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# DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE INNOVATIONS IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS

## Promising Practices and Recommended Policy Changes

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# CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Introduction	6
Why address democracy and governance deficits in fragile contexts?	8
Why adapt democracy and governance work to fragile contexts?	10
Why now?	11
Findings: Promising Innovative Practices	
Adapting to Context	12
Navigating Complex Actors	18
Strengthening Measurement	23
Conclusion and Recommendations	26
Authors and Contributors	29

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Democracy and governance (D&G) deficits — particularly weak state capacity, accountability, and legitimacy; exclusion or marginalization of population groups; and weak civic engagement — are drivers of fragility, conflict and violence (FCV). D&G assistance to address these drivers — and foreign policies that promote democratic, inclusive and responsive institutions — increase state capacity and accountability, and build good governance. These vital investments can help resolve the democracy and

governance gaps and grievances that drive chronic fragility. Building state accountability, effectiveness, and legitimacy, alongside citizen engagement and inclusion, must therefore be part of any pathway from fragility to development.

However, traditional approaches to democracy and governance programming face unique challenges in FCV settings. Volatile and unpredictable contexts, difficulty identifying actors to work with, and challenges in defining and measuring success mean that approaches used in non-fragile settings may not have the same impact in FCV contexts. This paper argues that the field of democracy and governance interventions must therefore adapt to apply more usefully to fragile contexts, and surfaces examples of promising innovations.

Over the past ten years there has been an unprecedented spike in global conflict.<sup>1</sup> From 2006 – 2017, the total number of conflict-related deaths increased by 140 percent.<sup>2</sup> Conflict now drives 80 percent of all humanitarian needs globally.<sup>3</sup> This trend is set to continue and intensify. Thirty years from now, an estimated one in three people globally will be living in contexts characterized by FCV.<sup>4</sup> By 2030, nearly half of the world's extreme poor will be living in countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence.<sup>5</sup>

From June to October 2019, eight organizations who work on democracy and governance in fragile places convened to identify innovative practices and supportive policy changes.<sup>6</sup> Collectively, we work in 129 countries globally and in 54 of the 58 countries on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) list of FCV contexts. This convening intentionally brought together 'traditional' democracy and governance organizations who have historically focused on elections, institutional strengthening, political parties, and civil society with development and humanitarian organizations who have approached governance work through community mobilization, peacebuilding, and multi-sectoral programming.

<sup>1</sup> World Bank Group, 'Overview: Fragility, Conflict and Violence,' <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/overview>.

<sup>2</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace, *Global Peace Index 2019: Measuring Peace in a Complex World* (Sydney, June 2019), <http://visionofhumanity.org/app/uploads/2019/07/GPI-2019web.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> World Bank Group, 'Overview: Fragility, Conflict and Violence.'

<sup>4</sup> OECD, *States of Fragility 2018: Understanding Violence*; UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Population Prospects 2017*.

<sup>5</sup> World Bank Group, 'Overview: Fragility, Conflict and Violence.'

<sup>6</sup> Mercy Corps, Catholic Relief Services, Counterpart International, International Foundation for Electoral Systems, International Republican Institute, National Democratic Institute, Pact

## Findings

We identified two primary obstacles to collective progress in democracy and governance work in FCV settings. First, the unique challenges of operating in FCV environments means that ‘traditional’ D&G programming may not work: innovative practices are needed. Second, there is no collated evidence base of ‘what works’, and how successful interventions work, to achieve sustained democracy and governance gains in FCV contexts.

FCV contexts are by their very nature defined by fragmented and fluid patterns of authority. This defining aspect of fragility poses three kinds of challenges for designing and implementing D&G programming. First, the rapidly changing and unpredictable context within FCV settings poses challenges for both defining strategic objectives and operationalizing programs and portfolios that build towards those aims. In contexts such as Somalia and Afghanistan that are characterized by a simultaneous absence of state capacity, massive legitimacy gaps, and long-standing grievances, what does success look like for a D&G program? Second, organizations implementing D&G programs in FCV contexts face tremendous difficulties in identifying which actors to work with. In these settings, the traditional, well-defined set of D&G actors, such as established political parties or a functioning legislature, may be absent. Implementers may need to work with new types of actors, including traditional social leaders and armed groups. Finally, FCV contexts pose unique challenges for measurement in D&G programs, where standard metrics for institutional performance or political participation are less viable, due to the fact that success involves normative changes that play out unevenly over time.

The unique drivers and consequences of protracted fragility require new approaches. Operating flexibly and leveraging diplomatic tools can help address weak state capacity, accountability, and legitimacy. Identifying actors to work with and supporting them to change repressive or counterproductive behavior can strengthen civic engagement and build more inclusive institutions and societies. Developing effective tools for measurement can help demonstrate the impact of D&G efforts and build an evidence base over time of what works, and why it works, in FCV environments.

Progress on democracy and governance in the world’s most challenging environments will require donors and practitioners to pair smart investments in democracy and governance programming with foreign policy that disrupts the development-diplomacy disconnect and creates an enabling environment for stabilization and innovation.

## Recommendations to Multilateral and Bilateral Donors:

- **Leverage diplomatic tools to support good governance outcomes.** Donors should be prepared to leverage an array of diplomatic tools, including high-level political pressure, arms transfers, non-D&G assistance, investigative delegations or commissions of inquiry to pressure governments towards transparency, inclusion, or reform.
- **Layer good governance into humanitarian response, stabilization, and early recovery efforts.** Donors need to integrate democracy and governance efforts multi-sectoral programming targeting health, food security, and nutrition.

- **Improve trans-border programming.** Development and diplomatic actors should create joint initiatives that move beyond country-specific silos to seek truly regional responses to regional challenges. The UN Sahel Cross-Border Cooperation Assistance Programme (ACTS) offers one example of an institution moving beyond country-specific silos to seek a truly regional response.
- **Invest in more research to build evidence of ‘what works’ and ‘how it works’ in fragile settings.** To address the evidence gap and ensure cost-effective, targeted foreign assistance, donors should fund additional research to understand the impact of D&G programming on democratic practices and good governance outcomes.

## **Recommendations to D&G Practitioners:**

- **Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management to ensure flexible interventions.** Ongoing analysis must feed into real-time programming to ensure interventions are conflict- and risk-sensitive and do not inadvertently exacerbate tensions.
- **Where possible, encourage trust-building between communities and government institutions.** D&G implementers should leverage their unique relationships to convene government actors and community leaders for building trust. NGOs should also model transparency and inclusion, and should develop early warning mechanisms to detect and defuse conflict between security services and communities at risk of violence.
- **Strengthen collective impact aggregation and influence.** D&G implementers need to provide policymakers with compelling, accurate, and aggregated data on the impacts of D&G investments over time. Organizations should collaborate to piece together a narrative of what has worked, what hasn't worked, and why, to help make the case for continued investments.

# INTRODUCTION

Democracy and governance (D&G) deficits — particularly weak state capacity, accountability, and legitimacy; exclusion or marginalization of population groups; and weak civic engagement — are drivers of fragility, conflict and violence (FCV). D&G assistance to address these drivers — and foreign policies that promote democratic, inclusive and responsive institutions — increase state capacity and accountability, and build good governance. These vital investments can help resolve the democracy and governance gaps and grievances that drive chronic fragility. Building state accountability, effectiveness, and legitimacy, alongside citizen engagement and inclusion, must therefore be part of any pathway from fragility to development.

However, traditional approaches to democracy and governance programming face unique challenges in FCV settings. Volatile and unpredictable contexts, difficulty identifying actors to work with, and challenges in defining and measuring success mean that approaches used in non-fragile settings may not have the same impact in FCV contexts. **This paper argues that the field of democracy and governance interventions must therefore adapt to apply more usefully to fragile contexts, and surfaces examples of promising innovations.**

## Box 1. Key Definitions

- **Democracy & Governance (D&G)** policy and programmatic approaches focus on strengthening democratic institutions and participation, and/or approaching accountability and representation with a responsiveness lens. Major D&G programming areas include:
  - Elections, legislative strengthening, political party development
  - Supporting government capacity to engage, listen, and respond to citizens
  - Building civil society and community capacity to engage with governments
  - Political inclusion of marginalized population segments
- **Fragility, Conflict and Violence (FCV):**<sup>7</sup>
  - **Fragility:** Countries or sub-national regions with high institutional and social fragility, where grievances are high and/or institutional capacity is limited
  - **Conflict:** Countries or sub-national regions in the midst of or exiting violent conflict
  - **Violence:** Countries or sub-national regions with high levels of interpersonal violence

From June to October 2019, eight organizations who work on democracy and governance in fragile places convened to identify innovative practices and supportive policy changes needed to address these obstacles (Table 1). Collectively, we work in 129 countries and in 54 of the 58 countries on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) list of FCV contexts (Figure 1). While in no way exhaustive of the breadth of organizations implementing D&G programming globally, the partners in the roundtable were selected to create a representative slice of the sector.<sup>8</sup>

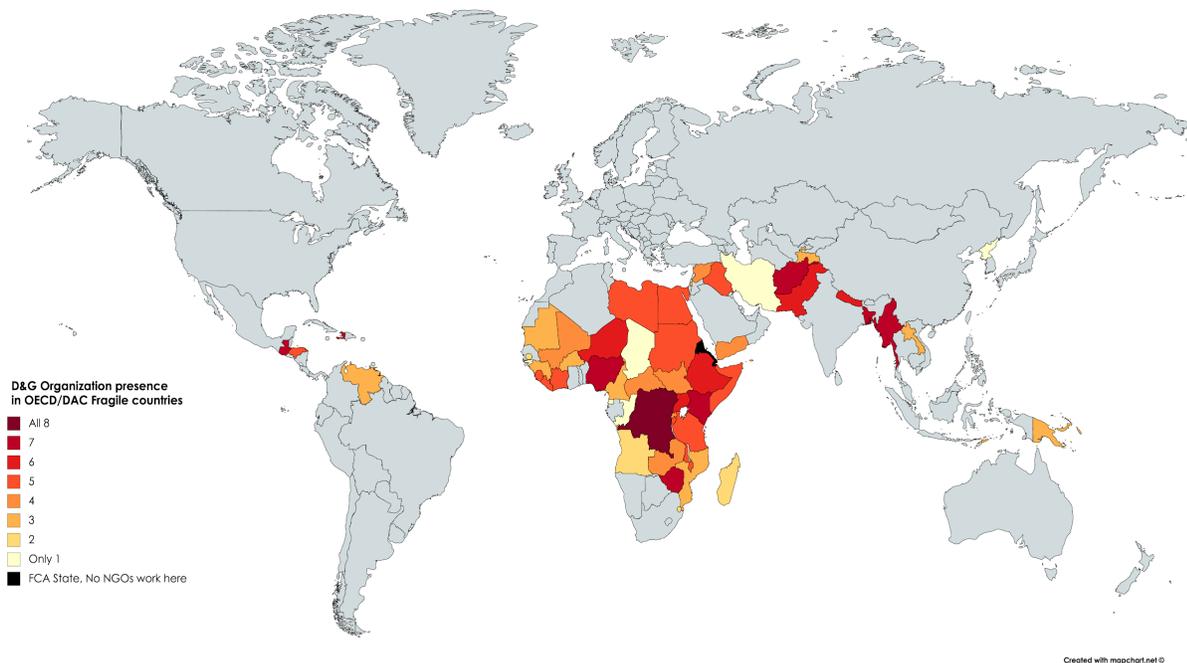
<sup>7</sup> Adapted from the World Bank Group, 'Concept Note: World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence,' 10 April 2019, <https://consultations.worldbank.org/consultation/world-bank-group-strategy-fragility-conflict-and-violence>.

<sup>8</sup> This roundtable series focused on an initial analysis of a set of programming approaches related to representation, accountability, and civic engagement in FCV contexts. However, given the deep connections between civil rights, human rights and good governance, future discussions and research will be expanded to the broader set of organizations that focus on Rule of Law and Human Rights.

**Table 1. Organizations Participating in the D&G FCV Roundtable Series**

Democracy International (DI)	Catholic Relief Services (CRS)
International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)	Counterpart International
International Republican Institute (IRI)	Mercy Corps
National Democratic Institute (NDI)	Pact

**Figure 1. D&G Roundtable Participant Organizations' Presence in FCV Contexts**



This convening intentionally brought together ‘traditional’ democracy and governance organizations who have historically focused on elections, institutional strengthening, political parties, and civil society with development and humanitarian organizations who have approached governance work through community mobilization, peacebuilding, and multi-sectoral programming. These two types of organizations are not always viewed as peers, both by funders, and by members of the organizations themselves. However, this convening revealed that in FCV settings this divide is much less stark than might be imagined — there are deep commonalities in the most promising approaches to improving accountability, inclusion, and civic engagement in these contexts, regardless of whether the program is explicitly labeled as a D&G program or it pursues these aims as part of a larger program which has other stated programmatic aims, such as peacebuilding, food security, or humanitarian response.

We identified two primary obstacles to collective progress in democracy and governance work in FCV settings. First, the unique challenges of operating in FCV environments means that ‘traditional’ D&G programming may not work: **innovative practices** are needed. Second, there is no collated **evidence base** of ‘what works’, and how successful interventions work, to achieve sustained democracy and governance gains in FCV contexts.

This paper highlights the key findings of these conversations, and argues for smart foreign assistance investments and enabling policy frameworks. It first outlines why democracy and governance programming and policy should be part of the response to the challenges of FCV. The paper then argues that the unique challenges of FCV contexts require adaptations to traditional D&G approaches. In the second section, the paper demonstrates how these adaptations can be made, by surfacing innovative D&G practices that are already happening in fragile settings to adapt to context challenges, navigate complex actors, and strengthen measurement. We close with recommendations to multilateral and bilateral donors, and practitioners.

## WHY ADDRESS DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE DEFICITS IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS?

Fragility, conflict and violence are driven by a number of complex underlying social, political, economic, and ecological dynamics, or ‘root causes.’ Donors, practitioners and academics have increasingly recognized democracy and governance deficits as drivers of fragility and conflict.<sup>9</sup> A recent Mercy Corps review of existing literature and practice identified three categories of governance-related root causes of conflict, and how D&G approaches help address these factors:<sup>10</sup>

### 1. Weak state capacity, accountability, and legitimacy

Governance institutions that are unable or unwilling to respond to citizens’ needs — due to factors like corruption, capacity or resource shortages, and the absence of accountability mechanisms — can exacerbate grievances and lead citizens or groups to turn to violence to get their needs met. Underperforming governance institutions are linked to rising instability and violence in a variety of conflict settings, including violent extremism, insurgencies, civil war, as well as the recurrence of violence in a post-conflict context. Institutions and norms that promote effective, legitimate, and accountable decision-making are a cornerstone of democratic governance and longer-term stability.

### 2. Exclusion and marginalization of population groups

Institutions, power structures, and cultural norms that entrench or deepen social divides between certain groups can exacerbate grievances and lead to violence by those that feel politically, socially, or economically excluded. In many contexts, the exclusion of certain minorities, women, youth, or other

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<sup>9</sup> For example, in 2018 the Cameron Commission highlighted the intersection between politics, governance, and fragility, emphasizing that “transforming politics and security requires fundamental changes in governance... An escape from fragility is a gradual process of the state developing both effective checks and balances on power-holders and developing a sense of common public purpose” - Escaping the Fragility Trap, LSE-Oxford Commission on State Fragility, Growth and Development (UK: London School of Economics, University of Oxford, International Growth Centre, April 2018), <https://www.theigc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Escaping-the-fragility-trap.pdf>, p. 22; also see J. Alexander Thier, Transforming Fragile States: Forging a New Consensus (Overseas Development Institute, 2019), <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12717.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Elise Egan, Carrie O’Neil, Ryan Sheely, and Nanako Tamaru, Good Governance: Preventing Conflict & Building Peace (Mercy Corps, 2019).

groups from local and national decision-making processes directly contributes to conflict and instability. Countries with high-levels of state-led discrimination are three times more likely to experience civil war as compared to states without such discrimination.<sup>11</sup> The political marginalization of specific ethnic or religious groups is associated with an increased risk of violent extremism. For example, Mercy Corps' research in Northern and Central Mali found that youth in anti-government and violent extremist groups were more likely than non-violent youth to report "deep grievances rooted in their perceptions of the government's relative neglect and mistreatment of their communities."<sup>12</sup> Research suggests that more inclusive and representative decision-making may reduce the likelihood of civil war and violence by addressing grievances that can fuel individual and group participation in conflict.<sup>13</sup>

### 3. Weak civic engagement

Good governance requires both citizen collective action *and* the state's capacity and willingness to respond. An active citizenry supported by a robust civil society and open civic space are necessary components for sustained good governance and long-term peace and stability. Civil society organizations play an important role in facilitating and reinforcing civic engagement. They inform citizens about the performance of governance institutions and support citizen action to influence public policies. Studies have found that civil society organizations lessen state corruption, promote the rule of law, and establish greater governmental effectiveness by making it more accountable in the eyes of the public and responsive to citizen demands.<sup>14</sup>

Governance challenges like illegitimate and inequitable institutions, lack of political inclusiveness, unequal provision of services, and corruption are further key drivers of recurring cycles of conflict. Ineffective and inequitable governance fuels grievances and can create space for violent extremist groups to gain hold in communities.

The aim of D&G programming in FCV contexts should be to promote accountable, responsive, inclusive and participatory governance as a normative good and a policy objective in and of itself; and to help build resilient democratic institutions that can manage conflict peacefully. At the same time, these interventions have the instrumental aim of addressing the inherently political structural and proximate causes of state fragility and recurring cycles of conflict.

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<sup>11</sup> Jack Goldstone et al., 'A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability,' *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 54, no. 1, January 2010, pp. 190-208.

<sup>12</sup> L. Inks, A. Veldmeijer, and A.K.I. Fomba, "We Hope and We Fight": Youth, Violence, and Communities in Mali (Mercy Corps, 2017), p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (University of California Press, 1985); Arend Lijphart, *Thinking about Democracy: Power Sharing and Majority Rule in Theory and Practice* (Routledge, 2008); Marta Reynal-Querol, 'Ethnicity, Political Systems, and Civil Wars,' *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2002, pp. 29-54. Also see United Nations, Sustainable Development Goal 16 on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development; New Deal for Building Peaceful States; UK Department for International Development, *Building Stability Framework*; and Institute for Economics & Peace, *Positive Peace Report 2016*.

<sup>14</sup> Rollin F. Tusalem, 'A Boon or Bane? The Role of Civil Society in Third- and Fourth-Wave Democracies,' *International Political Science Review*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2007, pp. 361-386.

# WHY ADAPT DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE WORK TO FRAGILE CONTEXTS?

Many of the classic contexts for D&G programming are either authoritarian states that are experiencing a political opening, or established electoral democracies that are facing a closure of civic space and a rollback of civil liberties. Programming approaches in both of these types of contexts implicitly assume that, at the bare minimum, state institutions are solidly established, and that the primary D&G programming challenge is in moving governments towards more competitive, inclusive, and representative politics and institutions. Traditional approaches to D&G programming also typically focus on building formal institutions associated with democracy, such as elections, legislatures, and political parties, as well as supportive democratic norms — shared values that collectively identify democratic institutions and processes as just, fair, and legitimate.

FCV contexts are by their very nature defined by fragmented and fluid patterns of authority. This defining aspect of fragility poses three kinds of challenges for designing and implementing D&G programming. First, the rapidly changing and unpredictable **context** within FCV settings poses challenges for both defining strategic objectives and operationalizing programs and portfolios that build towards those aims. In contexts such as Somalia and Afghanistan that are characterized by a simultaneous absence of state capacity, massive legitimacy gaps, and long-standing grievances, what does success look like for a D&G program? Second, organizations implementing D&G programs in FCV contexts face tremendous difficulties in identifying which **actors** to work with. In these settings, the traditional, well-defined set of D&G actors, such as established political parties or a functioning legislature, may be absent. Implementers often need to work with new types of actors, including traditional social leaders and armed groups. Finally, FCV contexts pose unique challenges for **measurement** in D&G programs, where standard metrics for institutional performance or political participation are less viable, due to the fact that success involves normative changes that play out unevenly over time.

There are significant evidence gaps on what works in FCV contexts to effectively address the democracy and governance drivers of conflict. In particular, important questions remain around how and when to combine or sequence accountability, inclusion, and civic engagement efforts in stabilization programming. Similar questions remain regarding: how to effectively connect localized, community-level governance interventions to national programming on political institutions and behavior; whether investments in information dissemination increase public trust; and how technical assistance might improve perceptions of inclusion and accountability.

Given the unique challenges in FCV settings related to context, actors and measurement, building the evidence base about what works, and how it works, will not be as simple as transplanting and replicating programs and evaluation designs from less-fragile contexts. Transferring lessons and techniques *between* FCV contexts is similarly challenging: the unique, fast-moving and context-specific nature of each fragile environment means that there cannot be a static set of assumptions or activities that form the basis of D&G work in FCV settings. Instead, pushing the frontier of knowledge and practice on D&G in FCV contexts will require identifying promising innovative programming approaches, using the right set of methods to learn about their effectiveness, and promoting policies and organizational changes that support the adaptation and diffusion of these approaches at scale.

## WHY NOW?

Fragility, conflict and violence are growing global phenomena. Over the past ten years there has been an unprecedented spike in global conflict.<sup>15</sup> From 2006 – 2017, the total number of conflict-related deaths increased by 140 percent.<sup>16</sup> In 2018 alone, there were 52 state-based conflicts, 77 non-state conflicts, and 33 one-sided incidents of violence, which cumulatively resulted in over 77,000 deaths.<sup>17</sup>

People living in fragile and conflict-affected contexts are more than twice as likely to be undernourished as those in other developing countries, more than three times as likely to be unable to send their children to school, more than twice as likely to lack clean water, and twice as likely to see their children die before age five.<sup>18</sup> Violent conflict does not just impact the communities directly affected: it reduces global gross domestic product growth by an average of two percentage points per year.<sup>19</sup> In 2017 alone, conflict cost the global economy \$14.76 trillion.<sup>20</sup>

This trend is set to continue and intensify. Thirty years from now, an estimated one in three people globally will be living in contexts characterized by FCV.<sup>21</sup> Climate change, growing inequality, and demographic change are set to exacerbate FCV in already vulnerable communities. By 2030, nearly half of the world's extreme poor will be living in countries affected by fragility, conflict, and violence.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time as increasing global levels of fragility, conflict, and violence, many countries are experiencing a contraction in civic space, which limits the ability of civil society to build constructive working relationships with governments or exercise meaningful oversight.<sup>23</sup>

To meet these challenges, donors and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have increasingly recognized that FCV contexts require new approaches and interventions.<sup>24</sup> Given that conflict now drives 80 percent of all humanitarian needs globally,<sup>25</sup> the environments that most need sustained development and humanitarian engagement are FCV contexts. In order to best serve communities in FCV settings and reduce global instability, D&G actors need to adapt D&G assistance to the unique challenges of FCV contexts, address democracy and governance drivers of FCV, and build partnerships to create an enabling environment for progress.

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<sup>15</sup> World Bank Group, 'Overview: Fragility, Conflict and Violence.'

<sup>16</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace, Global Peace Index 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Uppsala Conflict Data Program, UCDP Conflict Encyclopedia (Uppsala University, 2019), [www.ucdp.uu.se](http://www.ucdp.uu.se).

<sup>18</sup> World Bank Group, 'World Development Report 2011',

[https://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/WDR2011\\_Full\\_Text.pdf](https://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/WDR2011_Full_Text.pdf), p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> World Bank Group, 'Overview: Fragility, Conflict and Violence.'

<sup>20</sup> Institute for Economics & Peace, The Economic Value of Peace 2018: Measuring the Global Economic Impact of Violence and Conflict (Sydney, October 2018), <http://economicsandpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Economic-Value-of-Peace-2018.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> OECD, States of Fragility 2018: Understanding Violence; UN DESA, World Population Prospects 2017.

<sup>22</sup> World Bank Group, 'Overview: Fragility, Conflict and Violence.'

<sup>23</sup> Saskia Brechenmacher and Thomas Carothers, 'Defending Civic Space: Is the International Community Stuck?' (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2019).

<sup>24</sup> US Department of Defense, Stabilization Assistance Review (SAR), 2018, <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Jun/13/2001931133/-1-1/1/STABILIZATION-ASSISTANCE-REVIEW.PDF>; United States Institute of Peace, Preventing Extremism in Fragile States: A New Approach, 2019, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2019/02/preventing-extremism-fragile-states-new-approach>; UK Department for International Development, Building Stability Framework, 2016, [https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/DFID\\_Building stability framework 2016.pdf](https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/DFID_Building%20stability%20framework%202016.pdf); Cameron Commission, Escaping the Fragility Trap; United Nations, 'Goal 16: Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform,' <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>; United Nations & World Bank Group, Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Conflict, 2018, <https://www.pathwaysforpeace.org/>; OECD, States of Fragility 2018; The World Bank Group, 'Concept Note: World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence.'

<sup>25</sup> World Bank Group, 'Overview: Fragility, Conflict and Violence.'



Photo: Counterpart International, Democratic Republic of Congo

## FINDINGS: PROMISING INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

### › Adapting to Context

Understanding and adapting to contexts must be central to D&G programming in FCV settings. Programs and policy must incorporate a deep understanding of the local context in which the work is taking place, in addition to the wider sub-national, national and regional contexts. In fragile places, the strength and form of the government may range from too weak to deliver essential services, including security, to overly centralized and authoritarian, to even non-existent in failed states. Civic space may be constrained by a repressive government or by protracted insecurity. Citizen engagement may be lacking due to a history of disillusionment and disengagement, and the lack of a culture of transparency, accountability, and inclusion, or could be disrupted by conflict, disaster, or other shocks. Understanding this is imperative in FCV settings, as dynamics and on-the-ground realities can move rapidly, changing both the needs of the communities we work with and our ability to meet these needs. In some cases, a state can have functional or even strong institutions on a national level, but have areas of the country where they have less capacity to govern, an active insurgency or other factors that create sub-state pockets of fragility. FCV environments are often information-poor, physically insecure, and volatile. The continued development of innovative practices for context analysis, bolstered by sustained donor and practitioner engagement, is central to overcoming these challenges.

## *Developing context-specific analytic approaches to diagnosis and planning*

In fragile places it is imperative to quickly build trust and sustainable mechanisms for peaceful engagement between citizens and government. For D&G programming, a deep understanding of local context enables implementers to customize their approaches, ensuring that modes of citizen engagement and institution-strengthening are appropriate to the community. What implementers can do to help governing institutions be more effective and responsive depends on the formality and type of government structures, and the human and financial resources at hand. Whether communities can mobilize to invest in their own development, or rebuilding, can depend on the level of social cohesion within the community, or how fractious a conflict has been. Whether civil society can participate in government planning processes may depend on the level of personal security they feel in relation to the government, or to other ethnic, religious, or political groups. Implementers need to have the tools to be responsive to a fast-moving local context, and the mechanisms to understand the impact of their activities and course-correct if necessary.

It is important in D&G programming to ensure an intervention does not reinforce pre-existing societal divisions, power dynamics between dominant and minority groups, or an extractive and corrupted system. Given the fluidity that characterizes public authority in fragile contexts, the motivations and interests of governments, communities, and other local stakeholders can shift quickly. For example, before the 2018 political crisis, some municipal governments in Nicaragua were willing to engage with citizen groups on transparency questions when related to local infrastructure or service delivery issues. After the rapid political shifts and outbreak of violence, however, the types of social accountability efforts D&G organizations could support civic groups to undertake were substantially and rapidly constrained. Particularly in FCV contexts, conducting **ongoing scenario planning, 'do no harm' analysis, political economy analysis (PEA), conflict analysis, and systems mapping** can ensure local context is continuously evaluated and integrated into programming. Iterative scenario planning helps to prepare for potentially shifting programming to match shifts in context. 'Do no harm' planning can mitigate risks that D&G interventions could exacerbate conflict, such as in contexts where state capacity is being used to repress populations.

Fragile contexts are also characterized by uneven geographic patterns of power and legitimacy, which means that successful program implementation requires highly localized approaches to context analysis. For example, UNICEF's Afghanistan Office conducted a political economy analysis and stakeholder mapping to inform their programming in 10 priority provinces in 2012-2013. The analysis made it possible to identify local champions for secular schooling and public health services for women outside the urban areas, including village elders, youth groups, women's groups, and other informal institutions. Based on this PEA, UNICEF was able to target community mobilization and engagement activities around these services in different ways between urban and rural contexts, and within each of those contexts. While this approach was deployed in the context of an education program, this attention to sub-national variation is also directly relevant for D&G programming. Gender analysis should be an integral part of political economy analyses, allowing practitioners to understand differential impacts of FCV, and to avoid developing programs that inadvertently reinforce "power relations that systematically exclude and harm women, girls and other disadvantaged groups."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Rebecca Haines and Tam O'Neil, CARE International UK, 'Putting gender in political economy analyses: Why it matters and how to do it' (Gender and Development Network, May 2018), [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/536c4ee8e4b0b60bc6ca7c74/t/5af2c93f0e2e729b66d636b4/1525860674463/GADN+Briefing\\_PuttinGGenderInPEA\\_FinalMay2018.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/536c4ee8e4b0b60bc6ca7c74/t/5af2c93f0e2e729b66d636b4/1525860674463/GADN+Briefing_PuttinGGenderInPEA_FinalMay2018.pdf).

## *Programming boldly across categories, borders, and technical fields*

Fragility, conflict, and violence do not stop at state borders. Donor strategy and funding, however, typically focuses on countries rather than regions. This can transfer rather than solve problems: for example, programming to reduce violence in one state could cause armed groups to increase operations in bordering states. Some European donors have a framework that allows them to work cross-border effectively: for example, the UK's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF) allows for robust **regional programming**. [Box 2](#) provides an example of a joint initiative created to confront a regional challenge in the Horn of Africa. In contexts of cross-border fragility, conflict, and violence, non-traditional centers of power and actors often have more influence than traditional government actors. Sometimes practitioners need to turn attention away from official borders, and define the target communities based on their common identities, interests, and needs, which may cross borders, follow natural boundaries, or even historical narratives. **Community engagement and mobilization** can be a particularly important tool in border areas when local government institutions are either weak or not present. Community and citizen mobilization can plant the seeds for good governance and democratic participation through local ownership, when approached in a way that prioritizes creating an inclusive process. However, widening the impact of community-driven development (CDD) programs — by scaling up democracy and governance gains in community-level structures to regional and state-level structures — remains a challenge.

### **Box 2. Adaptive Regional Programming via Cross-Border Partnerships in the Horn of Africa**

**Challenge:** The Horn of Africa region is marked by periods of instability resulting from conflicts over natural resources, political incitement and terrorism. Pact works closely with partner organizations to contribute to the stability of the region as a whole, by supporting the strengthening of the horizontal and vertical linkages within and between local, national, and regional conflict management actors.

**Approach:** Partner CSOs provide weekly 'conflict and the general context' updates and analysis for the donor to better understand the operating context and to inform programming adjustments and decisions. Furthermore, Pact organizes annual learning and reflection meetings with partner CSOs to inform and update work plans and strategies.

**Results:** Pact and its partners are better able to respond to complex and recurrent conflicts in the operation area and use more adaptive approaches to peacebuilding. Incorporating the security, political and socio-economic factors into program plans has allowed them to be responsive to the changing context.

D&G in development and humanitarian work is often deprioritized or framed as a 'trade-off' with other immediate priorities, such as humanitarian response. However, for systemic impact, **layering in good governance approaches** early on is essential. In Syria, for example, Mercy Corps embeds civil society capacity strengthening into humanitarian response. The Investing in Syrian Humanitarian Action (ISHA) program provides training on humanitarian delivery to local civil society organizations (CSOs), simultaneously delivering humanitarian assistance while laying the groundwork for a skilled and connected civil society. Governance work can be integrated into service-delivery programming in areas such as health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), food security, and education. In contexts where integrating D&G into service delivery is possible, good governance principles should be embedded into programs regardless of the sector they primarily target ([Box 3](#)). These types of approaches help create

space and normalize civic participation, community decision-making, and oversight of service delivery and development planning. There is a growing body of evidence on the value of integrated approaches, including a 2019 study linking democratic governance to better adult health outcomes.<sup>27</sup>

### Box 3. Mobilizing Community-Led Change in Karamoja, Uganda

**Challenge:** Karamoja is in the midst of a social, political, ecological, and economic transition as it continues its recovery from decades of conflict and instability. It remains the most nutritionally vulnerable region in the country. Under-resourced governance structures, as well as the duality of informal and formal governance in the region, creates confusion and can at times leave both competing for power and space.

**Approach:** Mercy Corps' program APOLOU provides agency and voice to the most marginalized by creating platforms that bring together government, civil society, and the private sector to improve food and nutrition security. CATALYSE — Mercy Corps' approach to community mobilization — applies political and context analysis to account for existing power dynamics and to encourage broader inclusion within local systems in Karamoja.

**Results:** Community-level Resilience Action Committees (RACs) use CATALYSE to mobilize their communities to participate in identifying community issues and creating action plans that can be integrated into district development plans during the annual budget cycles. Given Karamoja's governance gaps, RACs include representatives from the many existing formal and informal structures and engage diverse community members. The purposeful inclusion of local government representatives in CATALYSE training and RAC consultations has bolstered their understanding of the community-driven process, and government officials have acknowledged how this open communication between the government and communities contributes to sustainable development efforts.

Even in the era of 'Thinking and Working Politically', barriers exist within the broader development community in how willing organizations and implementers are to engage with governments or address underlying governance issues that can disrupt power dynamics and systems.<sup>28</sup> As highlighted in a recent Carnegie Endowment for International Peace report, development aid agencies tend to have a "lower risk threshold" than, for example, human rights organizations focusing on democracy and governance, because the implementation of their development assistance often relies on maintaining functioning relationships with host governments.<sup>29</sup> This dynamic can cause development implementers to remain narrowly focused on reaching specific development objectives instead of raising or prioritizing human rights and governance issues which could jeopardize relationships with the government.<sup>30</sup>

### *Working within donor strategy & constraints – building an enabling environment*

Beyond understanding local, national and regional contexts, it is important to understand **the wider policy context** in which democracy and governance assistance is being designed and implemented. It is vital that implementers ground their programs within donor strategies and make clear connections between

<sup>27</sup> Thomas J. Bollyky et al., 'The Relationships between Democratic Experience, Adult Health, and Cause-Specific Mortality in 170 Countries between 1980 and 2016: an Observational Analysis,' *The Lancet* 393: 10181, 20 April 2019, pp. 1628–1640, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(19\)30235-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(19)30235-1).

<sup>28</sup> 'Thinking and Working Politically' (TWP) is a term originally coined by the TWP Community of Practice, referring to applying knowledge and analysis of political, economic, and power dynamics to development efforts. For further information see the TWP Community of Practice website: <https://twppcommunity.org>.

<sup>29</sup> Saskia Brechenmacher and Thomas Carothers, 'Defending Civic Space: Is the International Community Stuck?' p. 18.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

the aims of the overarching foreign policy objectives and the programming approach that they are proposing. One way to approach this is through **co-design of programs** with donors and technical experts, for which some platforms, such as a collaborative inception phase, already exist.

Working on D&G in FCV contexts is a long-term endeavor. Most projects, by nature, are not. Donors need to see results from their program investments: implementers in the D&G field must ensure program goals and timelines are specific and communicated, in order to build donor tolerance for incremental changes and **'good enough'** governance shifts. Focusing on what is good enough when defining success for any given program entails a focus on targeted short-term improvements rather than placing unrealistic expectations on how rapid and sweeping the impacts of any single program can be.<sup>31</sup> For example, following a violent uprising or the end of decades of authoritarian rule it would be catastrophically unrealistic to expect functioning institutions, a satiated and engaged public, and a swift transition by the end of a short project cycle. Instead it would be more strategic and resource-effective to identify the biggest risk factors for further conflict — be they political exclusion, inchoate security forces, or other issues — and target assistance to those priorities in the nearer term.

At the same time, a pragmatic approach does not necessarily imply abandoning the **larger aims of D&G programming**, which focuses on systems changes towards more accountable, inclusive, and engaged democratic governance. Rather, a 'good enough' approach for programming in FCV contexts entails setting a reasonable definition of success for a given program, while maintaining a broader view of how individual projects combine and accumulate over time to contribute to broader goals. As a result, implementers should find opportunities to clearly communicate the 'bigger story' of the impact of D&G work over time, while setting realistic expectations of what can be achieved — and at what pace — in FCV contexts.

Furthermore, D&G programs do not exist in a vacuum: **donor policy decisions** can undermine or strengthen efforts. For example, if a particular donor is not supportive of or does not prioritize D&G gains in a particular country or region, programs will be constrained in how much they can achieve, especially if the host government is obstructive. Donors can create an enabling environment for D&G programs by making D&G priorities more prominent in their foreign policy. Donors should also apply diplomatic tools, including high level political pressure, security sector assistance, trade deals, or investigative delegations to pressure governments towards transparency or reform. For example, if a partner government's security services are repressive, donors should consider conditioning military aid on behavioral change. Donors should also design security training packages to ensure the highest adherence to human rights standards. Trade deals are another important tool that donors can leverage to incentivize partner reforms or bolster a country's nascent democratic transition. Donors should build in human rights, transparency, monitoring, and governance provisions in trade deals. Additionally, both bilaterally and in coalition, donors can conduct delegations including international election observations and fact-finding missions to bring problems to light and make public, actionable recommendations to partner governments.

As autocratic regimes move to limit dissent and restrict the access and operations of legitimate civil society, donors can also leverage their unique convening power to **promote meaningful access for civil society and marginalized voices**. The United States' diplomatic reengagement with Myanmar

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<sup>31</sup> Merilee Grindle, 'Good Enough Governance,' *Governance*, 25 August 2004, pp. 525-548, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0952-1895.2004.00256.x>.

in 2012 and subsequent support for democratic elections and openings for civil society are an example of strongly coordinated diplomatic and development efforts. Similarly, in advance of Kenya's 2013 elections, the U.S. government leveraged a combination of diplomatic tools and development programs to help prevent electoral violence ([Box 4](#)).

#### **Box 4. Leveraging Diplomacy and Development to Prevent Violence in Kenya**

**Challenge:** Following the disputed election in Kenya in 2007, armed groups of young people, stirred up by local politicians, killed more than 1,500 people and drove more than 500,000 from their homes across the country. In advance of the 2013 vote, the U.S. government was committed to preventing electoral violence and developed a multi-layered strategy that included both development and diplomacy.

**Approach:** The U.S. supported Mercy Corps and other NGOs to work with youth groups and the government to build a grassroots constituency for peace. Through its \$53 million Yes Youth Can program, the U.S. government helped empower nearly one million Kenyan youth. The program helped 500,000 young Kenyans obtain national identification cards (a prerequisite to voter registration); and led a nationwide campaign with civic organizations to elicit peace pledges from all presidential candidates.<sup>32</sup> U.S. programs trained hundreds of women and youth groups in how to prevent violence, how to map potential hotspots, and how to intervene to stop incidents from escalating. They also helped develop a youth movement, The National Youth Bunge Association, and leveraged sports to bridge ethnic divides.

In addition to this development support, the U.S. government used its diplomatic influence to advocate for a free, fair, and peaceful election. President Obama took the extraordinary step of appealing directly to the Kenyan people through a video message, in which he urged Kenyans to “reject intimidation and violence and allow a free and fair vote.”<sup>33</sup> Top U.S. diplomats engaged in private and public diplomacy to urge all parties to refrain from inciting electoral violence. The U.S. Embassy monitored the situation closely, and the U.S. Ambassador convened a biweekly Elections and Reform Task Force and an international Elections Donor Group to monitor and coordinate efforts.<sup>34</sup>

**Results:** In contrast to 2007-2008, the 2013 elections took place largely without violence. Even when the election results were challenged by the opposition and civil society organizations, Kenya's institutions were able to manage the tension with minimal violence. Following the elections, Kenya experienced significant stock market and GDP growth. The D&G and diplomatic investments to prevent election violence also saved millions of dollars' worth of humanitarian assistance that would have been necessary to feed and house those who could have been displaced by violence.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> The Obama White House, 'FACT SHEET: U.S. Support for Strengthening Democratic Institutions, Rule of Law, and Human Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa,' 27 June 2013, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/06/27/fact-sheet-us-support-strengthening-democratic-institutions-rule-law-and>.

<sup>33</sup> 'President Obama's Message to the People of Kenya,' The Obama White House - Youtube Channel, 5 February 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGW9mYAJ7G8>.

<sup>34</sup> USAID, 'USAID Support for Kenya's 2013 Elections: Rapid Assessment Review,' February 2014, <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/Kenya%2527s%25202013%2520Elections.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> Kristin M. Lord and Jacqueline Wilson, 'Lessons Learned from Kenya's Election,' Foreign Policy, 19 March 2013, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/03/19/lessons-learned-from-kenyas-election/>.

## › Navigating Complex Actors

D&G programs build capacity, strengthen processes, and reinforce local empowerment and ownership of democratic governance practices. The actors engaged in these efforts are therefore partners and counterparts — local stakeholders that must work within and cooperate to improve their local systems. These actors span legitimate government authorities, elected officials, illegitimate state actors or armed groups, civic leaders, the business community, and individual citizens. In fragile environments, the definitions and roles of these actors are not always clear, and are often as fluid as the context. Communities and networks look and operate differently in different contexts, but trust and social capital can be leveraged for good governance outcomes.<sup>36</sup>

### *Mapping actors in context*

To strengthen prospects for success, D&G implementers need to build strong relationships and trust with local stakeholders and partners over time. In FCV environments, those relationships can be severed or strained, and previous maps of relevant and reliable actors can quickly become outdated. Incorporating reliable local knowledge, often by leveraging those relationships and networks, is important to ensure the understanding of dynamics keeps up with the fast-paced changes amidst conflict and crisis. For example, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) conducts routine reviews of the fluidity of structures and groups in a peacebuilding program the Central African Republic, consulting with partners and stakeholders to identify how groups have changed or splintered, who the belligerents are, triangulate how they relate to partners and the program, and adapt accordingly ([Box 5](#)). This type of **ongoing actor mapping** — of champions, spoilers and key actors in between — enables programs to ensure they are partnering or engaging with constructive counterparts, and to approach actors with a realistic understanding of the interests and power structures that motivate them. CRS's experience using actor mapping to convene stakeholders in CAR indicates that this type of approach can serve as a governance intervention in its own right, even when it is deployed alongside other sectoral programming approaches.

### **Box 5. Iterative Stakeholder Mapping and Conflict Analysis in the Central African Republic**

**Challenge:** The Central African Republic has been experiencing a prolonged violent crisis that has deeply affected its social fabric, including societal divisions across Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim communities.

**Approach:** As part of its Secure, Empowered, Connected Communities (SECC) Project, CRS held incremental gatherings to bring together a series of key actors across the religious communities in an interfaith platform intended to build a common vision of social cohesion and to develop a joint action plan for peace. CRS and the interfaith platform facilitated peacebuilding workshops for civil society leaders and the main belligerents in the conflict, the Anti-Balaka and Ex-Seleka, as well as workshops for senior government officials.

**Results:** Given the fluid situation and the shifts in the conflict, the iterative approach of including a broad range of actors throughout the process enabled stronger relationships among champions for peace. This built progressive awareness of individual and collective roles in building the peace. Using participatory and reflective methods while working between and among actors proved essential to staying informed and making adjustments to support participants in advancing their peace agenda. Over time, there was an improved sense of a shared destiny and more openness to dialogue and collaboration for peace.

<sup>36</sup> Sanjay Gurung and Allison Shean, *Social Capital and Good Governance: A Governance in Action Research Brief* (Mercy Corps, April 2017), <https://www.mercycorps.org/sites/default/files/Social-Capital-Good-Governance-Mercy-Corps-2017.pdf>.

In FCV settings it is crucial to identify and support individuals and networks who are **agents of positive change**. Fragility, conflict and violence are sustained by the people who benefit from it, such as armed groups who have more power than they otherwise would or governing elites who would lose influence in a functioning democracy. D&G implementers must therefore look to partner with and empower the groups who do not benefit from conflict and who stand to gain the most from peace: particularly



women and marginalized groups. Inclusionary politics is not just beneficial to the individuals and communities empowered, but can also be a central part of the solution set in FCV settings. Women's participation in peace processes, for example, has been shown to be crucial, not only in enabling women to represent themselves, but in the interests of building sustainable peace: when women participate in creating a peace agreement, it is 35 percent more likely to last for fifteen years or more.<sup>37</sup> Evidence shows that when women are significantly represented in legislatures in states emerging from civil war, the risk of conflict relapse is near zero.<sup>38</sup>

Empowering marginalized groups can lead to policy outcomes that strengthen communities: studies show that “when empowered, women make decisions that positively affect children and families.”<sup>39</sup> In Rwanda following the 1994 genocide, women's associations and NGOs were actively given a prominent role in national reconstruction by the Government of National Unity.<sup>40</sup> This inclusion was formalized in Rwanda's post-genocide constitution that was adopted in 2003, which constitutionally required a quota of 30 percent women in all decision-making bodies. In the decade and a half since the implementation of this reform, women parliamentarians have implemented key legal reforms, including on equal pay, discrimination, equal inheritance rights, and children's rights.<sup>41</sup>

The post-genocide experience of Rwanda indicates that D&G interventions that support and empower women and marginalized groups are particularly important in fragile settings. Following the 2011 revolution in Libya, the international community focused attention on empowering the many women who had previously been denied access to political life. The National Democratic Institute ran women's leadership academies, including a campaign institute, to help train women candidates for the country's first democratic election. In addition to gaining skills to benefit their campaigns and communities, several women won seats in Libya's first post-Qadhafi parliament. Some of these women formed a

<sup>37</sup> Marie O'Reilly, Andrea Ó Súilleabháin, and Thania Paffenholz, 'Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes,' IPI, June 2015, p. 12.

<sup>38</sup> A study of 58 conflict-affected states between 1980 and 2003 found that when no women are represented in the legislature, the risk of relapse increases over time, but “when 35 percent of the legislature is female, this relationship virtually disappears, and the risk of relapse is near zero.” Jacqueline H.R. Demeritt, Angela D. Nichols, 'Female Participation and Civil War Relapse,' *Civil Wars* 16, no. 3 (2014): p. 362; Marie O'Reilly, 'Why Women? Inclusive Security and Peaceful Societies,' *Inclusive Security*, October 2015.

<sup>39</sup> Elizabeth Powley, 'Rwanda: The Impact of Women Legislators on Policy Outcomes Affecting Children and Families,' UNICEF, December 2006, <https://www.unicef.org/sowc07/docs/powley.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> Joan Murungi, 'Women in the Post Conflict Reconstruction of Rwanda,' Paper presented at the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, March 2014.

<sup>41</sup> UN Women, 'Revisiting Rwanda five years after record-breaking parliamentary elections,' 13 August 2018, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2018/8/feature-rwanda-women-in-parliament>.

caucus, opened the door to youth and civic groups to access decisionmakers, and advocated for women’s representation on key legislative committees.

Understanding **actors’ constraints and motivations** is also vital for identifying the positioning of the host government. In some FCV contexts, governments can be part of the problem: belligerents to conflict; collapsed and incapable of partnering; or perceived as illegitimate by citizens. In such scenarios, donors and implementers risk bestowing legitimacy on a government by working with them. Those partnerships can alienate local civil society and signal tacit approval for state repression. However, in many other FCV settings, partnering with the government can also be a part of D&G progress and solutions. There is a key difference between governments’ political and capacity challenges: between governments who contribute to state fragility through their political decisions and ongoing involvement in conflict, and governments who want to see D&G improvements but lack the capacity to implement them. Actor mapping and conflict analysis is therefore crucial to help D&G implementers understand this distinction, informing their interactions with state actors. Implementers and donors should balance engagement with governments on the one hand with broad engagement with nongovernmental stakeholders across the country on the other.

Actor mapping can help **identify stakeholders and leverage their comparative advantages** to achieve D&G gains. Private sector actors — particularly foundations — have a comparative advantage in that they can often program more flexibly than bilateral and multilateral donors. At the same time, actors outside of the traditional D&G and development sphere, including international and local businesses, can contribute to social impact through **impact investing** (defined as “investments made into companies, organizations, vehicles and funds with the intent to contribute to measurable positive social, economic and environmental impact alongside financial returns”).<sup>42</sup> As outlined by The B Team — a group of global business leaders formed to catalyze “a better way of doing business” — there is a clear “business case for protecting civic rights” and civic space.<sup>43</sup> Investors and businesses benefit from less fragility: their investments can help create better D&G environments in FCV settings, which can, in turn, improve their ability to operate in these contexts. Building strong partnerships with the private sector could help D&G policymakers and practitioners harness impact investing to enable more sustainable and cross-sectoral gains in FCV settings.

### ***Recognizing individuals’ multiple self-defined roles, identities, and networks***

D&G programs have been successful when they have embraced fluidity by supporting constructive civic actors to engage with the context in the most productive and strategic way they can identify. Civil society organizations that are active in and representative of their community or region may lose swaths of staff to displacement, need to disband or lower the profile of activities, or amend their mission as the environment changes. While civic networks sometimes form with donor support to respond to a humanitarian crisis, for example, they may not have form or purpose in the long run. Such networks can be organized around a single time-bound issue, but may not need long-term engagement. In FCV environments, donors should look for ways to support the capacity of CSOs to network as needed, rather than imposing sustainability constraints in a bid to show long-term impact.

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<sup>42</sup> International Finance Corporation, ‘What is impact investing?’ [https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/Topics\\_Ext\\_Content/IFC\\_External\\_Corporate\\_Site/Impact-investing/Overview/](https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/Topics_Ext_Content/IFC_External_Corporate_Site/Impact-investing/Overview/).

<sup>43</sup> The B Team, ‘The Business Case for Protecting Civic Rights,’ 15 October 2018, <http://www.bteam.org/announcements/the-business-case-for-protecting-civic-rights/>.

In other cases, stakeholders may find **multiple roles and identities** within a fluid and changing context — such as an individual moving from civil society to a political or elected representative, or from business to a government staff member, or even an individual holding multiple roles simultaneously. Libya and Tunisia are examples in which the dynamic changes of structures and roles after the Arab Spring revolutions meant that actors would flow between civil society and political parties, navigating their way amidst nascent governance structures.

### *Supporting changes in values to enable inclusion*

Some **normative aspects of the governance systems** commonly promoted through traditional D&G programs may not match how the local system actually functions, especially in FCV contexts in which stakeholders have had to adapt to and cope with enormous stresses. For example, clientelist networks are often perceived by Western donors and implementers as corrupt, whereas individuals changing positions and functions based on their leader or benefactor within the system may be viewed locally as a legitimate coping strategy rather than ‘bad behavior.’ Development programs should not require local norms of the system to change to match imposed institutional structures, such as Western parliamentary democracy or bureaucratic public administration. Instead, programs should use local values and institutions as a starting point and work from there encourage locally-legitimate adaptations of good governance values and democratic practices.

D&G implementers can help to foster behavior change through their role as an **external facilitator or convener** for local stakeholders, which can help provide a safe space or political cover for dialogue that would not otherwise be possible. For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Counterpart convenes local communities, government officials, and civil society actors to engage in dialogue about controversial topics including the decentralization process and participatory governance. At these events, Counterpart champions the inclusion of historically marginalized groups, such as women, youth, persons living with disability, albinos, and Pygmies. Through these inclusive platforms, Counterpart is able to model inclusion while promoting greater civic and voter engagement among local communities. D&G implementers’ role as an external convener is particularly important when there are significant **trust deficits** between civilians and government, or between civilians and security sector actors ([Box 6](#)).

### **Box 6. Fostering Transparent Communication between Civilian, Government, and Security Sector Officials**

**Challenge:** Maintaining citizen security in fragile states affected by violent extremism requires communities to rapidly identify and communicate threats to the security sector and establish early warning response mechanisms to build community preparedness. However, in many violent extremism-affected states, the perception of heavy-handed counter-terrorism policies has led to a trust deficit between communities and the security sector. In Diffa, Niger, near the border with Nigeria, one of the unintended consequences of the government-imposed State of Emergency was the banning of all motorcycles and 3-wheeled scooters to inhibit Boko Haram’s mobility. The ban included shutting down transportation in Diffa’s towns, affecting commuting employees, students, and market vendors and customers. It also eliminated employment for youth who drove motorcycles as taxis, which in turn created a negative impact on the motorcycle supply chain and other local businesses. Communities were particularly concerned that unemployed youth could be recruited by Boko Haram, resort to criminality, or simply leave the community from desperation.

**Approach:** To bridge the trust deficit, initiatives that bring together the community in dialogue, or which seek to improve access to information on security practices, can strengthen collaboration between communities and the security sector. In Niger, Counterpart is implementing the USAID-funded Participatory Responsive Governance – Principle Activity (PRG-PA), and supporting the US Government’s Security Governance Initiative by training local journalists to improve reporting of security practices. Moreover, in regions affected by violent extremism that are currently under a State of Emergency, Counterpart is working with local stakeholders (including community groups, traditional leaders, government authorities, and security services) to mitigate the unintended consequences of protective measures.

**Results:** In Diffa, community organizers applied social pressure and leveraged political capital with the elected mayor and council to petition the local Governor for support. The local prefect agreed to personally deliver the letter to the Governor, and within a short time, the Governor issued a decree authorizing the use of scooters in the five principal urban centers in Diffa Region. The initiative not only restored vital income generating opportunities for youth, but also increased the perception of legitimacy and responsiveness of the government.

With convening power also comes the opportunity to model the values and behaviors promoted through D&G programming, namely transparency, inclusion, participation, and accountability ([Box 7](#)). Demonstrating those values at the local, national and global levels can help to build initial support and engagement with D&G values.

### **Box 7. Harnessing Convening Power in Post-Uprising Tunisia**

**Challenge:** Amidst the uncertainties of the immediate wake of the 2011 Jasmine Revolution which ended authoritarian rule in Tunisia, movement leaders and political actors struggled with determining tangible and constructive next steps for a peaceful democratic transition. There was massive public demand for concrete improvements in political freedoms and economic returns and transitional leaders struggled to respond to citizen concerns and manage expectations.

**Approach:** The National Democratic Institute (NDI) immediately put liaisons on the ground in Tunisia to work with local actors to identify their areas of need, and subsequently facilitated exchanges with practitioners from Hungary, Bulgaria, Spain, Portugal, Romania, Lebanon and elsewhere who had been personally involved in their countries’ democratic transitions and political reform efforts to identify lessons, pitfalls, and considerations. NDI also worked with local researchers to conduct the first qualitative inventory of public opinions to help inform transitional decision-makers and shape their policy efforts.

**Results:** With first-hand perspectives on the challenges and pitfalls inherent to transitions and key advice for moving forward from peers, Tunisian political and civic actors were able to lay out more realistic expectations for a transition, identify specific areas where outside technical assistance would be best placed in building appropriate institutions and processes, and identify key tension points and related mechanisms for consensus-building, dialogue, oversight, and electoral integrity that have enabled the country’s transition and peaceful political competition to continue moving forward. This model can be adapted to other fragile transitional contexts.

## › Strengthening Measurement

Robust measurement of the success and impact of programming is vital to ensure accountability to and buy-in from donors, inform ongoing programming, and provide learning for future programs. However, in FCV settings, success is hard to define and measure. Currently, the lack of an evidence base of ‘what works’ in D&G interventions, and the time-limited and output-focused nature of programs, are barriers to progress within the field. D&G work centers around decades-long processes, but program planning and funding structures require implementers to tackle these processes in annual workplans. This makes it difficult to place the intermediate goals of programs into the context of long-term strategies around D&G. Implementers need to better measure how outputs and outcomes of D&G programs are connected to broader D&G goals — increased accountability and legitimacy, more inclusive and fairer power structures, and empowered communities and civil society.

### *Measuring Outcomes over Time and Across Local Contexts*

Using recurring measurement over time and space is one promising response to challenges associated with measuring key outcomes of D&G programs in FCV states. Because the processes linking D&G programs to higher order impacts involve non-linear change and sequences of events that unfold over the course of years or even decades, it is helpful to move away from static measurements at a fixed baseline and endline towards repeated measures that allow implementers to track both progress and backsliding. In practice, measuring outcomes over time involves drawing on and combining innovative methods from multiple disciplines to adapt programs and revise theories of change. Approaches that embrace complexity view success as a journey rather than a destination and embed research methods into technical project activities. This approach can realize greater success, and includes the following tools:

- In a study of a governance training program in Myanmar’s Kayah state, Mercy Corps used a **process tracing case study** to allow researchers to identify the steps linking the program’s normative training to changes in governance behaviors.
- In Uganda, Research Triangle International used **outcome journals** in which program staff recorded observed changes and barriers weekly.
- In Niger, Counterpart applies a **Complexity Aware Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (CAMEL)** approach to track the emergence of unexpected social, economic, and political trends that may complicate program delivery. Insights gleaned from this approach allow for adaptive management of implementation of programming.
- In Somalia, Pact and its consortium partners **embedded research into its inception and design phase** to diagnose differences across local contexts ([Box 8](#)).

## Box 8. Using Research to Adapt Programs to Local Contexts in Somalia

**Challenge:** Pact implements the USAID-funded Expanding Access to Justice (EAJ) project in Somalia, aimed at enhancing the availability of basic justice systems and helping Somalis navigate a complex and pluralistic justice system. A core challenge in implementing activities on a national scale in an FCV state like Somalia is how to differentiate programming across a range of geographies that offer very different social, political, and security contexts.

**Approach:** Under EAJ, Pact benefitted from USAID's decision to include a five-month 'inception period,' which allowed for a deliberate and calibrated start up process. With its partner, the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative, Pact used the inception period to conduct intensive stakeholder engagement and carry out a range of foundational research, including a justice sector mapping, Applied Political Economy Analysis (APEA), and gender and social inclusion analysis.

**Results:** Pact used these foundational relationships and analyses to develop implementation models tailored to regions offering vastly different levels of state formation and security. These models have begun to be rolled out and will be tested and deliberately modified over the life of the project.

### *Participatory Methods of Indicator Selection and Measurement*

Participatory and empowering modes of defining and measuring governance indicators are another promising practice in D&G measurement. Measuring outcomes is notoriously difficult in governance programs, particularly when program success involves inducing changes in norms and processes, as opposed to changes in formal institutional structures or physical outputs. Because normative change ultimately depends on locally shared conceptions of identity and morality, measures of these types of outcomes must be grounded in the lived reality of project participants and stakeholders. Participatory methods of defining and measuring outcomes help to overcome these types of challenges in D&G measurement by using participants' own narrative accounts and priorities as the basis for assessment:

- In the USAID-funded Community Engagement Project in Jordan, Global Communities used structured storytelling to allow individuals to identify the **most significant change** in their lives associated with the project.<sup>44</sup>
- In Niger, a municipal governance project funded by SNV (Dutch government's development agency) used **participatory monitoring and evaluation** in which the local council, CSOs, and neighborhood residents worked together to define what improved governance looks like in this context and to develop a plan for measuring progress towards those goals.<sup>45</sup>
- In Rwanda, researchers studying a radio program about post-conflict reconciliation used **drama and role-playing** to assess how behavior in hypothetical conflict-related scenarios was shaped by the program.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> USAID, Jordan CSP MSC Videos, Global Communities, 23 July 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?reload=9&list=PLVJHKeJjjJbESn1NR3UHFdpNg6wKKfQA>.

<sup>45</sup> T. Hilhorst and I.M. Guijt, Participatory monitoring and evaluation: a process to support governance and empowerment at the local level: a guidance paper (The Netherlands: Royal Tropical Institute, 2006).

<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth Levy Paluck and Donald P. Green, 'Deference, dissent, and dispute resolution: A field experiment on a mass media intervention in Rwanda,' *American Political Science Review* 103:4, 2009, pp. 662–644.

- In Somaliland and Somalia, **Pact** used **outcome mapping** to enable project partners to build a shared vision, strategically plan activities, define their own metrics of success and build a complexity-aware monitoring and evaluation framework.

Participatory methods can also be used to identify unintentional consequences of programming. **Outcome harvesting** — in which the researcher collects evidence of what has changed and ‘works backwards’ to determine if and how an intervention has contributed to these changes — can surface the unforeseen impacts of D&G interventions.<sup>47</sup> This is particularly important in FCV settings, given that fragility, conflict and violence — and interventions designed to address these issues — usually have differential impacts on demographic groups within communities. For example, a decline in armed conflict often brings increased levels of sexual violence against women and girls.<sup>48</sup> Gaining a fuller understanding of the impact of interventions in FCV settings through participatory methods like outcome harvesting can help implementers plan for and mitigate unintended consequences.

### *Utilizing methods from across disciplines and sectors*

Finally, creatively combining multiple measures and methods from across disciplines and sectors is a promising practice for D&G measurement. Because FCV contexts are often characterized by opaque information flows and logistical impediments to data collection, using a diversity of types of data sources can help to make a program’s learning strategy less reliant on the success or failure of any one method:

- **Building exploratory and formative research into evaluations** can help implementers to detect **problem transference** as well as **unexpected successes**. Mercy Corps’ final evaluation of the ISHA program in Syria was able to measure the key outcome specified in the results framework — organizational capacity — as well as additional dimensions of program success that were identified by the program team during implementation, such as individual program participants’ commitment to public service and internalization of values regarding community accountability.
- In Tunisia, Democracy International used the types of nudge-based experiments used in **social and behavioral change communications in public health** to assess the effectiveness of alternative ‘Get Out the Vote’ strategies.
- The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) used **practice evaluations** that combined case study research design techniques with ex-post evaluation methods to assess how different kinds of interventions fare at preventing electoral violence in five at-risk countries.

<sup>47</sup> Ricardo Wilson-Grau and Heather Britt, ‘Outcome Harvesting’, pub. Ford Foundation, May 2012,

<https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/Outcome%20Harvesting%20Brief%20FINAL%202012-05-2-1.pdf>.

<sup>48</sup> Carol Cohn, ‘Women and Wars: Toward a Conceptual Framework,’ in Cohn ed. *Women and Wars* (Polity, 2012), pp. 1-35, p. 22.

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The unique drivers and consequences of protracted fragility require new approaches. The promising innovations and lessons highlighted in this paper offer a potential way forward with D&G interventions to address key drivers of fragility, and create an enabling environment for stability and progress in some of the world's most challenging contexts.

In order to address the primary governance drivers of FCV — weak state capacity, accountability and legitimacy; exclusion or marginalization of population groups; and weak civic engagement — donors and implementers must adapt to meet the unique context, actors, and measurement challenges. Operating flexibly and leveraging diplomatic tools can help address **weak state capacity, accountability, and legitimacy**. Identifying actors to work with and supporting them to change repressive or counterproductive behavior can strengthen **civic engagement** and build more **inclusive institutions and societies**. Finally, developing effective tools for measurement helps demonstrate the **impact** of D&G efforts and builds an evidence base over time of what works, and why it works, in FCV environments.

Donor governments and multilaterals have a vital role to play: they should move towards coupling investments in D&G work with foreign policy that recognizes the importance of D&G interventions in FCV contexts. Progress on democracy and governance will require the enabling environment created by actors beyond the traditional D&G and development spheres and a shared understanding of challenges and goals.

Drawing on these conclusions, the D&G organizations involved in this report recommend the following ways forward for bilateral donors, multilateral institutions, and to our own community of practice.

## › Recommendations to Multilateral and Bilateral Donors:

- **Leverage diplomatic tools to support good governance outcomes.** Donors should be prepared to leverage an array of diplomatic tools, including high-level political pressure, arms transfers, non-D&G assistance, and investigative delegations or commissions of inquiry to pressure governments towards transparency, inclusion, or reform. As autocratic regimes move to limit dissent and restrict the access and operations of legitimate civil society, donors can leverage their unique convening power and influence to create entry points and sustainable mechanisms for engagement with marginalized voices.
- **Layer good governance into humanitarian response, stabilization, and early recovery efforts.** Donors are increasingly integrating democracy and governance activities and strategies into multi-sectoral programming targeting health, food security, and nutrition, as well as cross-sectoral resilience programs. To address complex emergencies beyond short-term aid, we must transform the governance constraints that have contributed to crises. We need to build positive governance capacity in contexts where institutions have collapsed, and strengthen local actors and systems in politicized environments with high levels of insecurity. USAID's 2016-2025 Food for Peace strategy is a strong

example of donor framework integrating good governance objectives — accountability, inclusion, and civic engagement — into cross-sectoral funding for food security.

- **Improve trans-border programming.** Fragility does not recognize state borders. Development agencies should invest in cross-border initiatives to confront regional challenges. The UN Sahel Cross-Border Cooperation Assistance Programme (ACTS) offers one example of an institution moving beyond country-specific silos to seek a truly regional response.
- **Invest in more research to build the evidence of ‘what works’ and ‘how it works’ in fragile settings.** To address the evidence gap and ensure cost-effective, targeted foreign assistance, donors should fund additional research to understand the impact of D&G programming on democratic practices and good governance outcomes. New research could explore questions including how to effectively sequence governance interventions in stabilization programming; linkages between state capacity, violence, and legitimacy; whether investments in information dissemination increase public trust; and how technical assistance might improve perceptions of inclusion and accountability. Donors could expand research partnerships with implementing organizations, research institutions, and universities to build a broader evidence base and inform policymaking.
- **Implement inception phases and reflection opportunities that allow for collaborative program design and adaptation with implementers, host governments, and local communities.** Conflicts are not linear: conflict dynamics and on-the-ground realities can change rapidly, and security situations can improve only to decline again. However, often the projects implemented within conflict contexts are linear. Adaptive management ensures development interventions are tied to and inform policy shifts while also being rooted in realities on the ground. Allocating space and resources for real coordination and co-design during program inception phases, and conducting ongoing conflict analysis throughout the program life-cycle, can strengthen the design of interventions and ensure local input is genuinely incorporated.
- **Plan for the political and capacity challenges of partnering with governments in FCV contexts.** In FCV environments, governments can be belligerents to conflict; collapsed and incapable of partnering; or perceived as illegitimate by citizens of the country. When a government is a conflict party, it is vital that donors invest in context analysis and actor mapping to understand grievances, identify responsible parties, and to avoid partnerships that could inadvertently help enable tools of repression. Multilateral donors such as the World Bank can use their Country Partnership and project negotiations to push for political reforms and require the highest adherence to human rights, inclusion, and transparency as preconditions for partnership.
- **Enable longer-term D&G investments.** D&G work centers around decades-long processes, but program planning and funding structure requires implementers to tackle these processes in annual workplans and short-term project cycles. D&G impacts in FCV settings are difficult to measure over a short period of time. While the innovative measurement methods described above hold promise for helping to assess these harder to measure outcomes, there are challenges for implementers proposing to use these. Participatory methods for measurement take time, and often do not fit within the evaluation timeframe expected by donors. Donors should consider longer-term investments beyond 2 - 5 year project cycles, ensuring that long-term programming approaches set strong short term goals to deliver ‘quick wins’ and provide benchmarks while working for longer term returns.

## › Recommendations to Practitioners:

- **Strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management to ensure flexible interventions.** Ongoing analysis must feed into real-time programming to ensure interventions are conflict- and risk-sensitive and do not inadvertently exacerbate tensions. Practitioners should develop mechanisms of adaptive management — such as decentralized decision making, flexible work-plans, regular community stakeholder reviews, and joint monitoring with local stakeholders — to ensure that investments can adjust to rapidly changing conflict dynamics. Practitioners should ensure they budget and resource appropriately for analysis and adaptive management.
- **Where possible, encourage trust-building between communities and government institutions.** D&G implementers can leverage their unique relationships to convene government actors and community leaders for building trust. NGOs can also enable collective goal-setting, allow for participatory planning, model transparency, encourage information sharing, and develop early warning mechanisms to detect and defuse conflict between security services and communities at risk.
- **Strengthen collective impact aggregation and influence.** D&G implementers need to provide policymakers with compelling, accurate, and aggregated data on the impacts of D&G investments over time. Organizations should collaborate to piece together a narrative of what has and hasn't worked, and why, to help make the case for continued investments. As part of this, implementers should highlight that the fluidity of FCV environments means that what sustainability looks like may change, even multiple times, over the course of a program.
- **Improve information sharing between practitioners.** Up-to-date information is crucial for practitioners working in fast-moving FCV environments to deliver relevant and conflict-sensitive programming. On a wider scale, communication and sharing of information across the sector helps organizations learn from successes and mistakes, and collaborate to find innovative solutions to common challenges. Even as systems thinking advances within the donor and implementer communities, silos persist within organizations — across functions, regions, and approaches — that would be strengthened by ensuring more strategic collaboration from the outset of programs. For example, as implementers increasingly dedicate resources toward research and learning, those are not often integrated with M&E, which is a lost opportunity to ensure data collected is both relevant to learning priorities and applicable for program management or adaptation. Between implementing partners, information sharing can be inconsistent. Better sharing of information and analysis, which could include establishing the analysis and information-gathering each partner will be responsible for, could improve program efficiency, embed conflict-sensitivity, and avoid duplication of efforts.
- **Practice integrated approaches where possible.** Implementers should ensure that interventions in other sectors, such as humanitarian response, health, or nutrition overlay a governance strengthening approach. Integrating D&G into other types of programming signals how important political or civic voice and participation in community decision making are for broader development progress. For example, Mercy Corps' PAHAL program in Nepal promoted good governance in the context of a food security program by training local government officials in the skills needed for responsive governance, while simultaneously supporting increased civic engagement and inclusiveness in community organizations, such as farmers' groups and forest users' groups.

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