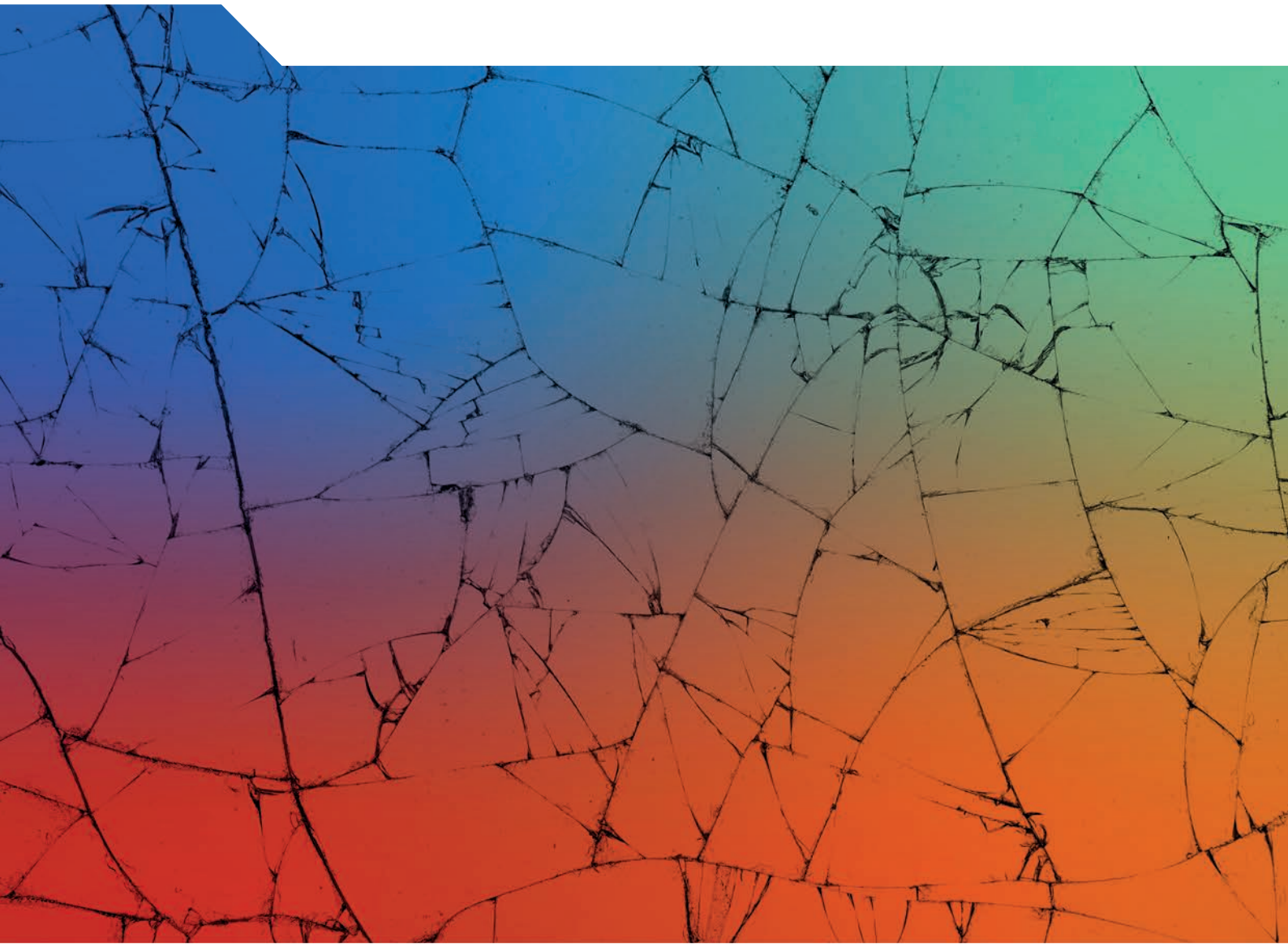
States of Fragility 2020



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STATES OF FRAGILITY 2020

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BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

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Preface

FRAGILE CONTEXTS IN A FRAGILE WORLD

Fragility is affecting millions of lives every day across the world. Whether due to inequality, poverty, illness, violence or injustice, it speaks directly to people's experiences and sense of vulnerability. It often draws the line between prosperity and survival and in the most extreme cases, life and death. The burden of fragility most often than not falls disproportionately on already vulnerable and marginalised groups, those who are "the furthest behind". In addition, fragility cannot always be attributed to responsibility – for example, those most exposed to the impact of climate change are often the least responsible for it.

To leave no one behind means acknowledging that the causes of fragility are complex, interconnected, and often deep-rooted within the most affected countries and communities. As the world tackles the dual public health and economic crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic, a focus on fragility is now more necessary than ever before. The spread of the virus across the globe has aggravated and multiplied issues of fragility across countries and regions, contributing to mass unemployment, increased poverty, heightened inequalities, political unrest and rising gender-based violence. For many countries, such issues and grievances are pushing them ever closer to conflict, exacerbating existing tensions and compromising the task of "building back better". For those already experiencing violence and conflict, prospects of peace and stability have become more distant due to the pandemic. Moreover, these challenges come at a time when peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts are fragmented and uncertain.

The *States of Fragility 2020* report underlines that putting people at the centre of the fight against fragility should be the starting point. Fragility undermines our sense of well-being and people's legitimate aspirations for education, health, community, representation, peace and security in clean and sustainable environments. There are no one-size-fits-all options in fragile contexts. Addressing fragility issues requires an approach based on local needs, priorities and resilience. To be effective, policies applied to address fragility should be informed by the systems and interactions that lie at the core of the fabric of society, and should involve all actors. Responding to fragility, preventing conflict, and building resilience and peace are a collective task. It is everyone's responsibility.

We have reached a turning point: The current crisis is challenging the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. One year into the "decade of action", we must focus our efforts on delivering on those ambitions while also taking fragile contexts into account. Responding effectively to the impact of COVID-19 and addressing pre-existing challenges such as climate change, inequality and polarising politics means responding to fragility, renewing faith in a shared vision and adapting our approach

to the current reality. In this context, States of Fragility 2020 makes an urgent call for collective action: OECD governments and their development agencies need to continue supporting countries and communities in fragile contexts by protecting ODA, supporting access to other sources of financing, promoting policies adapted to fragile contexts and prioritising partnerships at every level. As we continue to fight the worst health, economic and social crisis in nearly a century, now is the time to step up our collective efforts to address fragility and set our sights on a fair, inclusive, peaceful and sustainable future in a post-COVID world.

Angel Gurría
OECD Secretary-General

Foreword

The OECD Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD) has produced Fragile States publications since 2005. These publications explore trends and financial resource flows in fragile and conflict-affected countries and economies. They respond to increasing concerns about the implications of fragility for stability and development, especially in the context of Agenda 2030 and the international promise to leave no one behind. The OECD is one of only a handful of sources of aggregate data and analysis for fragile contexts as a group.

The purpose of the States of Fragility series is to provide compelling evidence and perspectives that can inform donor policies and underpin international debates. *States of Fragility 2020* marks the beginning of a new approach. This much shorter report is supported by an online platform and ten working papers that provide the substantive content underpinning the findings set forth in this document. The new approach is tailored to meet the needs of our audience of political decision makers, policy makers and practitioners to i) monitor levels and compositions of resource flows to fragile contexts, ii) understand qualitative trends related to these flows, and iii) gain an outlook on the key issues and countries to watch over the coming years.

This report is organised into three chapters. The first chapter identifies the most fragile contexts in 2020, considers their progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, and reviews official and other sources of finance available to support them. It also highlights the foundational importance of understanding and resourcing human capital for building resilient societies. The second chapter provides a comprehensive overview of approaches to peace in fragile contexts, proposes new analysis on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and emphasises the complementary value and potential of diplomatic and security actors. The final chapter bridges policy to practice, drawing on lessons learned in case studies to maximise the effectiveness of planning and operating in fragile contexts.

The data captured by the framework do not reflect the full impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis. However, given the magnitude and significance of the shock, data are referenced when available to add detail and context to recent trends on fragility.

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Abbreviations and acronyms

DAC	Development Assistance Committee (OECD)
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign direct investment
GDP	Gross domestic product
HCI	Human Capital Index
HDP	Humanitarian-development-peace
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LDC	Least developed country
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
n/a	Not available
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
USD	United States dollar

Editorial

One year into the Decade of Action, the 2030 Agenda is at a critical juncture. Progress on Sustainable Development Goals in fragile contexts had been slowing down until 2019. With the coronavirus (COVID-19) even that progress has stalled or is in reverse. While the full scale of the pandemic-related impact is only now unfolding, *States of Fragility 2020* demonstrates the need for urgent, context-specific and collective responses to help those most in need and ensure that no one is left behind. Addressing fragility in the 57 contexts classified as fragile in the 2020 edition of the OECD fragility framework means tackling the fundamental issues that affect people's lives: poverty, inequality, poor governance, violence, food insecurity, access to basic services, and peoples' ability to individually and collectively raise their voices to claim their rights.

Fragility is a global problem that disproportionately affects those who are least able to cope with it. The systemic shocks of climate change, global pandemics, conflicts and economic crises are most acutely felt in fragile contexts. In 2020, fragile contexts were home to 23% of the world's population and 76.5% of those living in extreme poverty globally. Prior to COVID-19, only 8 of the 48 fragile contexts for which data are available were on track to meet the first Sustainable Development Goal of ending poverty. Violence, armed conflict and forced displacement are concentrated in fragile contexts. In 2019, 22 of the 31 contexts in active, state-based conflict were fragile, representing 65% of the population of fragile contexts. And other manifestations of misery are concentrated in fragile contexts. While 18.4 of the 26 million total refugees in 2019 originated from fragile contexts, approximately half are living in contexts that are themselves fragile, with seven of the top ten refugee-hosting developing contexts being fragile.

This report shows that fragility is a multidimensional issue that transcends borders and connects to all levels of the global system from the international to the subnational. As countries and communities respond to its impact, COVID-19 has again highlighted the fundamental importance of long-term investment in building resilient societies and sustaining responses to issues of fragility. Over the last twenty years, fragile contexts have increased their links with the global economy, bringing both opportunities for development and risks that need to be managed – such as the current fall in foreign direct investment, remittances, and tax revenues. Putting public financing on a sustainable footing is challenging but

necessary, with fragile contexts carrying significant debt burdens. And while financing matters, it does not matter in isolation. Where, how and to whom resources flow – along with the quality of human capital and governance needed to make the most of them – can impact significantly on access to opportunities, incentives to stability or conflict, and resilience to shocks.

In the face of a global fiscal shock, members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) have pledged to strive to protect ODA. Development co-operation can do more, and ODA can work harder, particularly for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The system of actors and approaches to fragility is complex, fragmentary and still poorly understood. Yet addressing fragility is vital for peace. Unattended, issues of fragility cause grievance, disagreement and violence. Sound analysis is needed that identifies the root causes of fragility and violence and capitalises on the potential of all actors across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Such analysis can help build complementary and coherent approaches for peacebuilding and conflict prevention in fragile contexts.

People living in fragile contexts are falling further behind. Fragility must remain a focus for DAC members coherent responses to development and peace. The OECD will provide the policy-relevant data and analysis to assist actors across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to strengthen their efforts to prevent conflict, support peace, and sustain development. It is evident that COVID-19 has exacerbated existing risks and root causes to multidimensional fragility. As the world slowly arrives to a new normal, the women, children, and men most exposed to these risks in fragile contexts must be at the centre of inclusive, sustainable, and equitable efforts to build back better.

Jorge Moreira da Silva
Director,
Development Co-operation Directorate

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FRAGILE CONTEXTS HAVE REACHED A CRITICAL JUNCTURE FOR AGENDA 2030 AS THE FURTHEST BEHIND FALL FURTHER BEHIND

In 2020, before the coronavirus (COVID-19), fragile contexts were home to 23% of the world's population and also to 76.5% of all those living in extreme poverty globally. None of the fragile contexts were on track to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) on hunger, health, and gender equality and women's empowerment. The 13 extremely fragile contexts are at particular risk of being left behind from progress on sustainable development and peace relative to their peers: from 2012 to 2018, the gap in levels of fragility between them and non-fragile contexts increased every year. There is also evidence of a widening gap in progress along key SDGs. For example, in 11 of the 13 extremely fragile contexts, progress has stagnated or declined on SDGs related to hunger and gender equality, whereas progress is increasing or on track for achievement in more than half of non-fragile, developing contexts.

Alongside climate change, COVID-19 is a global systemic shock that is likely to intensify these trends and compromise even modest progress on the SDGs. For example, while 8 fragile contexts were on track to meet the first SDG on eradicating poverty, early projections suggest that the pandemic will result in 26 million additional people falling into extreme poverty by the end of 2020 in fragile contexts. The aftershocks of COVID-19 are also likely to disproportionately harm women's well-being relative to men's, manifesting in greater gender inequalities and what UN Women has termed a "shadow pandemic" of violence against women and girls. Children could be most severely impacted by the pandemic. As of mid-July 2020, 222.7 million primary school-age children were out of school in fragile contexts – 107.5 million of them girls – and early projections suggest that 36 million more children will be living in households in fragile contexts that cannot make ends meet by the end of 2020.

By exacerbating existing fragilities, the systemic shock will have serious implications for people, planet and prosperity. One year into the Decade of Action, fragile contexts are at a critical juncture if they are to achieve stability and refocus on achieving Agenda 2030.

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ADDRESSING THE CONSEQUENCES OF CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) MEANS FOCUSING ON FRAGILITY

The emerging evidence on the impact of COVID-19 is sobering – the consequences of COVID-19 will aggravate existing multidimensional risks and strain the coping capacities of those least able to cope. This is most apparent in health and education, the building blocks of sustainable development in fragile contexts. Focusing on fragility is imperative to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and build back better by resourcing resilience, restoring livelihoods, and supporting people's potential and well-being. This calls especially for supporting human capital through investment in health (including nutrition), education and social protection.

Official development assistance (ODA) is a critical resource for this effort. More net bilateral ODA – USD 76 billion – went to fragile contexts in 2018 than ever before, and in extremely fragile contexts, ODA amounted to 11.5 times the level of foreign direct investment (FDI) and 2.5 times the amount of remittances. ODA stands as a stable and risk-tolerant resource to support fragile contexts' pathways to sustainable development. OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) members gave USD 60.3 billion in ODA to fragile contexts in 2018, and recognising its importance, they pledged quickly to strive to protect ODA in light of the pandemic. This was an important first step. The next step will be to renew that pledge when the full extent of the pandemic's impact becomes clear.

Over the last 20 years, fragile contexts have gradually increased their connections to international systems, trade, migration and financial networks. For many fragile contexts, this improved economic connectivity has been a source of opportunity, increasing investment in infrastructure, opening access to new markets, facilitating new approaches to social service delivery, and enabling domestic and international finance where it might not otherwise be available. But connectedness also brings risks to be navigated, as the COVID-19 pandemic has made starkly clear. Fragile contexts may be among the hardest hit from reductions in external finance, FDI and remittances, with impacts on tax revenues and significant debt risks. Efforts to support the access of fragile contexts to domestic and international financing should include mechanisms to reduce the volatility of financial flows and prepare for so-called black swan events. Absent mitigating measures, estimated debt service owed in 2021 would amount to roughly 6% of total ODA in extremely fragile contexts and roughly 82% of ODA in other fragile contexts.

PREVENTING CONFLICT AND BUILDING PEACE IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

Preventing violent conflict is a long-term endeavour that aims to influence human behaviour and political incentives for or against violence. The system is complex, intervention is expensive and there are no guarantees of success. Although not synonymous with fragility, violence and armed conflict are concentrated in fragile contexts. In 2019, 22 of 31 contexts in active, state-based conflict were fragile, representing 65% of the population of fragile contexts. Additionally, progress on SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) has stagnated or declined in 41 of the 54 fragile contexts for which data is available, including 12 of the 13 extremely fragile contexts, underscoring the importance of investments in sustaining peace.

Violence and armed conflict affect everybody, and thus preventing them is a global, collective responsibility that is led by national actors with support from international partners. In 2017, the costs

of containing violence amounted to 86% of the total economic impact of violence on DAC member countries. Violence is cyclical and protracted, meaning that the benefits of preventing it, both in terms of lives and money saved, are significant and compounding each year. Engagement in fragile contexts should thus prioritise prevention always, development when possible and humanitarian action when necessary. However, DAC members' commitment to prevention does not always translate into investments: for example, only 4% of DAC ODA to fragile contexts in 2018 focused on conflict, peace and security. Identifying and addressing root causes of fragility and conflict through nationally owned and led processes is critical for effective peacebuilding and conflict prevention. These processes often depend on inclusive and diverse local partnerships that build on the strengths of local politics, institutions and civil society. To work best, they also must rely on a sound analysis of the broader context and operating environment that is conflict-sensitive and politically informed.

Yet contemporary analysis, frameworks and approaches for conflict prevention and peacebuilding are fragmented. Humanitarian and development support for these activities in fragile contexts is often critical, but security and diplomatic actors have valuable roles to play – roles that historically have enabled and enhanced peace. Between 1991 and 2017, 88% of the negotiated settlements in conflicts in fragile contexts involved third-party diplomacy. The full potential of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus must be utilised to drive informed analysis, adaptive frameworks and coherent approaches to help fragile contexts reach the global goals.

THERE ARE NO SOLUTIONS IN ISOLATION: THERE IS A NEED TO BUILD PARTNERSHIPS AT EVERY LEVEL TO SUPPORT RESILIENT LOCAL OUTCOMES

Fragile contexts test people and systems. Supporting societal transitions from fragility to resilience is complex, volatile and politically charged. But systems-informed strategy and adaptive operations across the nexus can and do deliver results in addressing fragility. International partners should identify how to better leverage their strategic comparative advantages, focusing on context-specific analysis as the starting point. International partners should also seek to identify and develop durable partnerships and co-ordinated approaches at multiple levels based on trust, conflict sensitivity and risk-sharing. As the diverse characteristics of fragility demonstrate (Infographic 1), actors must be capable of responding to a broad range of challenges that shape fragile contexts if sustainable outcomes are to be achieved.

WHAT IS FRAGILITY?

The OECD characterises fragility as the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, systems and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks. Fragility can lead to negative outcomes including violence, poverty, inequality, displacement, and environmental and political degradation.

Fragility is measured on a spectrum of intensity and expressed in different ways across the economic, environmental, political, security and societal dimensions, with a sixth dimension (human capital) forthcoming in States of Fragility 2022. Each dimension

is represented by 8-12 indicators – 44 in total across all 5 dimensions – that measure risks and coping capacities to fragility. In doing so, the OECD multidimensional fragility framework captures the intersection of fragility, risk and resilience to inform where and how international actors can help address the root causes of fragility in each dimension while bolstering sources of resilience against it.

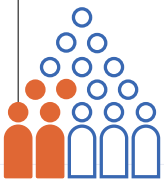
On the 2020 edition of the fragility framework are 57 countries and territories – hereafter referred to as contexts – of which 13 are extremely fragile and 44 are other fragile contexts. The framework captures the diversity of contexts affected by fragility and the dimensions of fragility in each context where indicators point to encouraging or worrying performance. Additional information on each dimension and what it measures, as well as the methodology for States of Fragility, is available on the States of Fragility platform, launched in October 2019 and containing the most up-to-date data and evidence on the states of fragility in fragile contexts.

Infographic 1. Characteristics of fragile contexts

Population

1.8 billion people, or 23%, of the world's population are living in fragile contexts in 2020. This figure is projected to grow to 2.2 billion by 2030 and 3.0 billion by 2050, which will represent 26% and 31%, respectively, of the total world population.

23% living in fragile contexts



Source: World Population Prospects, 2019

Geography

In 2020, 43% of the population in fragile contexts is living in urban areas, compared to 54% of the population in non-fragile contexts. This share is expected to increase to 48% in fragile contexts by 2030 and to 59% by 2050.

Source: World Urbanization Prospects, 2018

Youth

A third of the world's children (670 million) are living in fragile contexts in 2020, and they make up 38% of the total population of fragile contexts. This figure underscores the importance of human capital investments.

670 million under the age of 14 are living in fragile contexts

Source: World Population Prospects, 2019

Poverty

In 2020, fragile contexts are home to an estimated 76.5% of people living in extreme poverty (460 million). An additional 26 million people are expected to fall into extreme poverty due to the impact of COVID-19 in fragile contexts.

76.5% of people in extreme poverty

Source: World Bank

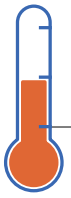
Food insecurity

In 2019, 44 of the 55 food-insecure contexts were fragile, accounting for 128 million (95% of global total) acutely food-insecure people in crisis or worse.

Source: World Food Programme Global Report on Food Crises 2020

Climate and environment

Half of the 48 contexts most exposed to climate change are fragile; together, they account for 61% of the total population of fragile contexts.



Half of most exposed contexts are fragile

Source: ND-GAIN Country Index

Violence and armed conflict

Fragile contexts accounted for 76% of all active, state-based violent conflicts and 96% of all deaths from state-based armed conflict in 2019.

76% of active state-based violent conflicts were in fragile contexts

Source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program

Forced displacement

In 2019, fragile contexts hosted 13.5 million refugees, and 7 of the top 10 refugee-hosting developing contexts were fragile. A total of 18.4 million refugees originated from fragile contexts, compared to 1.5 million refugees from non-fragile, developing contexts.

7 of top 10 refugee-hosting contexts were fragile

Source: UNHCR Refugee Statistics

Governance

In 2019, 35 fragile contexts were classified as authoritarian regimes; 17 were hybrid regimes; and 2 were flawed democracies.

Source: Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index, 2019

Gender

In 2017, the maternal mortality ratio in fragile contexts was 427 deaths per 100 000 live births, compared to 100 deaths per 100 000 live births in non-fragile contexts.

4 times higher maternal mortality in fragile contexts

Source: World Development Indicators and World Population Prospects, 2019

THE STATE OF FRAGILITY IN 2020

01

ABSTRACT

This chapter presents the main findings of the 2020 OECD fragility framework. It reviews the contemporary landscape of fragility, now exacerbated by the shock of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that jeopardises the modest progress fragile contexts had made towards achieving the ambitions of Agenda 2030. The chapter makes the case for consideration of human capital in the analysis of fragility and outlines the critical role of official development assistance (ODA) and other sources of financing available to fragile contexts as they work to achieve stability and their Sustainable Development Goals.

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IN BRIEF

THE STATE OF FRAGILITY IN 2020

- **The furthest behind are being left further behind**. The difference in levels of fragility between extremely fragile and non-fragile contexts has widened especially over 2012-18. In most extremely fragile contexts for which data are available, progress on eight Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has plateaued or is declining; in most non-fragile contexts, progress is increasing or on track.
- **Poverty is concentrated in fragile contexts**. Fragile contexts were home to 460 million people living in extreme poverty in 2020, or 76.5% of the worldwide total. Fragile contexts account for 23% of the world's population, but also 43% (26 million people) of those expected to fall into extreme poverty due to COVID-19 by the end of 2020.
- **Progress on the majority of the global goals has stalled**. Even before the shock of COVID-19, the majority of fragile contexts were on track to meet just one SDG – SDG 13 on climate action – and progress was particularly challenged on SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (health) and SDG 5 (gender equality).
- **ODA is a critical resource for fragile contexts**. At USD 76 billion, total bilateral ODA to fragile contexts in 2018 amounted to 2.3 times the level of foreign direct investment (FDI) and two-thirds the value of remittances (USD 113.5 billion). In extremely fragile contexts, ODA outweighs both FDI and remittances by 11.5 and 2.5 times, respectively.
- **DAC members spent USD 60.3 billion – 63% of their net country-allocable ODA – on total ODA to fragile contexts**. Given the relative weight of ODA, especially in extremely fragile contexts, striving to protect it considering COVID-19 is important to help these contexts meet short-term needs while capitalising on opportunities for a greener and more resilient recovery. It is also in the national interest of DAC members and aligned with their global commitments to sustainable development and peace.
- **Fragile contexts have greater access to diverse sources of financing alongside greater risks**. Fragile contexts received a total of USD 33.4 billion in FDI in 2018. But while some receive significant volumes of FDI, others have had net disinvestment. Meanwhile, only a third of the 43 fragile contexts analysed have reached the 15% ratio of tax to gross domestic product (GDP), a widely considered benchmark for effective state functioning and economic development. And by the end of 2018, low-income and LDC fragile contexts owed an estimated USD 432.6 billion, with 11% of this total owed by extremely fragile contexts. Absent mitigating measures, estimated debt service owed in 2021 would amount to roughly 6% of total ODA in extremely fragile contexts and roughly 82% of ODA in other fragile contexts.
- **Human capital is a building block of sustainable development**. Fragile contexts are lagging on critical measures of human capital. All but one of the 47 fragile contexts on the World Bank's Human Capital Index fall below the worldwide average. Supporting human capital in fragile contexts through investments in health, education and social protection is important to promote well-being and build resilience.

What does fragility look like in 2020?

The state of fragility in 2020 is a story in two parts – as it existed before COVID-19 and as it exists now that the impact of the pandemic has dramatically altered the landscape of fragility. The results of the OECD fragility framework do not yet capture the full effects of the pandemic, but evidence and examples from other sources portray a sobering reality. COVID-19 represents a systemic shock that will exacerbate multidimensional risks and strain the coping capacities serving to counterbalance these risks across the dimensions of fragility. While the situation is evolving rapidly, features of the new landscape are emerging. Some anticipated consequences of COVID-19 in fragile contexts are encapsulated in Box 1.1.

BOX 1.1. CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS

- **Extreme poverty**: Globally, extreme poverty is expected to increase for the first time in more than two decades (Lakner et al., 2020[1]). In fragile contexts, **26 million more people** will fall into extreme poverty due to the pandemic and its socio-economic impact in 2020, accounting for **43% of the global projected increase** (60 million people), according to the authors' calculations based on projections from 1 June 2020 by the World Bank (Lakner et al., 2020[1]).
- **Child poverty**: By the end of 2020, many more children will be living in households that cannot make ends meet. According to the authors' calculations based on projections from Save the Children and UNICEF produced in August 2020 (Fiala et al., 2020[2]), **36 million more children, or a third of the global total** of 106 million children, will be living in monetary poor households in fragile contexts.
- **Education**: Lockdowns in response to COVID-19 have precipitated an education emergency. In fragile contexts, **384.5 million children** were still out of school (across pre-primary, primary, secondary, and tertiary levels) as of 15 July 2020, and **183 million** of them were girls (UNESCO, 2020[3]). Save the Children estimates that, globally, 12 contexts are at extreme risk of falling behind on progress towards SDG 4 (education) due to the pandemic (Warren and Wagner, 2020[4]); **11 of these 12 contexts are fragile**. In the 29 fragile contexts for which data are available and based on United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) estimates, the annualised effective out-of-school rate for primary education is projected to increase from **22% in 2019 to 34% in 2020**, compared to global averages of 9% in 2019 and 20% in 2020 (UNDP, 2020[5]).
- **Social protection**: In the midst of a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, social protection is vital to safeguard livelihoods and human capital. As of 10 July 2020, fragile contexts had implemented 113 social assistance programmes, 15 social insurance programmes, and 8 labour market measures in response to COVID-19 (Gentilini et al., 2020[6]).
- **Violence and armed conflict**: Since the appearance of COVID-19, ceasefires have been offered in 10 fragile contexts but only been reciprocated in 5 of the 10 (PSRP, 2020[7]). Only in Sudan is there a mutually accepted ceasefire, which was still in place as of mid-July. But there have been notable ramifications for political violence and protest in fragile contexts. The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project COVID-19 Disorder Tracker has recorded 2 251 episodes of political violence related to the pandemic in fragile contexts, resulting in 477 fatalities as of 1 August 2020 (ACLED, 2020[8]).
- **ODA**: The COVID-19 global humanitarian response plan calls for USD 10.3 billion in funding, of which 22% had been pledged or committed as of 20 August 2020 (UN, 2020[9]). For plans and appeals specific to fragile contexts, USD 7.6 billion is required, of which only 19.5% (USD 1.5 billion) has been funded. Before the pandemic, ODA to priority sectors relevant to COVID-19 response in fragile contexts had increased over 2010-18 including to gender equality and women's empowerment (by 99%), humanitarian response (44%), health (26%), social safety nets (20%), water and sanitation (19%), and education (6%).

Globally, gaps are widening and exacerbated by the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis

Fragility in 2020 is global and dynamic. This was as true before the pandemic as it is now. Every country, state or territory – henceforth referred to as contexts – experiences varying states of fragility across its five dimensions and over time. These states of fragility emerge from a complex interaction of risks and coping capacities at various levels ranging from the international to the subnational. This publication highlights 57 contexts that exhibit comparatively higher levels of fragility relative to their peers, including 13 classified as being extremely fragile. Almost a quarter of the world's population (23%), and more than three-quarters (76.5%) of those already extremely poor before COVID-19, live in one of these 57 fragile contexts in 2020 (Lakner et al., 2020[1]; UN DESA, 2020[10]).

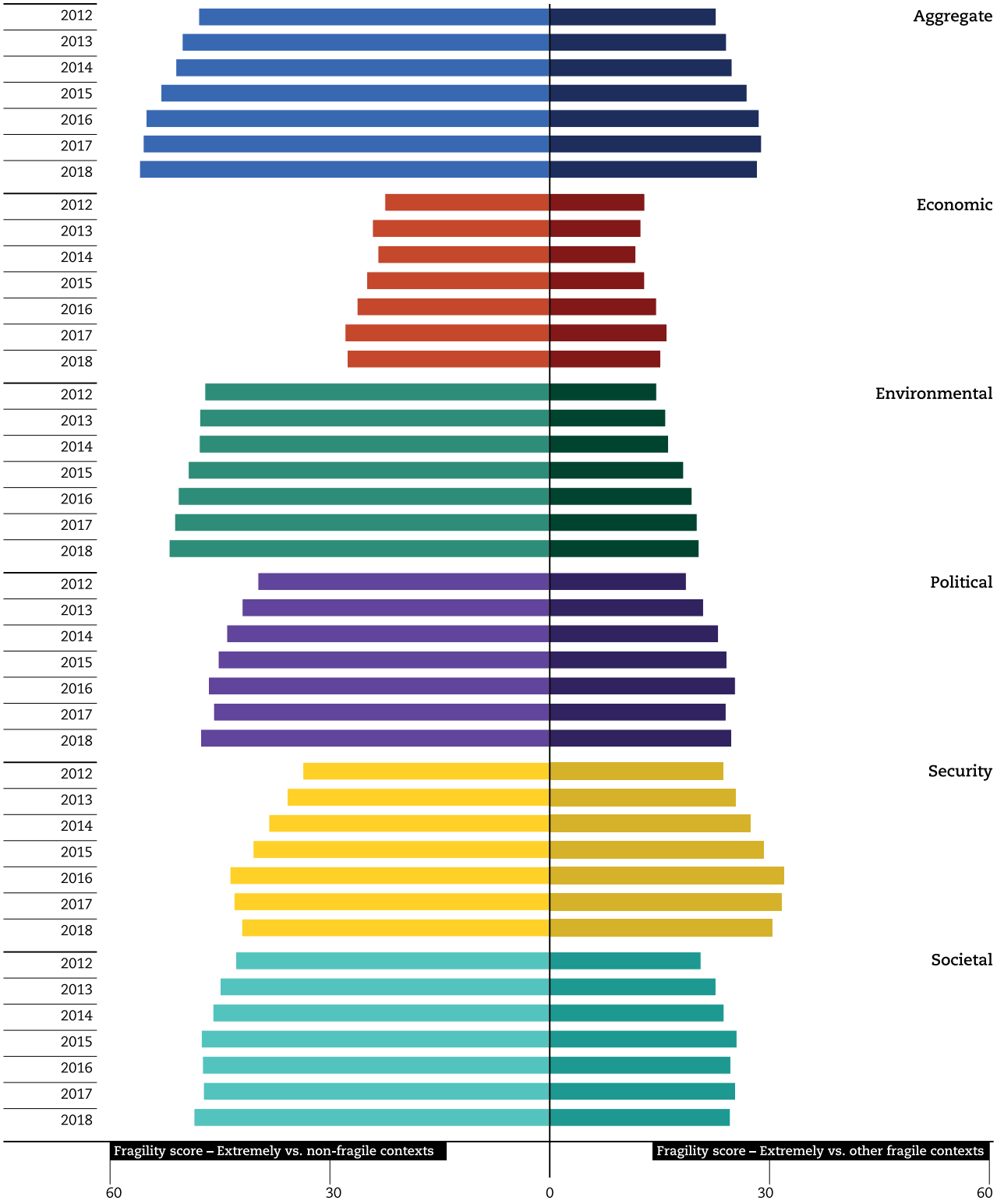
Globally, the story of fragility is one of widening gaps over time. From 2012 to 2018, the difference in levels of fragility between extremely fragile and non-fragile contexts grew, albeit by varying degrees across dimensions (Figure 1.1). For example, the differences grew year to year for overall and environmental fragility. In the security dimension, the difference between extremely and non-fragile contexts was widest in 2016, then narrowed afterwards. If the trend in overall fragility persists in the Decade of Action for Agenda 2030, extremely fragile contexts risk being left further behind from sustainable development progress. With COVID-19 magnifying the underlying drivers of fragility, contexts are likely to face yet another hurdle to achieving long-term peace, security and prosperity. In Yemen – the most fragile context in the 2020 fragility framework – COVID-19 has "made the health system's collapse complete" following years of war and conditions of famine (MSF, 2020[11]). In Nigeria, a fragile context that is recovering slowly from an economic recession four years ago and is home to the world's largest concentration of people living in extreme poverty, 40% of non-farm workers reported losing income in May 2020 (World Bank, 2020[12]). The COVID-19 impact is similarly dire in Sudan, an extremely fragile context on the 2020 framework with severe economic, political and societal fragility. In July 2020, an estimated 9.6 million people were experiencing crisis or worse levels of food insecurity – more than at any time in Sudan's history – due to lockdowns, conflict-induced displacement and inflation (IPC, 2020[13]). In many respects, COVID-19 is expected to reverse progress on human development globally (UNDP, 2020[5]).

Analysing the context-level picture: there are 57 fragile contexts in the 2020 edition of the OECD fragility framework

Since the findings presented in *States of Fragility 2018*, four contexts (Cambodia, Lesotho, Nicaragua and Togo) moved onto the framework and five contexts (Egypt, Malawi, Nepal, Rwanda and Timor-Leste) moved off (Box 1.3). Each context has faced different multidimensional challenges that have shaped its state of fragility and contributed to its placement on the framework. This edition marks Nicaragua's first appearance on the fragility framework following increases in all five dimensions of fragility since the 2018 framework. Similarly, fragility in Togo increased over the two-year interval in all but the economic dimension, with the rise in societal and political fragility contributing especially to its movement onto the framework.

At the other end of the spectrum, this publication is the first OECD report on fragility to not include Timor-Leste, which is not on the latest framework owing to marked declines in its economic and environmental fragility (Box 1.2). Malawi, too, exited the fragility framework following declines in its economic fragility and, as

Figure 1.1. The growing gap of fragility, 2012-18

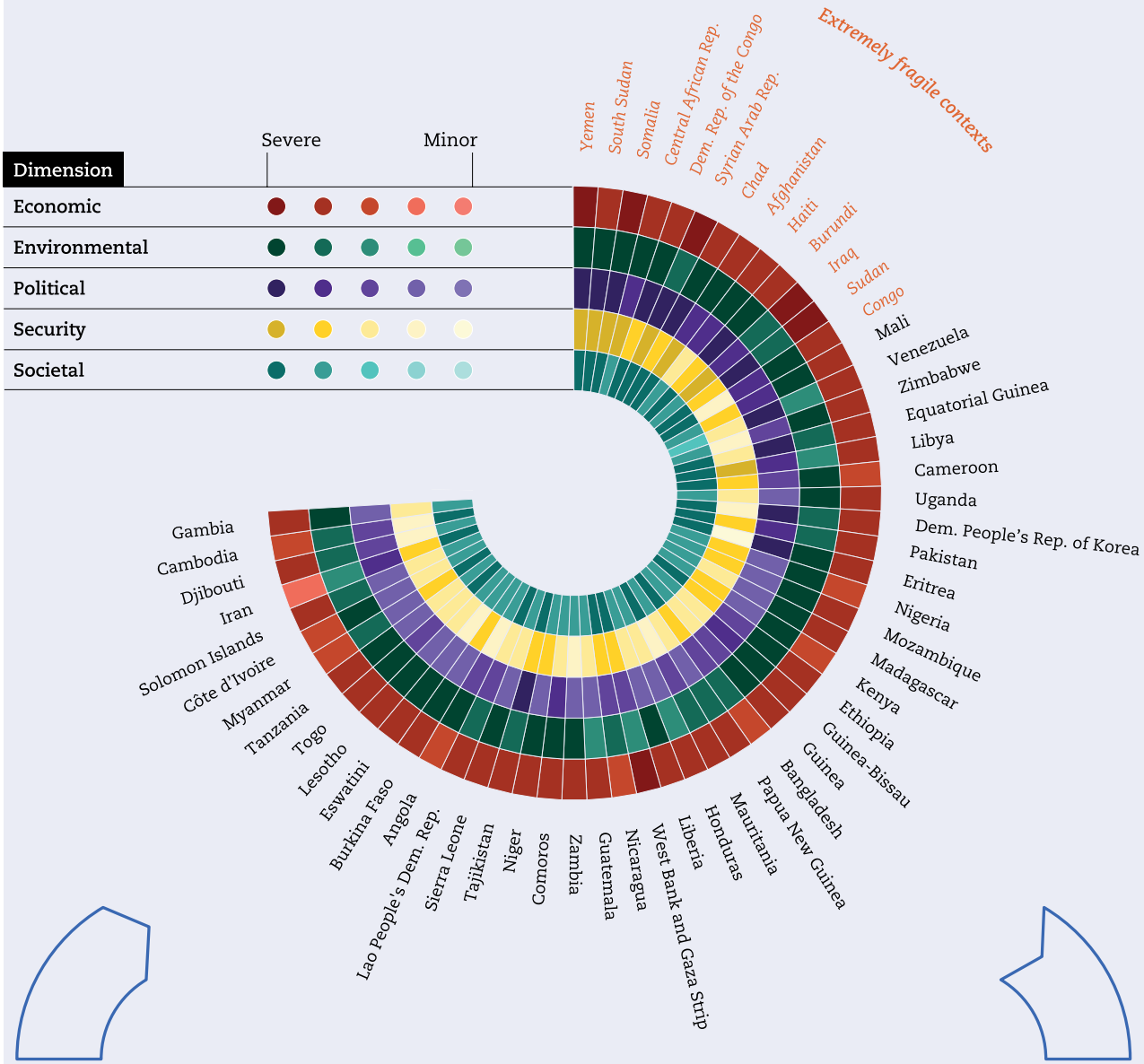


Note: The fragility score for extremely fragile, other fragile and non-fragile, developing contexts is calculated using an arithmetic average of the fragility scores of the contexts in each category. Scores are available for 13 extremely fragile, 44 other fragile, and 66 non-fragile, developing contexts.

Source: Desai and Forsberg (2020[14]), "Analysing the multidimensional fragility framework for States of Fragility 2020".

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787//888934167771

Infographic 1.1. OECD fragility framework 2020



New contexts since States of Fragility 2018

Nicaragua	Lesotho
Togo	Cambodia

Removed contexts since States of Fragility 2018

Egypt	Malawi
Nepal	Rwanda
Timor-Leste	

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BOX 1.2. FRAGILITY IN PERSPECTIVE: TIMOR-LESTE

Timor-Leste exited the fragility framework in the 2020 edition. It has done so through sustained investments over time in mitigating conflict, strengthening political institutions and building economic resilience. Since the results published in *States of Fragility 2018*, the country's fragility has declined in all dimensions apart from a slight increase in the security dimension.

Timor-Leste's progress underscores the value of joint, risk-informed approaches between governments and international partners to target and address the root causes of fragility and promote long-term peace and development (Reed, 2017[16]). In 1999, a Joint Assessment Mission, co-ordinated by the World Bank in partnership with international actors and Timorese stakeholders, established joint priorities between national authorities, led by the National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction, and their funding partners. This partnership mobilised reconstruction funds early on, in parallel with the deployment of a United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission. This enabled a smooth transition from humanitarian to development assistance while avoiding gaps in reconstruction activities.

Through joint planning, humanitarian, development and peace actors adopted an approach that targeted the root causes of fragility and defined clear roles and responsibilities among institutions involved in post-conflict reconstruction. Though Timor-Leste still faces challenges 20 years after the end of its conflict and 15 years after the departure of the UN peacekeeping mission, it continues to make progress on its sustainable development objectives and maintaining peace and stability. The *Sustainable Development Report 2020* finds that Timor-Leste is on track to meet SDG 4 (education), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and SDG 17 (partnerships) and that its progress is moderately increasing towards five other SDGs (Sachs et al., 2020[17]). On the other hand, its progress has stagnated on SDG 1 (poverty), SDG 5 (gender equality), SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure) and SDG 14 (life below water), and it is decreasing on SDG 15 (life on land) (Sachs et al., 2020[17]).

reflected in its recent elections, in political fragility (The Economist, 2020[15]). Other shifts of note are those of Cambodia and Lesotho, which were included in the 2016 but not on the 2018 fragility framework. Their movement onto the 2020 framework is a reminder that the trajectories of fragile contexts are not linear. It remains to be seen whether the contexts that left the framework in this edition will sustain their exit from fragility, especially as they address aftershocks from COVID-19.

Overall fragility declined in 103 and rose in 72 of the 175 contexts analysed in 2020. These shifts are relatively modest, however. Only 33 of the 175 experienced a notable change. The picture is different for the 57 fragile contexts: fragility increased over the 2018 analysis in 32 contexts and declined in 25, suggesting a slight increase in average aggregate fragility in the 57 fragile contexts since the results of the 2018 framework. Among these 57 contexts, 13 have experienced significant shifts upwards or downwards in fragility.

Moving from fragility to resilience is a non-linear and complex process with no guarantees – thinking in systems can inform such a process

Fragility has changed over time at both a global and context level. How it is understood and analysed has changed as well. Until five years ago, the OECD portrayed fragility in its reports as a binary: either a context is fragile, or it is not. Starting with *States of Fragility 2015*, the OECD introduced a multidimensional fragility framework that treats fragility as the product of an interaction of risks and sources of resilience that can be identified and analysed. *States of Fragility 2020* moves a step further by applying this multidimensional approach to better understand how contexts can move from

BOX 1.3. MOVEMENTS, DETERIORATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS

A range of factors contribute to the increases and decreases in fragility that lead to movements on and off the fragility framework. Fragility declined sufficiently in five contexts that were on the 2018 fragility framework to move them off in 2020; four contexts moved onto the 2020 framework due to increases in fragility. The fragile context profiles on the OECD States of Fragility platform[1] provide a wealth of additional and specific information on individual contexts.

The following are snapshots of the contexts that moved on and off the fragility framework:

Off

- **Egypt**: Fragility declined overall and in each dimension except in the security dimension, with the declines in political and societal fragility being notable.
- **Malawi**: Fragility declined, in descending order of magnitude, in the political, economic, and environmental dimensions. On the other hand, fragility in the security and societal dimensions increased slightly.
- **Nepal**: Fragility declined, in descending order of magnitude, in the political, economic and security dimensions but increased slightly in the environmental dimension and significantly in the societal dimension. The declines in economic and political fragility were significant.
- **Rwanda**: Fragility declined, in descending order of magnitude, in the political and security dimensions while increasing slightly in the economic, environmental and societal dimensions.
- **Timor-Leste**: Fragility declined in all dimensions except security, which showed a slight increase in fragility. Notable declines in economic and environmental fragility contributed to Timor-Leste's exit.

On

- **Cambodia**: Fragility increased most in the societal dimension followed by the political dimension, with declines in the economic, environmental and security dimensions. Overall fragility has not changed significantly.
- **Lesotho**: Fragility increased notably in the societal dimension followed by the economic and political dimensions, with declines in the environmental and security dimensions.
- **Nicaragua**: Fragility increased across all five dimensions, with notable increases in political, security and societal fragility.
- **Togo**: Fragility increased in all but the economic dimension, with increases in political and societal fragility being notable.

"fragility to resilience" (Ingram and Papoulidis, 2018[18]). The fragility-to-resilience paradigm is gaining momentum among prominent actors in fragile contexts such as the World Bank, the United States and European Union (EU) institutions (World Bank Group, 2020[19]). It does not imply a linear pathway out of fragility and towards resilience but rather involves identifying complex and interacting risks at a high level, understanding their root causes, and developing strategies to address them by strengthening the absorptive, adaptive and transformative capacities of a system (Ingram and Papoulidis, 2018[18]; OECD, 2014[20]).

Fragility and resilience are not at opposite ends of a spectrum. Nor is a movement away from fragility and towards resilience guaranteed. Additionally, strengthening resilience does not always prevent risks related to fragility and conflict from materialising, which underscores the need for investments in prevention (Chapter 2). Both fragility and resilience are properties of complex systems whose behaviour cannot be readily predicted or understood. In this view, navigating fragility means adopting a mindset of best guesses, fast feedback and adaptation to get results – and above all, of course, guarding a sense of humility

in light of the complex, multidimensional challenges that fragility poses to sustainable development and peace. This approach places an emphasis on conflict-sensitive and politically informed analysis and ways of working. Practitioners in fragile contexts are akin to navigators. A mechanical way to navigate systems is to go from point A to B in a straightforward way, using a preset log-frame to guide engagement. Another way is to embrace complexity and adaptation, which involves asking questions and using the available evidence to learn iteratively and influence openings in the system that most affect change.

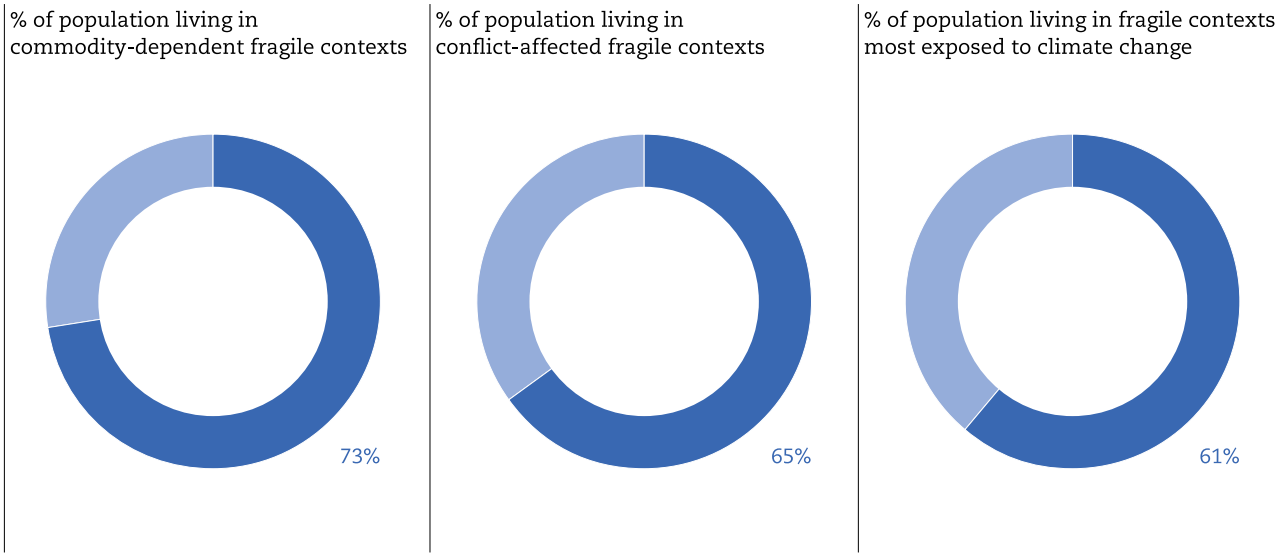
This latter way of working has significant implications for DAC members' monitoring, evaluation and learning systems (Hernandez, Ramalingam and Wild, 2019[21]). Increasingly, DAC members are experimenting with such approaches in fragile contexts, for example through scenario planning, outcome mapping and developmental evaluations (Pasanen and Barnett, 2019[22]). The OECD's resilience systems analysis also provides a practical approach to understand the landscape of risks and the broader system within which they emerge, as do tools being developed by DAC members (such as Belgium and Denmark)[2] that rely on the OECD fragility framework to assess systemic risks and coping capacities to fragility (OECD, 2014[20]). The data and evidence that are discussed in this publication and that underlie the OECD's multidimensional fragility framework can help produce actionable insights to guide navigation of systems within fragile contexts and support trajectories from fragility to resilience. Importantly, all levels of a system – from the international to the subnational – affect each other. The implication for a practitioner is to understand those intersections and devise interventions that capitalise on openings within the system to create change. Additionally, the dimensions of fragility represent systems unto themselves that interact to produce varying states of fragility and affect the eventual placement of contexts on the fragility framework.

Fragile contexts comprise a heterogeneous group across income, regions, and thematic issues

The heterogeneity of fragile contexts as a group underscores the importance of starting with the context, as discussed further in Chapter 3. At the same time, fragility can be more prevalent in certain groups of contexts than in others, and this informs donors' priorities as they are devising their context, regional or thematic strategies (Corral et al., 2020[23]). For example, approximately 8.6 out of 10 people in sub-Saharan Africa are living in a fragile context, compared to 4 out of 10 people in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). While poverty and income are associated with fragility, not all fragile contexts are low-income; 63% of the population of fragile contexts lives in middle-income economies. Finally, although cross-cutting issues such as commodity dependence, violent conflict and climate vulnerability are often linked to fragility, it is important not to conflate these (OECD, 2018[24]). For example, 8 of the 21 chronically fragile contexts[3] have not experienced an active, state-based conflict since 2009 (Pettersson and Öberg, 2020[25]). These issues do, however, affect and reinforce one another. As a consequence, almost three out of every four people in fragile contexts live in commodity-dependent economies, and approximately three out of five people live in conditions of violent conflict or in high exposure to climate change (Figure 1.2). These findings suggest that international

While poverty and income are associated with fragility, not all fragile contexts are low-income; 63% of the population of fragile contexts lives in middle-income economies

Figure 1.2. Population living in fragile contexts across different thematic groupings



Notes: Commodity dependence is measured according to the UNCTAD (2019[26]) list of 88 commodity-dependent developing countries. A context is "conflict-affected" if it experienced at least 25 battle-related deaths in 2019, the latest year for which data are available in the 2020 Uppsala Conflict Data Program database (UCDP, 2020[27]). Contexts "most exposed to climate change" are those that rank >144 on ND-GAIN Exposure in 2017 in the *ND-GAIN* database (University of Notre Dame, 2020[28]), which aligns with the criteria used in Krampe (2019[29]).

Sources: University of Notre Dame (2020[28]), *ND-GAIN* (database), https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/; UCDP (2020[27]), *Uppsala Conflict Data Program* (database), https://ucdp.uu.se/; UNCTAD (2019[26]), *Commodity Dependence, Climate Change and the Paris Agreement,* https://unctad.org/en/PublicationsLibrary/ditccom2019d3_en.pdf; UN DESA (2020[10]), *World Population Prospects 2019* (database), https://population.un.org/wpp/.

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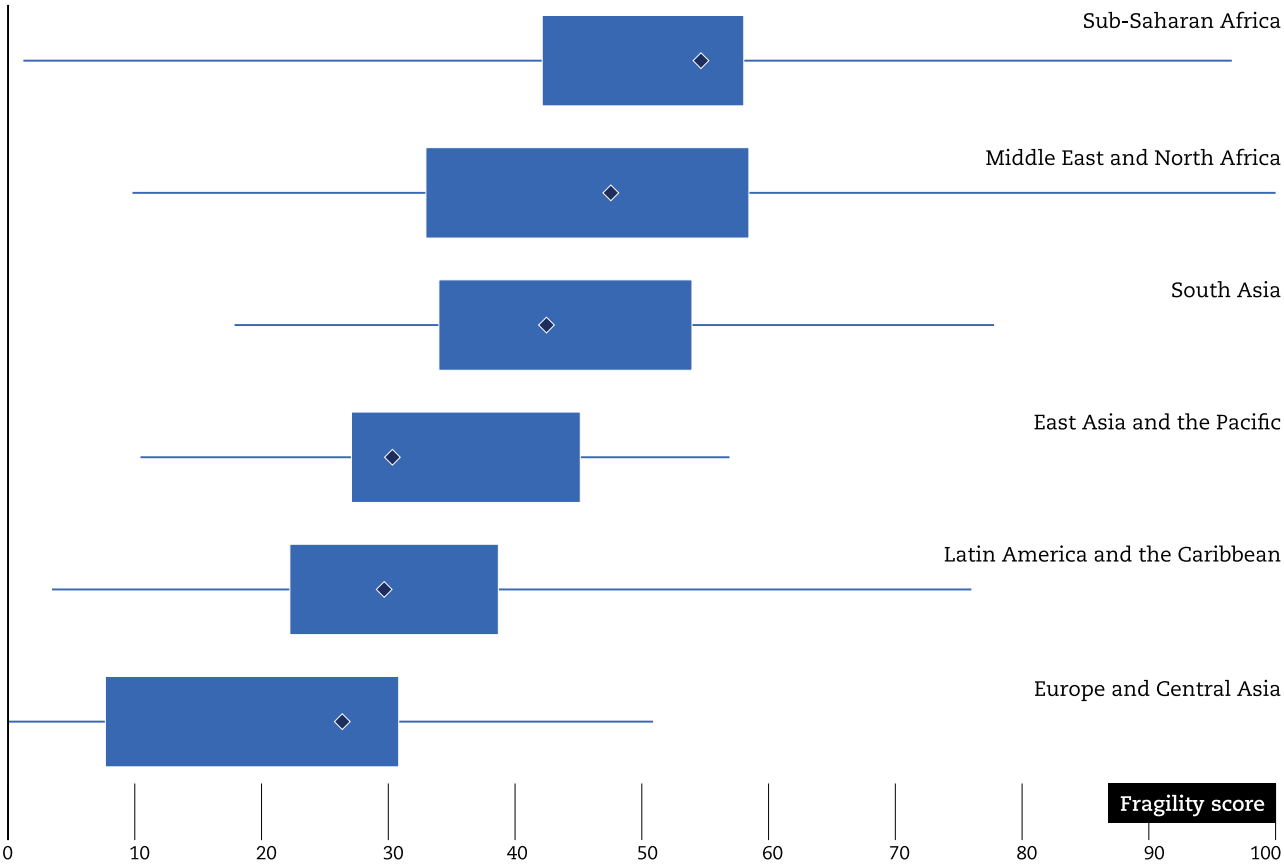
engagement on such cross-cutting issues cannot turn a blind eye to fragility, just as addressing fragility cannot disregard the cross-cutting issues.

Regions and subregions exhibit unique characteristics and varying levels of fragility overall and across dimensions

The drivers of crises and fragility are not confined within borders. Understanding fragility requires approaches that also extend beyond individual contexts. Analysis of this type is part and parcel of thinking in complex systems and the states of fragility within them. It helps inform more holistic approaches that consider the broader context and operating environment, which make a difference to the success of interventions at the context level. Transnational issues such as violent conflict, economic agglomeration, transnational crime and migration, climate change, and epidemics require "thinking and acting across borders" (OECD DAC, 2019[30]).

To facilitate this type of thinking, this publication introduces an aggregation of fragility scores at regional and subregional levels. Although such scores do not provide a complete and detailed account of underlying transnational issues, they are a starting point to inform donor priorities for regional strategies and establish a basis for joint analysis by international partners and their counterparts. These fragility scores also pave the way for more in-depth and complementary qualitative analyses and case studies. As an example, sub-Saharan Africa exhibits the highest levels of overall, economic and environmental fragility of any region, while political, security and societal fragility are highest in MENA, suggesting that actors could tailor their approaches to take the prevalent dimensions of fragility into account across regions. Figure 1.3 shows the levels of overall fragility across regions. The snapshots of each of the five dimensions of fragility are presented in Annex A. Analysing fragility at the regional level is an important step towards adapting the fragility framework

Figure 1.3. Aggregate regional fragility, 2019



Notes: The fragility score for each region is calculated using a population-weighted average of the fragility scores of the ODA-eligible contexts in each region, using population statistics in 2019 from UN DESA (2020[10]). ODA-eligible contexts consist of those on the DAC list of ODA recipients for reporting on aid in 2018 and 2019.
Sources: UN DESA (2020[10]), *World Population Prospects 2019* (database), https://population.un.org/wpp/; list of regions from World Bank (2020[31]), *World Bank Country and Lending Groups*, https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups; OECD (2020[32]) *DAC list of ODA recipients for reporting on aid in 2018 and 2019*, http://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/DAC-List-of-ODA-Recipients-for-reporting-2018-and-2019-flows.pdf.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934167809

to provide insights across complex systems at different geographic levels (OECD, 2018[24]).

Each fragile context is a system composed of subnational pockets of fragility

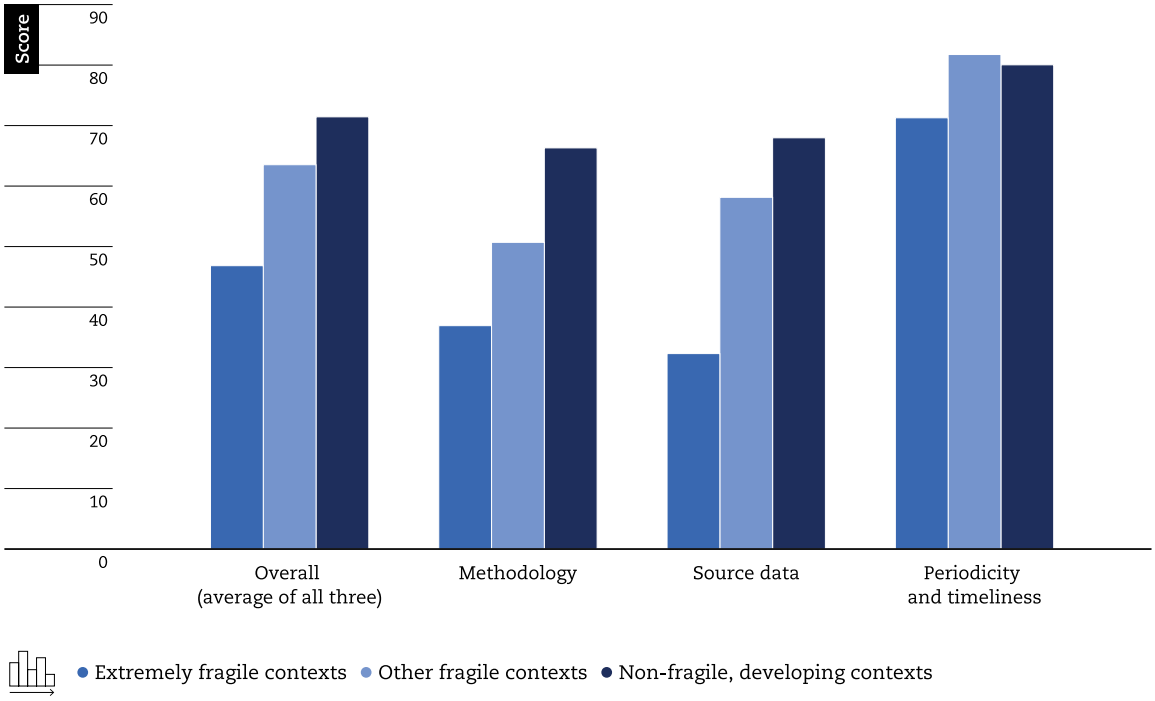
The fragility scores of each context on the framework reflect dynamic undercurrents of fragility within that context. Identifying pockets of fragility can facilitate donor co-ordination and help actors target their work according to need (Custer et al., 2017[33]; Manuel et al., 2019[34]). Identifying such pockets can also inform more disaggregated and "people-centred" policies (OECD DAC, 2019[30]) that leave no one behind, as this addresses where people are within contexts and provides an indication of what they need. There are limited data with which to apply the fragility framework to the subnational level. However, certain national indicators that are also available at the subnational level can highlight areas of vulnerability and lack of coping capacities. The subnational maps in the economic (Sudan), environmental (Myanmar) and security (Afghanistan) snapshots in Annex A highlight administrative areas with high levels of need on indicators relevant to fragility in each of these dimensions. These also can help actors determine where to target resources. Such maps support joint approaches among humanitarian, development and peace actors looking to manage risk and build resilience

BOX 1.4. THE STATE OF DATA TO UNDERSTAND STATES OF FRAGILITY

The availability and accessibility of data affect the quality of evidence-based decision making in fragile contexts. *States of Fragility 2018* outlined these data limitations in great detail, and the OECD has strived since then to improve data coverage in the fragility framework to better reflect the state of fragility globally and to reduce blind spots. For example, the 2020 edition of the framework analyses 175 contexts, 3 more than the 2018 framework. While it covers 99.5% of the world's 2019 population, this coverage varies within regions. Only 23 of the 38 contexts in East Asia and the Pacific, representing 98.6% of the region's population, are covered; MENA, sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia are fully covered. Meanwhile, only 4 of 11 small Pacific island nations are captured in the framework analysis, underscoring data gaps in these contexts. The challenges with data availability in Asia and the Pacific are well-documented: the latest Asia and the Pacific Progress Report notes that only 42% of SDG indicators are available to assess sustainable development in the region (UN, 2020[35]). There are signs of progress in closing data gaps, however. Last year, for the first time ever, data from a Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) of a Pacific island country or territory – the 2016-18 Papua New Guinea DHS – were made publicly available (National Statistical Office/Papua New Guinea and ICF, 2019[36]).

There is significant potential to strengthen data availability, reduce gaps and support data-driven policies through investments in data and statistical capacity. This is especially the case in extremely fragile contexts, which lag behind other contexts in their average performance on measures of statistical capacity (Figure 1.4). In 2018, DAC members gave USD 37 million of their ODA for statistical capacity in fragile contexts, which is a 37% reduction from the historical peak in 2013 and only 0.1% of their total ODA to fragile contexts (OECD, 2020[37]). To continue improving the comprehensiveness of the fragility framework, and help support data availability in fragile contexts and contexts covered by the framework more broadly, the OECD will look into how strategic investments in data and statistical capacity can yield value for money, with a focus on data gaps for women, children, the elderly, the disabled and other groups left behind in fragile contexts. This initiative is especially important for developing subnational measures of fragility.

Figure 1.4. The state of the data for assessing states of fragility, 2018



Note: The score for extremely fragile, other fragile and non-fragile, developing contexts is calculated using an arithmetic average of the score for all contexts in each category.

Sources: World Bank (2020[38]), *Statistical Capacity Score* (database), https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IQ.SCI.OVRL; World Bank (2020[39]), *Methodology Assessment of Statistical Capacity* (database), https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IQ.SCI.MTHD; World Bank (2020[40]), *Periodicity and Timeliness Assessment of Statistical Capacity* (database), https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IQ.SCI.PRDC; World Bank (2020[41]), *Source Data Assessment of Statistical Capacity* (database), https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/IQ.SCI.SRCE.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934167828

within contexts (Desai and Forsberg, 2020[14]). The next step is to develop the required data infrastructure to explore fragility holistically, across dimensions and over time, at the subnational level. The OECD cannot do this alone and anticipates the opportunity to collaborate with other data providers seeking to increase access to and transparency of data overall, and subnational data in particular. The state of data on fragility is outlined in Box 1.4.

Navigating fragility, shocks and pressures: Why fragility matters for the SDGs

One year into the Decade of Action, Agenda 2030 has reached a critical juncture

The combined impact of COVID-19 and multidimensional fragility on fragile contexts places Agenda 2030 at a critical juncture (Green, 2020[42]), as millions of people are at risk of sliding into conditions that reflect acute levels of fragility, such as poverty, high levels of conflict, and social and economic inequality. This is happening at a time when the functioning of the multilateral system has become more competitive, contested and patchworked against a backdrop of a "return to power politics, nationalism and trade wars" (Eggel and Galvin, 2020[43]), while political trends in fragile contexts show the persistence of authoritarian forms of governance. Fragility among fragile contexts that are authoritarian or flawed democracies has intensified since 2012 (Marley and Desai, 2020[44]). In 2019, 35 of the 54 fragile contexts (for which data is available) were categorised as authoritarian regimes, compared to 31 reported in *States of Fragility 2018* (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2020[45]). If the strategic vision of the Decade of Action is to be maintained, then the case for Agenda 2030 must adapt rapidly to connect with political realities in a multi-layered and dynamic global governance environment.

Prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19), most fragile contexts were on track to meet just one SDG, with progress stalled particularly on reducing hunger, ensuring healthy lives and achieving gender equality

Although most fragile contexts are on track to meet SDG 13 (climate action), none are on track to achieve SDG 2 (zero hunger), SDG 3 (good health and well-being) and SDG 5 (gender equality) – all SDGs for which substantial data are available across fragile contexts (Sachs et al., 2020[17]). The lack of progress on each of these SDGs underscores the urgency of investments in human capital, as discussed elsewhere in this report. Their lack of progress is especially concerning in light of projections that COVID-19 will add to the challenges to reaching these SDGs (Sachs et al., 2020[17]). For example, the latest State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World report finds that the pandemic may increase the total number of undernourished people globally by 83 to 132 million people in 2020 (FAO, 2020[46]). Progress also is not positive on other SDGs for which sufficient data are available to capture most fragile contexts. Only a third of fragile contexts are on track to meet SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), which has important implications for converting human capital into economic opportunities in fragile contexts. Very few fragile contexts are on track to reach SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy), SDG 9 (industry, innovation and infrastructure), SDG 11 (sustainable cities and communities) or SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). These findings highlight not only the significant challenges facing fragile contexts in meeting Agenda 2030, but also the lack of data available to properly assess progress for many of the SDGs. For example, data to assess progress on SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) and SDG 12

(responsible consumption and production) are not available for any of the fragile contexts.

The evidence in Table 1.1 also suggests that the trajectory for SDG progress among extremely fragile contexts is diverging from that of non-fragile contexts, underscoring that the furthest behind are being left further behind. Progress on eight of the SDGs has stagnated or decreased in the majority of extremely fragile contexts but has risen or is on track for achievement of the goals in more than half of non-fragile contexts.

Table 1.1. Progress on Sustainable Development Goals across extremely fragile, other fragile and non-fragile, developing contexts

	Extremely fragile contexts		Other fragile contexts		Non-fragile, developing contexts	
Sustainable Development Goal	**Progressing or on track for achievement**	**Stagnated or decreasing**	**Progressing or on track for achievement**	**Stagnated or decreasing**	**Progressing or on track for achievement**	**Stagnated or decreasing**
Goal 1 (no poverty)	10%	90%	42%	58%	85%	15%
Goal 2 (zero hunger)	15%	85%	38%	62%	56%	44%
Goal 3 (good health and well-being)	46%	54%	64%	36%	93%	7%
Goal 4 (quality education)	40%	60%	44%	56%	55%	45%
Goal 5 (gender equality)	15%	85%	50%	50%	61%	39%
Goal 6 (clean water and sanitation)	54%	46%	48%	52%	91%	9%
Goal 7 (affordable and clean energy)	38%	62%	48%	52%	86%	14%
Goal 8 (decent work and economic growth)	100%	0%	93%	7%	84%	16%
Goal 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure)	23%	77%	38%	62%	65%	35%
Goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities)	15%	85%	31%	69%	41%	59%
Goal 13 (climate action)	92%	8%	100%	0%	75%	25%
Goal 14 (life below water)	29%	71%	35%	65%	33%	67%
Goal 15 (life on land)	54%	46%	36%	64%	25%	75%
Goal 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions)	8%	92%	29%	71%	51%	49%
Goal 17 (partnership for the goals)	25%	75%	31%	69%	46%	54%

Notes: Data availability varied across each goal, but for the majority of them, data was available for at least 13 extremely fragile contexts and 42 other fragile contexts (with the exception of West Bank and Gaza Strip and Democratic People's Republic of Korea). There was not enough data available to assess progress on Goal 10 and Goal 12. Dark green colouring suggests that 50% or more of the contexts assessed are progressing or have achieved the respective Goal. Dark orange colouring suggests that 50% or more of the contexts assessed are stagnating or have declined in their progress.
Source: Sachs et al. (2020[17]), *The Sustainable Development Report 2020*, https://s3.amazonaws.com/sustainabledevelopment.report/2020/2020_sustainable_development_report.pdf

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934168303

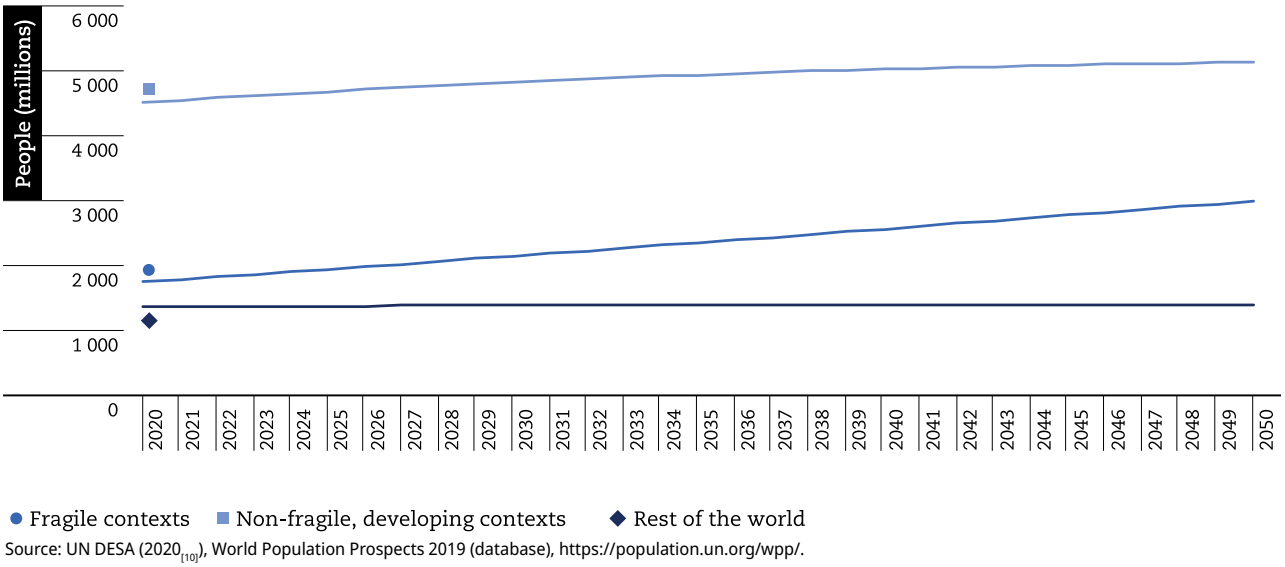
Fragile contexts will account for a quarter of the world's population in 2030, with urban areas accounting for 48% of the total population in fragile contexts

Not only did their progress on the SDGs appear to be limited before the COVID-19 pandemic, fragile contexts also were expected to account for a growing proportion of the world's population. As shown in Figure 1.5, 1.8 billion people are living in fragile contexts in 2020 (23% of the world's population). By 2030, this share is expected to increase to 26%, or 2.2 billion people (UN DESA, 2020[10]). Urban areas are projected to become more populous overall than rural areas by 2030-35. While 43% of the population of fragile contexts is living in urban areas in 2020, this proportion is expected to rise to 48% by 2030 and to 59% by 2050 (UN DESA, 2020[10]). The urban aspect of multidimensional fragility – poverty, housing issues associated with informal settlements and social inclusion – is becoming clearer in many contexts (Box 1.5). For example, Papua New Guinea and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) have among the highest urban poverty rates in the Asia Pacific region (Baker and Gadgil, 2017[47]). Average life expectancy in fragile contexts reached a historic high in 2017, the most recent year for which data are available. However, at 64 years, life expectancy is 10 years less than in the average non-fragile, developing context.

Despite a recent decline, armed conflict and its consequences are concentrated in fragile contexts, and political violence and violence against civilians is growing

Acknowledging the known limitations of conflict and violence data (Asylbek kyzy, Delgado and Milante, 2020[53]), the trend of falling rates on armed conflict must be understood against the backdrop of other forms of violence such as political violence. Fatalities from armed conflict globally continued their downward trend in 2019 (SIPRI, 2020, p. 2[54]). The three major armed conflicts identified by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in 2019 were in Afghanistan, the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) and Yemen, all extremely fragile contexts. (SIPRI, 2020[54]). Based on author calculations, incidents of violence against civilians in 54 fragile contexts for which data are available (excluding Comoros, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands) increased by 50% from January 2018 through December 2019 (ACLED, 2020[55]). The number

Figure 1.5. Population growth by type of context, 2020-50



Source: UN DESA (2020[10]), World Population Prospects 2019 (database), https://population.un.org/wpp/.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934167847

BOX 1.5. CITIES AS ARENAS OF FRAGILITY AND VIOLENCE

Urbanisation in fragile contexts is proceeding rapidly: nine of the ten contexts with the largest populations living in urban slums in sub-Saharan Africa are fragile (Commins, 2018[48]). Though the root causes of fragility in urban versus rural environments are essentially the same – corruption, inequality, weak governance, land disputes and access to basic services – they are often more intensive in cities. Urban dynamics change how fragility is experienced.

According to recent research on urban violence by Elfversson and Höglund (2019, pp. 347-348[49]), the socio-economic, environmental and political aspects of urban fragility present "specific characteristics and unique manifestations" as inhabitants grapple with rapid growth, inequality, segregation, informal settlements, and melting pots of ethnic and political tension. Evidence has emerged since 2018 showing that rapid, unregulated urbanisation is a key driver of fragility (OECD, 2018, p. 32[24]). For conflict-affected contexts, urban areas are politically contested spaces, as state-backed forces, rebel groups and militias resort to different forms of violence to pursue their political objectives (Carboni and d'Hauthuille, 2018[50]). The political character of these contests is frequently localised. For example, in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), violence in urban areas was personalised and focused on "revenue generation linked to aspirations for social mobility and status" (Verweijen, 2019, p. 7[51]).

In fragile contexts not affected by conflict, such as Nairobi, "violence in the urban informal settlements as well as in the rural areas can often be traced to the national political arena and the divisions between parties and politicians who mobilise along ethnic lines" (Elfversson and Höglund, 2019[49]). This national dynamic can intersect with other aspects of fragility to produce context-specific issues such as gerrymandering or the mobilisation of "poor youths" to further the political interests of local elites (Elfversson and Höglund, 2019, p. 355[49]).

Various interactions can further blur preconceived boundaries in urban environments where, as Kleinfeld and Muggah (2019[52]) note, "organized crime and state repression … are more intertwined than is commonly assumed". They further note that the international community has few tools to address the challenges of state and criminal violence and the reality of populations who, with no "automatic loyalty to the state", will look to other non-state groups such as urban gangs to address their needs.

Responding to these challenges will require rethinking the roles of private and social sectors, the scope of diplomacy and mediation, and the provision of better data and analysis that are collectively attuned to addressing issues of fragility in urban environments.

of protests recorded increased from 2 509 in Q1 2018 to 5 238 in Q4 2019 (ACLED, 2020[55]), part of a broader trend that suggests the potential for more serious forms of conflict and violence in many fragile contexts is growing. For example, incidents of civil unrest in sub-Saharan Africa rose by more than 800% in eight years, increasing from 32 to 292 riots and protests from 2011 to 2018 (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2020, p. 4[56]).

Most fragile contexts also are struggling to achieve momentum towards SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and as fragility intensifies in extremely fragile contexts, it fuels grievance and increases the risk of violence. The root causes behind these trends vary by context. For example, Burkina Faso, which fell 13 places from 2019 to 2020 on the Global Peace Index rankings, and Niger, which fell 11 places, both exhibit severe environmental fragility in the OECD fragility framework; meanwhile, Nicaragua, which slipped 15 places on the Index, exhibits severe societal fragility (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2020[56]). Conflict trends significantly affect the numbers of forcibly displaced people. More than two-thirds (67%) of all refugees worldwide came from just five conflict-affected fragile contexts. Except for Myanmar, all of these – Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan and Syria – are extremely fragile (UNHCR, 2020, p. 3[57]).

Fragile contexts are most affected by forced displacement, and multidimensional fragility is driving displacement

More than 79.5 million people were forcibly displaced during 2019 as a result of armed conflict, violence or human rights violations, including internally displaced people and asylum seekers. Of the total, 68% came from just five fragile contexts: Syria (6.6 million), Venezuela (3.7 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million), South Sudan (2.2 million) and Myanmar (1.1 million) (UNHCR, 2020[57]). An estimated 26 million people were refugees in 2019, the highest number of refugees ever recorded (UNHCR, 2020[57]). Fragile contexts hosted approximately half of the world's refugees in 2019. All of the ten top contexts of origin for international displacement situations were fragile in 2019, as were seven of the ten top developing contexts hosting refugees. Moreover, slightly more than one-quarter of the world's refugees are living in contexts experiencing severe environmental fragility. As of 2019, 77% of all refugees, or 15.7 million people, were living in protracted refugee situations of more than five years (UNHCR, 2020[57]). Fragility for people who remain in conflict zones should also be considered; "given their diminished resilience, those who stay behind are increasingly unable to cope with exogenous shocks, so that events unrelated to conflict may trigger waves of displacement" (World Bank, 2017[58]).

Multidimensional fragility relating to gender inequalities remains deeply entrenched

Gender inequality is a persistent challenge as the Agenda 2030 horizon approaches. Before COVID-19, there were signs of setbacks in progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment in fragile contexts. None of the 55 fragile contexts for which data are available are on track to achieve SDG 5 (gender equality): for 23 of these, progress is moderately increasing, but for 32, progress has stagnated (Sachs et al., 2020[17]). Gender relations are deeply political power relations and especially so in fragile contexts, where both patterns of gender discrimination and opportunities for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment are connected to wider fragility and conflict dynamics and to broader contestations over the distribution of power and resources (OECD, 2019[59]). The World Bank's (2020[60]) Women, Business and the Law survey finds significant disparities between fragile and non-fragile contexts on gender-related targets, particularly on objectives related to legal frameworks for women and girls in the family, in society and in the labour market. For example, in 2019, 38% of women and girls in fragile contexts (328 million) did not have legal protections against domestic violence, and half (425 million) did not have legal protections against gender-based discrimination in employment. In non-fragile developing contexts, only about 3% of women lack such protections. Progress is also uneven in the political sphere. While women's participation in parliaments, a useful indicator of political representation for which there is wide coverage, increased in fragile contexts over 2012-19, the rate of progress was lower than in non-fragile developing contexts and declined in extremely fragile contexts from 2017-19 overall.

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a disproportionate impact on women and girls, with the Executive Director of UN Women referring to it as a "shadow pandemic" due to the increased risk of violence against women (Mlambo-Ngcuka, 2020[61]). Early reporting from the International Rescue Committee suggests there has been an increase in this form of violence in fragile contexts such as Honduras, where reported cases increased by 4.1% each week in April and May 2020 (International Rescue Committee, 2020[62]). This figure is likely an underestimate as lockdowns due to COVID-19 have significantly increased the challenges to reporting domestic and intra-family violence, especially in fragile contexts such

as Bangladesh and Tanzania (International Rescue Committee, 2020[63]). Global figures from the UN Population Fund suggest that for every three additional months of lockdown, 15 million additional cases of gender-based violence are to be expected – a striking prediction that highlights the scale of the pandemic's impact on women and girls (UNFPA, 2020[64]). Additionally, evidence from the Ebola epidemic suggests that, when faced with budgetary pressures and the need to prioritise certain health services over others, governments are likely to scale back sexual health and reproductive services, which is also a risk in light of COVID-19 (WHO, 2020[65]).

Youth and children bear the brunt of fragility and its impacts on education and employment

In the 43 fragile contexts for which data are available, 66.1 million youth between the ages of 15 and 24 are not in employment, education or training, and almost three-fourths of these, or 47.9 million people, are women (ILO, 2020[66]; UN DESA, 2020[10]). Additionally, available data indicate widespread learning poverty (Marley and Desai, 2020[44]). Access to primary and secondary education remains a challenge for millions of children and youth in fragile contexts, limiting their ability to gain the skills and knowledge they need to lead productive and self-sufficient lives. Limited access is more pronounced in situations of violent conflict and among displaced populations and their host communities. Further slowing progress towards inclusive and equitable quality education for all (SDG 4), the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted education in 191 countries and caused schools around the world to temporarily close (UNESCO, 2020[3]). The impact of COVID-19 on education in fragile contexts, especially for girls, is expected to be severe, with 384.5 million children still being out of school as of 15 July 2020 across all levels of education (and 183 million of these children being girls). It is likely that many girls will never go back to school after the crisis (Albrectsen and Giannini, 2020[67]; Bandiera et al., 2020[68]). The digital divide experienced in many fragile contexts has made access to education during the pandemic all the more difficult. The annualised effective out-of-school rate in 29 fragile contexts (for which data is available) is expected to increase from 22% in 2019 to 34% in 2020 (UNDP, 2020[5]).

Youth living in fragile contexts face particular challenges in employment. They are more likely than older workers to be unemployed and underemployed due to their lack of experience and are found in disproportionate numbers working in the informal sector (UN, 2020[69]). This lack of economic opportunity and decent work conditions at home is a major factor driving youth migration. According to International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates in 2019, almost 30 million young people aged between 15 to 24 left their home countries to seek better economic opportunities abroad, accounting for about 11% of all international migrants (International Labour Organization, 2020[70]). However, many young migrants frequently find themselves trapped in exploitative job conditions when they arrive, including forced labour. The ILO has expressed concern over the risk that the pandemic poses in backtracking progress on child labour in fragile contexts. Higher poverty rates may result in more children being forced into child labour to support their families (ILO/UNICEF, 2020[71]).

The impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) highlights the systemic nature of fragility

Causes of fragility are not always endemic to fragile contexts. The systemic shock of the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and highlighted fragility globally, underlining the central importance of addressing fragility as a means to achieve the SDGs. The COVID-19 shock further underscores the interconnectedness of risks contributing to health, economic, environmental and climate-related fragilities (Nadin, 2020[72]). As

BOX 1.6. THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON FRAGILE CONTEXTS: GAMBIA

Gambia has made significant progress in all dimensions of fragility, and especially the political and societal dimensions since the fall of Yaha Jammeh's authoritarian regime in 2016. The impact of COVID-19 has affected progress in all areas and most notably in the economic and political dimensions. In the economic dimension, Gambia endured the double impact of falling remittances and a decimated tourist season, which typically represents 20% of its GDP (Bah and Stanford, 2020[76]). This occurred at a moment of unique political sensitivity, as the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission approaches its culmination alongside a proposed constitutional referendum and contentious presidential election. The political and security situation has also shown signs of stress, with growing discord between President Adama Barrow and the ruling United Democratic Party. Protests have given rise to mass arrests, and accusations of heavy-handedness by the police have cast a negative light on security forces at a time when the pandemic response has necessitated the diversion of resources away from security sector reform processes (Mutangadura, 2020[77]). In other ways, the government's response to the crisis has demonstrated some resilience, which reflects positively on recent reform efforts. For example, a social relief programme based on cash transfers is estimated to have reached 40.8% of the people most affected by the economic impact of the pandemic and included targeted stipends for new mothers (Kazeem, 2020[78]). In addition, the Gambian tourist board, with the support of the EU Youth Empowerment Project, is trying to use the crisis as an opportunity to move to more sustainable tourism that can "reduce poverty in rural areas by diversifying into community-based tourism, while extending the season into the 'green/tropical' months of July/August" (Bah and Stanford, 2020[76]).

the pandemic unfolded, reports of gender-based violence in many fragile contexts and in situations of forced displacement rose (Cone, 2020[73]; Yayboke and Abdullah, 2020[74]). Criminal organisations and armed militias were seen to capitalise on the opportunity of crisis, as the momentum behind the UN's call for a global ceasefire dissipated (Columbo and Harris, 2020[75]). Box 1.6 discusses how impacts of the pandemic reverberate through different dimensions of fragility in Gambia, which is one of the contexts in which overall fragility has declined the most since 2016.

The systemic shock of COVID-19 drives home how climate change impacts fragility across dimensions

Global temperature has already averaged 1.0°C above pre-industrial levels and is on track to reach 2.8°C by the end of the century under optimistic scenarios (CAT, 2019, p. 1[79]). This trajectory will substantially exacerbate challenges to sustainable development, as a global temperature rise of only 0.5°C is expected to increase poverty by several hundred million individuals (Roy et al., 2018, p. 447[80]). The multidimensional impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is giving the world a clear preview of what the cascading effects of climate change will look like in the years and decades to come as well as a real-time lesson in how shocks and disasters can reverberate across dimensions of fragility. Fragile contexts are at particularly high risk of being affected by natural disasters and therefore expected to face disproportionate impacts from climate change as it increases the frequency and intensity of these hazards. In 2019, 52.1 million people were affected by natural disasters in fragile contexts, the highest yearly number since 2010 and accounting for 55% of the total number of people affected by natural disasters worldwide (EM-DAT, 2020[81]). On average, 6 800 people have died from natural disasters in fragile contexts each year since 2011. While the severity of climate impacts will vary significantly by region, the climate crisis could reach a scale that results

in negative spillover effects globally – just as economic downturns caused by COVID-19 have occurred even in countries with low case-rates.

Climate change acts as a risk multiplier by compounding upon fragilities that already exist, exacerbating food and water insecurity, adverse health impacts and economic losses in already disadvantaged populations. The impact of climate change will be more pronounced in fragile contexts in the short to medium term, as the convergence of climate, conflict and fragility risks not only can add to food and economic insecurity and health disparities but also limit "access to essential services, while weakening the capacity of governments, institutions and societies to provide support" (ICRC, 2020, p. 8[82]). Of the 22 conflict-affected fragile contexts, 12 are also among the most exposed to climate change and together are home to 669 million people.[4] The global experience of systemic shocks – forest fires in the Amazon and the DRC, cyclones and locusts in east Africa, global pandemics, and economic crises, to name a few – alters the terms on which states respond to the call for a Decade of Action. As all development occurs within a changing climate, adapting to the effects of global temperature rise will be a necessary component of planning and operating in fragile and conflict-affected contexts (Chapter 3).

Why human capital should be considered in a multidimensional analysis of fragility

In 2022, the OECD will add a human capital dimension to its fragility framework in acknowledgement of the ambition set forth in *States of Fragility 2018* to "never lose sight of the end goal of delivering hope and better lives for all people in fragile contexts" (OECD, 2018[24]). As a measure of the knowledge, skills and health that people accumulate over their lives, human capital is an essential building block of sustainable development in fragile contexts and a powerful asset. Adding a human capital dimension to the OECD fragility framework thus will help place what matters to people – their well-being, lives and livelihoods – at the heart of development policy in fragile contexts. Indeed, support for human capital can provide the tools that everyone needs to utilise to achieve their individual life goals and aspirations, and the best possible outcomes for themselves and their families, while they cope with unforeseen events (UNDP, 2017[83]).

The OECD fragility framework analyses fragility across economic, environmental, political, security and societal dimensions, offering a nuanced perspective on fragility based on the interaction of risks and the coping capacities that help manage risks and build resilience. Because the framework focuses on sources of human vulnerability and resilience, a human capital dimension will enhance its rigour by providing evidence for how what matters for people shapes fragility across all dimensions and at all levels. This evidence can help support better and more effective policy and programming in fragile contexts. This section builds the case for why human capital matters for fragility and why investment in human capital can help develop more inclusive, peaceful and resilient societies.

Supporting human capital places people at the centre of policy while investing in their future potential

Fragility reverberates globally, locally and on the level of individuals. Placing people at the centre of sustainable development in fragile contexts means understanding how the issues that matter to people can affect fragility at all these levels, especially in contexts where parts of the population are the furthest behind. It means prioritising people's well-being, livelihoods and overall quality of life as a core concern and underlying motivation for policy and programming (OECD, 2018[24]; OECD DAC,

BOX 1.7. HUMAN CAPITAL IS AN ASSET THAT CAN HELP PEOPLE TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Considering human capital's role in multidimensional fragility means defining its position within a broader framework of analysis to showcase the interaction between people's lives and the complex systems that shape fragility or drive resilience. This also means ensuring that outcomes for people's well-being are a core concern in policy and programming. Livelihoods are sustainable when individuals and communities can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and when they can maintain or improve their capabilities and assets both now and in the future (OECD, 2014[20]; UNDP, 2017[83]; DFID, 1999[84]). Framing human capital as an asset that can help people build and maintain sustainable livelihoods will best reflect the OECD fragility framework goal to be multidimensional and people-centred. Framing human capital in this way will strengthen the framework, allowing for a look outward at how people's lives, livelihoods and well-being can impact fragility across all dimensions and at all levels, and how fragility impacts them (Forichon, 2020[85]).

2019[30]). As discussed, identifying pockets of fragility can inform more disaggregated policies, and the OECD methodology aims to move beyond the context level and bring a people-centred perspective to its approach to fragility. Assessing a population's level of human capital is useful because it provides measurable evidence of the return on investment in people (Box 1.7). Additionally, analysing how health, education and social protection affect people's well-being, lives and livelihoods can provide a tangible understanding of what shapes fragility from the perspective of the individual. This understanding can help international partners support the capacity of governments in fragile contexts to invest in the well-being of their populations and provide necessary public services.

The COVID-19 crisis and its impact on the global economy challenge the ability of governments to ensure the well-being of their populations and emphasise how important it is that they have the right mechanisms to do so effectively. With less than ten years remaining to meet the deadline for achieving Agenda 2030, success will require a greater focus on the building blocks of sustainable development – health (including proper nutrition) and education – and a renewed focus on providing financial support to the poorest by investing in social protection (Manuel et al., 2018[86]).

Human capital is an essential building block of sustainable development in fragile contexts that is vital to leaving no one behind

Support for human capital is an investment in the future. By supporting the human capital of their populations, countries can produce benefits at the individual, local and national levels, promoting resilience and helping maximise people's potential to live prosperous lives (Flabbi and Gatti, 2018[87]). The COVID-19 pandemic and its associated fiscal, political and social shocks bring into sharper focus the urgency of investing in human capital.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and its associated fiscal, political and social shocks bring into sharper focus the urgency of investing in human capital

Fragile contexts are lagging when it comes to human capital. All but one of the 47 fragile contexts measured in the World

BOX 1.8. WHAT IS HUMAN CAPITAL, AND HOW IS IT SUPPORTED?

Human capital can be broadly defined as the knowledge, skills and health that people accumulate over their lives and that enable them to build sustainable livelihoods and realise their individual potential. The core components used to measure an individual's human capital consist of "stock values" generally represented through levels of health and education; these include an assessment of an individual's existing human capital as well as the capacity of that individual to maintain health and gain the new knowledge and skills necessary to support future needs (World Bank, 2018[90]; UNDP, 2017[83]). Human capital can be supported through investments in health, education and social protection (Forichon, 2020[85]).

Investments in health and education are widely recognised as necessary avenues of support for human capital. Under the right circumstances, more and better education and proper healthcare can lead to increased wages, reduced inequality, economic growth, and overall economic and social empowerment of people. Education and health provide returns on investment at all stages of life. But they play an especially important role in early childhood development by promoting foundational cognitive skills, lowering child mortality and reducing stunting through proper nutrition – all areas that otherwise can diminish a context's potential for growth and affect well-being and livelihood outcomes for people for the rest of their lives (World Bank, 2019[91]; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2018[92]; Gilleskie and Hoffman, 2014[93]). While many fragile contexts have made some progress on health indicators such as maternal, under-five and neonatal mortality, there are systemic gaps in healthcare in most fragile contexts. In 2018, the under-five mortality rate in fragile contexts was almost twice the global average (Marley and Desai, 2020[44]).

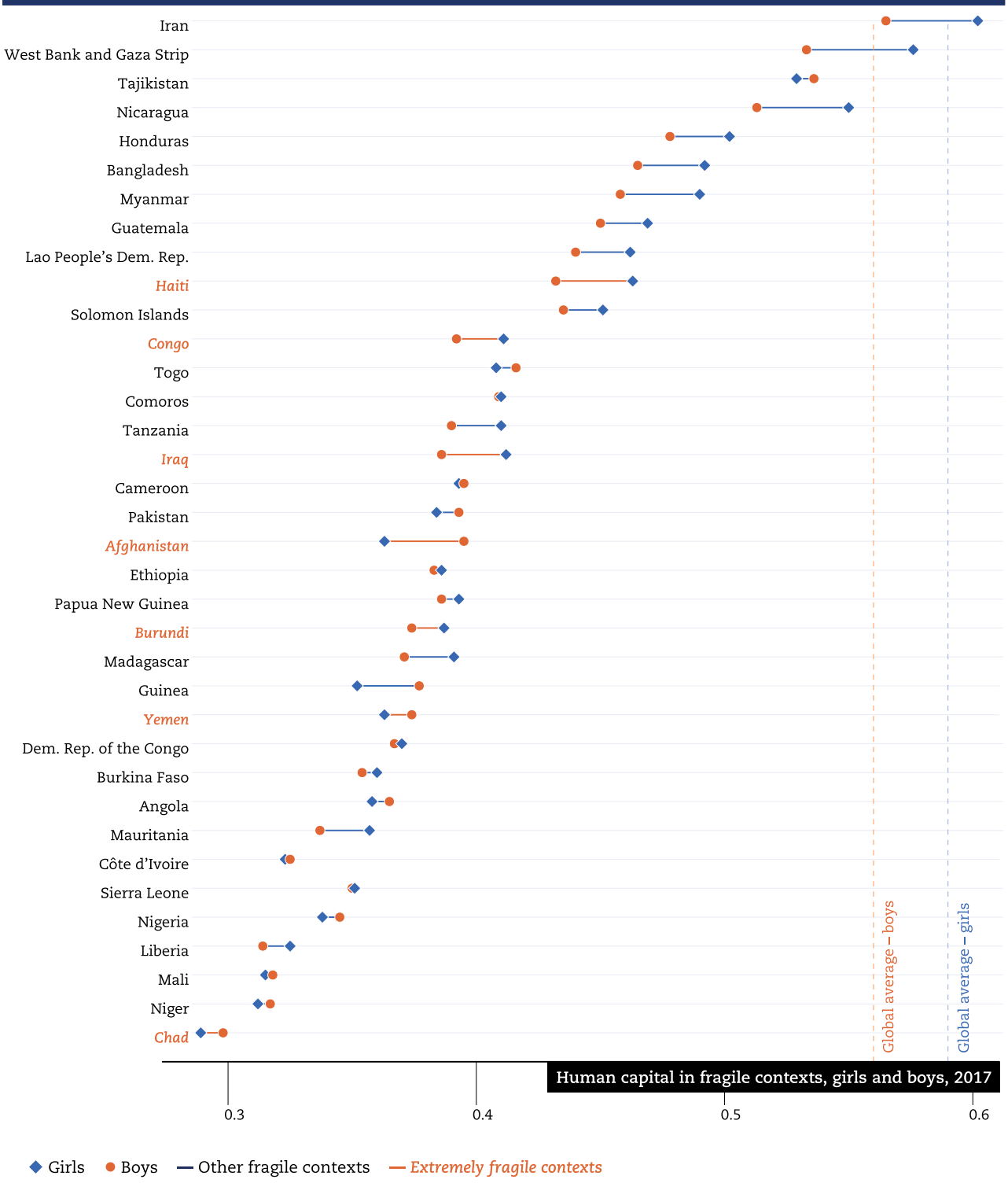
Social protection plays an important role in ensuring individuals' ability to fulfil their future needs. It can help provide people with the resources they need to build their human capital by increasing access to income, information and services and by serving as a form of insurance that protects them and allows them to invest in their well-being and that of their families (World Bank, 2020[94]; Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004[95]). The need for investment in social protection to support human capital is important to leaving no one behind, especially in fragile contexts that are home to some of the world's most vulnerable populations.

Bank's Human Capital Index (HCI) fall below the worldwide average for human capital, with the Islamic Republic of Iran (Iran) being the exception.[5] In addition, 33 of the 37 pre-demographic dividend countries listed by the World Bank also are fragile contexts and account for 94% of the total population of pre-demographic dividend countries[6] (World Bank, 2018[88]). Pre-demographic dividend countries are mostly low-income countries that lag in key human development indicators and have a high fertility level of more than four births per woman. These countries are experiencing very rapid population growth and have young populations that are not yet of working age (UNESCO, 2020[3]).

There is documented evidence of a gender gap in human capital outcomes. HCI scores are slightly higher for girls than for boys in most countries for which data are available, although evidence varies across countries.[7] In 23 of the 36 fragile contexts with HCI scores disaggregated by gender, girls have higher scores than boys (Figure 1.6). However, it is important to note that the HCI does not capture the unique challenges girls continue to face in accumulating human capital, including child marriage, early childbearing and gender-based violence (Avitabile et al., 2020[89]). These challenges will certainly be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Women also continue to face barriers in converting human capital to economic opportunities. Addressing these barriers to women's empowerment will be important for harnessing the potential benefits of human capital. Box 1.8 discusses support for human capital.

Women in particular play an important role in building human capital. Maternal

Figure 1.6. Human Capital Index scores of fragile contexts, by gender, 2017



Note: Gender-disaggregated data from the Human Capital Index was only available in 36 of 57 fragile contexts.

Sources: World Bank (2020[100]), *Human Capital Index, Female* (database), https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/HD.HCI.OVRL.FE; *World Bank* (2020[100]), *Human Capital Index, Male* (database), https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/HD.HCI.OVRL.MA.

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health and education are critical influences on early childhood development and lay the foundation for a child's future success (World Bank, 2019[91]; Bhalotra and Rawlings, 2013[96]). In fragile contexts, the maternal mortality rate is four times higher than in non-fragile contexts (Marley and Desai, 2020[44]). This disparity shows the importance of investment in women's health, as maternal mortality rates are an indication of women's access to high-quality healthcare and their overall social and economic status in a country or context (Marley and Desai, 2020[44]). As such, maternal mortality rates have major implications for human capital. As the COVID-19 pandemic puts health systems in fragile contexts under increased pressure, maternal mortality may worsen. Women also tend to be overrepresented in the informal economy and in the most vulnerable types of employment in developing countries (International Labour Organization, 2018[97]), and they undertake most of the unpaid care and domestic work, which makes it more difficult for them to access formal social protection and economic opportunities. Women who are not entitled to enough income security during the final stages of pregnancy and after childbirth, especially those working in the informal economy, can expose themselves and their children to significant health risks (OECD, 2019[98]).

Girls are also less likely than boys to go back to school if they leave, making investment in girls' education even more crucial as a form of crisis response (Bandiera et al., 2020[68]; Albrectsen and Giannini, 2020[67]). In fragile contexts, 183 million girls across all levels of education were still out of school as of 15 July 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19, with 107.5 million being primary-age girls (UNESCO, 2020[3]). Gender inequality and marginalisation can impact human capital and livelihood outcomes for women. That said, when investment in the education of women and girls is made, the returns are higher on average by about two percentage points than for male education, making women's education a good investment and a development priority (World Bank, 2019[91]; Psacharopoulos and Patrinos, 2018[92]). Investing in human capital for women is important to empower them and give them the opportunity to make decisions about their own lives.

Investment in human capital is especially important for vulnerable populations, and crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic can have significant intergenerational implications for poor families (UN, 2020[99]). Access to health, education and social protection are important dimensions of well-being. Lack of these can have devastating results for the most vulnerable in times of crisis and can make it difficult for them to rebuild after a crisis. Multidimensional deprivation has a trapping effect on individuals and households, in substantial part through impacts on human capital. Outcomes in education and health are far worse for vulnerable populations, reinforcing intergenerational cycles of low human capital, poverty and persistent inequality that are difficult to escape. Investment in human capital can be critical for reducing poverty. However, without a solid foundation early in a child's life, subsequent public investments in human capital are less likely to be effective and a spiral of increasing inequality more likely to develop (Flabbi and Gatti, 2018[87]; Corral et al., 2020[23]). Further, as noted, no fragile contexts are on track to meet SDG 2 (zero hunger), which is of particular concern considering the vital role that nutrition plays in health during the foundational years of a child's life.

Human capital is multidimensional: It affects, and is affected by, all five dimensions of fragility

Assessing a population's level of human capital is useful because it provides measurable evidence for the return on investment in people. One well-known manifestation of this return is in the positive correlation between increased human capital

and economic productivity, making human capital a useful measure of the impact of a population's health and education on a context's economic growth (World Bank, 2018[90]; Botev et al., 2019[101]). This is one example of how what matters for people can impact fragility in the economic dimension. However, human capital is more than just another indicator for economic fragility, and its returns on investment can manifest in a number of ways depending on the context and the circumstances. The relationship between human capital and fragility can be observed in a wide spectrum of issues that link across the economic, environmental, political, societal and security dimensions of fragility and that affect people, communities and societies. Human capital can help manage risk and build resilience in fragile contexts through fostering economic growth, promoting strong institutions, and helping to build peaceful and inclusive societies. Fragility can also negatively impact human capital through the shocks and stresses associated with vulnerability, health risks, weak institutions and conflict. The links between human capital and fragility can manifest themselves in circumstances and issues such as socio-economic vulnerability, inequality, quality of governance, food security, and responses to conflict and natural disaster, to name just a few (Forichon, 2020[85]). The multidimensional nature of the challenges posed by COVID-19 in fragile contexts is a clear example of these linkages.

Nevertheless, human capital is but one component of a complex system of risks and coping capacities, and its impacts are not always net positive. Fragility, as noted, is messy and complex, and the movement from fragility to resilience is neither linear nor guaranteed. Although investment in human capital can be a means of building resilience, it can also produce unintended and unforeseen outcomes (Forichon, 2020[85]). Building resilience does not prevent risks from materialising. Indeed, some contexts on the OECD fragility framework are more fragile than others and yet have higher HCI scores (Figure 1.6). Human capital thus is not sufficient as a standalone resource to combat fragility, but it does play a part by interacting with the systems that shape fragility in a way that either exacerbates risk or promotes resilience. Linking these dimensions of analysis, and acknowledging human capital's unique and important role, are therefore critical to understanding and addressing fragility.

Strengthening human capital can help build more peaceful and resilient societies

Considering human capital in the analysis of fragility can enhance understanding of the consequences of crises and prioritise effective and targeted responses. Fragility is often prolonged and ingrained, and DAC members and other international partners will only be effective if they address its root causes and support processes from within (OECD, 2020[102]). Human capital investments can have a double positive effect. Investing in health, education and social protection can have the immediate effect of saving lives and protecting the most vulnerable and can also yield substantial benefits over the long term by promoting growth and serving as a coping capacity against future crises. Investment in human capital generates lasting returns – the more human capital an individual acquires early in life, the more effective future investments will be, including for generations to come (Manuelli and Seshadri, 2014[103]). At the same time, violence and crises can cause irreversible damage to societies; once human capital is impacted by violence or crisis, it is very difficult to rebuild (Corral et al., 2020[23]).

The consequences of the COVID-19 crisis in fragile contexts will certainly be felt in the health sector in the short term, but there could be potentially significant socio-economic implications as well. A response that takes human capital into account will help address the multidimensional effects of crises to rebuild livelihoods and promote future resilience. Indeed, the DAC has

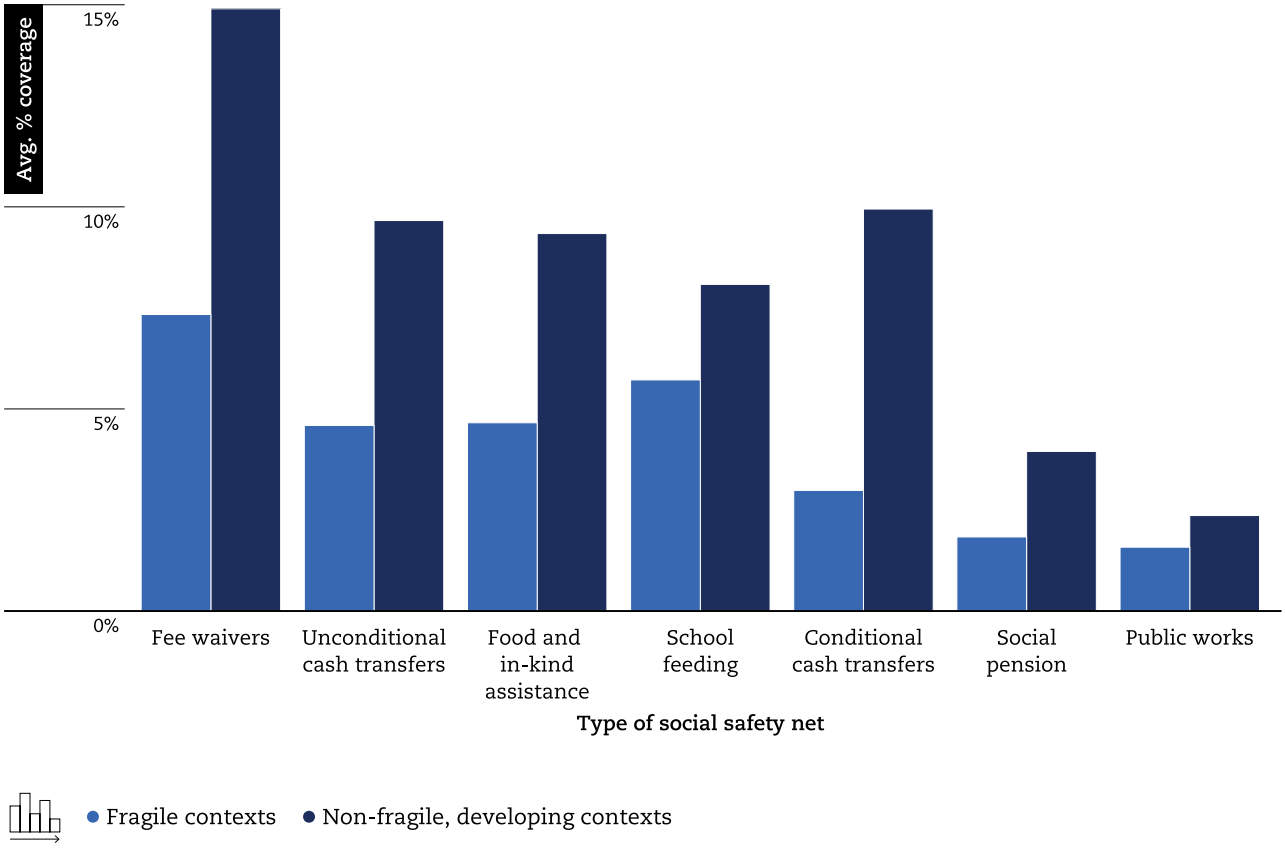
highlighted health and social safety nets as priorities in its COVID-19 response, while the UN is prioritising health, social protection, social cohesion and community resilience (OECD, 2020[102]; UN, 2020[99]). Support for social protection systems will be crucial for helping people in fragile contexts cope with the shocks associated with COVID-19. While countries and contexts with strong social protection systems and basic services suffer the least and recover the fastest during crises, 55% of the world's population has inadequate or no social protection to begin with (UN, 2020[99]). Although social systems are in place in fragile contexts, coverage of formal social safety nets is much lower than in non-fragile, developing contexts, with particular disparities in fee waivers, cash transfers, and food and in-kind assistance (Figure 1.7).

Factors contributing to this disparity include lack of financing from both governments and development partners, low government capacity for the provision of these services, and differences in reach (Hanna, 2020[104]). This lack of social protection coverage underscores the need for an extraordinary scaling-up of effort, particularly in fragile contexts. Absent such investments, people in fragile contexts risk being further left behind in progress on sustainable development and peace.

Building financial resilience in fragile contexts

Getting financing right can have a significant impact in fragile contexts and support movements from fragility to resilience. Yet

Figure 1.7. Population coverage of social safety nets by type, fragile versus non-fragile, developing contexts



Note: Calculations based upon the average percent coverage among all fragile contexts and non-fragile, developing contexts, using population statistics from UN DESA (2020[10]) in alignment with the year reported in World Bank (2020[105]). Year of reporting varies in the source data.
Source: World Bank (2020[105]), *ASPIRE: The Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity* (database), https://www.worldbank.org/en/data/datatopics/aspire; UN DESA (2020[10]), *World Population Prospects 2019* (database), https://population.un.org/wpp/.

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fragile contexts face substantial funding gaps for delivering basic services for their citizens and unique constraints to raising revenue, attracting private investment, and growing and diversifying their economies. Fragile contexts can be seen as small ships on a very large and tumultuous economic ocean. While they are home to 23% of the world's population – and are sources of many products critical to the global economy – fragile contexts account for only 2.7% of global GDP (Infographic 1.2).

ODA has historically been a stable and resilient resource for developing countries (Ahmad et al., 2020[106]). At the outset of the COVID-19 crisis and acknowledging the pressures on public finances in all countries, DAC members moved quickly to pledge to "strive to protect" ODA (OECD, 2020[107]). In doing so, they recognised that ODA would continue to play an important role in responding to immediate humanitarian needs while supporting a more sustainable and green recovery that builds back better. This section begins with an overview of ODA to fragile contexts and then discusses other sources of finance. It provides context for what exactly DAC members are striving to protect by looking at who is providing what, where and how using the latest data available from OECD aid statistics. This analysis can help DAC members respond to the uncertainties and changing needs in fragile contexts due to the pandemic and, in the longer term, target their ODA to address the underlying drivers of fragility.

Fragile contexts have slowly increased their connections to regional and global trading, migration, and economic and investment flows. They remain less well-connected economically than other developing countries, and especially in Africa, they are more likely to trade with each other (regionally) than with the rest of the world (globally). See, for example, Bouet, Cosnard and Laborde (2017[108]). Nevertheless, economic remoteness has dropped by 9.5% since 2000 among the 56 fragile contexts measured by the least developed country indicator (UN DESA, 2018[109]), and many fragile contexts have succeeded in attracting remittances and FDI and increasing their tax revenues.

For many contexts, the process of diversifying economic and financing links has been a source of opportunity and is an important part of increasing self-reliance over time. But it also brings risks to be navigated. While fragile contexts fared reasonably well during the 2008-09 global financial crisis, since then many have increased their linkages to the global economy and capital markets, and these are now drying up due to COVID-19 (Ongley and Selassie, 2020[110]). Reduced economic and financial opportunities could become a source of fragility, with "groups bargain[ing] for access to the basic means of livelihoods and well-being" in arenas of contestation such as land and natural resources and service delivery (UN/World Bank, 2018[111]).

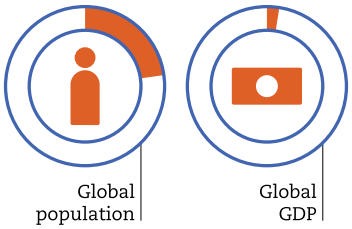
ODA is a critical source of finance for fragile contexts because of its volume and risk tolerance, especially relative to other financial flows

More bilateral ODA – USD 76 billion – went to fragile contexts in 2018 than ever before. Non-DAC donors provided USD 13.4 billion, or 18%, of the total. ODA to fragile contexts has increased every year since 2014. After remittances, it is the second-largest external financing flow to fragile contexts – 2.3 times the volume of FDI and 67% of the total value of remittances (Infographic 1.2). In extremely fragile contexts, its weight is greater still: total ODA is 11.5 times FDI and 2.5 times the volume of remittances. The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to spur capital flight from developing countries and a significant decline in remittances, making fragile contexts even more aid-dependent and boosting the relative weight of ODA (Ratha et al., 2020[114]; UNCTAD, 2020[115]). This may especially be the case in extremely fragile contexts such as Somalia, where

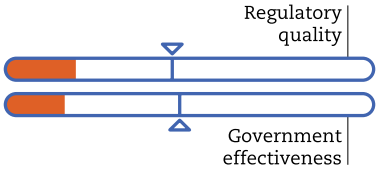
Infographic 1.2. Financing in fragile contexts

Fragility has a profound impact on financial flows of all kinds. Fragile contexts are…

- home to 23% of the global population but only 2.7% of global GDP in 2018 and 2019.



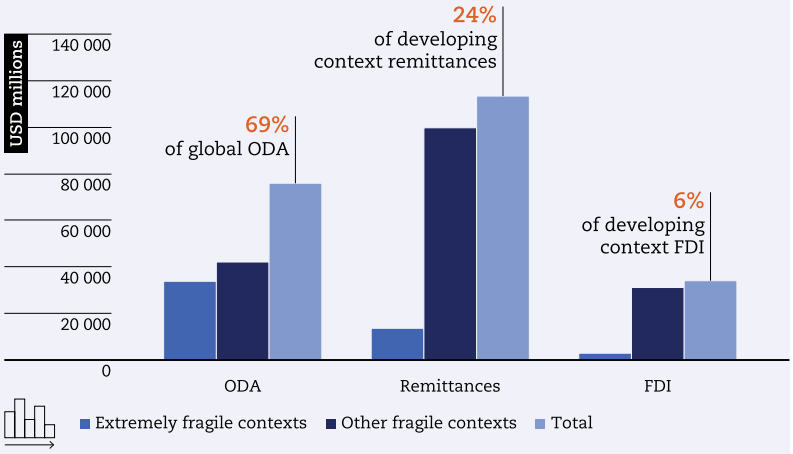
- gradually increasing their economic linkages. Economic remoteness has dropped by 9.5% since 2000.
- heavily impacted by commodity price volatility. 73% of the population of fragile contexts live in commodity-dependent countries.
- less likely to have strong economic governance, scoring an average 19th and 16th percentile on perceptions of regulatory quality and government effectiveness, compared to the 45th and 47th percentile for other contexts.



- less likely to have social safety nets, and less is spent on them. In fragile contexts, social safety nets total USD 35.5 per capita – 1/5th the amount of other developing contexts (USD 161 per capita).

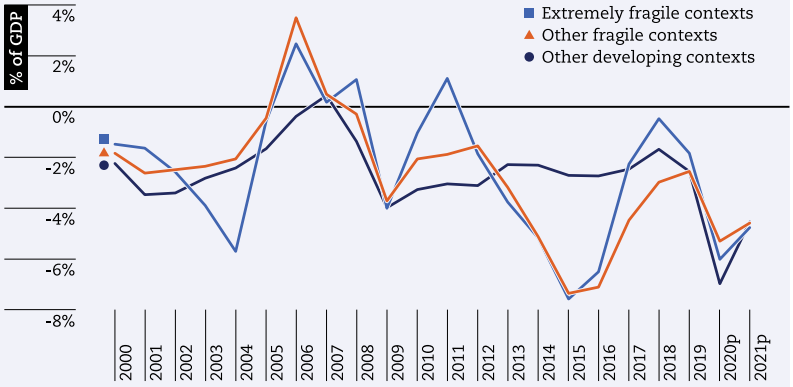
ODA plays a critical role in fragile contexts, especially the most fragile.

Overall ODA is the second-largest flow behind remittances, but in extremely fragile contexts, ODA was 11.5 times FDI, and 2.5 times remittances in 2018.



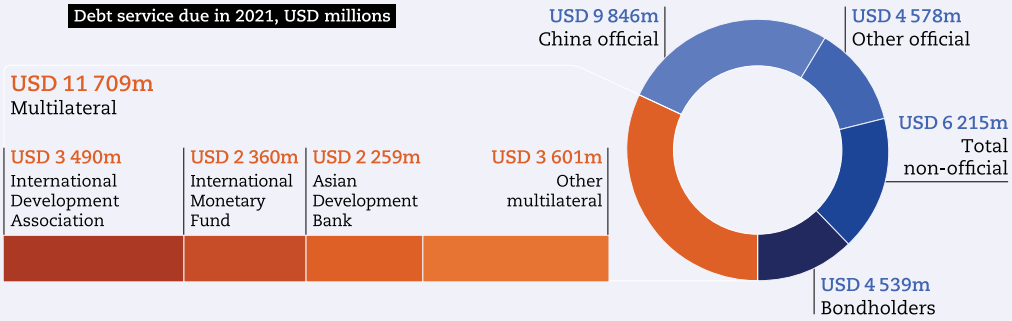
Fragile contexts show significant volatility in financing and a trend of increasing deficits.

While many fragile contexts have increased the diversity of their financing, their economies often remain concentrated in a narrow range of commodites dependent on global demand. Compared to other developing contexts, financing in fragile and extremely fragile contexts appears more vulnerable to economic booms and slumps between 2000 and 2021.



Many fragile contexts are carrying high debt burdens.

It is likely that without mitigating measures, in 2021 total debt service would amount to an estimated USD 37 billion, equivalent to roughly 6% of ODA in extremely fragile contexts, and 82% of ODA in other fragile contexts.



Sources: Desai (2020[112]), *States of Fragility and official development assistance*; Thompson (2020[113]), *States of Fragility: Financing in fragile contexts.*

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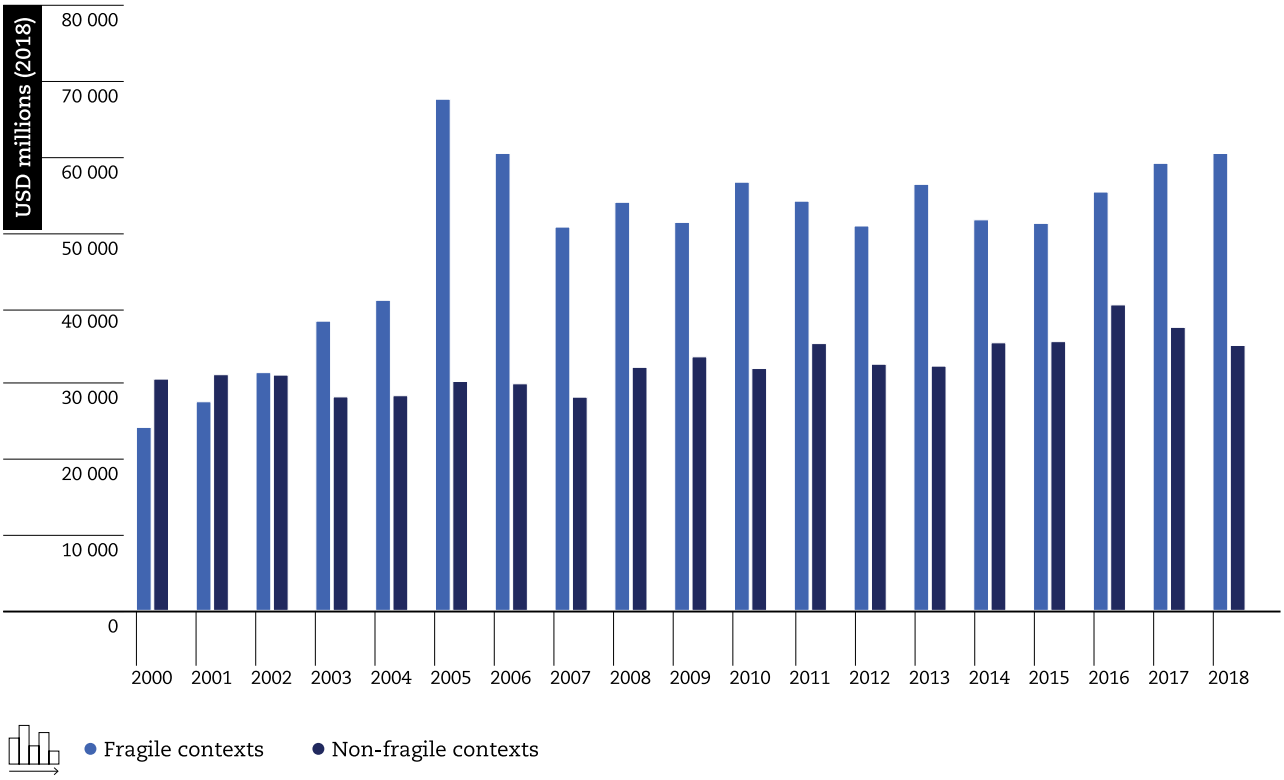
ODA and remittances each make up about a third of the country's GDP but where remittances are expected to fall by 40% due to COVID-19 (International Organization for Migration, 2020[116]). In 2018, the average aid dependency of extremely fragile contexts, as measured by the share of ODA to gross national income, amounted to 19%.

DAC members play an important role in fragile contexts through their ODA

The DAC recognises that its ODA is indispensable to support fragile contexts on their pathways to sustainable development and peace. DAC countries spent 63% of their total net country-allocable ODA, or USD 60.3 billion, in fragile contexts in 2018, which is the highest share since 2013. This ODA also has increased year to year since 2015 (Figure 1.8). Members are also increasingly giving their ODA through core contributions to multilateral organisations, which has important implications for aid delivery, accountability and effectiveness (Chandy, Seidel and Zhang, 2016[117]). In 2018, multilateral ODA represented USD 22.1 billion of the total USD 60.3 billion, the largest volume of multilateral ODA historically.

DAC countries spent 63% of their total net country-allocable ODA, or USD 60.3 billion, in fragile contexts in 2018, which is the highest share since 2013

Figure 1.8. DAC total ODA to fragile versus non-fragile contexts, 2000-18



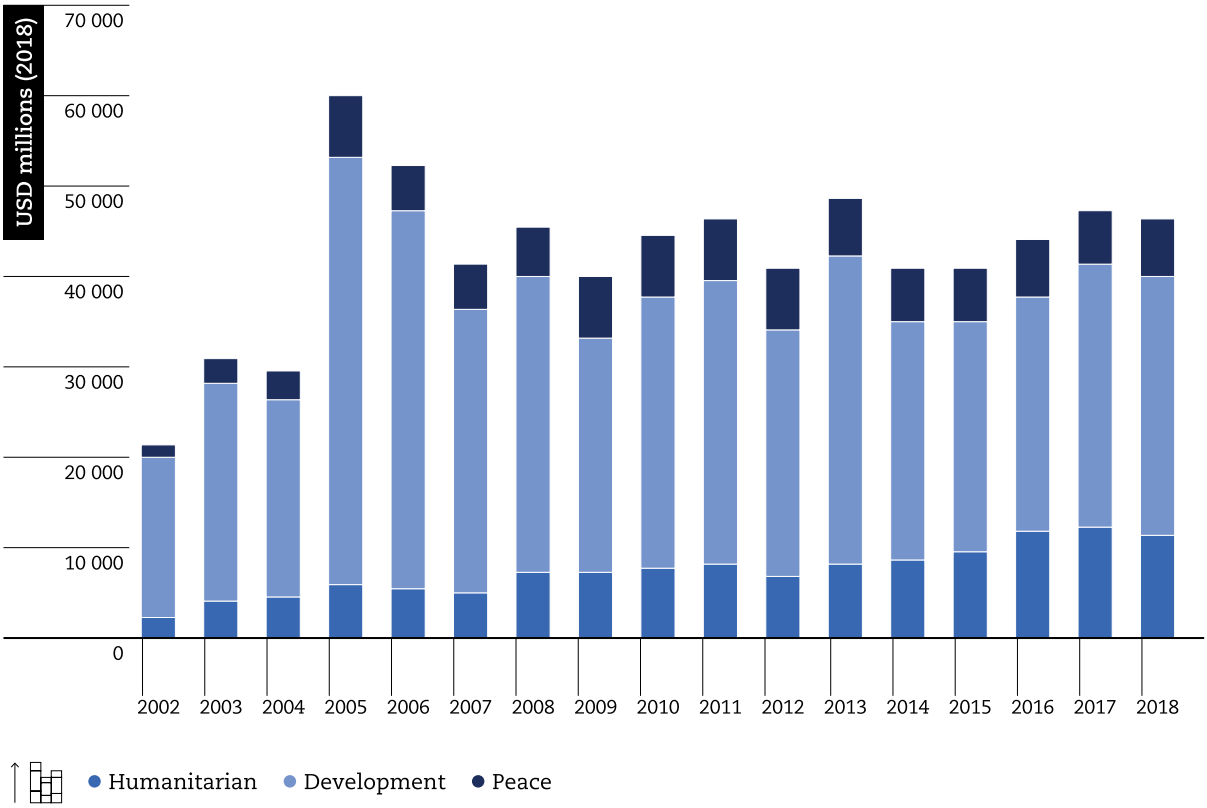
Notes: The total for ODA to non-fragile contexts does not include regional or unspecified ODA. The trend analysis is based on the same cohort of 57 fragile contexts defined in this report and the OECD 2020 fragility framework.
Source: OECD (2020[37]), "Detailed aid statistics: ODA Official development assistance: disbursements", *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), https://doi.org/10.1787/data-00069-en.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934167904

This pattern of allocation shows that DAC members are important actors in fragile contexts as shareholders in the multilateral system and as actors in their own right (OECD DAC, 2019[30]). In gross rather than net terms, DAC members gave USD 12.7 billion of their bilateral and multilateral ODA to the humanitarian sector in 2018, of which 89% was delivered through either multilateral organisations or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society channels. Members also gave USD 55.5 billion in development and peace ODA, of which 73% was delivered through bilateral mechanisms such as public sector institutions. These allocations underscore the need for a coherent and co-ordinated effort by DAC members and their multilateral counterparts that strengthens complementarity across the pillars of the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus (OECD, 2020[107]). They also highlight the importance of multilateral organisations' adherence to the DAC Recommendation on the HDP nexus, as the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has done and as other organisations have started the process of doing as of July 2020.

The majority of DAC bilateral ODA is focused on the development pillar, though a sizeable portion still goes to the humanitarian sector. DAC members gave 25% of their bilateral ODA in fragile contexts in 2018 to the humanitarian pillar, 62% to the development pillar and 13% to the peace pillar (Figure 1.9). The amount to the humanitarian pillar is understandable given existing humanitarian needs, especially in extremely fragile contexts. However, there is potential to save and redirect money

Figure 1.9. DAC bilateral ODA to fragile contexts across the HDP nexus, 2002-18



Note: The list of purpose codes that map to each pillar of the HDP nexus can be found in the methodological annex of Desai (2020[112]), *States of Fragility and official development assistance*, and on the States of Fragility platform, www3.compareyourcountry.org/states-of-fragility/overview/0/.
Source: OECD (2020[37]), "Detailed aid statistics: ODA Official development assistance: disbursements", *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), https://doi.org/10.1787/data-00069-en.

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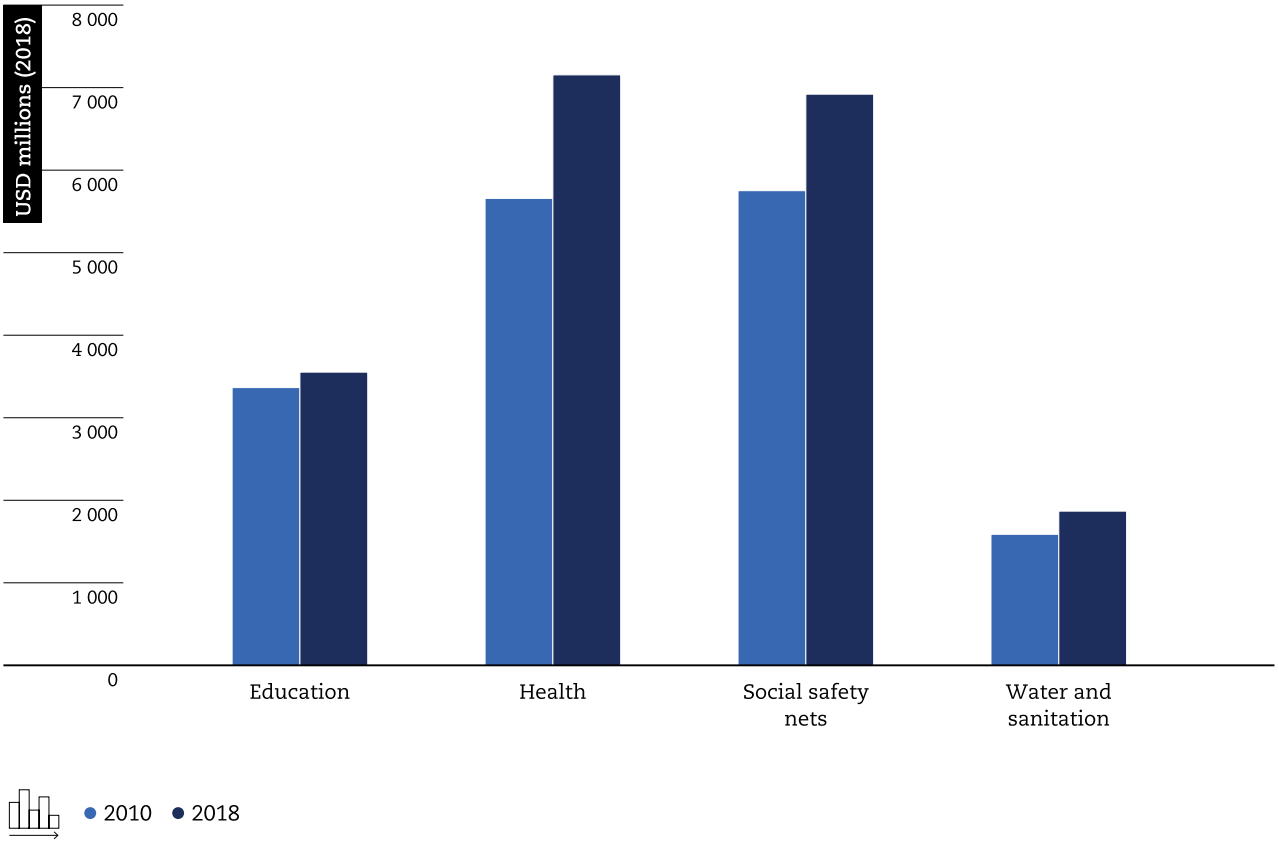
towards sustainable development by using ODA to manage the root causes of need, as articulated in the DAC Recommendation. Doing so calls for greater investment in a preventive and resilience-centred approach, which is discussed further in Chapter 2.

The impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis will affect both the priorities of DAC members' ODA and mechanisms for its delivery

While it is too early to assess its post-pandemic trajectory, ODA has been resilient in the past amid global economic downturns (van de Poel, 2020[118]; Ahmad et al., 2020[106]). Above all, it will be important to ensure a sustainable recovery that addresses funding needs in priority sectors such as health, education, social safety nets, water and sanitation, and gender equality and women's empowerment, some of which were identified in the Joint Statement by the DAC on the COVID-19 pandemic (Desai, 2020[112]; OECD, 2020[107]). From 2010 to 2018, DAC members increased their bilateral assistance to each of these priority sectors in fragile contexts, both in volume and as a proportion of total ODA (Figure 1.10). Humanitarian ODA also increased by 44% in the same period. DAC members' ODA commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment almost doubled from USD 10.5 billion in 2010 to USD 20.9 billion in 2018 and, in 2018,

Figure 1.10. DAC bilateral ODA to health, education, social safety nets, and water and sanitation in fragile contexts, 2010-18



Note: The category of social safety nets includes the following purpose codes from the OECD's Creditor Reporting System: Social protection (16010), Basic nutrition (12240), Food assistance (52010), Emergency food assistance (72040), Employment creation (16020), Informal/semi-formal financial intermediaries (24040), Social mitigation of HIV/AIDS (16064), Agricultural inputs (31150); and School feeding (11250), based on a schema introduced in Development Initiatives (2015[119]), with the addition of purpose code 11250.

Source: OECD (2020[37]), "Detailed aid statistics: ODA Official development assistance: disbursements", *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), https://doi.org/10.1787/data-00069-en.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934167942

represented 45% of their total bilateral, allocable commitments. This prevailing trend in all sectors is good news and reflects DAC members' commitment to addressing fragility. It is important to strive to protect these gains, given the impacts already being felt from the COVID-19 pandemic (Box 1.1).

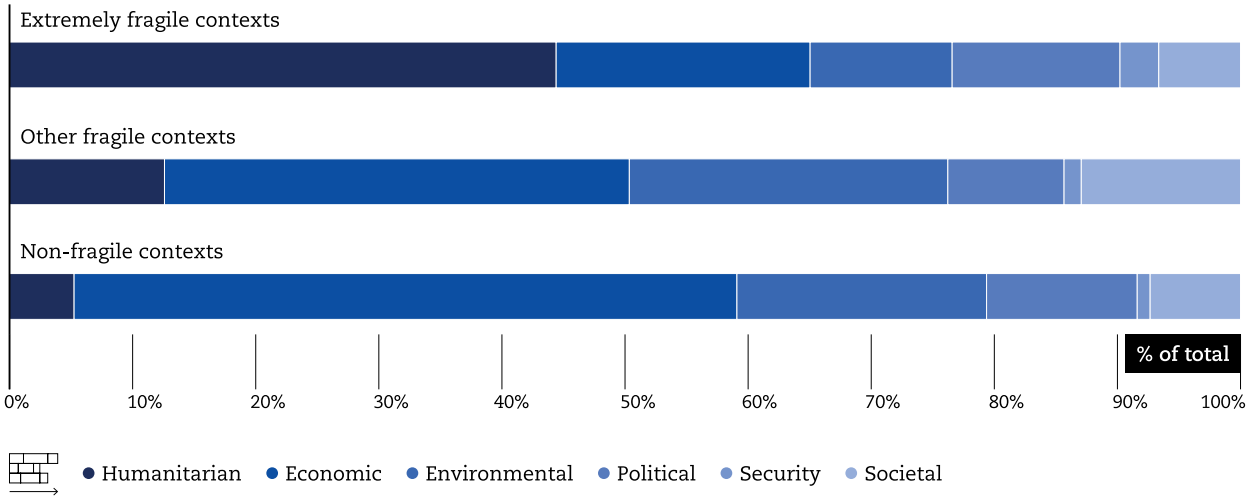
ODA is also an important source of financing for crisis response and preparedness. In 2018, DAC members committed USD 819 million of their bilateral ODA to projects that identified disaster risk reduction (DRR) as a principal or significant objective. This amounted to only 1.8% of their total, bilateral-allocable ODA to fragile contexts. There is an opportunity for a renewed focus on DRR in light of COVID-19 to help fragile contexts address the impact of systemic and multidimensional risks that the pandemic is aggravating in the short term and provide opportunities to mitigate the occurrence of such risks in the longer term.

DAC members deliver their bilateral ODA to fragile contexts primarily through public sector institutions, NGOs and civil society, and multilateral organisations. COVID-19 will affect all these channels in different ways. For example, it will put pressure on the ability of public sector institutions in both donor and recipient governments to deliver key services (Bteddini and Wang, 2020[120]). In 2018, DAC members channelled USD 17 billion, or 37% of their gross bilateral ODA, to fragile contexts, through public sector institutions, of which USD 9.7 billion went through recipient governments. The volume of DAC bilateral ODA in fragile contexts delivered through multilateral organisations, termed multi-bi ODA, amounted to USD 13.1 billion in 2018, or 28% of the total. Finally, DAC members channelled USD 10.5 billion, or 23% of their bilateral ODA, to and through NGOs. Pandemic-related lockdowns and other government measures will affect the space for NGOs, civil society and multilateral organisations to manoeuvre in fragile contexts, including in their humanitarian operations (ACAPS, 2020[121]). These organisations remain at the front line of the COVID-19 response in fragile contexts, especially in remote areas where the capacity and reach of public sector institutions are limited (OECD, 2020[102]). Striving to protect these channels of aid delivery is important to ensure that ODA is reaching the populations that need it.

Financing to meet humanitarian needs and address drivers of fragility requires and increasingly benefits from differentiated approaches

This trend of differentiated financing by DAC members to address needs in fragile contexts is a positive development and reflects investments in context analysis. However, as Figure 1.11 shows, there is considerable opportunity to focus financing on targeting the underlying drivers of fragility, especially in extremely fragile contexts. It is understandable that humanitarian ODA is prevalent in extremely fragile contexts, considering high levels of need. Yet ODA to the security and societal dimensions comprises only 3% and 7%, respectively, of total DAC bilateral ODA in extremely fragile contexts, despite the prevalence of severe or high security and societal fragility in these contexts (Desai and Forsberg, 2020[14]). Societal ODA, particularly, receives 13% of the total ODA in other fragile contexts. Additionally, ODA to the environmental dimension is only 12% of the total in extremely fragile contexts, while it amounts to 25% of the total in other fragile contexts. Similarly, the economic dimension receives approximately half the proportion of the total ODA in extremely fragile contexts than it receives in non-fragile contexts. These findings are notable given the importance of the environmental and economic dimensions as determinants of overall fragility in the 2020 framework. Taking such multidimensional drivers into consideration when making strategic decisions about the allocation of their ODA can help DAC members ensure that their financing is sufficiently calibrated to the specific needs of fragile contexts and the severity of their fragility.

Figure 1.11. DAC bilateral ODA to fragile contexts across the five dimensions of fragility and the humanitarian pillar of the HDP nexus, 2018



Note: In this figure, code 74020 on multi-hazard response preparedness has been moved to the environmental dimension rather than the humanitarian pillar, which explains the slight difference between total humanitarian ODA in Figure 1.9.
Source: OECD (2020[37]), "Detailed aid statistics: ODA Official development assistance: disbursements", *OECD International Development Statistics* (database), https://doi.org/10.1787/data-00069-en.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934167961

Despite its weight in fragile contexts, ODA is not the only or always the most important source of financing in fragile contexts. Non-ODA financing is equally important as ODA to achieving stability and the SDGs. The financing landscape is varied across fragile contexts, reflecting the multidimensional factors that shape, and are shaped by, financial flows (Thompson, 2020[113]). The following sub-section discusses the status of financial resources beyond ODA in fragile contexts, outlining trends prior to the COVID-19 crisis as well as initial assessments of its impact. Financing is closely linked to the economic dimension of fragility and thereby affects the societal, political, environmental and security dimensions through, for example, investments in social protection and human capital.

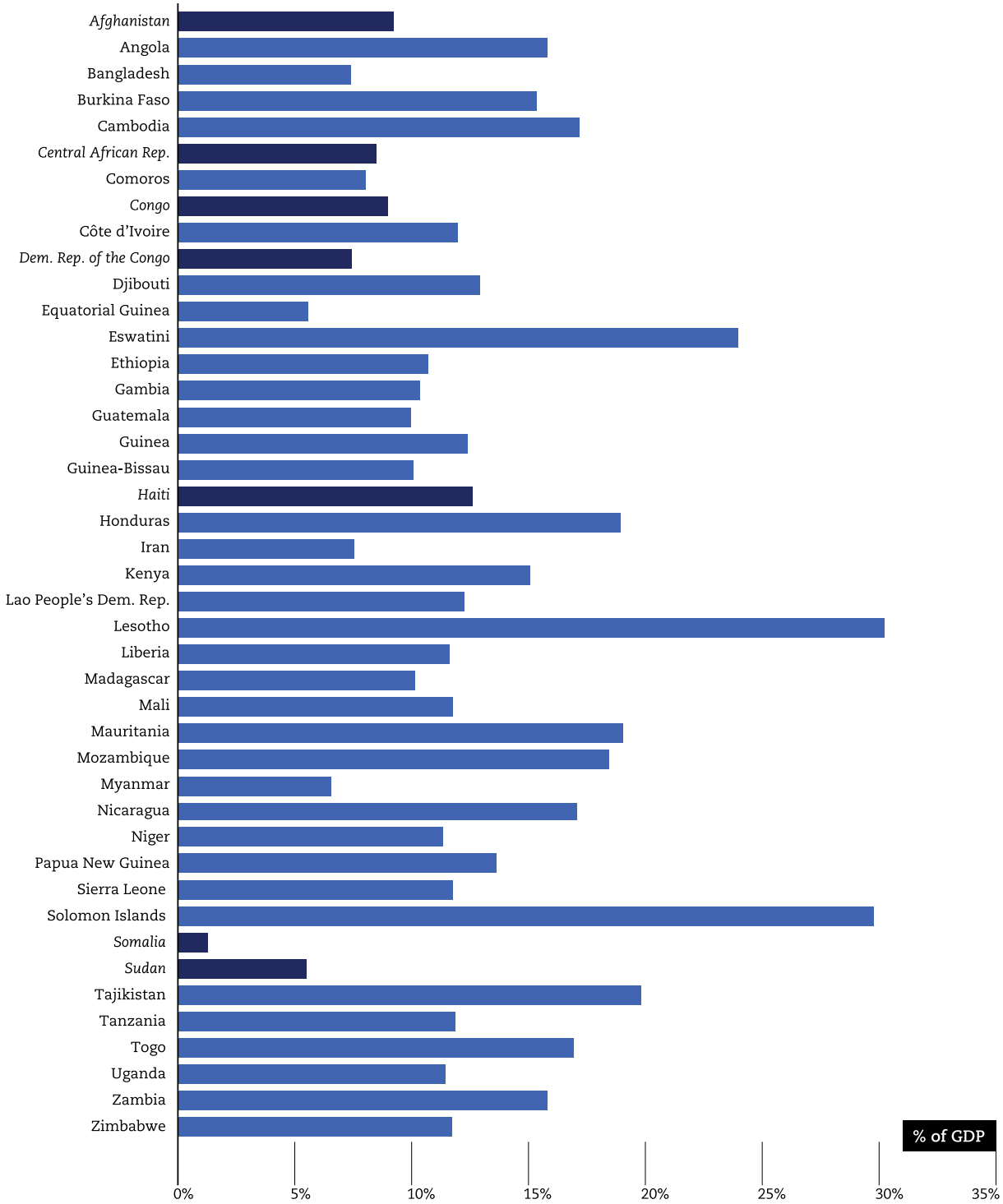
Putting government financing on a sustainable footing is challenging but necessary

Significant efforts have been made to increase the sustainability of government revenues and financing for social services without relying solely on ODA. 51 out of the 57 fragile contexts have received ODA dedicated to increasing tax revenue between 2014, when data tracking began, and 2018 (OECD, 2020[122]). Raising and spending revenue is seen as a key capacity that supports resilience and can help build social cohesion through the "fiscal contract", whereby increased taxation increases citizens' expectations of their government and its accountability (OECD, 2019[123]).

Tax revenue is the single largest source of financing for development globally, with a tax-to-GDP ratio of 15% a widely considered benchmark for effective state functioning and economic development (see, for example, (OECD, 2018[124]) and (Gaspar, Jaramillo and Wingender, 2016[125]). Based on the most recent data available, only a third of the 43 fragile contexts analysed have achieved this level (Thompson, 2020[113]) (Figure 1.12). Many governments in these contexts remain heavily reliant on natural resource revenues: 45 of the 88 commodity-dependent contexts are fragile, representing 73% of the population of fragile contexts (UNCTAD, 2019[26]; UN DESA, 2020[10]), as discussed in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.12. Tax-to-GDP ratios in fragile contexts

Total tax-to-GDP ratios, excluding social security charges



Notes: This figure is based on 7 extremely fragile contexts and 36 other fragile contexts and uses the most recent available data for each country. For most contexts data is for 2018. For Afghanistan, Angola, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Tajikistan and Tanzania data are for 2017. For Sudan and Somalia data are for 2016. Data for Central African Republic (2018) and Iran (2016) include social charges. It should be noted that even including social charges in the calculations for all countries, only one third of countries have a tax-to-GDP ratio of 15% or more.

Source: Authors' calculations based on merged dataset UNU-WIDER (2020[126]), *Government Revenue Dataset*, https://www.wider.unu.edu/project/government-revenue-dataset.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934167980

The quality of institutions and public expenditure is just as important for effective state functioning. For example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has found the following:

- In only a third of developing countries analysed was a widening fiscal deficit associated with increased public investment across all sectors, implying that borrowing rather than taxation was being used to pay for today's expenditure (International Monetary Fund, 2020[127]).
- The quality and efficiency of public investment processes – for example in infrastructure – have a big impact. The most efficient public investors have twice the impact on growth for every dollar spent than do the least efficient investors (International Monetary Fund, 2015[128]). This growth dividend then impacts directly on the country's ability to provide social services and safety nets and to service debt.

Still, most fragile contexts experience severe capacity constraints in economic governance. In the World Governance Indicators, while other developing countries scored an average 45th and 47th percentile on perceptions of regulatory quality and government effectiveness, fragile contexts scored an average 19th and 16th percentile, respectively (World Bank, 2018[129]), see Infographic 1.2 above.

Clear-eyed strategies and realism are needed to achieve reform. Slow and sustainable reform can be more effective than overly ambitious expectations. Supported by multilateral and bilateral partners, significant advances have been made in countries' debt management capacity and domestic resource mobilisation, among other aspects. This important work has also begun in fragile contexts and must continue, with realistic expectations and strategies. Especially in fragile contexts, limited absorptive capacities and political and practical constraints can slow the pace of progress and deter country buy-in (Independent Evaluation Office, 2018[130]).

Private sector investment can be volatile in fragile contexts

Private investment has increasingly come to be an important potential source of financing for development, especially for investment in infrastructure and private sector development (OECD, 2018[124]; Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development, 2020[131]). While private investment can take many forms, one of the most closely watched indicators is the level of foreign direct investment (FDI), defined as an investment made to acquire a lasting interest in, or effective control over, an enterprise in another country. FDI can involve either so-called greenfield investment (investing in a new business or asset) or brownfield investment (taking over and/or repurposing an existing business or asset). FDI is seen as relatively more important for development than other forms of investment such as portfolio investment because it is relatively long-term, may boost productivity and can increase a country's linkages to global economic opportunities.

However, even under the most optimistic COVID-19 scenario, global FDI flows are expected to fall by more than 30% in 2020 (OECD, 2020[132]). Developing countries may be hit hardest, given that the sectors most severely impacted by the pandemic – for example, the primary and manufacturing sectors – account for a larger share of FDI in fragile contexts than in developed economies. Fragile contexts, however, generally receive only a small fraction of total global FDI flows (OECD, 2018[24]), as investors are generally cautious about the higher potential risks in fragile contexts. Moreover, global FDI has been on a general downward trajectory since 2015 (OECD, 2020[133]). Nevertheless, fragile contexts received a total net inflow of USD 33.4 billion in 2018, with most (USD 30.5 billion) going to other fragile contexts. On average, other fragile contexts received 2.9 times more FDI in 2018 than extremely fragile contexts (USD 245 million versus USD 709 million) (Thompson, 2020[113]). But these

averages hide significant variation, both between contexts and over time.

FDI flows can vary significantly from year to year and between countries. Some fragile contexts have received significant volumes of FDI, among them even the relatively isolated Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which received overall positive net inflows of USD 821 million between 2009 and 2018. Over the same time period, Nigeria received the largest net inflows of all fragile contexts, totalling nearly USD 53 billion, and Bangladesh, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Iran, Mozambique and Venezuela each received between USD 20 and 35 billion (Figure 1.13). Among extremely fragile contexts, the Republic of the Congo (Congo), the DRC and Sudan each received between USD 14 and 21 billion. But substantial disinvestments are also possible. Angola, Iraq, South Sudan and Yemen had net disinvestment over 2009-18 – meaning disinvestments exceed total investments over the period – while Chad, Congo, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the DRC, the Kingdom of Eswatini, Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania, Togo, Venezuela and Venezuela have all had negative inflows in at least one year (Thompson, 2020[113]).

Remittances help support households, and vary significantly by context

Remittances represent a significant financial resource for many households in fragile contexts. Overall estimated remittance flows nearly doubled between 2009 and 2018 from around USD 60 billion to around 113.5 billion (World Bank, 2020[135]).

Remittances are an individual-to-individual financial resource, supporting incomes at the household level. Their volumes vary significantly by household and by context, with higher volumes reaching contexts such as Haiti, Honduras and Gambia that have high levels of emigration to wealthier neighbouring countries (Figure 1.14). While data are limited, it is often considered that remittances tend to flow to wealthier households that are more likely to be able to educate and send a household member to work abroad. However, remittances can also flow to poorer households and refugees, including through in-kind and informal remittances through *hawala* networks. For example, refugees in Cameroon have been reported as receiving remittances from family in the Central African Republic (OECD, 2019[136]).

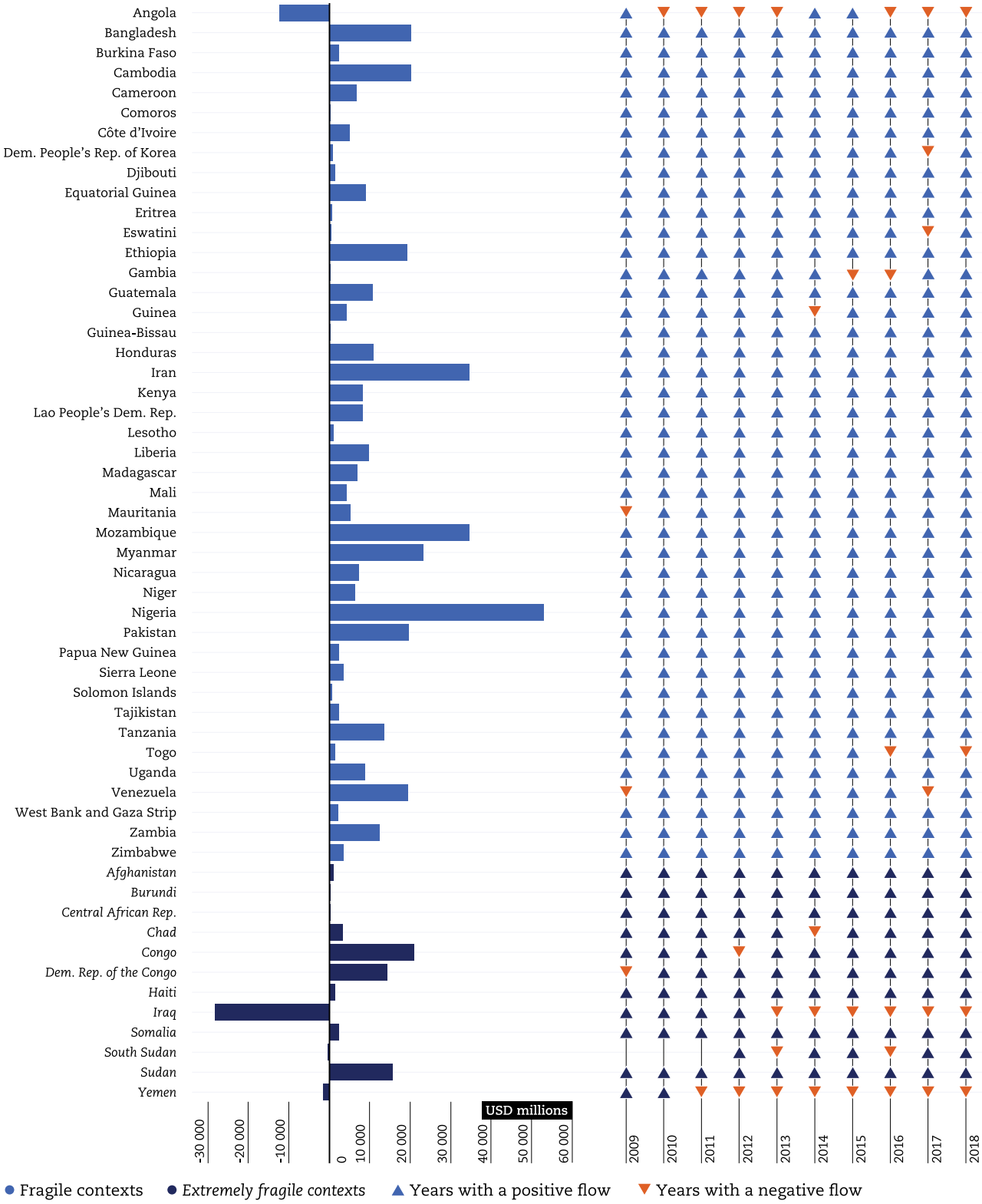
At the household level, remittances can provide a financial buffer during tough economic times (Thompson, 2020[113]). At the country level, remittances are often countercyclical, in that volumes tend to increase during economic downturns in migrants' home countries. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, is disrupting this pattern. With the global economic downturn hitting migrant-hosting countries hard, remittances to low- and middle-income countries are projected to fall by 19.7% in 2020, and fragile contexts may be among the worst affected (World Bank, 2020[137]). These forecasts underscore the importance of keeping the costs of transmitting remittances down, ensuring that migrant workers are not discriminated against in retaining employment and, as far as possible, keeping remittance channels open as an essential service (Horrocks, Rühmann and Konda, 2020[138]).

Economic and financial linkages can be a source of both resilience and risk

Increased access to more diverse financial resources has provided significant opportunities to fragile contexts, but it has also brought additional risks. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, debt risks were increasing, and these risks appear to be closely linked to fragility.[8] First, contexts at medium or high risk of debt distress have increased fragility, and more of these such contexts are on the 2020 fragility framework than were on the 2018 framework. Second, the contexts that exited the framework since 2018 are at low or medium risk of debt distress (Thompson, 2020[113]; OECD, 2020[140]).

Figure 1.13. Foreign direct investment into fragile contexts

Foreign direct investment into fragile contexts 2009-18, US dollars



● Fragile contexts ● *Extremely fragile contexts* ▲ Years with a positive flow ▼ Years with a negative flow

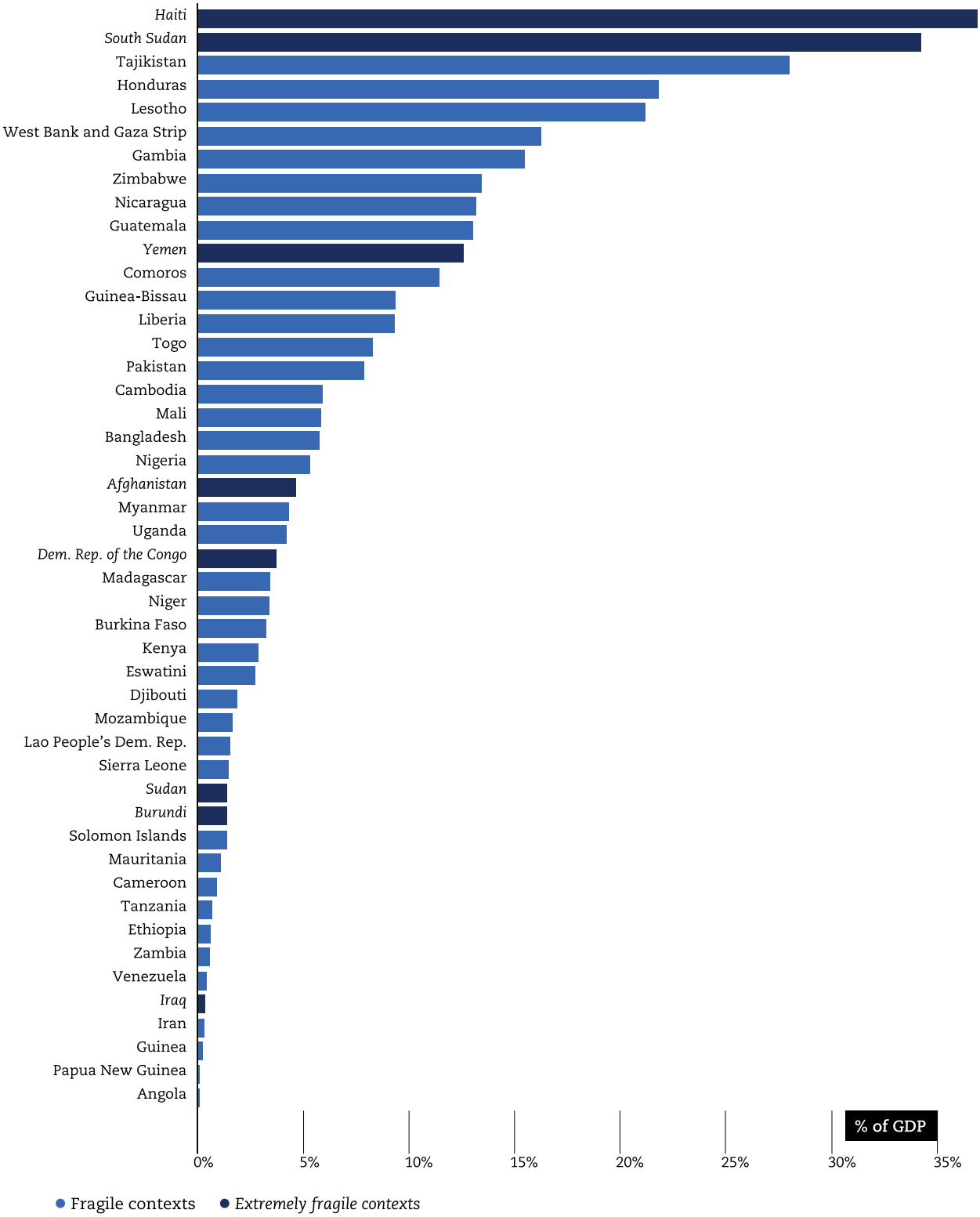
Notes: Negative values imply disinvestment. This figure does not include data for Libya and Syria due to data limitations. Data for South Sudan are included within figures for Sudan prior to 2012.

Source: World Bank (2020[134]), *Foreign Direct Investment, Net Inflows* (database), https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.KLT.DINV.CD.WD, converted to 2018 USD using the DAC total deflator.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934167999

Figure 1.14. Remittances relative to the overall economy in select fragile contexts

Remittances as a share of gross domestic product, 2019



Note: Values for 2019 are estimates. Remittances data is not available for all fragile contexts. Remittances may also be sent through informal channels not captured here.

Source: World Bank (2020[139]), *Migration and Remittances Data: Remittances: Inflows* (database), https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/migrationremittancesdiasporaissues/brief/migration-remittances-data.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934168018

These opportunities and risks have become abundantly clear in the economic and fiscal shocks flowing from the COVID-19 pandemic. The IMF predicts that Africa is heading for its first recession in 25 years, while Latin America and the Caribbean may see its worst recession in history (Thompson, 2020[113]). And while external financing has helped build economic resilience, it is those countries with significant external linkages that may be the worst affected. Yet few governments or households in fragile contexts are able to introduce the kinds of large-scale economic stimulus and social safety net responses that were initiated in Europe. Moreover, a large portion of the private sector in these contexts is comprised of small informal and micro-enterprises with little access to capital and safety nets. Far less is spent on social safety nets in fragile contexts than in other developing contexts: around one-fifth as much (USD 35.5 versus USD 161), according to the World Bank's Atlas of Social Protection Indicators of Resilience and Equity, or ASPIRE, data (World Bank, 2020[105]).

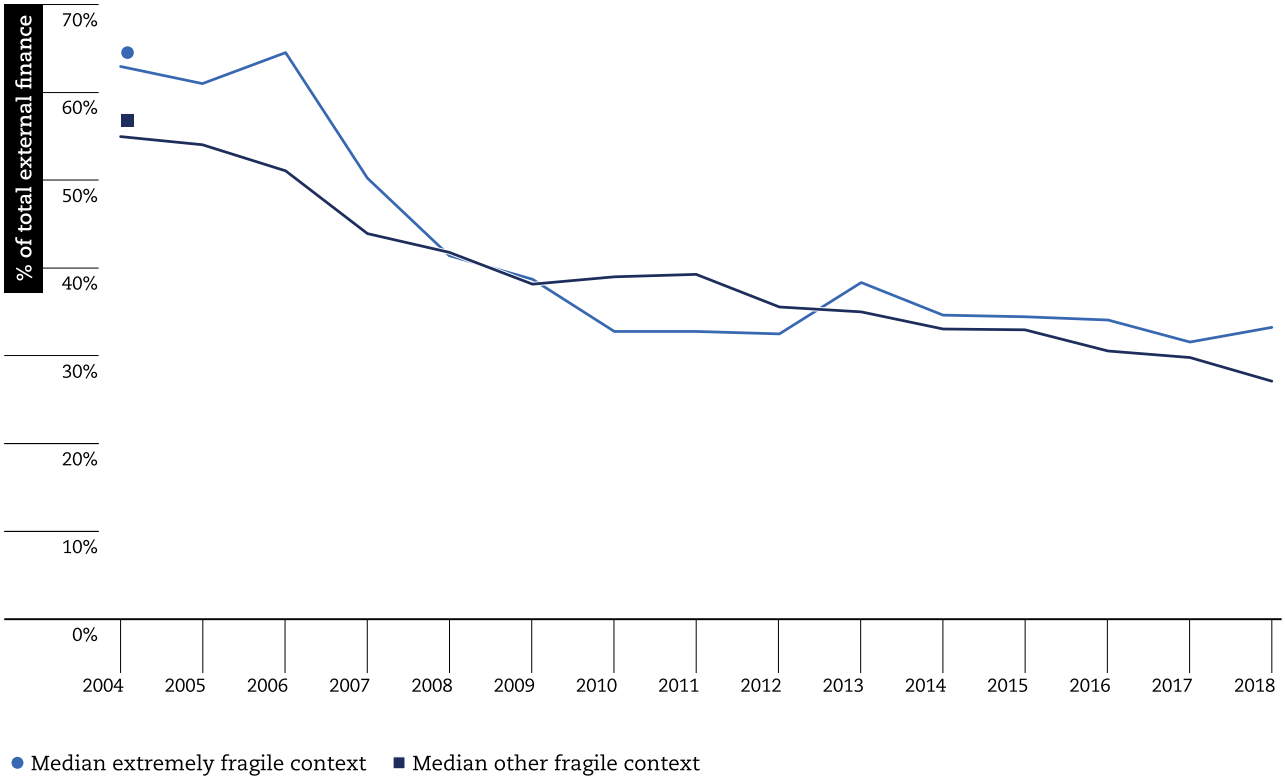
Public debt has increased steadily since the debt relief provided under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative. This has reduced the space that fragile contexts have to respond to the impacts of COVID-19 and other economic shocks (OECD, 2020[140]). There also appears to be a strong connection to resource dependence, which not only has enabled a greater and faster build-up of debt but is making the effects of the COVID-19 recession more severe for many fragile contexts. Countries' access to natural resource assets also enabled them to build up debt faster than non-resource rich countries: between 2013 and 2018, oil exporters' median debt-to-GDP ratio increased significantly faster than for their resource-poor counterparts, growing from 31% to 54%. For example, the Congo's debt levels more than doubled over the five-year period while those of Equatorial Guinea grew fivefold (Calderon and Zeufack, 2020[141]).

As shown by data on the suspension of debt repayments available to low-income countries under the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), eligible low-income fragile contexts owed approximately USD 432.6 billion by the end of 2018, with 11% of the total owed by extremely fragile contexts. It is likely that without mitigating measures, debt service would amount to around 6% of ODA in 2021 for extremely fragile contexts and around 82% of ODA for other fragile contexts (World Bank, 2020[142]; Thompson, 2020[113]; OECD, 2020[140]). Among official bilateral lenders, by far the largest debt service bill is owed to the People's Republic of China (China). Infographic 1.2 illustrates debt burdens in fragile contexts as a component of financing.

New lenders and forms of debt are increasing the cost and complexity of borrowing and, if necessary, restructuring debt (OECD, 2020[140]). Fragile and extremely fragile contexts are borrowing from a more diverse group of lenders, and the overall proportion of concessional debt in external debt has decreased (Figure 1.15). Traditional bilateral lenders have reduced their lending while borrowing from other bilateral lenders such as China, the Russian Federation and Saudi Arabia has increased. Commercial borrowing also increased between 2010 and 2018, including Eurobond issuances by 16 low-income developing countries, 12 of which are fragile contexts.[9]

Given this diversity, fragile contexts face more varied debt risks than during the pre-HIPC era, which places a premium on fiscal management and the ability to service and manage debt as components of resilience. Black swan events will happen, and the most effective time to intervene is before they occur. Dealing effectively with unsustainable debt takes time, institutions, and resources from both borrowers and lenders.[10] Debt sustainability, moreover, is not merely a technical fiscal exercise, but it also requires expertise in fragility and the political economy. The quality and sequencing of financing as well as a realistic pace of reform

Figure 1.15. Concessional debt as a proportion of total external debt since HIPC, 2004-18



Note: This figure is based on data for 11 extremely fragile contexts and 39 other fragile contexts. Missing values are excluded from the calculation. South Sudan is included in Sudan prior to 2012.

Source: World Bank (2020[142]), *International Debt Statistics* (database), https://data.worldbank.org/products/ids.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934168037

become ever more important in a high-debt fragile context. Understanding debt dynamics on a case-by-case basis will be important for resolving crises while preserving positive incentives on borrowers and lenders. Building contexts' capacity to negotiate, assess and contract debt can help address incentive issues (OECD, 2020[140]; Thompson, 2020[113]).

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NOTES

1. See http://www3.compareyourcountry.org/states-of-fragility/overview/0/.
2. See, for example, Belgium's Fragility Risk Assessment Management Exercise tool, described by Vervisch (2019[143]) at www.diplomatie.be/oda/frame_methodology.pdf, and Denmark's Fragility Risk and Resilience Analysis Tool.
3. Chronically fragile contexts are those contexts that have appeared in each OECD fragility report since the first one in 2005.
4. This figure is derived from authors' calculations based on data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) and the *ND-GAIN* database (University of Notre Dame, 2020[28]) at https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index, using the classification of exposure to climate change introduced by Krampe (2019[29]) at https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/pb_1906_ccr_peacebuilding_2.pdf. See Pettersson and Öberg (2020[25]) for the UCDP data at https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0022343320934986.
5. This figure is an authors' calculation based on data from the World Bank's Human Capital Index (World Bank, 2020[100]).
6. The figures are authors' calculations based on the 2020 fragility framework and data from the *Pre-demographic Dividend* database of the World Bank (2018[88]), available at https://data.worldbank.org/region/pre-demographic-dividend?view=chart.
7. The World Bank provides disaggregated data for 126 out of the 157 countries analysed by the HCI. See (Avitabile et al., 2020[89]) at http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/306651578290912072/Insights-from-Disaggregating-the-Human-Capital-Index.

8. This assessment is made on the basis of the low-income countries covered by the Debt Sustainability Framework for Low-Income Countries, for which the IMF publishes debt sustainability analyses, normally on an annual basis.
9. The low-income developing country grouping (LIDC) is a diverse grouping of 59 countries used by the IMF for analytical, not operational, purposes. The LIDC group has economic structures and per capita income levels that are insufficient for them to be classified as emerging market economies, although some do have access to international capital markets.
10. As part of COVID-19 responses, some immediate steps have been taken, for example by bilateral lenders under the debt service suspension initiative (DSSI), and by the IMF and donors under the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT), to either defer the timing of repayment, or pay debt service on behalf of low-income countries. At the time of writing, these initiatives extend until the end of 2020 (DSSI) or for six months, to be potentially extended for up to two years (CCRT) (Thompson, 2020[113]).

PEACE, FRAGILITY AND FRAGILE CONTEXTS

02

ABSTRACT

Ensuring effective engagement in fragile contexts requires humanitarian, development and peace actors to work with coherence and complementarity based on mutual awareness of their individual roles and principles. This chapter focuses on conflict prevention and peacebuilding, with a particular goal of exploring and demystifying the somewhat less-understood roles of peace actors in fragile contexts. It provides an overview of support for peace and prevention of violent conflict in fragile contexts and ways development actors, peacebuilders, diplomats and security actors can work towards shared goals more effectively.

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IN BRIEF

PEACE, FRAGILITY AND FRAGILE CONTEXTS

- **Violence is concentrated in fragile contexts**. In 2019, 79% of deaths from violent conflict and 96% of deaths from state-based armed conflict occurred in fragile contexts. While the share of deaths from violent conflict is the lowest since 2010, it is nevertheless substantial and affirms that violent conflict remains concentrated in fragile contexts. In 2019, 22 of 31 contexts worldwide in active, state-based conflict were fragile, representing 65% of the population of fragile contexts.
- **The case for conflict prevention has never been stronger**. Violent conflict is cyclical and protracted. The mechanisms for responding to it are becoming overstretched, while the benefits of preventing it are significant and compound annually. The costs of violence are not confined to where it is located; DAC members spent USD 5.1 trillion on containing violence in 2017.
- **External interventions for peace require analysis that is conflict-sensitive and politically informed**. Prevention and peacebuilding are messy, long-term and highly political exercises. And yet it is vital for development actors to engage in them. Investing in analysis, early and often, is a crucial enabler of conflict-sensitive and politically informed approaches that adapt to the broader context. Such approaches can allow actors to capitalise on windows of opportunity for targeting risks and strengthening sources of resilience to violent conflict and fragility.
- **Every actor in the nexus has a role to play**. Support for peace is context-specific and can involve a wide range of peacebuilding, security and diplomatic actors. At a minimum, awareness of each other's roles across the nexus is required to do no harm when operating in fragile contexts. Diplomatic actors have unique mobility across the nexus and can draw on their network and skills to support sustainable peace alongside sustainable development in fragile contexts. External security actors can create the space and time for political and societal peace processes. The presence of external security actors can increase the success of negotiated settlements and prolong peace. The risk of conflict recurrence drops by 75% where United Nations (UN) peacekeepers are deployed.

The relationship between fragility and peace

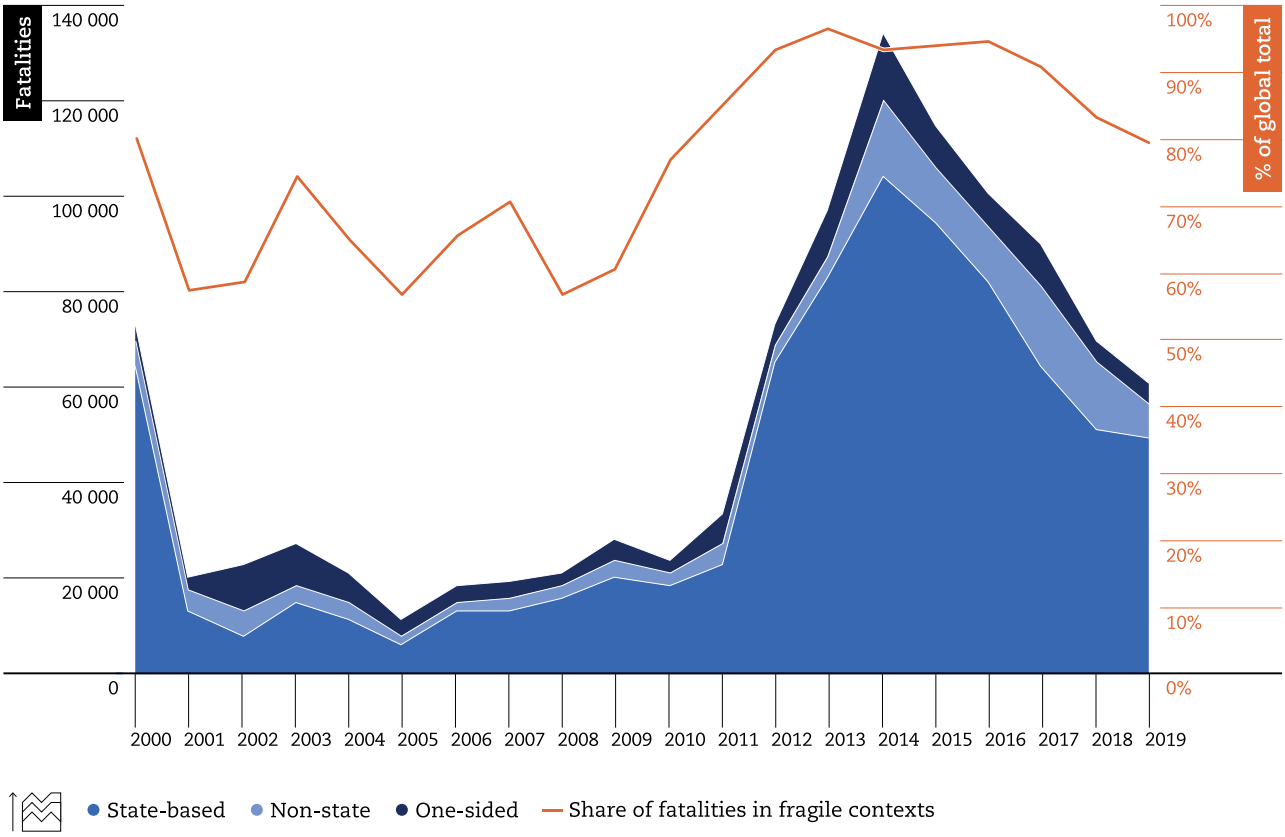
The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a framework for the creation of peaceful, just and inclusive societies that leave no one behind. As the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development affirms, "There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development" (UN, 2015, p. 2[1]). This is particularly true in fragile contexts, which are the most affected by conflict and, as the analysis in Chapter 1 suggests, face the biggest risk of being left behind on the SDGs. Shortly after adopting Agenda 2030, the UN General Assembly and UN Security Council adopted joint resolutions on peacebuilding and sustaining peace in which they pledged to work towards a "common vision of society" (UN, 2018, p. 1[2]) free from violent conflict, using all available tools at their disposal. They reaffirmed that addressing violence in all its forms requires a nationally led, collective political process involving national governments, local authorities and communities with support from external partners. In this way, the sustaining peace resolutions embrace the same principles of universality and positive peace as the SDGs. Since their adoption, various joint initiatives and policy frameworks have reaffirmed the importance of this agenda. Among them is the DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, adopted in February 2019 and calling for "prevention always, development wherever possible, humanitarian action when necessary" (OECD DAC, 2019[3]).

Sustaining peace in fragile contexts is not a simple or linear task. Nor can it be achieved in isolation or by any one actor or approach. Violent conflict is multidimensional, and addressing it requires a sound analysis of the underlying root causes of conflict and fragility, coupled with complementary, coherent and co-ordinated responses. This chapter explores the range of approaches and challenges to supporting peace in fragile contexts, outlines good practices in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and reviews how diplomats and security actors can contribute to peace in such environments. These actors are at the front lines of efforts to address violent conflict, each equipped with a distinct set of tools and approaches within a broader ecosystem of actors. The DAC Recommendation recognises their unique contributions to sustainable peace while also stresses that they need to collaborate with and complement the work of humanitarian and development actors in support of mutually agreed, collective outcomes. However, the activities and approaches of peace actors are relatively less understood than those of their counterparts (Redvers and Parker, 2020[4]), and one of the goals of this chapter is to demystify the work of peace actors and solidify their importance as actors in their own right. The chapter concludes with a discussion of avenues to improve the international community's support for peace in fragile contexts, with an emphasis on promoting coherence and investing in analysis. Doing so can help shift the focus away from responding to crises and instead encourage early, proactive action to prevent them.

Fragility and violent conflict, though not the same, are often mutually selfreinforcing

Violent conflict and its consequences are more concentrated in fragile contexts than ever before (Pettersson and Öberg, 2020[5]). The character of conflict has also changed, with an increasing prevalence of non-state actors and organised armed groups alongside other regional, transnational and global actors who combine and compete in a wide variety of ways in pursuit of their interests. While violent conflict and fragility are not the same, they are linked inextricably (Chapter 1). More than three-quarters of the casualties from violent conflict in 2019 occurred in the 57 fragile contexts on the

Figure 2.1. Fatalities from violent conflict in fragile contexts, 2000-19



Note: See methodological annex (Annex B) for further information on the categories of armed conflict referenced in this figure.
Sources: Pettersson and Öberg (2020[5]), "Organized violence, 1989-2019", https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0022343320934986; UCDP (2020[6]), *Uppsala Conflict Data Program* (database), https://ucdp.uu.se/.

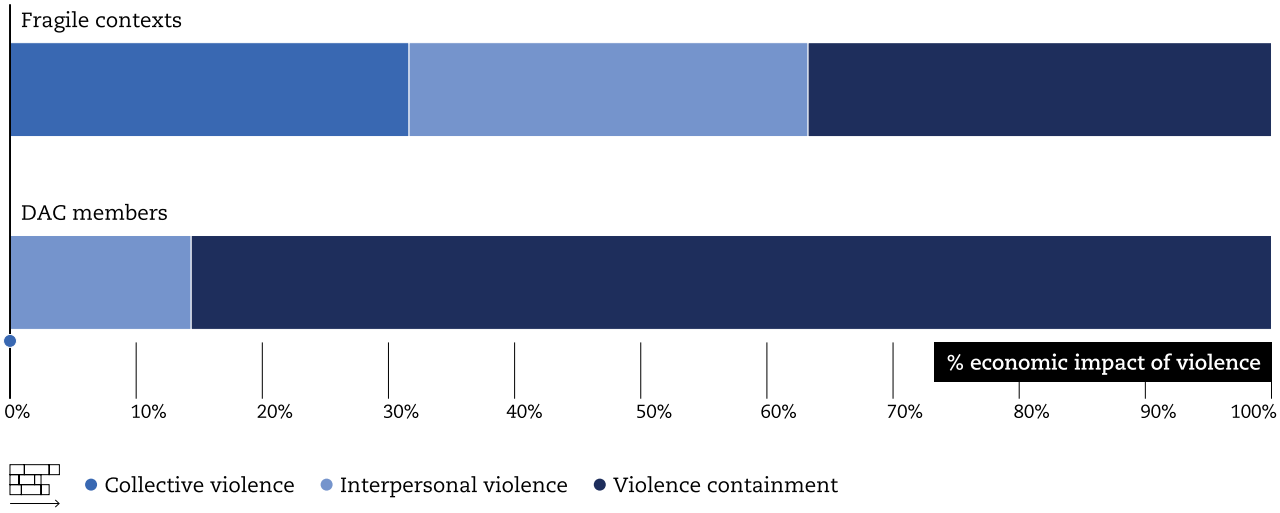
StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934168056

2020 fragility framework. Additionally, from 2010 to 2019, the number of active violent conflicts in fragile contexts increased by 128%. While the share of global deaths from violent conflict in fragile contexts has declined since its peak in 2013, it still amounted to 79% in 2019 and underscores that violent conflict is concentrated in fragile contexts (Figure 2.1).

Such violence is cyclical and persistent, creating a conflict trap that is difficult to escape (UN/World Bank, 2018[7]). An example is Afghanistan, where reported deaths from violent conflict have increased every year since 2008. Because these violent conflicts are becoming protracted, the lives and money saved from a preventive approach are multiplied over many years (Milante et al., 2020[8]). The consequences of violent conflict are not confined to fragile contexts. Rather, it has implications for fragile and non-fragile contexts alike, as illustrated in Figure 2.2. DAC members spent USD 5.1 trillion on containing violence globally in 2017, which amounted to 86% of the global economic impact of violence on members (Iqbal, Bardwell and Hammond, 2019[9]). Indeed, trends in violence and violent conflict in fragile contexts have shaped DAC members' foreign policy priorities and development co-operation objectives. A recent, notable example is the Global Fragility Act, a new United States strategy focused on conflict prevention (Welsh, 2019[10]).

DAC members are using a range of development, diplomatic and security tools to address violent conflict and fragility and foster peace. These include UN peacekeeping, as shown in Figure 2.3,

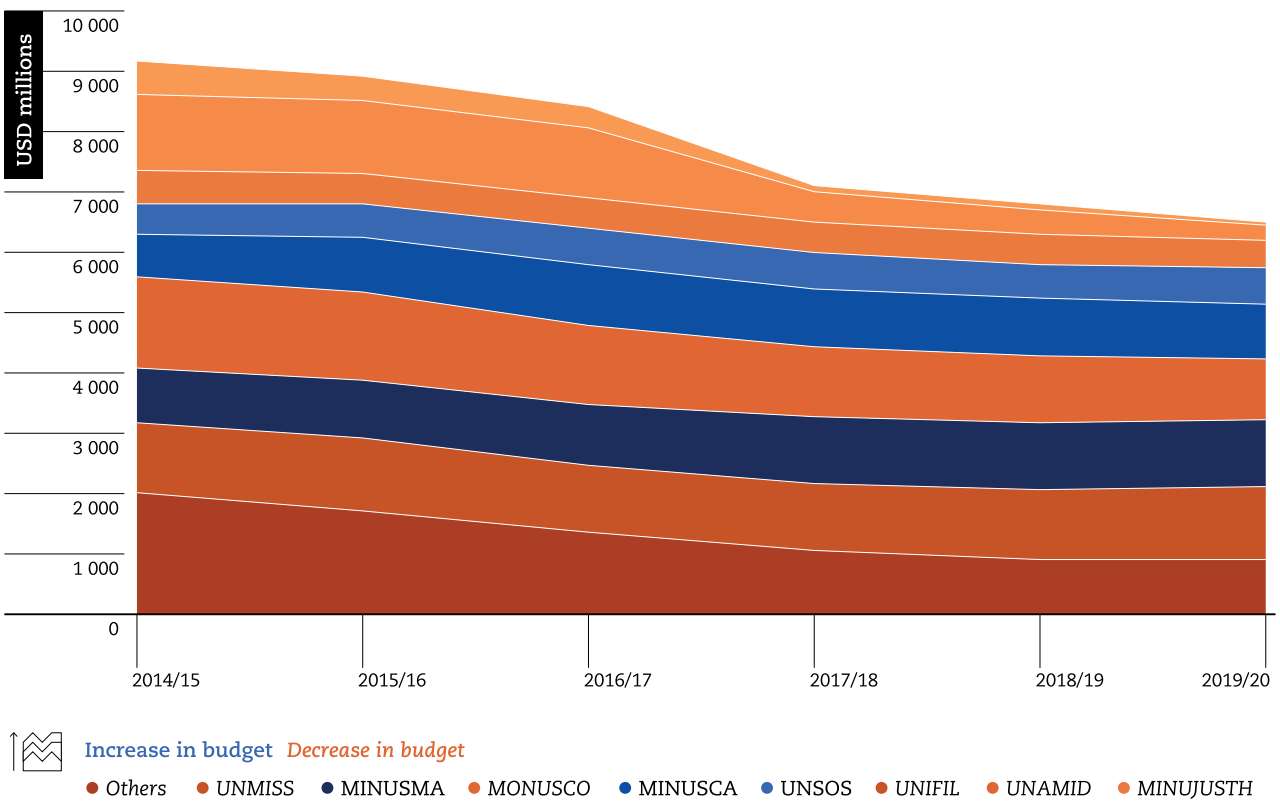
Figure 2.2. Economic impact of violence by type in fragile contexts versus in DAC members, 2017



Source: Iqbal, Bardwell, and Hammond (2019[9]), "Estimating the global economic cost of violence: Methodology improvements and estimate updates", https://doi.org/10.1080/10242694.2019.1689485.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934168075

Figure 2.3. UN peacekeeping budgets, 2014/15-2019/20



Notes: "Others" refers to the budget of all other operations, including support missions, that are financed through the UN peacekeeping budget. All numbers are reported in 2019 constant prices for the year the budgets were set, using the United States Consumer Price Index.
Source: Data on UN peacekeeping budgets is collected from General Assembly documents relating to the approved resources for UN Peacekeeping operations, see https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/how-we-are-funded#gadocs2 and methodology in Annex A of Forsberg (2020[13]), Security Actors in Fragile Contexts.

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which is one of the most effective tools to mitigate the risk and impact of violent conflict (Howard, 2019[11]). However, as the costs of crisis response rise, the UN peacekeeping budget has fallen by almost 30% in the past five years and is likely to continue to decline, especially in light of additional fiscal constraints imposed by COVID-19 (de Coning, 2020[12]).

Those who are engaged in violence compound its physical and psychological trauma by exposing and targeting fragility in opposing peoples, communities, institutions and states. This is the case whether the violence is competitive, embedded or permissive (Cheng, Goodhand and Meehan, 2018, p. 2[14]). Notwithstanding international laws on armed conflict and other treaties, contemporary conflicts are replete with examples of state and non-state attacks on hospitals, schools and critical infrastructure. UNICEF sounded an alarm in 2019, noting a "three-fold rise in verified attacks on children since 2010, an average of 45 violations a day" (UNICEF, 2019[15]). Violent conflict impedes DAC members' efforts to address fragility and support sustainable development. It also impacts humanitarian assistance and the longevity of investments in infrastructure. Attacks on healthcare facilities, for instance, have been a striking feature of conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) and Yemen (Briody et al., 2018[16]). In 2019, there were 277 attacks on aid workers globally, a 75% increase over 2017, resulting in 125 causalities. Of these attacks, 94% (260 incidents) occurred in fragile contexts, resulting in 123 casualties, or 98% of the global total (Stoddard et al., 2020[17]). Conflict economies can bring official state, non-state and criminal organisations together in relationships of convenience and often self-interest, undermining the integrity of economic systems in fragile contexts and eroding the basis for recovery. The economic issues of fragility that may give rise to conflict often take on new meaning during conflict. As a recent study for Chatham House notes, "Even if economic motivations did not spark the wars in Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen initially, it is clear that such factors now play a critical role in the persistence of open fighting, localized violence and coercion" (Eaton et al., 2019, p. iv[18]).

Arbitrary justice, the targeting of vulnerable groups and particularly women, and the instrumentalisation of forced displacement for conflict goals cynically target social cohesion. For example, armed groups seeking to leverage economic, societal, political and security advantage often seek to strategically cause forced displacement to pressurize displaced populations and host communities as a means to affect bargaining "between governments and opposition actors along social, religious and political lines" (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2019[19]). Using force to displace populations is also used to "provide cover for militants and their arms to enter new territories and cross international boundaries, placing host communities at risk of conflict diffusion" (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2019[19]).

As evidenced by these examples, the exploitation of fragility for the violent pursuit of political objectives devalues human security and distorts local and regional politics, undermining the capacity for compromise and peace. This poses a series of policy dilemmas for actors across the nexus where the "aspiration to 'do no harm'" meets the reality of calculated policy and operational risks in highly complex environments that are frequently conducive to "unforeseen and/or negative consequences" (Eaton et al., 2019, p. v[18]). Multidimensional analysis for peace must therefore balance consideration of the root causes of fragility that give rise to conflict against the manipulation and aggravation of issues of fragility to sustain conflict. Box 2.1 discusses the added stressor of the COVID-19 pandemic on fragile conflicts at risk of or experiencing violent conflict.

BOX 2.1. CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) AND PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT

COVID-19 is not halting or lessening violence in fragile and conflict-affected settings. It is adding to economic, health and societal fragility, exacerbating existing pressures. In contexts where violence is concentrated or on the rise, mitigating the impact of COVID-19 will require a focus on preventing violent conflict and building peace. The call by the United Nations Security Council for a global ceasefire was a laudable first step for preventative action. However, with few exceptions, the call has gone unanswered by violent actors (ACLED, 2020[20]).

Pandemic-related pressure is building in many contexts. Just since the ceasefire call, for example, violent conflict has displaced 660 000 people (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2020[21]), which may further burden fragile contexts. They are already hosting approximately half of the world's refugees, and now, according to the UN INFORM COVID Risk Index, six of the top ten developing countries hosting refugees are exposed to high structural COVID-19 risk. Against a backdrop of persistent global conflicts, the risks will only increase. Initial pandemic response measures taken by governments in some fragile contexts risk compounding poverty, inequality, social fragmentation and political repression, which can only serve to exacerbate the root causes of violent conflict and fragility. Aligning conflict prevention approaches to the impact of COVID-19 will challenge national and international actors' approaches to inclusivity. One reason cited for the failure of the UN Security Council's global ceasefire to gain traction was the exclusion of certain non-state actors from the appeal, caveats that may well have undermined the very gains the international community hoped to achieve (Beckelman and Long, 2020[22]). The underlying principles of conflict prevention, articulated in the 2018 UN and World Bank report *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, are applicable to efforts to respond to the COVID-19 crisis (UN/World Bank, 2018[7]). These include focusing on resilience, especially at local levels; prioritising conflict sensitivity in an integrated manner; and supporting the capacities of national actors to manage the effects of the crisis while capitalising on opportunities to build back better.

The main challenges to prevent violent conflict and to sustain peace in fragile contexts

Fragmentation of peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts damages accountability and fosters inefficiency

External support for peacebuilding and conflict prevention takes a variety of forms. Bilateral and multilateral diplomatic actors, humanitarian actors, development agencies, and security actors all inform, shape and participate in peace processes from prevention to reconstruction. This plethora of actors is often necessary to ensure comprehensive and effective support for multidimensional peacebuilding and conflict prevention processes while simultaneously addressing the direct consequences of violence and conflict and the underlying causes of conflict, violence and fragility. However, this multiplicity of actors also risks contributing to fragmentation of international support for peace, with negative and unintended consequences that compromise often delicate local processes. This risk is further amplified by the decline in international co-operation in recent years (UN, 2020[23]).

The approaches taken by external security actors to support peace in fragile contexts vary significantly and are often fragmented, even within a single context. A multitude of multilateral and bilateral security actors operate in several fragile contexts, each with its own mandate, approach and agenda. Multilateral peace operations alone can range from large-scale peace enforcement and stabilisation missions to unarmed military observation missions and capacity building. Non-DAC donors such as China and the Russian Federation are also increasingly involved in security in fragile contexts. The Central African Republic, Iraq, the Sahel region, Somalia and several other contexts are presently hosting multilateral, regional and bilateral deployments by a variety of security actors, all of which have

different mandates, tasks and priorities. These trends pose a challenge to global governance of peace and security, increasing the urgency to find new avenues for effective support for peace in fragile contexts.

Security actors can also be isolated from other contributors to peace support. There remain both a wide cultural rift and significant lack of trust between security actors and other actors across the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus. For humanitarian actors, co-operating with security actors carries the risk of compromising the integrity and operational value of humanitarian principles. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), both UN and non-UN humanitarian actors have been reluctant to share information with staff of the UN peacekeeping mission MONUSCO because of insufficient trust in the mission's personnel (Metcalfe, Giffen and Elhawary, 2011[24]). For political and development actors, interacting with security actors, particularly in frameworks where the voice of security actors is leading a political response, can lead to a securitised approach that often fails to account for the full spectrum of causes of fragility and conflict. For example, the comprehensive military planning approach meant to inform military interventions by the Force Intervention Brigades in the DRC was criticised for not fully working as intended because military commanders preferred to take final decisions among themselves based on their own military intelligence (International Crisis Group, 2019[25]). The current rigidity of silos between security actors and other actors across the nexus thus fosters inefficiency, negatively impacting on the integrity of humanitarian, development and peace actions in a variety of ways.

Fragmented analysis contributes to misalignment of high-level commitments to prevention and operation-level engagement

Despite robust evidence on what works to prevent violent conflict, the application of these lessons is limited both in terms of funding and prioritisation (Cheng, Goodhand and Meehan, 2018[14]; Wolff et al., 2020[26]). Transitioning from violent conflict to peace, just as moving from fragility to resilience (Chapter 1), is not linear or inevitable (UN/World Bank, 2018[7]). External actors can only do so much to support internal processes for peace that are shaped by power dynamics and elite behaviour, and in fact they can do much harm.

The implication is that efforts to prevent violent conflict must eschew the language of best practice and agendas of good governance in favour of engaging with underlying power relations that shape incentives for or against violence (World Bank, 2017[27]). Doing so requires problem-driven approaches that adapt to the evolving context and capitalise on windows of opportunity to address risks and sources of resilience to violent conflict and fragility. To do this, analysis is critical. Analysis of the political context and conflict environment that encourages politically informed and conflict-sensitive approaches is a prerequisite to effective strategies for prevention and peacebuilding.

However, current approaches to analysis, which tend to focus on specific sectors or thematic priorities, offer only a partial and provisional picture of the sources of risk and resilience in the broader context (Swelam, 2020[28]). Additionally, such analysis is not deployed across all stages of programming cycles and remains divorced from broader, strategic frameworks that inform decision making on prevention priorities at different geographic and thematic levels (Desai, 2020[29]). These issues contribute to a misalignment between high-level political commitments to prevention, of which there are many, and strategic engagement on and resourcing for them.

The fragmentation and inflexibility of official financing limit its ability to contribute to peace

Official financing, including both official development assistance (ODA) and non-ODA

sources, can be an important enabler of peaceful and resilient outcomes (UN/World Bank, 2018[7]). However, at present, its focus remains on responding to crises rather than preventing them. DAC members spent 25% of their ODA to fragile contexts on humanitarian assistance but only 4% and 13% on prevention and peacebuilding, respectively, in 2018. Additionally, the share of DAC ODA that is humanitarian has doubled from 12% in 2007 to 25% in 2018. This disparity between investments in prevention relative to response is notable given the return on investment to prevention. According to *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, every USD 1 invested in prevention generates USD 16 from the averted costs of violent conflict (UN/World Bank, 2018[7]). Similarly, recent estimates from Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies suggest a cumulative net benefit of USD 6.6 trillion from 2020 through 2030 (Milante et al., 2020[8]). This analysis presents a clear business case for investments in prevention. However, the low amount of financing for prevention relative to response is only part of the issue. Even when such financing exists, it is scattered and misaligned to agreed collective outcomes, which limits its return on investment (Day and Caus, 2020[30]). It also tends to be insufficiently flexible and risk-averse, and it focuses on small-scale programmes with limited impact rather than on medium-sized ones that are more difficult to secure funding for (UN, 2020[31]; UN/World Bank, 2018[7]). These challenges, in terms of both volume and programme design, limit the ability of official financing to contribute to peace, an issue that is also emphasised in the UN Peacebuilding Architecture Review (Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, 2019, p. 4[32]).

The substance of local ownership for prevention and peacebuilding is contested and difficult to establish

The importance of local ownership for peacebuilding and conflict prevention processes is broadly accepted. In practice, it has proven difficult to establish. External actors supporting peacebuilding often find it difficult to identify local stakeholders, local participation can be inconsistent, and the concept and process of conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives can themselves be a source of tensions, as external and local actors compete to address the needs and political aspirations of their respective communities (Bojicic-Dzelilovic and Martin, 2016, p. 7[33]).

Collins and Thiessen (2019[34]), analysing the nature of ownership for peace initiatives, note that "shallow ownership" where local actors are encouraged to "buy into externally designed reform strategies" is much more common than more substantive versions of ownership where local actors "decide for themselves what sort of state-building should be prioritised, and how it should be implemented". This is highly context specific and almost always includes politically charged conversations around future governance structures and the balance of power within them. For example, the peacebuilding process in Afghanistan must balance the expectations of the central government alongside "local power brokers, rebels and insurgents" who have established parallel or competing structures of governance, including the provision of public services, that shape the local populations' choices, loyalty and expectations of peace (Collins and Thiessen, 2019, p. 221[34]). The question of who is asking whom to own what peace needs to be carefully considered and appropriately informed.

Lessons on conflict prevention and peacebuilding

Preventing violent conflict and building peace are messy, political and difficult processes that happen over a long time horizon. There are no quick fixes or templates (Cheng, Goodhand and Meehan, 2018[14]). And yet it is important for development actors to engage in this hard work, both in addressing the

drivers of violent conflict and fragility and in building resilience against the impact of such drivers in the long term.

The effectiveness of conflict prevention and peacebuilding varies according to the broader context and type of activity (Cramer, Goodhand and Morris, 2016[35]). There is limited evidence that investments in any single area or programme, detached from other approaches, will yield successful outcomes. Different tools for and approaches to preventing violent conflict can work but only when deployed together and coherently (UN/World Bank, 2018[7]). However, such joint interventions are not without cost, and there is always a possibility that they can exacerbate risks to conflict, which underscores the importance of conflict-sensitive and politically informed analysis and ways of working. The evidence on what does not work for prevention is clear: interventions that neglect the political and social drivers of violent conflict tend to reproduce or create new drivers, leading to failed peace processes (Cramer, Goodhand and Morris, 2016[35]).

Despite the varied nature of successes, broader lessons are emerging from the available evidence to support peer learning and inform DAC members' strategies. The remainder of this section elaborates on lessons drawn from a Survey of DAC members' strategic approaches to conflict prevention, conducted from January to March 2020.

Interrogating the politics of prevention is vital to help support inclusive political settlements

One of the lessons that emerged involves confronting politics, particularly the way in which political settlements are ordered and contested to induce or mitigate conflict. The interaction between these political settlements, elite bargains and formal peace agreements affects trajectories from violent conflict to peace (Cheng, Goodhand and Meehan, 2018[14]). The extent of inclusion or marginalisation that results from these interactions, particularly in the distribution of goods and services, is a key determinant of incentives towards peace or conflict (Wolff et al., 2020[26]). Indeed, systematic exclusion from political governance or livelihoods is associated with higher levels of conflict (UN/World Bank, 2018[7]). This finding also underscores the importance of investments in justice and security to address such exclusion (Task Force on Justice, 2019[36]).

In each case, it is important to ask who is being excluded and how that exclusion affects the underlying political settlement (Cheng, Goodhand and Meehan, 2018[14]). Political settlements analysis provides an approach to do so by understanding the institutions and power relations that preserve a tacit political settlement (Kelsall, 2018[37]). It can help identify the political incentives of actors, including leaders and vulnerable groups, and subsequently adapt approaches based on how their interventions affect these political arrangements, rather than relying on pre-conceived objectives or technical fixes. Such adaptation is a process of listening to various stakeholders, learning iteratively and being willing to adjust the design of prevention strategies. It is important to emphasise that political engagement takes a long time and thus requires programme cycles that accommodate such time horizons.

A prominent example of such a politically informed approach identified in the survey responses is the multi-donor Somalia Stability Fund for local governance (Laws, 2018[38]). The Fund used a politically smart and adaptive approach whereby it considered power relations within formal and customary institutions at the regional level and invested in politically attuned staff who involved political leadership in decision making at important times. The Fund also exercised a flexible approach that shifted resources based on what was and was not working, which also allowed it to capitalise on emerging opportunities to affect political processes.

Another example is DAC members' joint efforts to support the implementation of the 2001 Bougainville Peace Agreement,

particularly for the conduct of the referendum on Bougainville's future political status in late 2019. The success of this process in yielding a peaceful referendum reflected a strongly co-ordinated effort among international partners, led by Australia, New Zealand, and the UN, to support national actors and other local institutions essential to the referendum, including the Bougainville Referendum Commission; the International Foundation for Electoral Systems; the multi-country Bougainville Referendum Regional Police Support Mission (consisting of representatives from Pacific island small states); the National Research Institute; and civil society organisations and non-state actors, especially women's groups and ex-combatants. Such support also complemented bilateral assistance from other international partners in service delivery and community cohesion and stability (specifically support for women and youth), and it represented a culmination of long-term support and engagement with the Papua New Guinea and Autonomous Bougainville governments to implement the Peace Agreement.

Supporting resilience to multidimensional risks requires investments in sound, conflict-sensitive analysis

Another lesson from the survey findings is the importance of building resilience, particularly at the community level, and of reinforcing the bonding, building and linking functions of social capital (OECD, 2018[39]). As COVID-19 and other black swan events have shown, shocks are inevitable and there is a need to scale up programming to build the resilience of populations, institutions and systems. At the same time, not all forms of resilience contribute to sustainable development; often, negative forms of resilience can entrench exclusionary structures. It is important to identify sources of positive resilience that respond to needs among vulnerable populations and strengthen their adaptive, absorptive and transformative capacities (Ingram and Papoulidis, 2018[40]; OECD, 2014[41]). To do so effectively requires an emphasis on conflict sensitivity and political awareness.

There are many examples of conflict prevention and peacebuilding to resolve disputes within communities. A prominent one is the success of peace huts in communities across Liberia in which women activists mediated grievances and supported the development of local peacebuilding priorities (UN/World Bank, 2018[7]). Another example involves Japan's New Approach for Peace and Security in Africa (NAPSA), which proposes a framework for co-operating with regional organisations to support prevention and peacebuilding across the African continent (Prime Minister of Japan and His Cabinet, 2019[42]). As part of NAPSA, the Japan International Cooperation Agency supported the development of guidelines for local councils in the northern regions of Sierra Leone to encourage community participation and build trust between communities and local governments for the broader purpose of building resilience to future shocks after the Ebola epidemic.

Communities play a vital role in fragile contexts (Myint and Pattison, 2018[43]). They are not homogenous but involve a diverse set of actors with different social positions and consequently varying incentives for engaging in or ending violence. The structures that govern communities are also not neutral constructs but rather have historical, social and political roots that may be a source of contestation or compromise. While supporting community resilience is important, it also has the potential to entrench exclusionary structures. It is therefore crucial to recognise the socio-historical roots of success stories, such as the examples presented here. The success of peace huts in Liberia, for instance, built on the foundation of women peace activists who were instrumental in the movement to end Liberia's last civil war (UN/World Bank, 2018[7]). The issue, then, lies in identifying which lessons work and where, as supporting

resilience within communities and promoting social capital are highly contingent, agent-based approaches. They require a more holistic and conflict-sensitive understanding of the context, which further underscores the need for an adaptive and iterative approach. Practitioners and policymakers can learn from positive examples. They can also embrace experimentation and trial and error based on their operating environment and theories of change.

The two lessons highlighted in this sub-section underscore that prevention and resilience are complementary processes, both of which inform a risk reduction approach to violent conflict and fragility. They are urgently needed to shift the focus of international institutions away from responding to crises to addressing risks before they have materialised.

Maintaining local focus for conflict prevention and peacebuilding in fragile contexts

Empowering local ownership of peacebuilding in fragile contexts

Peacebuilding thinking and practice are evolving. In 2015, the UN's sustaining peace agenda acknowledged peacebuilding as a political activity that requires context-specific responses, shifting the discussion on conflict prevention and peacebuilding approaches and encouraging the exploration of new options. The importance of building trust with and among political elites is universally accepted. But the technical preparation, management and implementation of peacebuilding processes can leave political elites detached. Working with civil society organisations (CSOs) can serve to extend the space for public engagement in peacebuilding dialogue and encourage political elites to engage. For example, in Sudan, though narrowly conceptualised, CSOs were found to have played an important role in "putting pressure on track-one parties; providing actual input; and selling peace agreements to grassroots" (Assal, 2016[44]). However, it is also worth noting that CSOs can be politically aligned and viewed as party to a conflict (Assal, 2016, p. 3[44]).

Prevention and resilience are urgently needed to shift the focus of international institutions away from responding to crises to addressing risks before they have materialised

Where political elites are themselves party to a conflict – where they have chosen to pursue their goals through violent means – the challenge is to provide or support the search for alternative political means. This is not always possible; for example, the trend in long-term civil wars (such as Syria) is increasingly towards a one-sided victory rather than compromise and peace (Howard and Stark, 2018[45]). This trend must be challenged as the evidence also exists to show that "the seeds of war are often sown during war" and failure to address unresolved grievances "leads to a pattern of conflict recurrence" (World Bank, 2017[46]).

Approaches such as adaptive peacebuilding can bring actors together in a "structured effort to sustain peace" that focuses on process and local resilience over predetermined end states (de Coning, 2018, p. 317[47]). Altering the terms of ownership and support among local political leaders and external peacebuilders can also help build more politically inclusive and sustainable processes. This addresses an issue found in many fragile contexts whereby "local stakeholders are not authorised to hold global actors accountable for

achieving their local level aims" (Campbell, 2018, p. 48[48]) A decision to build local accountability by ensuring local actors' authority over the design, direction and content of peacebuilding activities alters the power dynamics of relationships between actors and can serve to empower and incentivise local political actors to take more visible roles in the process. While not adhering to all these features, the Truth, Reparations and Reconciliation Commission (TRRC) established in Gambia stands out as a locally designed and led transitional justice process. The TRRC design draws on the local Bantaba tradition for community dialogue blended with an extensive communications strategy that includes live radio and television broadcasts of the TRRC sessions, social media, and community and victims outreach initiatives to encourage public engagement and build legitimacy for the process (Ceesay, 2020[49]). Though the Commission has yet to reach the more contentious reparations part of its mandate, it is generally considered to be successful in establishing an accepted picture of the atrocities committed under the previous regime (Darboe, 2019[50]).

Analysing fragility can build the evidence base to empower local ownership. By design, most peacebuilding processes focus on local ownership, management and implementation (Peace Direct, 2019, p. 3[51]). However, from community to national levels, local peacebuilding actors often struggle (or lack the capacity) to gather data and conduct analysis to inform the design and effectiveness of peacebuilding approaches. At the community level, where issues are intimately understood and where engagement with CSOs can alleviate knowledge gaps and facilitate dialogue, this may not be a problem (Peace Direct, 2019, p. 36[51]). Larger-scale peacebuilding initiatives that encompass a broader range of issues require more careful consideration. Guaranteeing local ownership and leadership at the earliest stages of programme analysis permits local oversight of the analysis of the root causes of fragility and conflict. This can establish the evidence base for change, build the credibility and legitimacy of a process, and ensure local political knowledge and awareness are built into peacebuilding design.

Supporting the long-term local capacity for sustaining peace in fragile contexts

Conflict prevention and peacebuilding initiatives at the community level are often short-term and issue-specific – focused, for example, on local patterns of armed conflict and violence – and frequently leave root causes of conflict unaltered. It may not be possible to patch them together to form a larger-scale process, as "in their variety, local peace agreements represent the diversity but also the splintered nature and patchiness of what is contemporary armed conflict" (Pospisil, Wise and Bell, 2020, p. 4[52]). Though they may not be part of a national process, these types of initiatives can offer national-level value, particularly by sustaining periods of "negative peace" (Galtung, 1969[53]) to allow time for longer-term conflict prevention and peacebuilding to take hold.

National-level processes are more complex and often require the establishment of institutional frameworks that may remain in existence for extended periods. This poses a number of short- and long-term challenges. In the short term, external peace support must be mindful not to overburden or distract domestic capacities. In many conflict-affected fragile contexts, state and non-state capacity to manage and lead conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes is limited; it is also often disproportionately focused on managing relations with external partners at the expense of local priorities, on occasion inadvertently contributing to instability and fragility (de Coning, 2013, p. 1[54]).

At the national level, peacebuilding is almost always a generational process with implications for local institutions, civil society and education. It requires "long-term commitment and adequate human

and financial resources" (Greve, 2019[55]), which implies that strategic approaches for sustaining peace are needed across dimensions of fragility. Investing in and supporting local capacity to build and sustain peace also entails addressing the societal, human capital and political means to deliver an often highly complex process. This requires building partnerships across national and local governments, CSOs, political parties, religious groups and, where possible, parties to a conflict. For example, the importance of engaging youth in conflict prevention and peacebuilding in fragile contexts is recognised in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security. The resolution sets out five pillars for engagement – participation, protection, prevention, partnerships, and disengagement and reintegration – that speak to different aspects of the challenges affecting youth in conflict-affected fragile contexts (UN, 2015[56]). Implementation of the recommendations is notably lacking in some contexts where youth peacebuilders face challenges associated with shrinking civic engagement space, limited access to individual economic opportunities or organisational funding, and a lack of transparency from governments. Short-sightedness regarding the role of youth "can exacerbate the risk of violence and radicalisation in certain contexts" (Peace Direct, 2019, p. 5[57]).

Aligning humanitarian and development support to local processes and priorities

The DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus encourages "collaborative, coherent and complementary humanitarian, development and peace actions, particularly in fragile and conflict affected situations" (OECD DAC, 2019[3]). It promotes approaches that bring together actors from different pillars of engagement and organisations – multilateral and bilateral – to ensure effective collective efforts. Fully embraced, the Recommendation can help drive better-informed and more aware, efficient and locally responsive approaches to addressing fragility. While it will inevitably mean different things to different communities and create frustrations, it can be seen as much a call for adjusting organisational cultures and mindsets as for technical forms of change (Redvers, 2019[58]; Schreiber and Loudon, 2020[59]).

The DAC Recommendation should not compromise humanitarian competence or principles. It should, though, challenge the thinking of all actors across the nexus on the implications of their activities. In fragile contexts, addressing people's needs often aligns with addressing root causes of conflict. As crises in fragile contexts persist for extended periods, humanitarian responses have increasingly moved beyond filling the gaps and addressing people's immediate needs (International Peace Institute, 2018, p. 2[60]). Humanitarian moves to "increase people power in new modes of participatory programming, localization and 'accountability to affected people'" (Slim, 2020[61]) will pose questions for their interactions with local and external actors. While there are necessary risks associated with the concept, most notably where aid or activities get politicised (NGO VOICE, 2019, p. 5[62]), there is significant potential, too. For fragile contexts, localised approaches can have a multiplier effect to the extent that where addressing people's needs aligns with root causes of conflict – notably in the economic and societal dimensions of fragility – humanitarian activities can have a peace and resilience value by alleviating pressure and building capacity, particularly at local levels. A joint study for the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute and the World Food Programme (WFP) found that WFP's school meal programmes in Mali can contribute to mitigating the effects of conflict on education and improve stability in communities because it helps keep schools open and improves class attendance (Goldwyn et al., 2019[63]).

While conflict sensitivity and the "do no harm" framework are important aspects of humanitarian planning, adopting a nexus

mindset should also include the evaluation of humanitarian actions for other actors across the nexus (International Peace Institute, 2018[60]). This can help test operational assumptions, mitigate perceived hierarchies and ensure inclusivity of local actors, but it requires a cohesive and balanced engagement from all actors. Where peace and security approaches are perceived as narrowly defined or unhelpfully blurred and where self-interests are seen to have adverse effects on policy development, the potential of the nexus will not be realised (Tronc, Grace and Nhaikian, 2019, pp. 27-29[64]). Humanitarian, development and peace actors may not always manage to agree on or achieve co-ordination. However, the starting point for their respective actions must be an awareness of their shared operational space and of the implications of their actions for each other.

Development actors, too, can provide leverage and incentives to prevent conflict and to chart paths from negative to positive peace outcomes, as they are able to address fragility across dimensions (Galtung, 1969, p. 170[53]). At a macro level, initiatives such as the World Trade Organization's Trade for Peace are designed specifically for fragile and conflict-affected contexts with the goal of improving their chances to sustain peace by integrating them into the world economy and boosting their trade. World trade is projected to decline by between 13% and 32% in 2020, making the early warning and collective action aspects of such initiatives particularly timely (Wolff, 2020[65]). At regional and national levels, development can be used to sustain peace through such processes as the United Nations Development Programme-funded Wan Fambul National Framework in Sierra Leone, which aims to "facilitate inclusive, community-centred, sustainable rural development leading to resilient and cohesive communities across Sierra Leone" (Paris Peace Forum, 2019[66]). Aligning more closely with the work of peace and security actors, programmes such as the French Development Agency's Minka Lake Chad Initiative target issues of fragility that cause conflict by supporting the delivery of public services in a fair and inclusive manner, strengthening local governance and community mediation, and supporting the protection of women and youth (AFD, 2019[67]).

Recognising the complementary roles of diplomatic and security actors for conflict prevention and peacebuilding

To support peace in fragile contexts is a whole-of-government endeavour. Local peacebuilders, development actors and sometimes humanitarian actors play important roles in addressing the underlying causes of conflicts and the root causes of fragility. But they cannot do this in isolation. This publication focuses on external security actors, but the roles and actions of internal actors are equally important. Diplomatic and security actors, for instance, are equipped with tools and skills to assume several roles in the international community's efforts to support peace and security in fragile contexts. They contribute to several critical aspects of effective peacebuilding and conflict prevention processes and greatly affect the potential for effective external support for peace in fragile contexts.

Diplomatic actors have the network, mobility and leverage to address fragility and promote peace

The core strength and competency of diplomats and other diplomatic actors is that of continuous communication and dialogue. Through dialogue, diplomats provide political assistance and apply pressure to address the political root causes of armed conflict and violence, thereby complementing development and peacebuilding approaches and ensuring that the political dynamics of conflict are addressed in peace processes.

The diplomatic presence in fragile contexts is comprised of bilateral diplomatic missions and embassies, multilateral political missions, and various ad hoc and informal arrangements. DAC members have 571 resident embassies and permanent delegations deployed in fragile contexts, covering 56 of the 57 fragile contexts[1] (Figure 2.4) (Lowy Institute, 2019[68]). Embassies are concentrated in contexts that are of particular economic and security interest to the respective members, in line with their primary objective of implementing their government's foreign policy. However, they are also present in some of the contexts most affected by armed conflict, and they often contribute implicitly and explicitly to peace through their political engagement. In addition, 60 active multilateral political missions are currently operating around the world. Of these, 31 operate to some extent in fragile contexts (Figure 2.5) and engage in activities such as short-term preventive diplomacy, providing good office functions, promoting rule of law, and advising on socio-economic and political issues. The UN deploys the largest number of political missions of any multilateral organisation, particularly in fragile contexts. Of the 31 political missions active in fragile contexts, 20 are UN missions, most of them in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa (Figure 2.5). However, other organisations including regional organisations also deploy political missions to support peace. For instance, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe provides political support through 16 missions in Europe and Central Asia. Multilateral political missions thus have a geographical presence and expertise to provide cost-effective support for peace in fragile contexts and beyond (OECD, 2018[39]).

The political dialogue that is inherent to diplomatic practice is of particular relevance for the promotion of inclusive governance. Inclusive governance refers to "a normative sensibility that stands in favour of inclusion as the benchmark against which institutions can be judged and also promoted" (Hickey, 2015[69]). There is strong agreement on the centrality of inclusive governance to achieve sustainable development (OECD, 2020[70]) and sustained peace (UN, 2015[1]). Inclusive governance can be promoted through development assistance and support for CSOs and other inclusive institutions. Diplomats can also contribute through inclusive dialogues with different national stakeholders, amplifying voices that are otherwise marginalised, and through political dialogue, engagement and persuasion with ruling elites (Forsberg and Marley, 2020[71]).

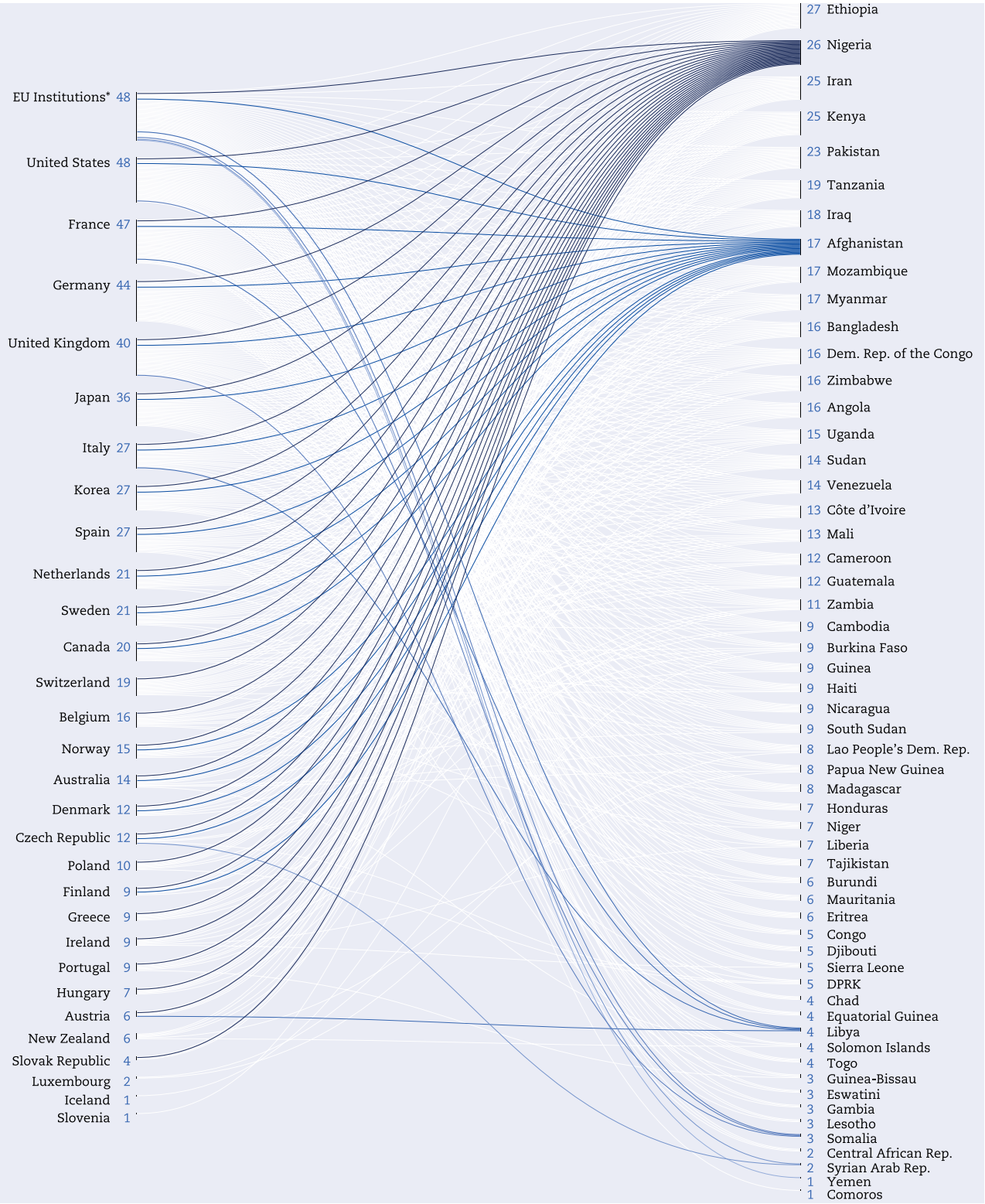
DAC members have 571 resident embassies and permanent delegations deployed in fragile contexts, covering 56 of the 57 fragile contexts

Several countries have launched initiatives to improve the complementarity of development and diplomatic practices in long-term processes contributing to peace. Canada, France and Sweden have adopted feminist foreign policies and international assistance policies that bring together different tools, including political dialogue and pressure, to further gender equality around the world (Thomson, 2020[72]). Sweden's Drive for Democracy initiative, launched in 2019, is another example of an integrated development-diplomatic approach, supporting democratic institutions through the joint use of development aid and political influence to encourage inclusive political settlements (Wallström, 2019[73]).

Mediation can prevent the immediate threat of violent conflict but also contribute to long-term stability and peace

Diplomatic actors' contribution to peace extends beyond long-term political

Figure 2.4. Embassies and delegations in fragile contexts, 2019



Notes: Numbers in blue refer to the number of embassies or delegations each DAC member deploys and that are present in each fragile context. The six fragile contexts that are highlighted are those that experienced high-intensity conflict in 2019. General consulates, political missions and other types of diplomatic missions that are not embassies or permanent delegations are excluded. DPRK refers to Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

*EU Institutions deploy delegations rather than embassies. The EU institutions delegations to Syria and Yemen are currently temporarily relocated to Beirut and Amman, respectively.

Sources: Data sourced from the Lowy Institute (2019[68]), *Global Diplomacy Index*, https://globaldiplomacyindex.lowyinstitute.org/ and the European Union (n.d.[74]), *EU in the World* (webpage), https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/area/geo_en.

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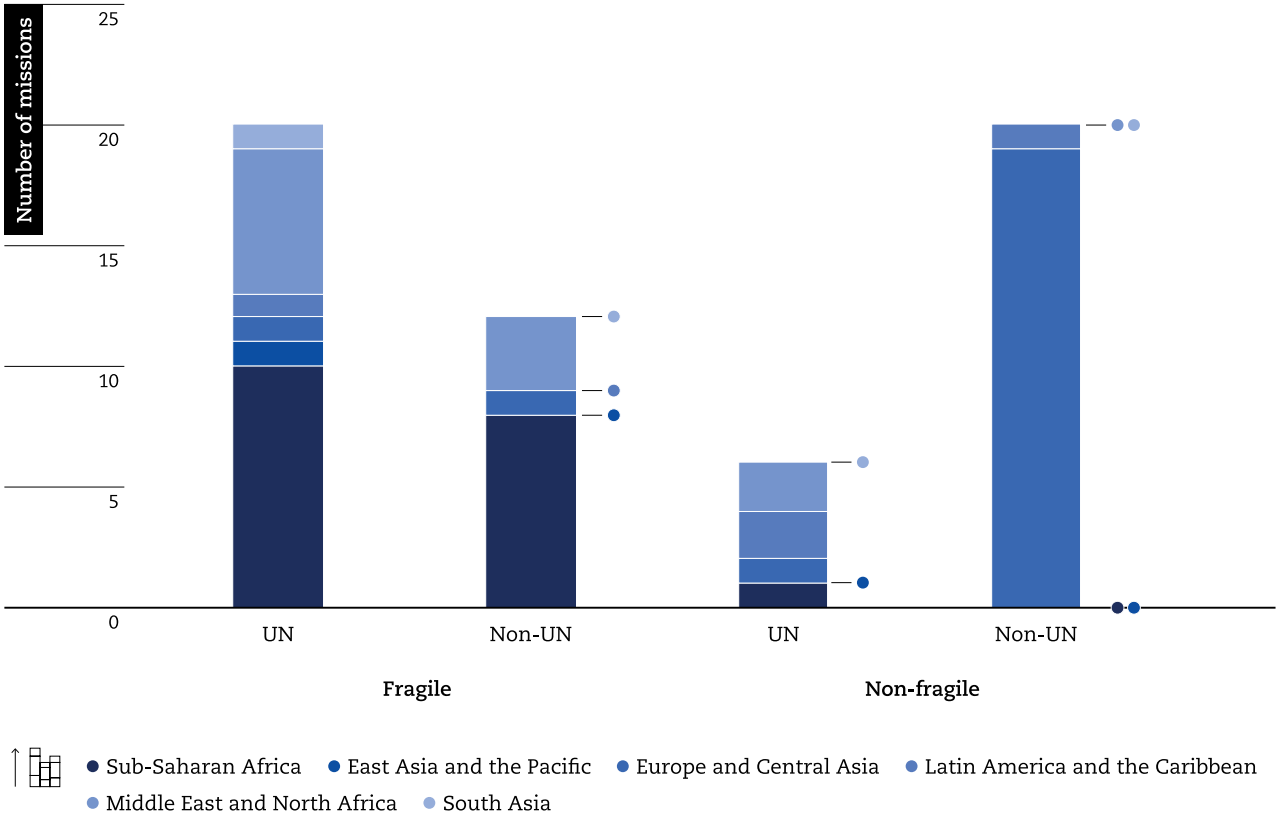
Figure 2.5. Multilateral political missions in fragile and non-fragile contexts, 2019



Note: The multilateral political missions all have different mandates, sizes and functions.
Source: This graph is produced based on the authors' calculations using the SIPRI (SIPRI, 2020[75]) *Multilateral Peace Operations Database* https://www.sipri.org/databases/pko and desk research on multilateral organisations' own reporting of their political country presence.

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engagement. Mediation is the type of diplomacy most closely related to peace making and peacebuilding. It is used in all stages of peace processes – even in the heat of full-scale war where parties are locked in mutually exclusive and fixed positions with high levels of distrust and resentment – in order to prevent conflict from emerging, escalating and recurring (Boutros-Ghali, 1992[76]). Mediation involves bridging information gaps and resolving commitment problems but can also involve more coercive strategies such as promised benefits and threats of punishment (Wallensteen and Svensson, 2014[77]). Of the 165 negotiated settlements reached in conflicts in fragile contexts between 1991 and 2017, only 19 were concluded without any involvement by a third-party mediator (Duursma, 2020[78]). The success rate of mediation varies significantly according to the context, type of mediator and conflict dynamics, and reaching a politically negotiated peace agreement is only the first stage in a longer peace process. Nonetheless, mediation that creates conditions for necessary political settlements among elites and between groups in society remains an essential, flexible and effective tool for peace (UN, 2017[79]).

The immediate preventive power of mediation is not enough to ensure sustained peace in fragile contexts around the world. Efforts to build resilience and address the root causes of conflict are needed to achieve just, peaceful and inclusive societies. However, as violent conflict spurs further conflict, mediation that prohibits disputes from escalating into conflict does contribute to long-term stability and peace.

States and multilateral organisations are not the only actors engaged in third-party diplomacy and mediation. Non-official actors, including individuals and non-governmental

organisations, intervene as third-party mediators in conflicts in what is often referred to as Track II and Track III diplomacy. This type of diplomacy generally complements that of official actors, as it allows more flexible, subtle and personal approaches that are free from the constraints of official policies and positions (Böhmelt, 2010[80]). Track II and III mediation can be as important as negotiations among political elites. Conflicts are disruptive and destructive, breaking down social capital, entrenching hostile attitudes among groups and creating fear in the affected populations. Such attitudes and feelings are not resolved in political settlements; they require deeper, longer-term and personal engagement (Mac Ginty, 2014[81]).

Security actors can create space for political and societal peace processes

Security actors' main role in support of peace in fragile contexts is to contribute to conditions conducive for political and societal peace processes and to support institutions that are critical to sustaining peace. In short, they help create the space and time needed for peacebuilding (Forsberg, 2020[13]). This main function of security actors in peacebuilding is important. The effects of peacebuilding and development co-operation on violence and conflict are dependent on sufficient security and stability (World Bank, 2020[82]). The presence of peacekeeping has a positive and statistically significant effect on containing the spread of civil war, increasing the success of negotiated settlements and increasing the duration of peace once a war has ended (Howard, 2019[11]). The risk of conflict recurrence drops by as much as 75% where UN peacekeepers are deployed (Gates, Mokleiv Nygård and Trappeniers, 2016[83]). These relationships do not look the same for all types of security actor operations in all contexts, and there are risks involved in external security interventions in fragile contexts. However, they do suggest that security actor operations, when done right, are instrumental to successful peacebuilding processes, in that they provide the basic conditions needed for addressing and transforming underlying causes of conflict. They can also serve to unlock the potential of other avenues for peacebuilding associated with supporting gender and youth empowerment Box 2.2.

The 13 fragile contexts that hosted peace operations in 2019 had a total continuous presence of more than 100 000 military personnel deployed and more than 10 000 police

In several fragile and extremely fragile contexts, security actors are the main international presence. The 13 fragile contexts that hosted peace operations in 2019 had a total continuous presence of more than 100 000 military personnel deployed and more than 10 000 police. Furthermore, DAC members spent an estimated USD 12 billion on multilateral peace operations in the 23 contexts that hosted peace operations in 2019 through troop contributions and direct financial support, the vast majority of which was directed towards fragile contexts (Figure 2.6). The international community is highly dependent on these missions' contributions to support peace, especially where large multilateral peace operations (such as UN multidimensional peace operations) are deployed. To disregard their effect on peace in fragile contexts would be to ignore the largest component of international engagement in support of peace, particularly in extremely fragile contexts.

Security actors cannot build peace in isolation

As discussed, basic security conditions are not enough to establish sustained peace and

BOX 2.2. WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Despite policy progress and the recognition that equal and meaningful participation of women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding improves outcomes of peace processes, the number of women in uniform contributing to peace operations remains low, and many still face significant obstacles in terms of sexual and gender-based harassment. In 2019, women comprised 15.1% of military observers and staff officers, 4.4% of military contingents, 26.8% of individual police officers, 11.1% of members of Formed Police Units, and 27% of justice and corrections personnel (Baldwin and Taylor, 2020[84]).

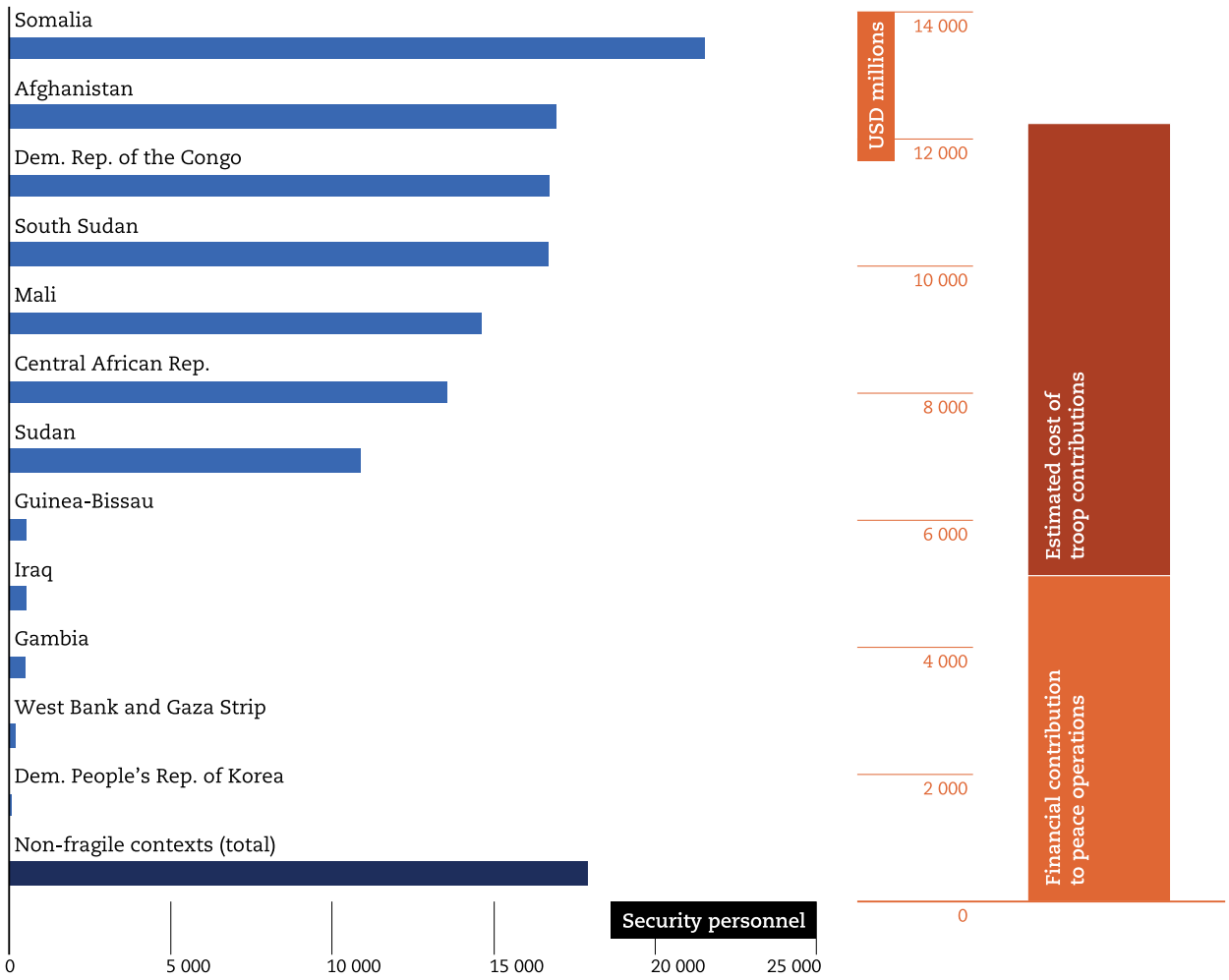
Progress in their non-uniformed contributions to peace is similarly modest. Between 1992 and 2018, women made up 3% of mediators, 13% of negotiators and 4% of signatories in major peace processes (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019[85]). Efforts to address issues of women, peace and security in fragile contexts are still met with "scepticism, apathy, [and] passive and active resistance" (Myrttinen, 2018, p. 41[86]). Only a fifth of peace agreements refer to women (Council on Foreign Relations, 2019[85]). The level of influence of women in peace processes matters. The chances of reaching a peace agreement increase significantly if women can exercise moderate to high degrees of influence on peace negotiations. Gender equality in peacebuilding is important as "the exclusion of women – who are primarily affected by conflict – from peacebuilding activities invariably limits the comprehensiveness of the process" (Adjei, 2019[87]), although the potential of inclusive peace processes remains largely untapped.

The causes of gender inequality in fragile and conflict-affected contexts are nuanced, with complex implications for issues of protection. In Somalia, women represent an important social base for the Al-Shabaab insurgency despite its brutal violence, patriarchal ethos and rigid gender norms, and they help recruitment, generate funds and carry out operations. For most women, this is a context-specific and pragmatic choice that reflects both "the federal government's blinkered assumption that women do not energise the insurgency" and the fact that life under Al-Shabaab's rule offers women a "degree of predictability and opportunities for justice that are often absent in areas administered by the federal government" (International Crisis Group, 2019[88]). New approaches to encourage engagement, dialogue, leadership and reform are seeing results in fragile contexts (Serrano, 2020[89]). Linking and integrating these innovations and the analysis behind them to broader conflict prevention and peacebuilding processes help ensure that gender aspects of social cohesion retain due prominence in multidimensional responses to fragility.

prevent conflict from recurring. To ensure security actors make a sustained impact that contributes to peace over the long term, their activities need to be complemented and co-ordinated with appropriate and well-resourced peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts that encourage inclusive political settlements and societal reconciliation and address the underlying causes of conflict. There are several examples of approaches that bring together security actor engagement for peace with more long-term solutions to conflict. They have in common that they do not propose a blending of responsibilities or joint programming where these are neither relevant nor feasible (Forsberg, 2020[13]). Instead, their starting point is the different comparative advantages, mandates and principles of the relevant actors, and they build from these.

The most prominent and scaled example of approaches that bring together political support, peacebuilding efforts, development co-operation and security actor operations is UN integration. In all cases where the UN has a country team and a multidimensional peacekeeping operation, the UN presence is strategically integrated. This is achieved through sharing of strategic objectives, closely aligned or joint planning, a shared set of collective outcomes, agreed-upon responsibilities, and commonly agreed mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation (UN, 2013[90]). Such integration serves as

Figure 2.6. Peace operations in fragile contexts, 2019



Notes: The blue bars represent the total number of security personnel deployed in all peace operations in each context from all troop-contributing countries. The orange bar represents the estimated contribution of DAC members only to peace operations, in USD.
Source: See methodological annex in Forsberg (2020[13]), "Security actors in fragile contexts".

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an instrument to help countries transition from war to lasting and sustainable peace in complex contexts that require system-wide UN support (Eide et al., 2005[91]).

However, the UN is not alone in implementing approaches that seek to improve coherence between different pillars of international support in crises and conflict. The European Union (EU) Crisis Response System, led by the European External Action Service (EEAS) Crisis Response and Operational Coordination Department, was established to ensure timely and coherent responses to crises by actors and instruments across the EU system. It also contributes to the coherence of policies and actions throughout the different phases of crises, from prevention and preparedness to response and recovery. The system brings together the EEAS, the diplomatic arm of the EU, with humanitarian (DG ECHO), development (DG DEVCO) and military (EU Military Staff) components of the EU system (European Union, 2020[92]).

The French strategy in the Sahel also promotes a coherent approach to peace through a 3D approach that brings together French development, diplomatic and defence capacities in the region. The strategy recognises that while each actor

has an individual role to play, the different pillars of engagement are interconnected and complementary. The strategy calls for the French armed forces to assist in restoring conditions for political solutions and development, while the diplomatic branch maintains a constant dialogue with all stakeholders to foster local, political dispute settlement initiatives. Simultaneously, under this approach, French development agencies work to seize opportunities for development projects in the region that will address underlying conditions of the conflict with the aim of building sustainable, long-term peace (AFD, 2020[93]). Following military progress in Liptarko-Gourma in 2019, the French Development Agency and the French diplomatic branch initiated a joint project in the region, the Three Borders Project (Projet Trois Frontières), that seeks to consolidate the security gains through socio-economic development and strengthened social cohesion between communities across and within Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger (The Sahel Alliance, 2019[94]).

Security actors support security sector governance and reform

In addition to contributing to basic security conditions, security actors directly contribute to processes and institutions that sustain peace through electoral assistance, human rights monitoring, security sector reform (SSR), and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes. Support for these activities is shared endeavours between international bodies, including development, peacebuilding and political actors, and different types of security actors. During its 15-year deployment in Liberia, the UN Mission in Liberia, UNMIL, disarmed more than 100 000 combatants, secured about 21 000 weapons, and assisted in the holding of three peaceful presidential and legislative elections (Ighobor, 2018[95]), thereby directly contributing to the inclusive political settlement of the Liberian civil war. Free and fair elections; an absence of human rights abuses; the government monopoly on the legitimate use of force; and a strong, effective and inclusive security sector are all key factors in establishing sustained peace.

SSR and DDR are particularly important in some fragile contexts where the capacity of the domestic security actors is limited, though it also has been noted that moving from framework agreements on conflict prevention and peacebuilding to implementation is a persistent challenge across security sector governance and reform processes where details on implementation of SSR and DDR are not clearly outlined from the start of a process (Linke, 2020, p. 8[96]). The total budget of peace operations in extremely fragile contexts currently hosting peace operations corresponds to approximately three-quarters of their total domestic military expenditure. The budgets of peace operations amount to more than twice the domestic military expenditure in five contexts – the Central African Republic, the DRC, Somalia and South Sudan, all of which are extremely fragile, and Mali, which is fragile (Forsberg, 2020[13]). Sustaining peace in these contexts requires efforts to support the development of strong, effective and inclusive domestic security institutions, both through military and police capacity building, as well as strengthened governance and rule of law.

Translating commitment to conflict prevention and peacebuilding into effective engagement

Examining sources of risk and resilience to violent conflict and fragility

Violent conflict and fragility are multidimensional, and each emerges from a complex interaction of risks and coping capacities. The implication is that effective development co-operation that targets the root causes of violent conflict and strengthens coping capacities to manage them is instrumental to sustaining peace. This involves focusing attention on both

prevention and resilience, which are two sides of the same coin: one is focused on mitigating the occurrence of risks (prevention) while the other involves mitigating their impact on socio-economic outcomes (resilience). Both of these risk reduction strategies require coherent, complementary and co-ordinated approaches across the triple nexus that involve the full spectrum of peace actors discussed in this chapter, alongside their humanitarian and development counterparts.

As noted, a starting point for these approaches is analysis that provides a holistic perspective on the sources of these risks and their counterbalancing sources of resilience to inform politically sensitive and adaptive ways of working on conflict prevention and peacebuilding. There is value in widening the lens of analysis to consider the entirety of the context rather than focusing on specific sectors or programmes, especially when individual activities are limited in their impact on broader peace processes (UN/World Bank, 2018[7]). That narrower focus would mean that risks are analysed in operational terms, purely based on their effects on programmes, rather than to inform broader, adaptive strategies for effective engagement.

The OECD multidimensional fragility framework offers a tool for this holistic analysis of risk and resilience to violent conflict and fragility (OECD, 2016[97]; OECD, 2018[39]). It is not a programmatic or prescriptive tool. Instead, it is meant to provide a nuanced overview of a context across the dimensions of fragility. Such analysis can help actors identify windows of opportunity to prevent risks and strengthen resilience and thereby contribute to sustaining peace. It is a starting point, and it has the added value of providing a common language to articulate risks and resilience that can appeal to a diverse group of actors, each with different mandates, political incentives and ways of working. In doing so, the framework can facilitate joint, risk-informed analysis, which is a cornerstone of the DAC Recommendation on the HDP nexus. As shown in Chapter 1, the framework is adaptive and malleable across geographic levels. DAC members are testing applications of the framework to inform strategic approaches to building resilience in fragile contexts. Two examples are Belgium's Fragility Resilience Management Exercise and Denmark's Fragility Risk and Resilience Analysis Tool pilots. Moving forward, there is an opportunity to scale these approaches.

Using diplomacy to make the nexus work for conflict prevention and peacebuilding

One of the main challenges to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in fragile contexts today is the fragmentation of efforts between the different pillars of engagement. The humanitarian-development-peace nexus is an approach whereby actors from the humanitarian, development, peacebuilding, diplomatic and security communities strive to improve their mutual collaboration, coherence and complementarity. Diplomatic actors operating in fragile contexts have unique mobility to engage with actors across the triple nexus, including multiple official and non-official actors; political, security and business leaders; civil society; and other individuals and groups. Thanks to this access, their appreciation of the local character of fragility and their official status combining legal authority, legitimacy and power of influence frequently place diplomats in positions to assume convening or facilitating roles that link national and international actors on issues of fragility. Through their knowledge of political dynamics at different levels and access to multiple actors, bilateral and multilateral diplomatic actors can and do provide leadership across all pillars of engagement in fragile contexts. They are frequently best placed to be nexus trilingual with the ability to bring actors and partners together on a range of issues.

This function assumed by diplomats is critical to the implementation of the triple

nexus to guarantee both communication and awareness across the pillars of engagement in fragile contexts and also to ensure activities across the nexus are aligned with national priorities for conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The broad political network that diplomatic actors possess, which encompasses engagement with governments, opposition parties, CSOs and the plethora of external actors in fragile contexts, positions them as a nodal point for effective and inclusive humanitarian, development and peace actions.

Capitalising on synergies between diplomatic and development tools in peace processes

There is great potential in integrated diplomatic-development approaches, not only to facilitate co-operation and coherence across the HDP nexus but also to achieve better results when addressing political root causes of fragility and armed conflict. Leveraging the multilayered political knowledge of diplomatic actors and the political networks they are part of can ensure political factors are taken into account and addressed in development co-operation, peacebuilding and conflict prevention in fragile contexts. This can produce results that are more likely to be sustained and transformative. Without using such synergies, prevention, peacebuilding and development co-operation risk becoming too process-driven and can lack a sustainable theory of change, with the result that they overlook key political causes of armed conflict, violence and fragility. It is important, however, not to sacrifice development co-operation principles, priorities or competencies to achieve integration (Gulrajani et al., 2020[98]).

Similarly, mediation should be seen as part of a broader engagement to support peace. In many cases, it is conducted in conjuncture with military efforts to provide the stability and security needed for fruitful peace negotiations (Forsberg, 2020[13]) and with development programmes and various forms of peacebuilding (Cole and Koppell, 2017[99]). Security actor operations, development co-operation and peacebuilding efforts all have an impact on the dynamics of conflict and incentives for peace. Mediators use the leverage and dynamics of security and development engagement to craft peace agreements, and the implementation of such agreements requires sustained assistance, both financial and political. The actions and inaction of development, peacebuilding and security actors can help reinforce a mediated solution or undermine its success (UN, 2017[79]). It is therefore important to ensure that the full range of support for peace is mobilised and co-ordinated, seizing the opportunities for sustained peace that mediators facilitate.

Enhancing engagement between security actors and other actors across the triple-nexus

Enhancing awareness among civilian and security actors is fundamental for the full implementation of the DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (Forsberg, 2020[13]). Engaging with security actors carries a degree of risk that civilian activities do not (Forsberg, 2020[13]). However, greater awareness of the role of security actors in fragile contexts, stronger dialogue with and among security actors, and co-ordination at the right levels would allow DAC members to mitigate the risks associated with security actor engagement by ensuring that each actor operates with respect to the others' principles and mandates. Where relevant and possible, co-ordinated and joint analysis and planning across development, humanitarian, peacebuilding, security and political dimensions can integrate development into peace processes from the outset, ensure access for humanitarians to people most in need, promote politically informed decision making, and anchor peace processes in trust and cohesion at the local level – thereby contributing to better results for all.

Some organisations have come further than others in their implementation of nexus approaches that include security actors, particularly the UN. However, as the dynamics of conflict and global governance are changing, diplomats and other peace and development actors need to find new avenues for agreements and co-ordination where they are possible and effective for the particular conflict or effort at hand. Particularly, with the proliferation of peace actors in fragile contexts with differing roles and responsibilities, it is vital to ensure that security actors from different organisations and countries are included in country-level discussions on conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Improving coherence through country-level platforms

Country co-ordination platforms provide an opportunity to bring together analysis, programmes, monitoring and financing to inform efforts for sustaining peace in fragile contexts (Papoulidis, Graff and Beckelman, 2020[100]). Although country platforms are not the only option for doing so, recent commitments by the UN, World Bank and Group of Twenty (G20) to strengthen such platforms in fragile contexts point to their potential, as do examples of success in contexts such as the DRC, Haiti, Liberia, Rwanda and Somalia (Papoulidis, 2020[101]; G20 Eminent Persons Group, 2020[102]).

While their structure can vary, a defining feature of them is high-level engagement among host government officials alongside international partners and CSOs (Box 3.3). For this reason, country platforms can help instil political weight to drive momentum for co-ordination in a way that is aligned with national priorities for prevention and peacebuilding. For example, they can provide a forum for international partners to adapt their financing and programming mechanisms to respond to changing needs, especially if they can leverage centralised trust funds such as the Peacebuilding Fund or Instrument for Stability. They can also give partners access to transversal capacities at the country level, such as strategic planning, communications, co-ordination support and pre-positioned resources.

These platforms are thus an important mechanism for coherence across the triple nexus and adaptation to the political and conflict realities of fragile contexts. It is important that they be informed by a sound analysis of fragility that can help identify sources of risk and resilience and help actors monitor outcomes and impacts at a systemic, rather than projectised, level. The OECD fragility framework can serve this function by offering a high-level technical input for the secretariat of these platforms. In doing so, it can help country platforms hold actors accountable for mutually agreed collective outcomes, thereby driving triple nexus approaches that encompass the full spectrum of actors contributing to peace, including diplomatic and security actors in fragile contexts. Country platforms thus provide an avenue to translate high-level commitments to sustaining peace into co-ordinated, complementary and coherent engagement in fragile contexts.

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NOTE

1. The West Bank and Gaza Strip does not host any resident embassies. Nor is there an EU delegation to the West Bank and Gaza Strip. However, there are a number of other diplomatic missions directed towards relations with the Palestinian Authority, including an EU support office, several consulates and other representative offices of a number of DAC members.

FIT FOR FRAGILITY: POLICY TO PRACTICE

03

ABSTRACT

Engaging in fragile settings is challenging, but there is much to learn from the work DAC members are doing to support fragile contexts on the ground. Drawing on case study research assembled as part of the Fit for Fragility project and the discussion in Chapters 1 and 2, this chapter offers guidance for navigating these substantively, strategically and institutionally complex environments.

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IN BRIEF

FIT FOR FRAGILITY: POLICY TO PRACTICE

- **There are no easy answers to fragility**. Daily, international partners experience the inherent complexity, volatility and uncertainty that characterise the fragile contexts in which they operate. These features affect their operations and require adaptation mechanisms.
- **Effective engagement in fragile contexts begins with good analysis**. Acknowledging complexity and interrelated causalities is essential, but the search for nuance should facilitate focused action, not produce paralysis. Adaptive management and iterative learning mean that a good enough approach can help effectiveness.
- **To be fit for fragility specifically requires being fit for collaboration**. Effective collective action demands the presence of essential co-ordination structures and a nexus mindset across all relevant actors. It also requires sustainable partnerships built on trust, mutual accountability and risk-sharing.
- **Back office functions must align with field needs**. Adapting to rapid changes requires the effective use of existing flexibility within international partners' back office function; funding, procurement, contracting and programme management are frequent sticking points.
- **Don't add burden to the fragility**. Care must be taken not to bog down collective action in too many priorities but to use existing mechanisms and to allow national stakeholders to take their rightful place.
- **The fragility landscape is evolving, and so must we**. Global developments such as the increased role of South-South partnerships and the COVID-19 pandemic are having an impact on the fragility landscape and the role of official development assistance (ODA) in it. In light of these changes, maintaining an effective framework for North-South dialogue on fragility issues is essential to ensure co-operation that remains relevant and continues to add value.

Real-world lessons for operating effectively in fragile contexts

How do we ensure effective international engagement in fragile settings? Helping countries address drivers of fragility and reach self-reliance is not only a matter of funding. It also requires long-term partnerships, smarter programming and an appetite for risk. It involves ensuring complementarity and coherence between diplomatic, development, peace and humanitarian interventions in accordance with the DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. It also necessitates strategic approaches adapted to the multidimensional challenges and volatile dynamics of fragile contexts and their heterogeneous mix of individual stakeholders engaging with their own individual strategies, operating modalities and priorities. More than ever, we need to be fit for fragility.

A solid framework of global principles for effective engagement in fragile settings has emerged in the past ten years. While it has served as a useful normative yardstick, this framework has proven less successful at transforming realities in the field. In an ideal world, international partners would be free to adjust their institutional set-up and working processes to fit each context to respond rapidly, stay engaged, collaborate and be flexible. However, windows for institutional reform are rare. Therefore, institutional design of existing systems and mechanisms must be taken as a given for daily engagement and programming in fragile contexts and focus directed to making the most of existing frameworks.

Building on the findings of the 2020 fragility framework, this chapter consolidates recent learning from country case studies undertaken as part of the Fit for Fragility project (Schreiber and Loudon, 2020[1]). Based on the systems thinking described in Chapter 1, it explains how complex features of fragility manifest in the operating environments where ODA is delivered, reviews the implications of this complex landscape for international partners, and looks at ways to ensure more effective engagement at strategic, organisational, country and global levels.

Fragile settings as complex operating environments

Development, peace and humanitarian actors operating in fragile settings are both external to and part of the complex realities they seek to help change. As such and to be fit for fragility, they must make sure their strategies and ways of working are adapted to the features of fragile operating environments, which are characterised by substantive, strategic and institutional complexity. A practical approach to systems thinking is necessary to manage these three types of complexity affecting both donor systems and the operational environment. Box 3.1 describes the three types.

Aligning processes for operational effectiveness

Being fit for fragility entails matching organisational features with the requirements of complex operational environments. This section looks at how the day-to-day manifestation of complexity in fragile settings can inform international partners' engagement.

Starting with analysis of country realities, development co-operation actors can take steps to adapt to fragile and crisis-affected settings where they aim to reduce overall vulnerability and unmet needs, strengthen coping capacities, and tackle root causes of crisis and fragility. For effective results, they should harness the strengths of their existing systems and mechanisms by utilising available levers at four levels: strategic planning, country-level engagement, organisational processes and the global framework. This, in essence, is being fit for fragility, as illustrated in Infographic 3.1.

BOX 3.1. SYSTEMS THINKING APPLIED TO PROGRAMMING: MANAGING COMPLEXITY DAY TO DAY

1. Substantive complexity

Decision making in fragile contexts occurs in situations of volatility, uncertainty, complex multi-causal relationships and ambiguous information. While programmatic goal setting in these environments is often complicated by the lack of available data and evidence, more information is not always a panacea. Indeed, fragility presents itself as complex webs of systemic interdependence that cannot easily be captured in clear-cut frames of reference or joint problem definitions. As a result, people and personalities matter, and knowledge is not given but negotiated; it is impossible to enumerate an exhaustive set of policy courses; there is no "immediate or ultimate test" to assess alternative policy options (Head and Alford, 2015[2]); and solutions are generally "one-shot", with limited opportunity for learning by doing (Ramalingam, Laric and Primrose, 2014[3]).

2. Strategic complexity

Fragile contexts are characterised by strong interdependencies between the stakeholders involved, both national and international. The wide variety of strategies and activities deployed by these actors, each with its own agendas and priorities, limits the effectiveness of development co-operation. Because actors are autonomous and bound by often unclear or weak relations of accountability, the overall aid system in these contexts is highly resistant to attempts to reduce or manage complexity. As a result, various and sometimes conflicting strategies and programming may develop (Hill et al., 2012[4]).

3. Institutional complexity

In many fragile contexts, informal networks, institutions and economies shape the day-to-day realities of local political, economic and social activities and relationships. In contrast, international development efforts often focus on formal institutions and systems. The result is a complex, multilayered framework of formal and informal systems in which official laws and policies can be quite detached from daily programmatic realities. Within this framework, actors operate according to often competing or unclear sets of rules and procedures, adding to the unpredictability of outcomes. At a lower level of analysis, fragility also impairs co-ordination among service delivery systems, generating a disconnect between citizens' expectations of the state and the state's capacity to deliver. This disconnect is often amplified when efforts to modernise or decentralise state institutions are not accompanied by shifts in resource allocation from the centre to the periphery.

Note: The distinction between substantive, strategic and institutional complexity builds on work by Klijn and Koppenjan on governance in complex networks. See for example (Klijn and Koppenjan, 2014[5]).

Strategic planning: Make long-term goals stick

Engaging in fragile settings is an exercise in managing trade-offs, for example between short- and long-term actions, big picture thinking and technical complexities, and needs and means. Investing in the initial context and fragility analysis is key to set the course for further engagement. Thus, when clear objectives flow from a sound general analysis of the operational environment, it becomes possible to balance the key challenge of short-term uncertainties with longer-term goals.

Look at the big picture first

Development practitioners working in fragile contexts increasingly recognise that technical programmatic solutions, even if well-formulated, are often insufficient to achieve the desired result. Country case studies corroborate this challenge. Many development and civil society actors struggle to articulate the development trajectory in a

Infographic 3.1. Fit for fragility

Fit for fragility: Improving operational effectiveness

Reducing overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthening risk management capacities, and addressing the root causes of conflict.

Strategic planning: Make long-term goals stick

Look at the big picture first
Planning must identify the key drivers of fragility, actors' comparative advantages and a collective vision of the desired end state.

Use the available room for flexible programming
Programming must be able to adapt to risks and unknowns in the short term while sticking to the long term strategy.

Keep the analysis simple – not simplistic
Acknowledge complexity in systems, and prioritize activities with multiplier effects.

Country-level engagement: Identify and invest in partners

Promote local ownership in an inclusive manner
There are always partners to be found in national institutions, as well as across societal and geographic areas.

Acknowledge and address political challenges
Addressing deep-rooted drivers of fragility is often a politically sensitive exercise, with an important role for diplomacy.

Invest in durable partnerships
Stable partnerships, based on trust and a joint commitment to long-term outcomes, are indispensable to adaptive programming.

Make coordination simpler
Coordination is a trade-off between transaction costs and benefits. Examples of good practice offer a simple recipe.

Organizational processes: Make the system work smarter

Strengthen diverse teams with incentives and rewards
Organisations must create the right incentives to attract the best teams to tackle fragile settings' complex realities.

Keep processes solution-oriented
All steps of the back office's value chain must be geared towards optimum field support.

Leverage system-wide capabilities
Tackling multidimensional fragility requires that multiple areas of expertise across the system come together.

Plan your exit as carefully as your entry
Achieving sustainable outcomes and avoiding relapse requires frequent re-evaluation of objectives – not a box-ticking approach.

Global framework: Take a fresh look at the dialogue

Assess implications of evolving global realities
The landscape of fragility is evolving, and so must global thinking. Take stock of new trends and their ramifications.

Renew and sustain North-South dialogue
Such dialogue on issues of fragility remains essential, notably for aid effectiveness and partnershps.

Invest in collaboration and interoperability
Being fit for fragility is in first instance being fit for collaboration. To make systems work together, the devil is in the detail.

BOX 3.2. ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF THE INITIAL CONTEXT ANALYSIS

Evidence compiled from case studies conducted in the Central African Republic, Chad, Honduras and Liberia as part of the Fit for Fragility project suggests the initial context analysis should include the following essential elements:

- key multidimensional risks, vulnerabilities and coping capacities
- national institutional context and strategies
- dynamics of power and social exclusion
- other relevant actors' activities and plans.

clear theory of change that is underpinned by systems thinking. And while political processes, informal institutions and power relations play a critical role in the success or failure of development interventions in each context, these processes are not systematically considered in the initial context analysis. For development actors, a thorough review of the context is needed as a basis for engagement, recognising multidimensional fragility as a core feature of this context. This initial analysis is essential to define the action in each context, based on comparative advantage and strategic objectives.

Since development activities serve to complement national systems, a clear vision of the desired outcomes should notably include an understanding of what an effectively functioning social contract between resilient state and society systems would look like. In the Central African Republic, for example, it was noted that political deadlines, peace agreements and electoral cycles can distract the government and development partners from creating a long-term vision for development planning. Similarly, the Chad case study highlighted the need for a more explicit collective vision of how ongoing programming contributes to building sustainability and fostering social cohesion. Box 3.2 reviews essential elements of an initial context analysis developed for the Fit for Fragility project.

Use the available room for flexible programming

Flexible programming and finances are crucial in rapidly evolving contexts. For example, funding that is tightly earmarked for use in a specific location may leave vulnerable populations without assistance if they are on the move or returning after displacement. Compliance systems can also be a major impediment to flexibility. International partners therefore must seek to take advantage of any room for building flexibility into their programming. In the Central African Republic, joint funding mechanisms such as the Bekou Trust Fund and Minka funds provide a vehicle for programmatic flexibility. Pre-positioned response capacities, such as the UNICEF-led Rapid Response Mechanism, offer another avenue for joint investment into flexible mechanisms. In addition, adaptive programming is an important way to ensure flexibility and iterative learning in these fluid contexts.

From a financing partner's perspective, including contingency scenarios in programming and flexibility in design, procurement and contracting allows programming to evolve with the fragile context rather than needing a complete overhaul. The goal is to manage risks rather than avoid them, adopt adaptive programming practices, and seize potential opportunities for collective learning and change. These measures also make it possible to stick to long-term goals while managing short-term realities. In the Central African Republic and Honduras, development actors' flexibility was constrained by several factors including, for example, pressure to either disburse or lose funds; programme quality standards that are ill-adapted to insecure or otherwise unstable environments; and short-

term, project-based financing that impedes operational partners' ability to develop a long-term vision and retain staff.

Keep the analysis simple, not simplistic

Fragile contexts frequently present conflicting signals that can be hard to capture in a single narrative. Finding ways to capture nuances is often a challenge. The country case study in Honduras, for example, highlighted the utility of donor institutions having frameworks, strategies and tools that take into account the different types of fragility and not only whether a particular country is in or is not in crisis. When countries present a set of mixed signals of crisis and recovery, as can occur in a post-conflict setting, it is challenging but often critical to frame a complete narrative to help maintain international attention by focusing on the context's potential for development.

Binary understanding of how a partner country situates itself on its development path can lead to binary response, either the provision of humanitarian assistance or development co-operation, for example. To avoid such simplistic approaches, iterative learning, a good enough approach and clear goals can help build nuanced response to complex challenges. Selecting achievable goals and realistic outcomes is an essential part of this challenge.

Country-level engagement: Identify and invest in partners

Most DAC members tend to have a limited country presence. This restricts their capacities and means to navigate complex landscapes, making it all the more important to invest in joint action, leverage partnerships and ensure a realistic approach.

Local ownership is essential and must be inclusive

Allies for peace can generally be identified within the political, administrative and civil structures in fragile contexts. An example is Liberia, where there is a recognised value of identifying and partnering with niche and sectoral administrative entities to ensure national ownership and technical competence, notably in the agriculture sector. However, bilateral co-operation must also involve a diversified, whole-of-society approach, with attention to stakeholders' perspectives across the country. To maintain legitimacy, the state must deliver in both the capital and the periphery. In the Central African Republic, for example, it is critical to support the government to ensure a minimum administrative presence and service delivery for the population outside Bangui, including in the eastern areas that have low population density.

Acknowledge and address political challenges

Some of the most critical drivers of fragility are also among the most politically sensitive. Creative, coherent and context-specific approaches can help overcome political sensitivities. An illustration of this can be found in Honduras, where actors have sought creative solutions to tackle important but controversial issues such as human rights, corruption and the rule of law, while mitigating risks to other, ongoing development programmes. In that endeavour, as noted in Chapter 2, linkages between development and diplomacy are key. While recognising the need to safeguard humanitarian space, actors must also acknowledge and address the political causes of humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities. Honduras provides an example of how a political-technical divide and communication deficit can impede crossover and linkages between technical experts and high-level leadership, thus undermining the ability to back technical-level discussions with strategic decisions.

Invest in durable partnerships

Sustained partnerships and informed risk-sharing offer the possibility of building trust in an otherwise often unstable environment. Lessons from case studies show the importance of mutual trust for promoting flexibility in programming and agreements. Such partnerships imply a level of risk management, identifying the comparative advantages of key partners, and investing in

technical assistance that increases mutual accountability, capacity and responsibility sharing – not only at the central level.

Make co-ordination simpler

Co-ordination is complex in fragile contexts, where everything is a priority, national co-ordination capacities are limited, and a multiplicity of actors operate in the same space. Three levels of co-ordination must be interlinked: strategic co-ordination (including on joint political messaging and strategic objectives); operational co-ordination (on harmonised and complementary programming); and technical co-ordination (towards peer learning and standard setting). Systems thinking and co-creation of programmes are ways to build bridges across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and overcome barriers between the respective actors within each pillar of the nexus – often referred to as trilingualism – while maintaining local focus.

Co-ordination for its own sake can be a drain on human resources, which are scarce in many fragile settings. It is therefore essential to focus co-ordination activities only in areas where they will lead to more effective and efficient programming. The case studies highlight that if co-ordination is a multitude of meetings without a focus on achieving better results, there is a risk that key actors will disengage. Co-ordination mechanisms can focus on strategic priorities and shared analysis or issues; they can also be developed on a geographical basis. To be effective, these mechanisms must be complemented by an effective system for exchanging information on programmes, funding, timetables and gaps, as discussed in Box 3.3.

Organisational processes: Make the system work smarter

Seen through the lens of country-level engagement, organisational processes are the stage for back office processes and practices used to align and control headquarters-based operational support. These include the procedures for planning strategy and operations, setting budgets, measuring and rewarding performance, and reporting progress and conducting meetings. It is fair to say that, historically, most DAC members have relied on the same organisational model to operate in settings across all degrees of fragility. In the most fragile settings, the requirements of this approach tend to overwhelm longer-term strategic goals of country engagement. This explains why the desire to "do development differently" is particularly strong for donors working in fragile contexts (Gulrajani and Honig, 2016[7]).

Nevertheless, while some organisational design models seem better adapted to evidence-based adaptive management and iterative learning in fragile settings, profound organisational reform to adopt new paradigms often seems out of reach. Not only is rewiring the underlying institutional framework only possible under rare circumstances. Each effort to reform existing systems also comes at a cost in terms of short-term efficiency and impact. An alternative approach is to make the best of existing frameworks, accounting for comparative advantages and seeking complementarity among partners.

Strengthen diverse teams with incentives and rewards

As the country case studies illustrate and the human capital analysis in Chapter 1 shows, extremely fragile contexts tend to feature limited national absorption capacity and gaps in trained national capacities. In these contexts, significant numbers of experienced international staff need to be deployed. Development partners face great difficulties in filling positions, which results in high turnover that in turn affects institutional memory and reduces the quality and speed of implementation. For international staff, incentives to apply for positions in fragile contexts are not always perceived as commensurate with the hardships of working in the context. Better rewards for commitment, tenacity and entrepreneurship are needed to make fragile contexts an attractive option to staff with the right

BOX 3.3. COUNTRY PLATFORMS AS COLLECTIVE MECHANISMS FOR CO-ORDINATION AND ITERATIVE LEARNING

Enhanced co-ordination through joint iterative planning and learning is the foundation on which improved, system-wide coherence must be built in fragile settings. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution to make multi-stakeholder co-ordination effective, examples abound of successful platforms.

One attempt to standardise co-ordination is the country platforms initiative, which provides core elements that can be applied to fit each context and build on existing systems. Country platforms effectively serve as government-owned frameworks that allow for a built-in accountability mechanism for all partner organisations and agencies. They act as a "vehicle for more collaborative, resilient, adaptive and scalable approaches", with the main goal of improving collaboration and co-operation between development partners in addition to improving national partnerships.

Country platforms are structured around three levels of co-ordination:

- **A high-level steering group** helps foster coherence between various national strategies and translates their goals into achievable plans, maintaining a long-term perspective. It also provides for strategic-level mutual accountability among partners and mobilises the resources required to fulfil joint strategic objectives.
- **Sector-level co-ordination** is led by line ministries and technical experts and is critical to determining resource flows and managing organisational overlaps or gaps in programme implementation.
- **A secretariat** acts at the functional level to facilitate overall joint development processes.

Somalia provides a model for how a country platform can help enhance co-ordination. Though international partners were co-ordinating meaningfully within Somalia before the platform was established, there was a notable lack of local inclusion in development programming. The country platform was created as a way to overcome this challenge as the Somali government was creating a National Development Plan (NDP) in 2017. Somalia's country platform helped significantly narrow the number of development priorities, shifted development programming from a donor-led to government-led model and offered an inclusive governance structure to oversee the achievement of activities under the NDP, supported by a dedicated pooled fund (Papoulidis, 2020[6]).

mix of expertise and competencies. One financing partner in Honduras, for example, specifically requested that field staff include one objective in their annual performance review that is related to informed risk-taking. Not only does this prevent staff from being penalised by their institution for taking risks, but it actively inspires them to do so.

The strongest teams are those with diversity built in. Recognising that international staff's expertise cannot be optimised without local knowledge means ensuring that the local voice is not just present but a cornerstone of a team's development. Carefully managed, this can deliver mutually beneficial gains for both the team and its interlocutors in a fragile context in terms of design (better programmes), cost-effectiveness and legitimacy (locally and people-focused) (Slim, 2020[8]).

Keep processes solution-oriented

When operating in fragile contexts, flexibility and adaptability to future risks are crucial. However, the flexibility of the aid sector is challenged by a combination of structural and cultural elements. Country case studies show that the standardisation of processes at headquarters level actually reduces operational flexibility. This underlines how important it is that organisations maintain a culture that allows the use of available discretion within regulatory limits. Yet interlocutors reported a trend in the opposite direction. "In the past", said one interviewee cited in a country case study for the Fit for Fragility project, "one was allowed to take action if there were no explicit rules against it. Now, if the rules do not explicitly allow it, it is perceived as forbidden".

High-level decision makers have a role to play in making organisational culture more attuned to country realities and fully exercising bureaucratic flexibility to adapt processes to the context. This relates to issues such as organisational ethos, contract terms, logical frameworks, targeting criteria and more coherent and consistently set funding cycles across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.

Leverage system-wide capabilities

The multidimensional and often ingrained nature of fragility across many contexts requires more varied and intense analytical efforts and a broader range of tools than typical development programming can offer. In Honduras, for example, development actors and civil society representatives said in interviews conducted as part of the Fit for Fragility project that a better understanding of historical, anthropological and gender-specific fragility factors and the political economy of the context would allow for more effective engagement.

Such an approach requires international partners to be able to access sets of expertise and skills beyond the traditional development realm. Depending on the context, this is where diplomatic and security actors could provide an enabling function (Chapter 2). This also would involve promoting coherent and effective engagement across all involved pillars of public administration, guided by common objectives and field needs. Beyond a whole-of-government approach, investing in a whole-of-society approach offers a way to mobilise expertise and capabilities from civil society and academia.

Plan your exit as carefully as your entry

In terms of their exit strategy for post-crisis settings, international partners should avoid disengaging at the first signs of improved security and political stability. Progress should be rewarded with redoubled financial efforts and stronger inclusive partnership. The country case studies of Liberia and the Central African Republic show that diminished international attention can quickly lead to setbacks. After a crisis, development and stability needs are added to still acute humanitarian needs, creating even more need for support. As the situation improves, however, it is important that partners develop the vision for accompanying the partner country on its new, post-crisis path and define evolving requirements in terms of local ownership, authority and service delivery. For conflict-affected contexts this means analysing the components necessary for successful transitions to sustainable outcomes (OECD, 2020[9]).

Global framework: Take a fresh look at the dialogue

Despite the changing landscape of fragility arising from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is broad consensus overall on the substance of the development agenda and principles as well as general agreement among DAC members that aid effectiveness, including in fragile settings, needs renewed attention.

Assess implications of evolving global realities

Development co-operation in fragile contexts is increasingly under pressure from alternative models of international engagement and ODA disbursements. In Liberia, for example, donor planning cycles are often too short and institutional frameworks too constraining to accommodate the large-scale projects that would propel the country's economy and economies like it. A longer-term development co-operation horizon and increased efforts to diversify the resource mix might allow bilateral and multilateral partners to set targets that are more ambitious and increase their impact.

Renew and sustain North-South dialogue

Over the past ten years, the international community has developed and put into action various initiatives and normative frameworks to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and increase development effectiveness in fragile contexts. However, the space for

dialogue around effectiveness is narrowing (Brown, 2020[10]). The current dialogue offers limited opportunities to share analysis and joint approaches for fragile settings involving development actors beyond providers of traditional ODA. Where they exist, these spaces also generally focus on commitments rather than dialogue (Bracho, 2017[11]). (Re-) enlarging the global space that encourages dialogue, notably on aid effectiveness and partnerships but also for conflict prevention and peacebuilding, is essential to effectively engage in fragile contexts.

Invest in collaboration and interoperability

To a large extent, being fit for fragility also involves being fit for collaboration. In Chad, for instance, donors in the capital appear eager to co-ordinate on implementation. But their institutional priorities and frameworks are not always optimised for co-ordination. Some of the building blocks for such collaboration exist at the country level, where donors are working on the same types of analyses and developing similar logical frameworks. Here, at the country level, there also is political will and a close-knit donor community to push co-ordination forward. However, procedures and institutional mechanisms (e.g. dispute resolution mechanisms, auditing mechanisms and other legal frameworks) often present practical impediments to co-ordination other than information sharing. These structural constraints run counter to the shared goals of improved flexibility and coherence. Continued attention to ensuring better interoperability among international stakeholders in fragile settings is important for increasing the impact and effectiveness of collective engagement.

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ANNEX A. SNAPSHOTS OF FRAGILITY BY DIMENSION

ABSTRACT

The following snapshots highlight key attributes and trends of fragility within each dimension in the OECD fragility framework. They begin by providing a global snapshot of the average extremely and other fragile contexts across all indicators of that dimension. Then, they highlight regional and sub regional performance based on the (population-weighted) average score of all developing contexts within a region or sub region. They conclude by profiling a particular indicator, trend, or relationship within that dimension. These snapshots demonstrate the potential of the fragility framework to inform policy and practice across different geographic areas and thematic issues.

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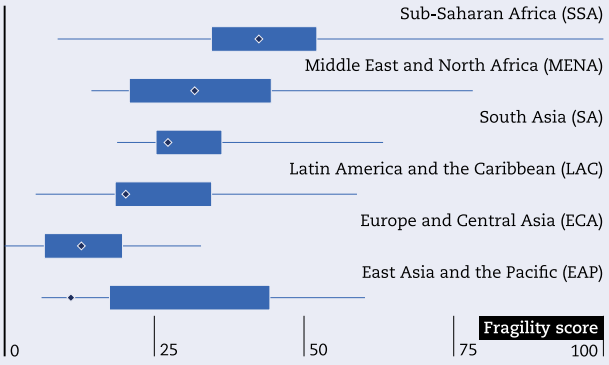
Figure A A.1. Economic dimension

ECONOMIC DIMENSION

The economic dimension measures vulnerabilities stemming from weak economic fundamentals, and/or a high exposure to macroeconomic shocks as well as a lack of coping capacities to mitigate their impact. Economic fragility affects the wellbeing and prosperity of individual people, households and society as a whole. It impacts the other dimensions of fragility by exacerbating political and societal divisions that contribute to violence and unrest and, in turn, affect the economy. Indicators include GDP growth, debt, regulatory ability, the labour market, resource dependence and economic remoteness. The score in this dimension is the second largest contributor to overall fragility.

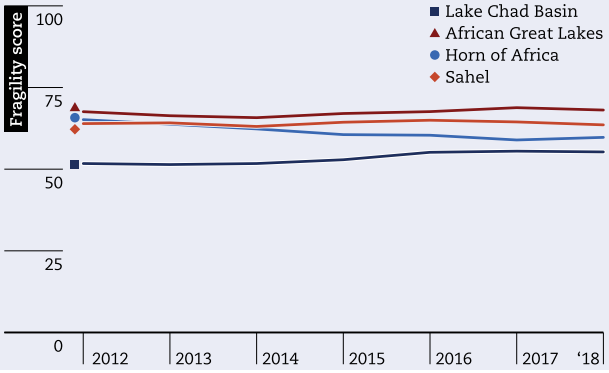
Economic fragility by region, 2019

Sub-Saharan Africa exhibits the highest level of economic fragility among all regions, followed by MENA, SA, LAC, ECA and EAP.

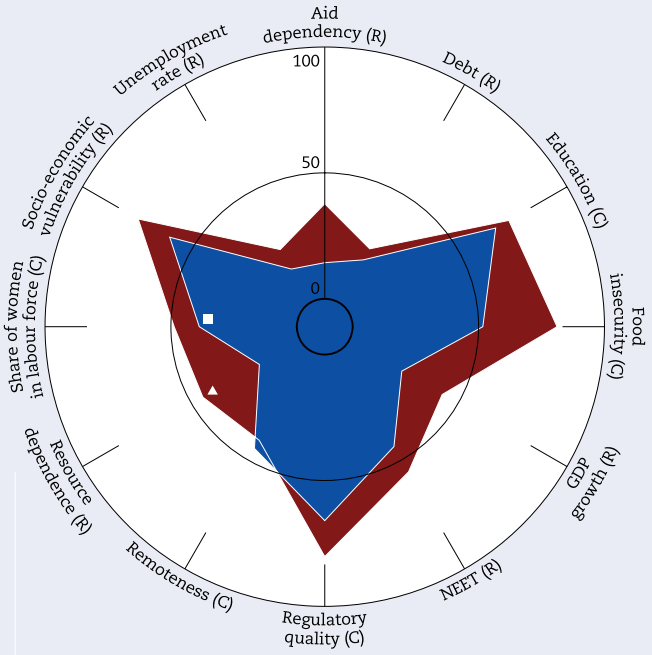


Economic fragility in select subregions, 2012–18

The African Great Lakes was the most economically fragile subregion from 2012 to 2018, followed in 2018 by the Sahel, Horn of Africa and Lake Chad Basin in descending order.



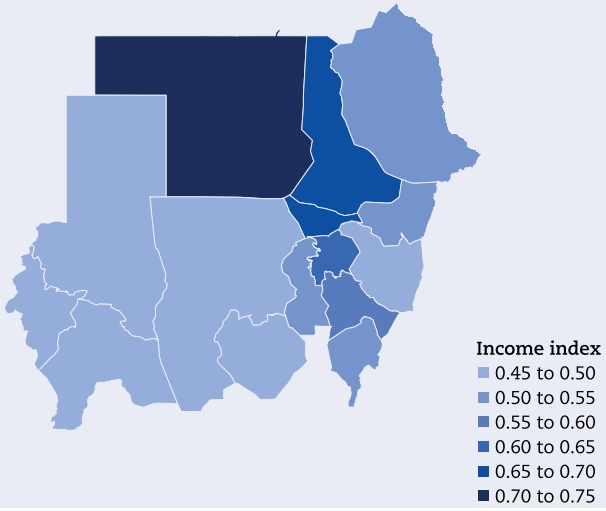
Fragility in the economic dimension of an average extremely fragile and other fragile context



The average extremely fragile context performs worse than the average other fragile context in 11 of 12 indicators.

Sudan income index, 2018

The income index is one of three components of the Subnational Human Development Index. In 2018, the Northern region of Sudan exhibited the highest level of income, followed by the Khartoum, Nahr El Nil and Al Gezira regions.



Source: Global Data Lab (2020[1]), *Subnational Human Development Index 4.0, Income Index* (database), https://globaldatalab.org/shdi/.

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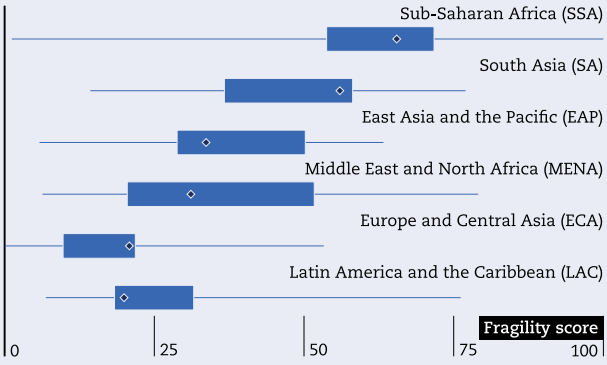
Figure A A.2. Environmental dimension

ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION

The environmental division measures vulnerability to climactic and health risks that affect livelihoods as well as legal and social institutions to counterbalance such risks. Environmental fragility can widen inequalities, increase the risk of violence over the distribution of resources, and affect key indicators of economic and social well-being, thereby impacting other dimensions of fragility. Indicators include natural and human hazards (e.g. food insecurity and infectious diseases), rule of law and civil society, government effectiveness, environmental performance and socio-economic vulnerability. The score in this dimension is the largest contributor to overall fragility.

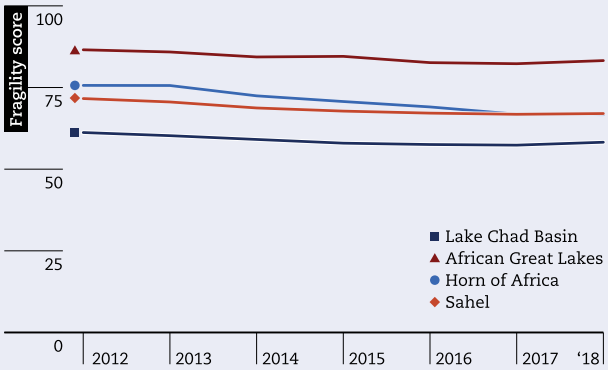
Environmental fragility by region, 2019

Sub-Saharan Africa exhibits the highest level of environmental fragility among all regions, followed by SA, EAP, MENA, ECA and LAC.

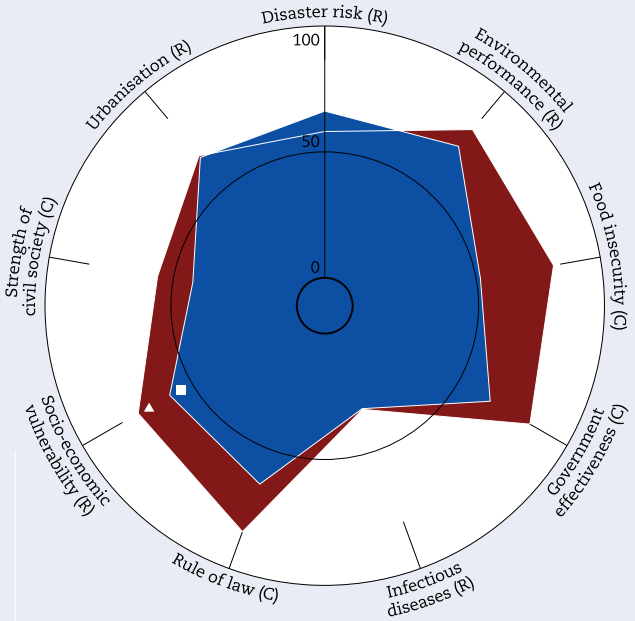


Environmental fragility in select subregions, 2012–18

The African Great Lakes was the most environmentally fragile subregion from 2012 to 2018, followed in 2018 by the Sahel, Horn of Africa and Lake Chad Basin in descending order.



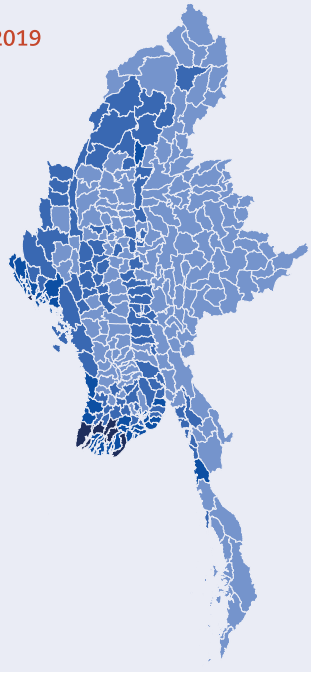
Fragility in the environmental dimension of an average extremely fragile and other fragile context



The average extremely fragile context performs worse than the average other fragile context in 8 of 9 indicators.

Myanmar disaster risk, 2019

Myanmar records one of the highest rates of natural disaster risk in the world. The map suggests high risks in coastal areas, particularly for townships located in the Ayeyarwady and Rhakine regions that are susceptible to cyclones, tsunamis and floods.



Source: Disaster Risk Management Knowledge Centre (2019[2]), *INFORM Risk Myanmar 2019* (database), https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Subnational-Risk/Myanmar; shapefile from Runfola et al. (2020[3]), "geoBoundaries: A global database of political administrative boundaries", https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0231866.

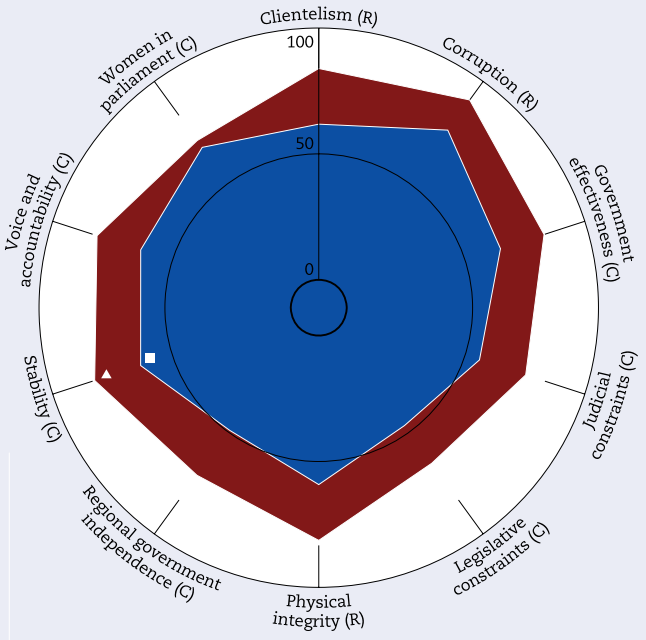
StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934168189

Figure A A.3. Political dimension

POLITICAL DIMENSION

The political dimension measures vulnerability to risks inherent in political processes as well as coping capacities to strengthen state accountability and transparency. Political fragility affects other dimensions and overall fragility by shaping the institutions that mediate economic and social relationships and contribute to peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Indicators include clientelism and corruption, government effectiveness, political stability, division of power, constraints against the executive, voice and accountability, physical integrity, and women's participation in parliament. The score in this dimension is the fourth largest contributor to overall fragility.

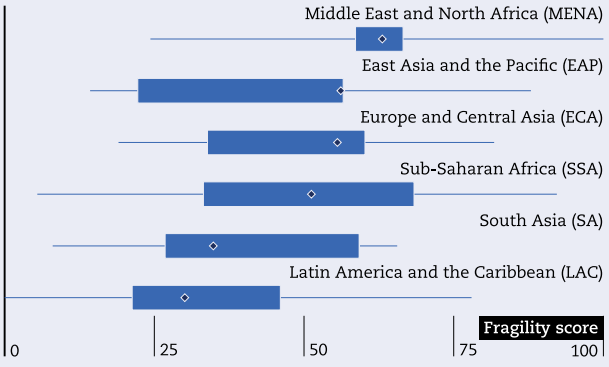
Fragility in the political dimension of an average extremely fragile and other fragile context



The average extremely fragile context performs worse than the average other fragile context in all 10 indicators.

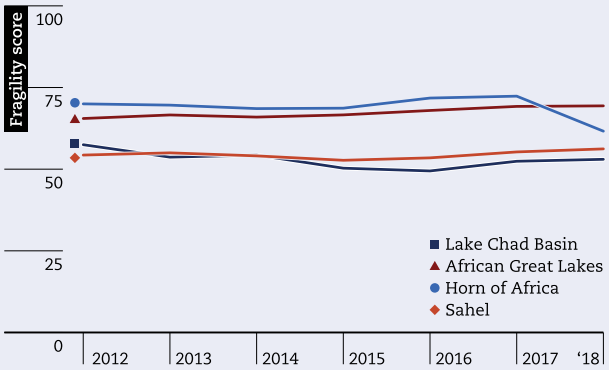
Political fragility by region, 2019

Middle East and North Africa exhibits the highest level of political fragility among all regions, followed by EAP, ECA, SSA, SA and LAC.



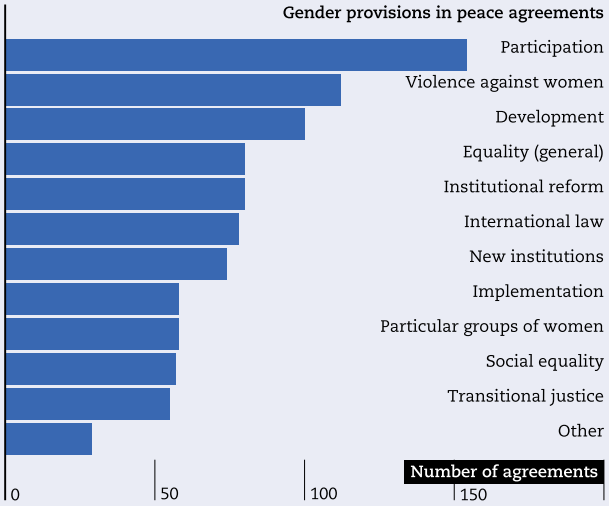
Political fragility in select subregions, 2012–18

The Horn of Africa was the most politically fragile subregion from 2012 to 2018 except in the last year, when its level was behind the African Great Lakes but ahead of the other subregions.



Gender provisions in peace agreements involving fragile contexts

Gender provisions are included in 47% of peace agreements. Provisions for women's participation in peace are most frequent, followed by those for violence against women and women's development.



Source: Political Settlements Research Programme (2020[4]), PA-X Gender Peace Agreement Database (database), https://www.peaceagreements.org/wsearch.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934168208

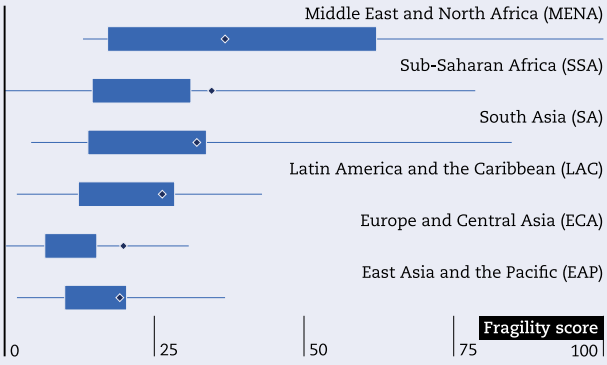
Figure A A.4. Security dimension

SECURITY DIMENSION

The security dimension measures vulnerability to violence and crime, capturing the presence of direct violence as well as institutions to prevent and mitigate it. Security fragility affects other dimensions and fragility overall by disrupting economies and societies as seen in lives lost, infrastructure and supply chains damaged, social capital and cohesion eroded, and other cross-cutting challenges that affect sustainable development and peace. Indicators include direct and interpersonal violence, state security forces, rule of law, control over territory, formal alliances, and gender physical integrity. The score in this dimension is the fifth largest contributor to overall fragility.

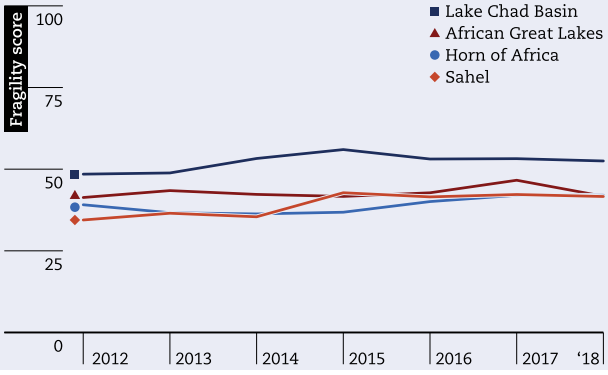
Security fragility by region, 2019

Middle East and North Africa exhibits the highest level of security fragility among all regions, followed by SSA, SA, LAC, ECA and EAP.

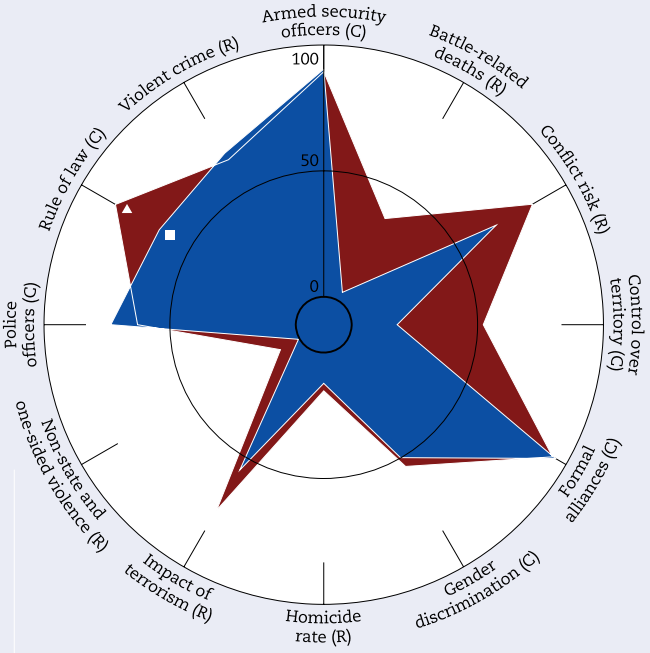


Security fragility in select subregions, 2012–18

The Lake Chad Basin was the most fragile subregion in the security dimension from 2012 to 2018. All three other subregions had similar levels of security fragility in 2018.



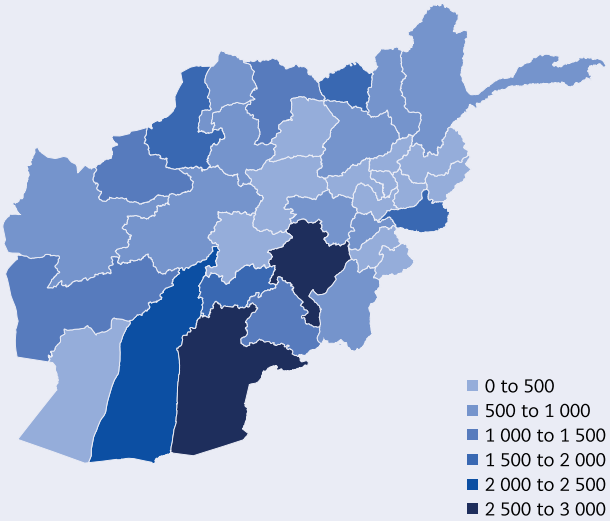
Fragility in the security dimension of an average extremely fragile and other fragile context



The average extremely fragile context performs worse than the average other fragile context in 8 of 12 indicators.

Afghanistan battle-related deaths, 2019

In 2019, Afghanistan recorded the highest number of battle-related deaths globally. The map shows considerable variation in Afghanistan, with Ghazni and Kandahar provinces recording the most deaths.



Source: Pettersson and Öberg (2020[5]), "Organized violence, 1989-2019", https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0022343320934986, and Sundberg and Melander (2013[6]), *UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) Global Version 20.1* (database), https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/; shapefile from Runfola et al. (2020[3]), "geoBoundaries: A global database of political administrative boundaries", https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0231866.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934168227

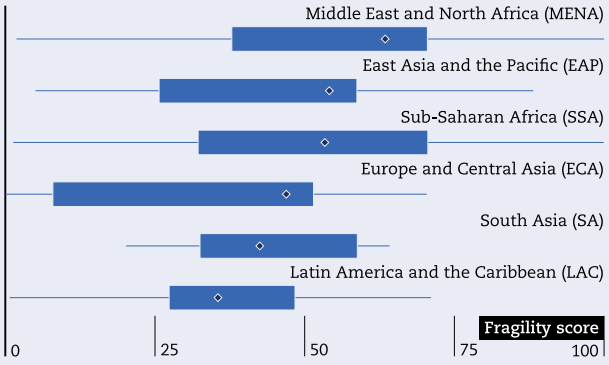
Figure A A.5. Societal dimension

SOCIETAL DIMENSION

The societal dimension measures vulnerability to risks affecting social capital and cohesion, particularly those that stem from vertical and horizontal inequalities, and the presence of institutions to counteract such risks. Societal fragility exacerbates economic, political, and social exclusions and contributes to grievances among marginalised groups, which is one way it contributes to fragility in other dimensions and overall. Indicators include horizontal, income, and gender inequality; voice and accountability; access to justice and strength of civil society; and measures of urbanisation and migration. The score in this dimension is the third largest contributor to overall fragility.

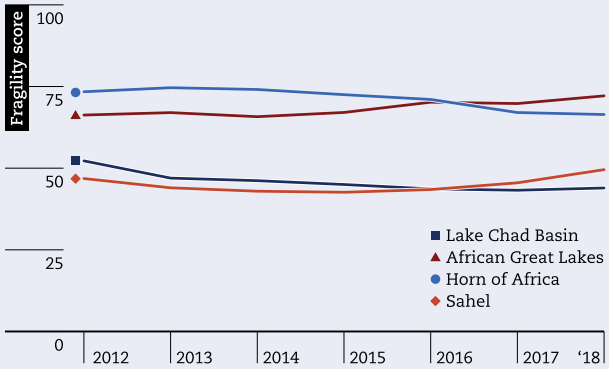
Societal fragility by region, 2019

Middle East and North Africa exhibits the highest level of societal fragility among all regions, followed by EAP, SSA, ECA, SA and LAC.

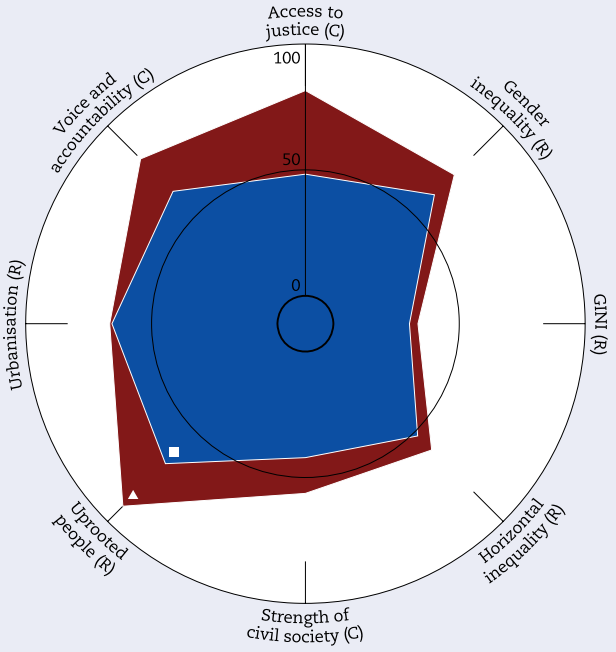


Societal fragility in select subregions, 2012–18

From 2012 to 2018, societal fragility trended upward in the African Great Lakes and Sahel but downward in the Horn of Africa and Lake Chad Basin.



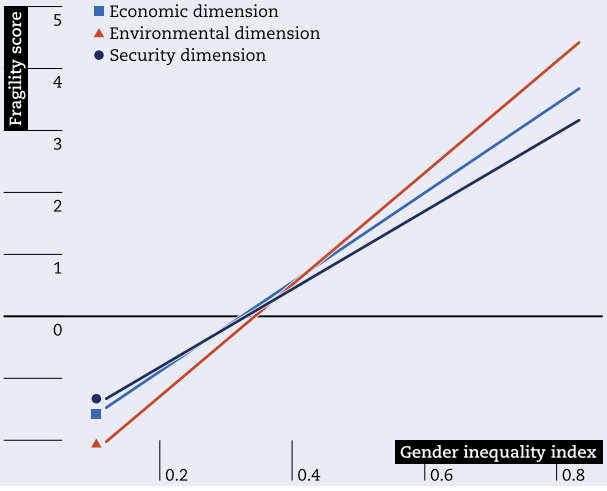
Fragility in the societal dimension of an average extremely fragile and other fragile context



The average extremely fragile context performs worse than the average other fragile context in all 8 indicators.

The relationship between gender inequality and fragility across dimensions

Gender inequality is strongly associated with economic, environmental and security fragility in the 143 ODA-eligible contexts, underscoring the importance of gender for addressing fragility.



Source: UNDP (2020[7]), *Gender Inequality Index (GII)* (database), http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii.

StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934168246

ANNEX B. METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

This annex provides an overview of the methodological notes for the data and evidence used in this report. Further information is available on the OECD's States of Fragility platform at www3.compare yourcountry.org/states-of-fragility/about/0/.

Contexts referred to as "fragile contexts" are based on the OECD fragility framework, discussed below. Contexts referred to as "developing contexts" are based on the OECD DAC list of ODA Recipients (OECD, 2020[8]).

OECD fragility framework

The OECD characterises fragility as the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacities of the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks. The OECD multidimensional fragility framework, introduced in the 2016 edition of *States of Fragility*, measures fragility on a spectrum of intensity across five dimensions: economic, environmental, political, security and societal. It relies on a mixed methods approach that examines contexts within each dimension and then aggregates this information to obtain an overall picture of fragility.

The methodology is based a two-stage, principal components analysis (PCA), with a hierarchical clustering procedure to group contexts according to similar characteristics in each dimension. The foundation is 44 indicators derived from independent third-party data sources, all of which are recorded and explained in greater detail on the States of Fragility platform. Each of the five dimensions contains 8-12 indicators that are aggregated into principal components in the first stage PCA; the first two principal components in each dimension are used for the second stage PCA. The first principal component that results from this second-stage PCA represents the overall fragility score for each context. Based on this score, a context is classified as either fragile if its score is lower than -1.20 or extremely fragile if it is lower than -2.50. This analysis assesses fragility across 175 contexts for which sufficient data were available, as denoted by data being available for a context for at least 70% of indicators.

In Chapter 1 and Annex A, all figures representing regional or subregional fragility scores were calculated using a population-

weighted average of all contexts within the respective region or subregion. Population statistics were sourced from UN DESA (2020[9]), with the latest year corresponding to the year 2019. Regional classifications were derived from the World Bank (2020[10]). Please note that in the radial graphs of each snapshot in Annex A, the indicators were scaled and adjusted to face the same direction, such that higher scores represent higher vulnerabilities (high risks/lower coping capacities).

An extensive discussion of this methodology is available in Annex A of the working paper accompanying this publication by Desai and Forsberg (2020[11]) and on the States of Fragility platform, including the step-by-step process for the PCA and hierarchical clustering procedure as well as the methodological notes and caveats regarding the data collected for the analysis. Additional information is available upon request.

Financial statistics

Unless otherwise stated, all aid statistics cited in this report are deflated to USD constant (2018) and represented in USD million disbursements. They are sourced from the OECD aid statistics database (OECD, 2020[12]), specifically the DAC2a and Creditor Reporting System. Unless otherwise stated, statistics are deflated using the DAC total deflator (OECD, 2020[13]).

The sources of other financial statistics are cited in the text, using the most recent values, usually 2018. Due to data limitations, not all data are available for all contexts. Where values have been imputed, they use the latest available value or a simple average of the last three years, as indicated. In time series, projected values are identified with "p", and estimates are identified with an "e". Values after 2019 have not been deflated.

Violence and conflict

Violence comprises a broad range of actions, including among others sexual and gender-based violence, terrorism, armed conflict, and homicides. Categorisations of violence and violent deaths also vary and may differ based on norms, culture or definition in national and international law (Asylbek kyzy, Delgado and Milante, 2020[14]). The Global Registry of Violent Deaths categorises violent deaths in 16 different categories; intentional and unintentional homicides, killings in legal interventions, and direct conflict cause the largest numbers of deaths (Asylbek kyzy, Delgado and Milante, 2020[14]). In *States of Fragility 2020*, the primary focus is on violence in violent conflict, while recognising that all forms of violence contribute to fragility across multiple dimensions.

Also in *States of Fragility 2020*, **violent conflict** refers to all state-based (both intrastate and inter-state) and non-state conflicts. A **state-based conflict** (also referred to as armed conflict) is understood in this publication to be "a contested incompatibility that concerns government or territory or both where the use of armed force between two parties results in at least 25 battle-related deaths. Of these two parties, at least one is the government of a state" (Gleditsch et al., 2002[15]). A **high-intensity conflict** is a conflict that reaches the intensity of war, resulting in at least 1 000 battle-related deaths. These definitions are in accordance with the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) definitions. A **non-state conflict** refers to "the use of armed force between two organized armed groups, neither of which is the government of a state, which results in at least 25 battle-related deaths in a year" in accordance with the UCDP definition (Sundberg, Eck and Kreutz, 2012[16]). **Conflict-affected contexts** are contexts in which at least one armed conflict was active in 2019. *States of Fragility 2020* also makes reference to **one-sided violence**, defined by UCDP as the "the use of armed force by the government of a state or by a formally organized group against civilians which results in at least 25 deaths in a year" (Eck and Hultman, 2007[17]).

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States of Fragility 2020

States of Fragility 2020 sets a policy agenda for fragility at a critical turning point: the final countdown on Agenda 2030 is at hand, and the pandemic has reversed hard-fought gains. This report examines fragility as a story in two parts: the global state of fragility that existed before COVID-19, and the dramatic impact the pandemic is having on that landscape. It acknowledges the severe reality of fragility in its multidimensionality and complexity. It explores thinking and practice on fragility to propose new ideas on human capital analysis and conflict prevention in order to adapt policy for more resilient outcomes. With a thematic emphasis on peace in fragile contexts, it highlights the important role of peacebuilders, diplomats, and security actors for peace, and builds the case for enhanced complementarity and coherence across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus. It concludes by reconciling theory with practice to explore what it means to work effectively in fragile contexts. Focusing on fragility will be imperative to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies that leave no one behind.

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