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World Bank Group
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Comments on World Bank Group strategy for fragility, conflict, and violence 2020–2025

COREI welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft World Bank Group strategy for fragility, conflict, and violence 2020–2025. We appreciate the work of the WBG in this area, as addressing FCV is critical to enable people to live in dignity and to overcome poverty.

While the private sector can play an important role, it is not necessarily at the centre of reducing fragility, conflict and violence (FCV) and enhancing sustainable development. There are other models for provision of products and services, including those encompassed by the social and solidarity economy (SSE).

Social and solidarity economy

The focus of our comments relates to the role of the SSE and associations operating under principles compatible with it in addressing FCV. It is not clear from the draft whether such associations are included under the definition of the private sector. If they are, we suggest this be made explicit, if not they should be included, again explicitly.

SSE includes the production of goods and services by a broad range of enterprises and other organisations, e.g. formal and informal rotating savings and credit associations and other self-help groups, cooperatives, service-provisioning NGOs, social enterprises, associations of informal economy workers and other community-based organisations. The principles guiding these organisations include democratic self-management with explicit social objectives and often environmental objectives. They are often characterised by cooperation, solidarity and ethics.

There is a growing recognition that SSE principles can be effective for development on small to large scales for disadvantaged and marginalised groups. When applied to the sustainable development goals (SDGs), they can be useful as a starting point for planning reconstruction and strengthening fragile societies, particularly those plagued by conflict and violence.

This has been recognised by United Nations, which has established an Inter-Agency Task Force on Social and Solidarity Economy (UNTFSSSE), bringing together some 20 UN agencies and other intergovernmental organisations with a direct interest in SSE as well as umbrella associations of

international social and solidarity economy networks. We noted that the World Bank is not a member, despite the importance of financing for this sector as well as the role SSE can play in addressing fragility, conflict and violence.

In June 2019, this Task Force convened a conference on ‘Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: What Role for Social and Solidarity Economy?’ The papers accepted for presentation at that conference, together with other papers on this topic can be found on: <http://unsse.org/knowledge-hub/>.

Inclusion

In para 48, p.15, the draft acknowledges that *‘some groups may perceive private sector development as connected to elite capture and corruption, and this is often a source of grievances’* and recommends ways in which such grievances could be overcome. We suggest that encouraging associations based on SSE principles be added to the para, which summarises other ways of addressing this issue.

Such associations would facilitate the mobilisation of youth, which the draft in para 50, p.15 suggests would be important agents for change towards less fragility. They have the potential of engaging what otherwise may become unemployed and disengaged youth and easy targets by organisations promoting FCV. The inclusive education referred to in this para should include enterprise skills that could be used for SSE organisations as well as private enterprise. Greater focus on SSE would also facilitate the achievement of the WBG gender strategy, outline in para 51, p. 15, e.g. in the form of cooperatives with women only members, that could provide a training ground for future participation in the private sector.

Risks, particularly non-financial risks

Para 59, p.17 raises the issue of non-financial risks, such as those related to a lack of inclusion and elite capture. The draft recognises that litigation and other forms of grievance approaches can arise in the absence of a suitable forum where those grievances can be redressed. Offering greater opportunities for inclusion, associations informed by SSE principles have the potential to reduce the level of grievances and can also provide procedures for addressing grievances, should they arise, in their articles of association.

Helping countries transition out of fragility

The situation inferred in para 97, p.26 is often both a major contributing factor to FCV and its effect, e.g. the population of a particular area has been marginalised, often because of a different ethnicity or religion than the government and resources have been extracted from those areas with only limited, if any benefit flowing back to the population. This is the situation in many flashpoints today, including Darfur (in Sudan) and West Papua (Indonesia). However, the solutions recommended in this para, e.g. greater autonomy and transfer of resources, are likely to be resisted by the government. The question that the WBG must address is what can be done to overcome that resistance.

Mitigating the spillovers of FCV

In para 101, p.,27, the draft suggests that WBG programs be adapted to the needs of at-risk groups, which disproportionately suffer from the violence and economic disruption of war. While there is a reference to people with disabilities, within brackets, in the last sentence of this para, dealing with Intersectional approaches, this group should be included as a key group in the list of at-risk groups.

Operationalising the WBG strategy for FCV – monitoring and evaluation

Some of the approaches for operationalising the WBG strategy for FCV might have to be amended, should WBG incorporate the proposed SSE approaches

In addition to those changes, we would like to address some of the M&E related issues covered in para 138, p.36. National, as well as local, systems for M&E are necessary to promote evidence-based policymaking. Beneficiary-led M&E is also important, but local participation should not be limited to beneficiaries. Projects often have unintended consequences, positive and/or negative. In order to identify those, it is necessary to expand local evaluation participants to stakeholders beyond the intended beneficiaries. It is also necessary to take a longitudinal perspective, as a project may seem to be a failure immediately on completion, but may become a success in a few years. The opposite can also apply, particularly if the attention is too narrowly focussed on the beneficiaries. The immediate outcome may be positive, but future negative impacts on others can encourage them to undertake spoiler activities.

Notwithstanding the importance of locally based involvement in M&E, it will be necessary for the WBG to issue guidelines for M&E of aspects that are essential to its operations, including to learn how various approaches are to reducing to FCV in different contexts.

Due to time constraints, we have limited our comments to what we consider the most essential aspects of the draft and those issues in which COREI has expertise. Please do not hesitate to contact us, should you require further information or clarification on any of the issues raised in this feedback to the draft report on the World Bank Group strategy for fragility, conflict, and violence 2020–2025.

Sincerely,

Helena Grunfeld and Marg Leser

Co-founders of COREI