **state–society relationships**, processes and attempts to break down the limits of primarily state-oriented definitions. Hence the **OECD (2014, 16)** has stated that “a fragile region or state has weak capacity to carry out basic governance functions, and lacks the ability to develop mutually constructive relations with society”.

The concept of fragility is also increasingly contrasted with that of **resilience**: resilient states are seen as better equipped to deal constructively with crisis such as economic crisis and natural disasters. Importantly, from this perspective fragility and resilience are not fixed states but rather positions within a spectrum, with the possibility of situations veering towards fragility and/or conflict.

The **2014 UNDP Human Development Report** “Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience” also emphasises the concept of **“resilience”** from a developmental perspective.

Putzel (2010, 2014) and Putzel and Di John (2012, 7-8) of the UK-based **Crisis State Research Centre (CSCR)** argue, on the other hand, that identifying “fragility” requires the category of **“resilience” (understood as “peace” or stability) to actually capture the specifics and distinguish “fragile” states from other low-income countries**. They caution that the concept of “fragile states” is only useful when it is focused on a state's basic functions and

“There is a distinction, among the poorest developing countries, between those that experience a condition of fragility – or a real danger of state breakdown and internecine violence – and poor countries where the state has achieved considerable resilience, or peace, even when economic development has been elusive.”
(Putzel and Di John 2012, iv)

vulnerability to violent conflict (Putzel 2010, 2014; Putzel and Di John 2012).³

Leading international actors also compile **annual lists of states** that they consider fragile (see Appendix 1 for the OECD 2014 list). Such indexes enjoy considerable popularity among policymakers and development practitioners and are the tools of choice when it comes to ranking states.

Complementary and further-reaching than indexes are models that **disaggregate state fragility into key dimensions or typical aspects** of fragility, and group countries accordingly. Grävingsholt, Ziája, and Kreibaum (2012) from the German Development Institute (GDI) have recently discussed a “multi-dimensional empirical typology” for state fragility, **and this provides the basis for HELVETAS’ understanding of fragility** (see Chapter 3).

2.2 From ten Principles for Engagement to the “New Deal”

Back in 2007, OECD published ten “**Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations**”. The principles were formulated to complement the commitments outlined in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, with special attention on enhancing the positive effects of engagement and minimizing unintentional harm in countries of “weak governance and conflict, and during episodes of temporary fragility” (OECD 2007).

In the meantime, the g7+ group of around 40 fragile and conflict-affected countries, development partners and international organisations drew up the “**New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States**”, which was adopted in Busan in 2011.⁴ Switzerland is one of the signatories to the document and is in the process of adapting its standards of implementation. At the core of the “New Deal” lie five key peacebuilding and statebuilding goals (**PSGs**) as well as principles for country-owned and country-led engagements with fragility (**FOCUS**) and commitments based on mutual trust and result orientation (**TRUST**) (see Box 3 for a snapshot). As such, it represents a major step on the level of states in recognising the importance of peace- and statebuilding elements for development and can be considered to be unique in terms of formulating mutual accountability and a national ownership approach. However, **crucial questions remain as to the legitimacy of the lead actors and about the roles granted to civil society** within the processes (KOFF 2013). This criticism is especially valid from a gender perspective, and much remains to be done to make the New Deal more receptive to, and more in line with, the demands of leading women’s organisations and agreed international resolutions (Cordaid 2012).

Linked to this “New Deal” discussion are the current self-assessments of a number of states based on the so-called “**fragility spectrum**” developed by the g7+ countries. Using the five PSGs as a framework, this matrix is a tool for identifying a country’s fragility on a scale ranging from crisis (1) via transitional stages - rebuild and reform (2), transition (3) and transformation (4) - to resilience (5). There is on-going work devoted to formulating appropriate fragility indicators (g7+ 2013; OECD 2012b; OECD 2014, 16).

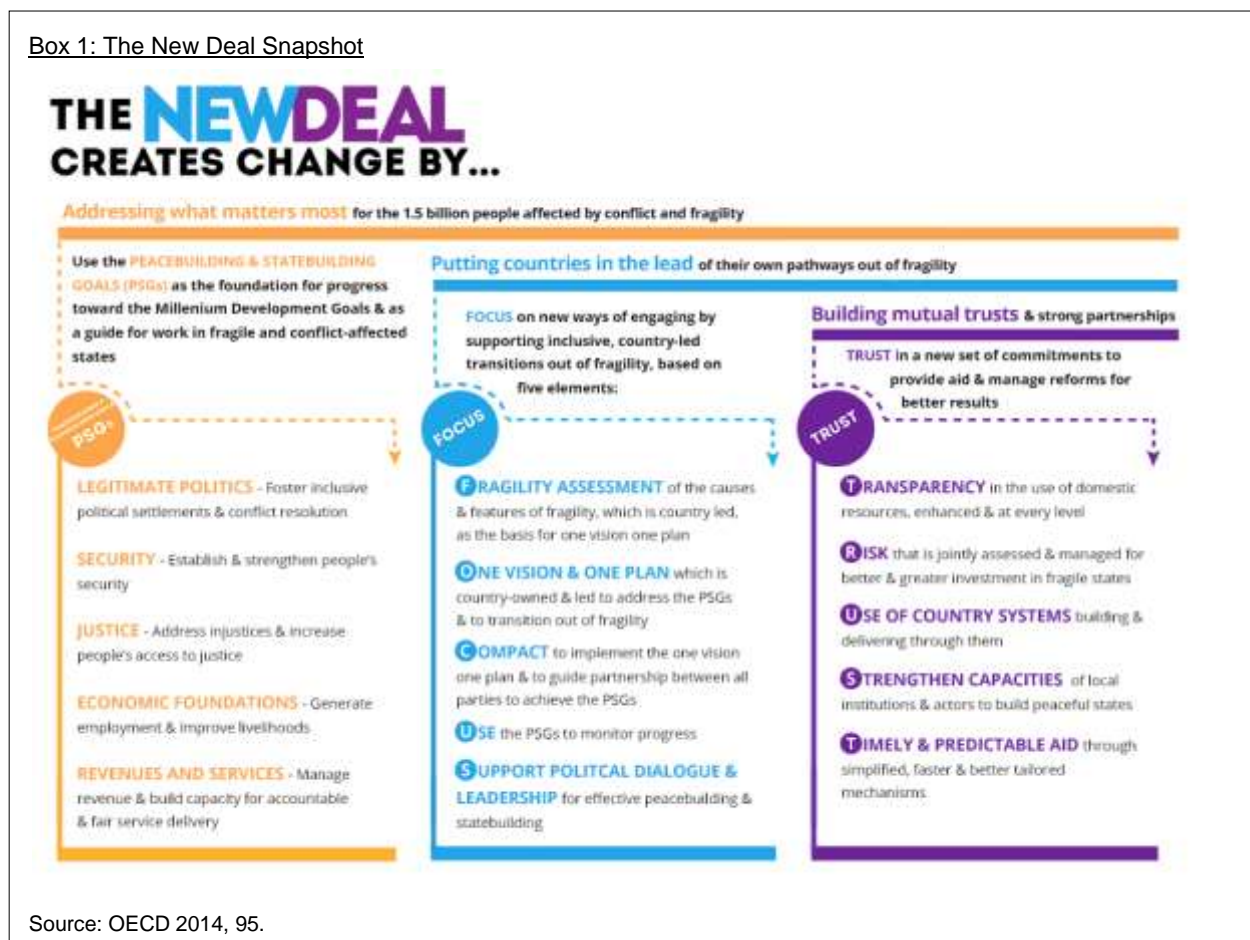
In this respect, Cordaid’s (2012) critical and gender-relevant discussion of the New Deal is an important contribution from an NGO perspective. It identifies an array of possible gender indicators that start by asking how inclusive political processes are, address the gender-specific security concerns, and then

Women may have a specific role to play in society when it comes to caring for dependents, maintaining relationships or voicing grievances. We also believe that they have obvious rights to participate in the processes that affect them and to have their say in formal and informal political processes.

³ In CSCR’s definition, fragility is theorized in regard to four “traditional” attributes of the state: monopoly over the use of force; bureaucratic capacity and taxation power; territorial control; and hegemony of institutions (or rules) over rival non-state counterparts. Failures along these dimensions make up the four sets of characteristics of fragility, and a state’s failure “to exercise a monopoly over the legitimate use of force” is considered key among these indicators (Putzel and Di John 2012, 7). This model is compatible with the model proposed by GDI (2012), see below in the text.

⁴ Some 40 countries, the EU, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the African Development Bank, the OECD and the UN Development Group have endorsed the New Deal so far (KOFF 2013, 1).

try to find out the gender-related barriers to accessing justice, to state only a few of the possible indicators.



3. Fragility: the HELVETAS model of engagement

Internally, HELVETAS welcomed the international concern for fragility **as an additional means to engage with conflict prevention** by applying conflict sensitivity. While conflict-sensitive approaches tend to receive specific interest only when a crisis in a country has already erupted, the fragility lens promises to be a more **preventive approach** to tackling the drivers of fragility and conflict before violent clashes occur.

3.1 Definition and conceptualization

HELVETAS has adopted the GDI's (2012) multi-dimensional typology for a differentiated and empirically grounded conceptualization of fragility as the basis of a **definition**. It distinguishes **three overlapping dimensions of fragility – force (monopoly of force), capacity (service provision), and legitimacy (acceptance of rule)**.⁵ These dimensions must be applied to **a country's entire territory and overall population**. Single dimensions may predominate over others, or they may overlap and curb each other. We consider questions of **legitimacy and monopoly of force** to be particularly relevant when attempting

⁵ Based on this model and on its own working experience, Helvetas came up with suggestions for classifying countries and for possible forms of support and priority interventions in a previous publication (see Appendix 2).

to gain an understanding of fragility. Though some or all of the three dimensions may be manifest in prolonged (“chronic”) form, they are conducive to change, can be transformed towards **resilience** and tend to shift along this continuum.

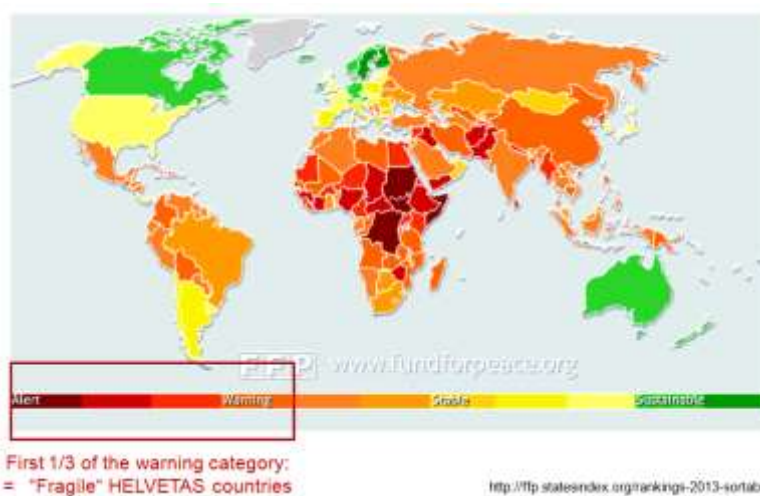


Thus we do not see fragility merely in terms of obstacles hindering development progress. Indeed, the **recognition and promotion strengths and capacities can transform social and political structures**, guiding them towards more resilient forms that are less vulnerable to social, political or economic crisis and “natural” disasters. Moreover, the same dimensions or characteristics may also apply to wider regions or to “pockets” within a country (“**fragile situations**”, “fragility”).

When it comes to how countries are classified in indexes, we refer to the efforts of other relevant institutions, foremost among them the list of fragile countries regularly updated by the **Fund for Peace**.

However, we handle this in a **non-normative way**. The categorization of countries according to this list is visualized on a scale from “alert” (marked in dark red) to “warning” (shades of red) to “stable” (shades of yellow) and “sustainable” (green). We draw a line within the red “warning” section to separate our partner countries into what we consider fragile and non-fragile states (see Box 4). This

Box 2: Global overview fragile states

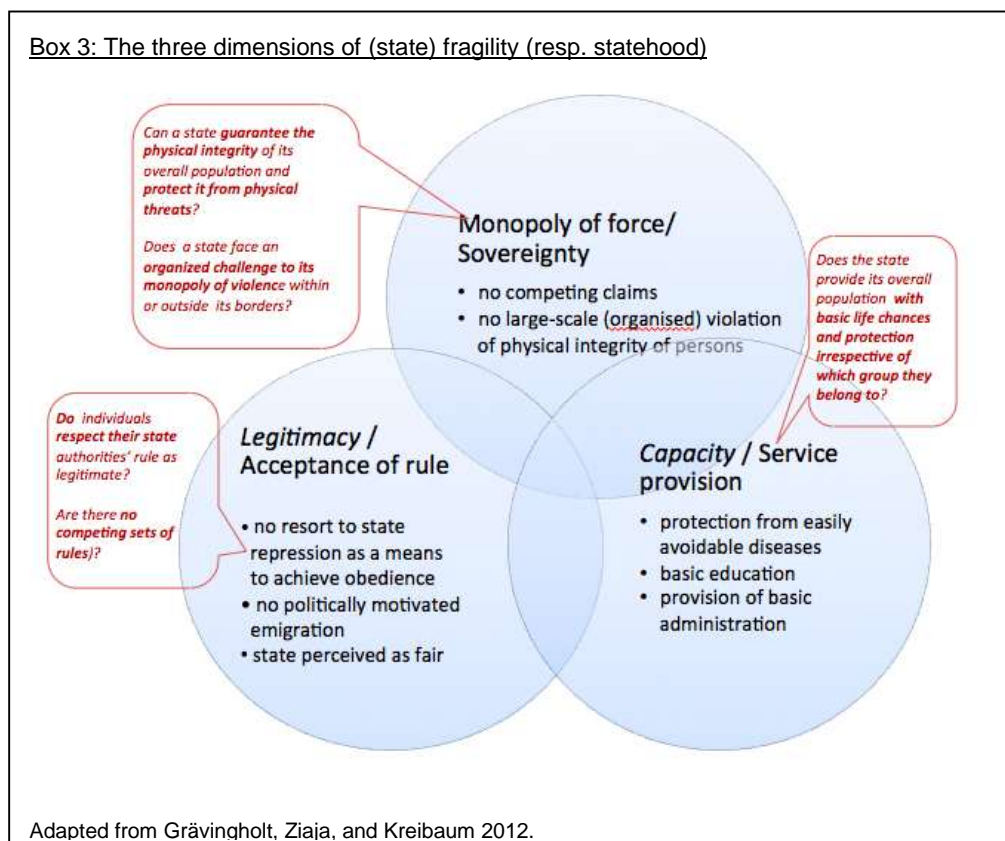


classification helps us to focus our attention on specific regions and developments. Yet, as mentioned above, **such lists are little more than “early warning” tools**. What is more important than this kind of classification and (continuously changing) country indexes is a shared understanding of fragility and an awareness of how aspects of fragility can affect the contexts in which we work.

In sum, as an aid organisation, HELVETAS feels certain affinities with the OECD’s perspective on fragility and fragile states presented in Chapter 2. Hence we share a notion according to which fragile states are described in terms of **flawed service provision** and fraught relationships between state institutions and civil society. However, **we place far greater emphasis on questions of legitimacy**: when it comes to fragility we think it is important to examine the degree to which state authorities foster their overall population’s identification with the state, and their basis for the rule of law. Additionally, **we support the argument of Putzel/Crisis State Research Centre (2012) that “fragility” is most useful as a concept when it is focused on factors that make a state or region vulnerable to organised armed violence**. This focus on the possible risk of armed conflict helps to limit the concept, avoiding the mistake of “stretching” it too far and labelling any form of “underdevelopment” or any precarious situation “fragile”. It ultimately allows one to make more precise differentiations between what is a “fragile state” and what is not, and why.

Overall, the **German Development Institute’s (GDI) “multi-dimensional empirical typology”** describes **fragile states** are states that show a **lack of capacity** to provide basic services and promote sustainable and equitable economic development (or “life chances”) to its entire population; they **lack legitimacy** or

their rule is contested by all or some of its population and fail to maintain the rule of law; and they lack the **monopoly of force**, to ensure the state’s sovereignty and protect its population from significant levels of violence. This model largely overlaps with that proposed by CSCR’s research discussed above.⁶ These authors (Putzel 2010, 2) emphasise how great a challenge it is to understand why some poor countries are highly unstable and prone to violence and conflict, while others show significant periods of stability and peace in spite of manifest poverty. Aside from greater conceptual clarity, there are obvious pragmatic reasons for focusing on factors that may lead to the outbreak of armed hostilities. Insecurity and open warfare result in great loss of life, misery and suffering, and are thus the most detrimental basic conditions from which people should be spared. Lastly, HELVETAS has continuously refined its own conflict transformation approaches by emphasising violent conflict within the concept of fragility.



Clearly, any definition and concept of “fragile states” and “fragility” has strengths and weaknesses. Both HELVETAS’ definition and its conceptualization based on GDI (2012) are fairly broad. They therefore lend themselves less well to precise analysis and categorisation than more limited definitions and models. However, they establish a clear framework for thinking about fragility as well as reference points for identifying useful indicators with which to analyse specific local or regional contexts. So they serve our purpose, which is not so much to define neat classifications but to **design appropriate development interventions and monitor performance**. Ultimately, **fragility offers us a “lens”** with which to continue our practice of many years: to integrate conflict sensitivity approaches into our work and adapt our programme strategies to address the **drivers of fragility and conflict, and conflict transformation** (for a detailed account of how to tackle the drivers of fragility and conflict, refer to the *GOP working area strategy*).

⁶ Thus what Putzel (2010) and Putzel and Di John (2012) describe as a state’s monopoly over coercive force and the true extent of a state’s territorial reach (as seen, for example, in the presence of offices across significant swathes of territory) falls within the dimension of (monopoly of) force; capacity includes the authors’ point about fiscal control and inclusive spending; lastly, legitimacy also describes what they call “institutional hegemony”.

HELNETAS definition of “fragility”

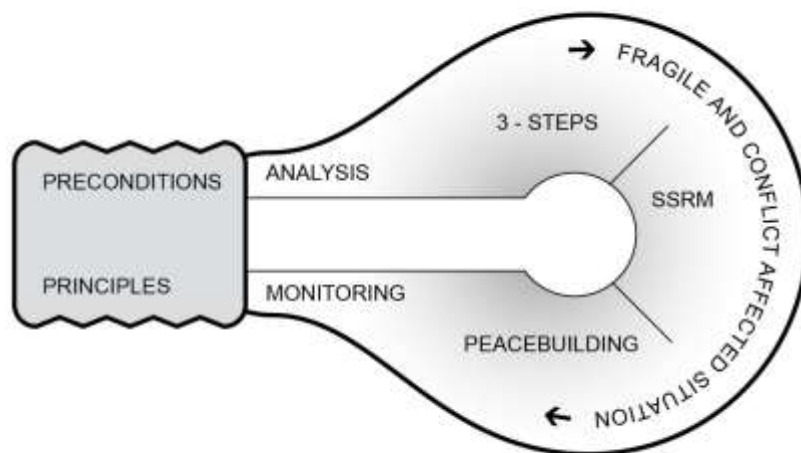
Fragility denote states or situations that **lack sufficient ability** (or political will) to...

- Provide **basic services** and promote sustainable and **equitable economic development** to their entire population (→ **capacity**)
- Gain their population’s identification with the nation state and maintain the **rule of law** through inclusive politics (→ **legitimacy**)
- Maintain **control over all their territory** and protect their entire population from armed violence while adhering to human rights (→ **monopoly of force**)



Any, or all three, of these dimensions may predominate to varying degrees over different periods of time. They significantly concern the relationship between a state and its **entire population**, and they can also apply to larger (cross-border) regions or to limited areas within a country (commonly described as “**fragile situations**” or “situations of fragility”). Fragility contrasts with **resilience**, and fragility can be transformed into resilience in what is essentially a non-linear process.

To address fragility and conflict, HELNETAS thus follows the **following model for working in fragile and conflict affected situations (FCS)**:



→ See the GOP working area strategy on how to do peacebuilding and “address the drivers of conflict and fragility”.

4. Preconditions and principles

After this rationale for engaging in fragile situations and conceptual clarity, **HELVETAS needs to carefully incorporate** the discussion about fragile states and situations into its **operational work**.

4.1 Preconditions for engagement in fragile situations

Fragile situations are often fraught with challenging security situations and high levels of mistrust within the population or between citizens and state representatives, as well as offering limited space for civil society.

HELVETAS therefore regards the following as essential **(pre)conditions** for engaging *in* and *regarding* fragile and conflict-affected situations:

1. HELVETAS will continue to engage, despite fragility and conflict, as long as there is **space for development activities** and **basic working principles and values** can be upheld;
2. HELVETAS will not start any new programmes in situations of open warfare or fully-fledged (civil) war;
3. HELVETAS is able to remain **independent** in its programmatic decisions, e.g. programming must (directly or indirectly) include **ways to address the key drivers of fragility**;
4. Our partners and beneficiaries are able to cooperate **according to the principles of engagement** (see below 4.2.).

As development actors in and regarding fragile situations, HELVETAS recognises that we face specific challenges.

Risks and limitations:

- Development agencies working in fragile and conflict-affected situations are increasingly confronted with precarious **security situations**.
- The **rapprochement between the fields of humanitarian action, development and security** in recent years⁷ poses particular problems for relief and development work (it becomes difficult to clearly distinguish between civil and military actors and tasks).
- The **sustainability** of efforts is often endangered by outbreaks of violence and a lack of institutional capacity.
- **Engaging with local actors including civil society** in fragile states is not risk-free, and intensive dialogue and a conflict-sensitive approach are essential.
- **Planning** is a challenge in volatile contexts.
- **The operational costs** of projects in fragile situations are often considerably higher.

Ideally, all fragile countries should adapt their practices according to the 3-step approach, conduct a thorough analysis of the fragile situation and draw the consequences for the relevant programme strategy and projects. This ensures that, as an organisation, HELVETAS has a clear position and profile regarding fragility in all the affected countries.

However, we maintain that engagement in fragile contexts **is both necessary and possible**, provided the above preconditions are met and basic principles fulfilled. Indeed, our work in Afghanistan and Nepal

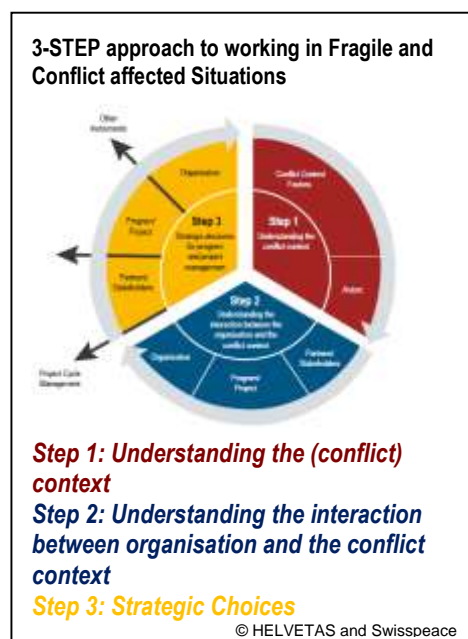
⁷ This relates back to the tendency among Western states to see weak or fragile states as a threat to global security, resulting in so-called humanitarian military interventions.

provides good examples of what aspects of fragility can be accommodated within development projects, and how precisely this can be done.

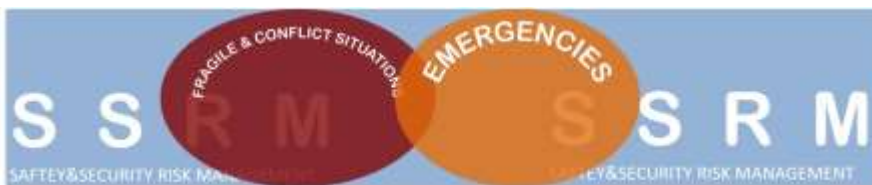
4.2 Principles for engagement in fragile situations

Recognising the challenges of working on fragile and conflict-affected situations, HELVETAS will operate according to the following principles:

- HELVETAS insists on **long-term commitment and the “long haul”** in development processes with its partners, supports **community ownership** and promotes long-term capacity building and flexibility in adjusting to changing circumstances.
- HELVETAS **rigorously adheres to a conflict-sensitive approach (3 steps)**: assessing intended and unintended impacts of its projects or programmes (we make sure that “no harm” is done and that entry points for positive transformation are identified).
- Building on our the long-standing experience in the field of conflict transformation, HELVETAS is **dedicated to detailed conflict and fragility analysis** to ensure that the intervention **contributes to peace- and statebuilding processes and addresses the drivers of fragility and conflict**.
- We adopt an **“all-party” position** and develop **long-term** relationships of trust among and beyond project stakeholders.
- HELVETAS **coordinates and communicates with all relevant stakeholders** to achieve common goals and foster local ownership. This also entails addressing all locally relevant authorities, which may translate into coordinating with conflict parties in specific situations.
- We strive to identify power relationships and the ways in which they intersect with **gender** in a given context and **address the specific vulnerabilities and needs of women and girls**, while acknowledging the strengths of their social positions and **supporting their capacities** and resilience.
- In the event of severe **emergencies**, we are determined to **make the most of our comparative advantage** and contribute to effective relief in partner countries. We believe in the importance of remaining involved and advocate the concept of **“Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development” (LRRD)**.
- Working according to a Rights Based Approach (RBA) and tackling the issue of human rights, HELVETAS will favour a constructive (as opposed to confrontational) approach that **emphasises the roles and responsibilities of each citizen (rights-holder) and state actor (duty-bearer)**.
- HELVETAS will support the establishment of **responsive and accountable institutions, promote inclusive political settlements, and empower marginalised and vulnerable social groups** to participate in informal and formal decision-making processes.
- HELVETAS invests in the **recruitment and training** of staff as well as the selection and **capacity development of its partners**. It is important to foster **“soft skills”** in areas such as **analysis, (non-violent) communication, dialogue, facilitation, negotiation and leadership** alongside “hard skills” (e.g. specific technical knowledge).

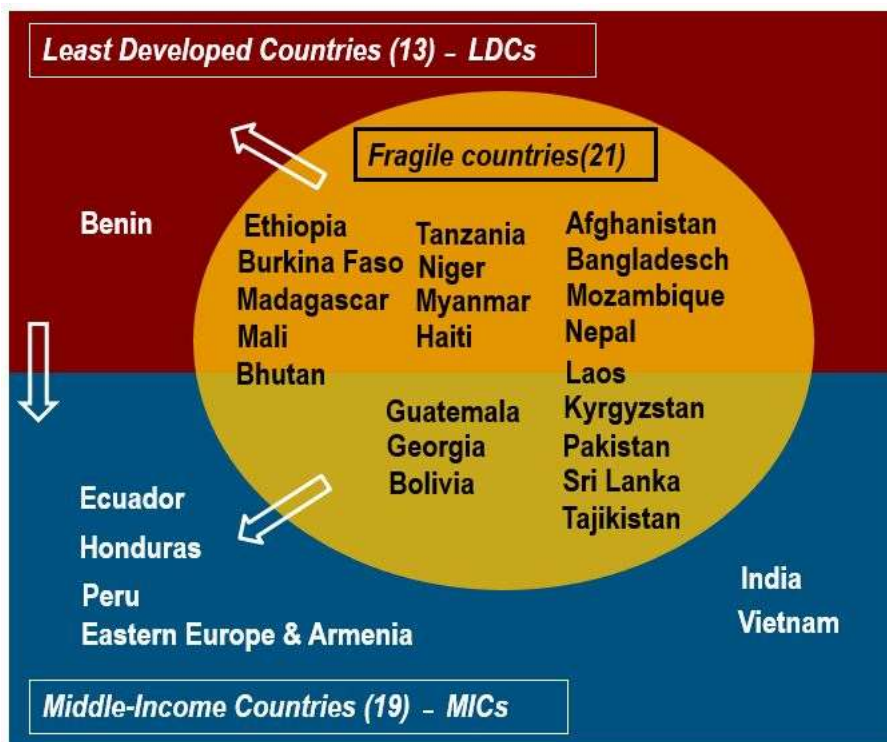


- HELVETAS follows a comprehensive **Safety, Security and Risk Management (SSRM) system**, which delineates clear responsibilities and competencies at country and head office level, and acknowledges both its **responsibility as an employer** for the security of its staff and its **obligation to avoid or mitigate significant risks to its partners and projects**.



- HELVETAS firmly supports a **“security through acceptance” strategy**. This builds upon a community-based approach to security, in which mutual trust and respect between project staff, partners and beneficiaries are crucial, as is keeping a low profile.
- The HELVETAS risk management approach was developed from a framework known as the three “Copenhagen circles”: three interrelated categories of risks - **contextual, programme and institutional** - whose aim is not to avoid risks, but to identify and balance risks and opportunities in an “enabling process” that allows us to stay engaged even in highly instable and dangerous situations rather than “leaving the field” (OECD 2011b, 30-34).

BOX 4: Fragile HELVETAS countries as of November 2014, according to FFP Index.



5. Conclusion and outlook

When we look back over the last 30 years and the current prominence of the fragility topic, it appears that we have reached **a crossroads in global governance, conflict and fragility trends**. The good news is that there have been major improvements in recent years. The number of democracies has sharply increased since the end of the Cold War and is still increasing, albeit at a slower pace. There were approximately 30 armed conflicts in 2010 compared to 50 in 1990. Scholars⁸ suggest that this improvement in the state of the world has not come about by accident, since as many as 646 peace agreements were reached between 1990 and the end of 2007, and an increasing proportion have endured (as they were mostly negotiated settlements). There were also more peacekeeping operations than ever before. Another positive note is that “peace, rule of law, effective institutions and inclusion“ are on the provisional list of the post-2015 SDGs, and the G7+ New Deal with its Peace- and Statebuilding goals has been endorsed by over 20 countries.

The OECD calculates that by **2030 two-thirds of the poor will reside in fragile situations**, which means that development cooperation will face increasing poverty alleviation challenges, not only in Least Developed Countries but also in fragile Middle Income Countries (we were already working in nine fragile MICs in 2014, see above). Development actors will therefore have no choice but to work in fragile contexts. HELVETAS has been working in such areas for many years, and this paper shows that it is aware of the efforts this takes and is well placed to meet the challenge. Furthermore, **a shift from reaction to prevention is possible if integrated approaches**, including collaboration between civil society networks, bi- and multilateral donors, RIGOs and state actors, can be improved, based on effective, locally grounded strategies to prevent fragility and conflict.

5.1 Relevant future issues

Despite the decrease in violent conflict, some new potential drivers of fragility and sources of violent conflict are emerging. Economic crises are compounding social, economic and political tensions across the world.

“Dan Smith (International Alert) states: “The challenge from nature is a challenge for governance and our social, economic and political institutions. As the basic conditions of life become more difficult, in those countries where inequality is greatest and conflict management institutions are weakest, the risk of conflict will be greatest.”⁹

On the other hand, it is generally acknowledged that international cooperation is now in a better position to tackle issues of fragility, and projects are benefiting from the experience gained over the past decade (Chandy 2011, 8). Yet the call to “take the context as the starting point” has not diminished, nor has the need to commit to the “long haul” and to coordinate actions well. Additional efforts are required, and these account for the (sometimes substantially) higher costs of operation in fragile contexts. The cost factor has to be carefully considered during the planning stage and must be dealt with responsibly by donors in form of “risk-sharing” arrangements. Furthermore, there is international concern about more equitable funding to address the most needy (and continuously “under-aided”) of the fragile states, and to counter the current fluctuations in aid by providing more stable financial flows. We are already faced with issues of gross human rights violations in Sri Lanka, Honduras, Guatemala and Laos, deep-rooted horizontal inequalities, endemic corruption and violent power struggles in Kyrgyzstan, and climate-change-fuelled resource conflicts in the Sahel. These examples are a spotlight of the pivotal challenges of the future.

⁸ Christine Bell, *On the Law of Peace*, Oxford University Press. 2008.

⁹ <http://www.international-alert.org/blog/conflict-horizon-2-rising-pressures> (accessed July 2015)

Main future challenges:

- **Changes in demography** (population growth and urbanisation) and subsequent issues of inequality will further **test the social fabric and political stability**.
- **Climate change is very likely to intensify competition for water, food, energy and natural resources**, and these may increase fragility and the risk of violent conflict, particularly in fragile situations. It is therefore becoming imperative to **link fragility to climate adaptation strategies** in order to help prevent fragility and violent conflict.
- Against the backdrop of continuing geopolitical power struggles, fragility manifests itself in different forms including **large-scale criminality** (e.g. gang control of deprived urban areas, **extremely profitable trafficking** in illegal narcotics, people and other goods by global criminal networks), which kill large numbers of people and destabilise societies.
- Violent and fragile situations **may not escalate into full-blown wars, but rather a tangle of small conflicts, local violence and instability**. These are closely linked **dysfunctional democracies** that lack good governance and the rule of law, and face **endemic corruption, rising inequality, an inability to meet people's basic needs** and **coercive force** based on arbitrary power.
- These situations are also often coupled with a **lack of institutions to handle and resolve conflicts fairly**.
- Lastly, development actors will have to prove their capacity to **address, in an appropriate and meaningful way, the rising number of middle-income countries** among fragile states.

5.2 The future role of civil society

Whilst there is no blueprint for fragility and conflict scenarios, it is indisputable that no one actor can address them, nor can they be tackled at any one level in isolation. In the long term, addressing fragility and violent conflict is too hard – intellectually, technically, and politically – to be the responsibility of any single institution or government. Strengths must be pooled, burdens shared and labour divided among actors. In their engagement with state structures, NGOs are a crucial component of a country's social fabric and a prerequisite for peace- and statebuilding. The following points are therefore crucial:

- One possible role for northern civil society (INGOs) is to gradually strengthen civil society in the South, promote increased South-South cooperation and establish North-South and East-West linkages
- International civil society can still play an important part in addressing the external drivers of fragility as well as providing linkages to global civil society with the enhanced legitimacy and protective force that these bring¹⁰.
- To fully reflect civil society in all its diversity, it may be necessary to have a broader outreach to less formal and organised civil society and develop deliberate strategies to increase the autonomy of Southern partners.
- One further area of intervention may be to offer support to local civil society so that it can conduct policy analysis and identify opportunities for engagement in the national or global policy arenas.

Alas, it is more than likely that the topics of fragility and (violent) conflict are here to stay. As a development organisation, HELVETAS is therefore right to clarify its concepts, approaches, tools and methodologies so as to be in a position to meet the challenges ahead.

¹⁰ Strengthening Civil Society? Reflections on International Engagement in Fragile States. October 2012. Weijer, F. de, and U. Kilnes. 2012. ECDPM Discussion Paper 135). Maastricht: ECDPM.

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7. Appendices

APPENDIX 1: OECD list of fragile (low and middle income) countries

The OECD list is compiled on a yearly basis and serves to monitor financial flows to these countries as well as progress towards peacebuilding, statebuilding and development objectives. It relies on the harmonized list of fragile states developed jointly by the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the African Development Bank as well as on the yearly Failed States Index.¹¹

Source: OECD 2014, 17.

Region	Income level		
	Low income	Middle Income	
		Lower middle	Upper middle
East Asia and Pacific (8)	Korea, DPR + Myanmar*	Kiribati* Micronesia, Fed. States Solomon Islands* Timor-Leste*	Tuvalu* + Marshall Is.
Europe and Central Asia (2)		Kosovo	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Latin America and Caribbean (1)	Haiti*		
MENA (6)		Egypt, Arab Rep. + Syrian Arab Rep. + West Bank and Gaza Strip Yemen, Rep.*	Libya Iraq
South Asia (5)	Afghanistan* Bangladesh* Nepal*	Pakistan Sri Lanka	
Sub-Saharan Africa (29)	Burundi* CAR* Chad* Comoros* Burkina Faso* + DRC* Madagascar* + Malawi* Eritrea* Ethiopia* Guinea* Guinea-Bissau*	Kenya Liberia* Mali* + Niger* Sierra Leone* South Sudan* Somalia* Togo* Uganda* Zimbabwe	Cameroon Congo, Rep. Côte d'Ivoire Nigeria Sudan* Mauritania* + Angola*
Income Level: Totals (and %)	28 (55%)	17 (33%)	6 (12%)

* denotes a fragile state that is also defined as a least developed country (LDC).

+ Eight countries that are new on this year's list.
(For the country classification, see <http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/country-and-lending-groups>)

¹¹ Available at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/governance-peace/conflictandfragility/docs/FSR-2014.pdf> (accessed July 2015)

APPENDIX 2: Possible gender indicators in fragility assessments

Table 4 Suggestions of gender-related issues to explore in a fragility assessment

PSGS	EXAMPLES OF ISSUES TO EXPLORE IN FRAGILITY ASSESSMENTS
Legitimate politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How are women represented in different decision-making structures, including in informal and customary institutions? ■ What mechanisms exist to support women's political participation in governance structures at local, sub-national and national levels? ■ How are gender issues addressed in peace agreements or constitutions? ■ How inclusive is the political dialogue process? ■ Are there any gender dimensions to the drivers of conflict and violence? ■ What kinds of grassroots peacebuilding and reconciliation activities are being carried out by women's organisations?
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What are the gender-specific security concerns and priorities of women, men, girls and boys? ■ How does the security sector respond to violence against women? ■ Does the security have any codes of conduct and operate with respect for women's rights and human rights? ■ What are women and men's perceptions about security and how do they differ? ■ Are women represented in meaningful ways in the security services?
Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What is the nature and type of gender laws and to what extent are they implemented? ■ How are women represented on human rights bodies, TRCs, etc, and how do these bodies address gender issues? ■ What are the gender-related barriers to access to justice? ■ What is the role of customary law in adjudicating over domestic and family-related matters, including in relation to marriage and inheritance?
Economic foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How much access to land and credit do women have? ■ What is the balance of employment in the formal and informal sectors for men and women? ■ What are the gender-based barriers to infrastructure? ■ What role do women play in cross-border trade? ■ How does youth unemployment affect girls and boys?
Revenues and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What are the gender-related barriers to access to services? ■ How do women and men's priorities in relation to service delivery differ? ■ How do women and men's tax contributions differ? ■ How does corruption affect women and men? ■ Are women meaningfully represented in the public service and do they have any specific capacity-building needs?

Source: Cordaid 2012, 17.

APPENDIX 3: Fragile States and suggested (policy) interventions¹²

Character of the country/situation	Priority goal	Character of external support	Suggested HSI Priorities (based on Lessons Learned)
<p>Extremely low levels in all three dimensions: authority, capacity and legitimacy</p> <p><i>Typical countries: (Chad, DR Congo, Sudan)</i></p>	<p>Focus on the provision of basic security first. Then bring quick socio-economic gains and/or establish the basics of legitimate politics (debated!)</p>	<p>Broad-based international engagement; peacebuilding and state building</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Work on basic needs at local level → Strengthen voice and local accountability → Provide space for dialogue and collaborative efforts between citizens (including organized civil society) and between citizens and state → DO NOT: Ignore conflicting interests and rifts in society
<p>Mostly very low levels of capacity but also relatively low on authority; diverse, though mostly at the lower end, on legitimacy</p> <p><i>Rep. Congo, Uganda, Kenya Etc.</i></p>	<p>Improve capacity, but combine it with strengthening legitimacy</p>	<p>Offer support for capacity, yet encourage (or demand) better governance based on broader legitimacy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Multi-stakeholder approaches may be especially effective → Work with change agents AND duty bearers → Strengthen accountability mechanisms at both sides of the equation → Strengthen voice → Lobbying and advocacy maybe important for effective policy formulation and implementation (inclusive policies) → DO NOT: Work on empowerment of right-holders only without strengthening capacities of government (duty bearers)
<p>Very low levels of capacity, but decent authority and above average legitimacy</p> <p><i>Madagascar, Ghana, Burkina Faso etc.</i></p>	<p>Strengthen capacity in state, society and economy</p>	<p>Alignment with country system and local priorities (“Paris Agenda”)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Assist in the implementation of policies → Deepening democracy interventions → DO NOT: Strengthen parallel systems or misalign with national policies
<p>Decent capacity, yet high levels of violence</p> <p><i>Algeria, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic etc.</i></p>	<p>Prevent violence; invest in constructive state-society relations</p>	<p>State-building and governance support based on meaningful political dialogue; coordination essential</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Work with change agents AND duty bearers → Strengthen accountability mechanisms at both sides of the equation → Provide space for dialogue and collaborative efforts between citizens, and between citizens and state on security needs <p>DO NOT: Ignore conflicting interests and rifts in society</p>
<p>Good authority and decent capacity, but mostly lower levels of legitimacy</p> <p><i>Tunisia, Belarus, Egypt etc.</i></p>	<p>More legitimate rule</p>	<p>Cautious support of more legitimate governance unless and until opportunity or a broad engagement opens up</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Work with change agents → Strengthen accountability mechanisms → Strengthen capacities of legislative government (councils, parliament) → DO NOT: Strengthen executive government if there is a risk of reinforcing authoritarian regimes

¹² Adapted from: Jörn Gravingholt, Sebastian Ziaja, Merle Kreibaum. 2012. “State fragility: towards a multi-dimensional empirical typology”. German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE).