

**World Vision International**  
**Feedback & Recommendations for the World Bank's Fragility, Conflict and Violence**  
**Strategy Concept Note**  
June 26, 2019

World Vision welcomes the World Bank's consultative process for development of its first-ever strategy to address the drivers of fragility, conflict and violence. We appreciate the opportunity to both participate in in-person consultations and provide written input, drawing on our experience and lessons learned operating in fragile contexts around the world.

Below please find World Vision's feedback and recommendations, based on a thorough review of the strategy concept note and guided by the questions included in the World Bank's online questionnaire.

**1) Focus on people-centred, child-focused collective outcomes:**

- *Greater recognition of citizens/civil society as agents of change and development actors in their own right.* While there are important references to the need to hear the voices of the poor and most vulnerable (page 9) and to engage key stakeholder groups (under the heading "promoting equity and inclusion, with a special focus on gender and youth," page 10), the strategy could go further in demonstrating stronger commitment to citizen engagement as envisaged under the World Bank's Citizen Engagement Strategy and the work of the Global Partnership for Social Accountability, the latter of which World Vision has actively participated with our social accountability approach, [Citizen Voice and Action](#).

As a child-focused agency, World Vision has been an ardent advocate of two sides of a child-focused coin: child protection as a core, under-funded component of people-centred programming in fragility; and on the other side of the coin, adolescent empowerment and participation in peace processes as effective peace actors and to reinforce the resilience of young people. World Vision has developed project guidance called [Empowering Children as Peacebuilders](#), which brings children to the centre of conflict prevention and empowers them as agents of change, healing and peace, both among their peers and in their communities. World Vision also helped shape the *Inter-Agency Guiding Principles on Youth Participation in Peacebuilding*, aimed at offering overarching guidance on meaningful youth engagement and participation, especially in conflict or transition settings. These Guiding Principles offer guidance to stakeholders, including governments, UN entities, donors, national and international NGOs, and civil society actors. Through this work with youth, World Vision was able to ensure children's voices (aged 15-17) were incorporated into UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on youth, peace and security and the resulting report of the Secretary-General, "[The Missing Peace](#)".

**Recommendations:** World Vision recommends that the World Bank provide greater recognition of citizens/civil society (especially children and youth) as agents of change and development actors in their own right throughout the consultation process and to ensure their meaningful inclusion in the final strategy document. Drawing on insights from programming in fragile contexts, World Vision also recommends the World Bank's strategy include a continuum of accountability, from humanitarian to social accountability. This continuum should be inclusive and empowering, and facilitate the participation of the most vulnerable.

- *It is good to see digital technology highlighted as a potential enabler for the opportunities it creates to unlock new solutions in fragile and conflict-affected contexts (page 9).* In fragile contexts, gender disparity and scarcity conspire to exclude the most vulnerable from access to technology and access to literacy. Technological solutions should be people-centred, secure, and designed with

the unique needs of those in fragile contexts in mind. If designed for the majority, these initiatives risk only increasing inequality. Strict data protection and privacy protocols should enable people to have access to and control over their data.

**Recommendation:** World Vision recommends that the World Bank ensure its strategy regarding digital solutions focuses not only on the technology but also on aspects of access, digital literacy and capacity required to ensure digital solutions are appropriate for the most vulnerable.

- *Faith-based organisations can be key partners in work to address the drivers of fragility and to achieve sustainable peace and prosperity.* While the concept note does not specifically mention engagement with faith leaders and faith-based organisations, World Vision encourages the World Bank to link implementation of its strategy for fragility, conflict and violence with the ongoing work of the World Bank supported *Moral Imperative* and its *Global Faith Initiative*, as well as other initiatives such as the *International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PaRD)* and its work stream on Sustainable Development Goal 16 to achieve sustaining peace. In fragile contexts, faith leaders often enjoy significant legitimacy and trust in their local communities. Faith leaders and faith-based organisations fill gaps in social services, foster social cohesion, facilitate peacebuilding efforts and combat xenophobia, making them natural allies in efforts to reach those most vulnerable and tackle the drivers of fragility.

In our experience, World Vision's Christian identity is a point of connection for people of all faiths. It provides open channels to address belief systems, and behavioural and cultural norms that perpetuate poverty and injustice. This mutual respect enables World Vision to engage faith leaders on sensitive theological matters and provides a safe space for practical and informed theological engagement of sacred texts. By engaging faith leaders and respecting sacred texts of different traditions, World Vision's programmes reinforce inclusive social values from a faith perspective, appropriately contextualised to the local community. World Vision's faith identity and focus on community empowerment also facilitate trusted relationships with influential local faith leaders and faith-based organisations who provide significant services to communities even in the most remote places. To support these efforts, World Vision has developed an interactive process called [Channels of Hope](#) that can be replicated by other faith-based organisations in fragile contexts. The process aims to create a safe space for faith leaders and their faith communities to become active participants in the well-being of children, focusing on the root causes and convictions that impact attitudes, norms, values and practices toward the most vulnerable.

**Recommendation:** World Vision recommends the World Bank consider making linkages with faith-based organisations, the *Moral Imperative*, their ongoing *Global Faith Initiative* and *PaRD* to support the development of its strategy and strengthen its work around civic engagement and community development in fragile contexts.

- *Affirmation of the need for robust accountability/monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms.* World Vision welcomes the concept note's recognition of the need for strong M&E frameworks. As the World Bank invests in M&E, it will be important to find an appropriate balance between qualitative and quantitative measures in order to capture a wider range of multidimensional impacts, including the more normative, behavioural and structural elements that are key in adaptive approaches. It will also be important to include key measures that capture the World Bank's contributions to delivering concrete, tangible improvements in the lives of the most vulnerable children, families and communities, in alignment with the 2030 Agenda's commitment

to 'leave no one behind'. World Vision's programming experience in fragile contexts underscores the need for adaptive, iterative and close-to-real-time M&E: adaptive to respond to the rapidly changing nature of fragile contexts; and iterative and rapid to continually test M&E assumptions in short cycles to inform new programmatic choices.

It will be very important for the World Bank's M&E framework/indicators to also collect data disaggregated by age to capture the specific needs of males and females across the lifecycle (e.g., boys and girls). Children and youth make up the majority of the population in many fragile contexts. As such, it is critical to understand and address the disproportionate, long-term impacts of fragility on children as this has significant negative implications for current and future national social and economic growth, equity and inclusion.

**Recommendations:** World Vision recommends the World Bank include sufficient qualitative indicators in their M&E framework to better capture the normative, behavioural and structural elements that underpin the more adaptive approach to change that is needed in fragile contexts. This should include measures of tangible improvements in the lives of the most vulnerable children, families and communities in alignment with the 2030 Agenda, as well as data disaggregated by age.

## 2) Context-specific action:

- *Strong affirmation of the need for more adaptive and flexible operating models.* World Vision strongly affirms the concept note's recognition that expanding its presence and impact in situations of fragility, conflict and violence will require building a more adaptive, flexible operating model for these contexts. It also requires a more adaptive and flexible funding model, as recommended in the February 2019 [OECD-DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus](#). Long-term consortia such as the [Somalia Resilience Programme \(SomReP\)](#) and the [CORE Group Polio Project](#) that bring together the expertise and capacity of several international and local NGOs offer one such operating/funding model that has proven itself in fragile contexts such as Somalia, South Sudan and Afghanistan. It is important that the World Bank's strategy explicitly speaks to the risks, benefits and trade-offs inherent in this more adaptive approach, how it will manage these tensions, and map out key scenarios for how to handle this.

The critical role of national and local organisations in efforts to overcome hardships, build resilience and prevent future crises also cannot be overstated. These national and local actors are key stakeholders in sustainably addressing the four strategic areas of engagement outlined in the concept note at the national, subnational and community levels. National and local organisations are often first responders and stay in communities long after donors and international organisations leave. Prioritising localisation and local partnerships is therefore critical in design of adaptive and flexible operating and funding models. World Vision, as a signatory to the Grand Bargain, recommends that efforts to empower national and local actors in fragile contexts be aligned to the Grand Bargain's approach to localisation.

**Recommendations:** World Vision recommends that the World Bank ensures its strategy includes support to and reinforcement of national and local organisations' capacities to manage future shocks and effectively address the drivers of fragility in their communities in the long-term, in line with Grand Bargain commitments and the OECD-DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. World Vision also recommends considering long-term consortia that bring together the expertise of both international and national or local NGOs. Finally, World Vision recommends that the World Bank reviews its outsourcing

mechanism to identify more flexible funding sources that generate more cost efficiency and effectiveness toward more localization of funding.

- *Invest in joint conflict and fragility assessments to ensure context-appropriate responses.* Between the 2011 World Development Report and the 2019 OECD-DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, most major policy development and academic research has underscored the vital importance of shared, ongoing local conflict analysis to calibrate and inform programmatic plans of all actors in fragile contexts. As outlined in the [Peace Promise](#) endorsed by the World Bank (and World Vision), and launched by at the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, it will be critical to: (1) ensure the alignment and coherence of collective outcomes in the short, medium and long-term; (2) conduct regular context, risk and/or conflict analysis; (3) ensure institutional learning, innovation and information sharing by developing capacities, tools and partnerships; (4) ensure programming does no harm and is conflict-sensitive; and (5) provide financing that is adequate, sustained and risk-tolerant. [World Vision's own experience](#) promoting its own and a variety of inter-agency conflict analysis [tools](#) has reinforced the reliability of these tools, and the vital importance of conducting these analyses jointly with multiple actors rather than as a single agency.
- *The three outlined typologies in the concept note do not adequately reflect the nuanced analysis of the causes and consequences of fragility outlined in the concept note.* The proposed approach to addressing 'diverse fragility, conflict and violence challenges' through categorising fragility, conflict and violence along three typologies (pages 4-5) raises the following issues:
  - There is a high likelihood that a particular context would simultaneously demonstrate characteristics of two or three of these types, making determining which category it fits into quite complex;
  - It is likely that a number of countries with very different root causes/drivers for their situations would be put into the same category; and
  - The types are based on a narrow definition of the nature of fragility and its drivers, failing to capture the multidimensional elements of fragility (and resilience), such as those outlined in the OECD's 2018 State of Fragility Report (i.e., political, societal, economic, environmental, security resilience).

**Recommendations:** World Vision recommends that the World Bank reconsider the three typologies it is applying in its concept note and instead use an assessment of the resilience of the country and its citizens, along multiple dimensions, as an organising and planning method. The World Bank could even consider partnering with the OECD to leverage their analytical capacity and technical expertise to assist them in the confirmation of typologies.

### 3) System strengthening:

- *An enhanced view of pathways to 'state legitimacy' is needed.* While World Vision is highly supportive of the focus on social contracts/social cohesion, the concept note puts a much stronger emphasis on the role of service delivery and human capital. While improved service delivery and investments in building human capital can deliver direct benefits to affected populations and contribute to building state legitimacy, there is evidence that challenges the need for a solely 'services to legitimacy pathway' approach. For example, [the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium six-year panel study](#) provides some evidence that where communities were involved in the design of services and where there was a grievance mechanism, there was a lift in state legitimacy, even if the state did not directly provide the services (e.g., if NGOs were the service providers). This finding confirms similar experiences with World Vision's

*Citizen Voice and Action* approach, which World Vision has also successfully applied in adapted form in 15 fragile contexts to improve local services.

**Recommendation:** World Vision recommends that the World Bank consider incorporating evidence-based approaches that engage and empower civil society in efforts to achieve greater state legitimacy.

**4) Positive politics:**

- This year marks the 70th anniversary of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Yet, even as we mark these important agreements, civilians, and especially children, continue to suffer disproportionately from the devastating consequences of armed conflict. Fragility is often a key underlying cause of conflict in contexts such as Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Myanmar, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen. Concurrently, we are also witnessing a worrying retreat from multilateralism and the rules-based international order, of which the World Bank is a critical pillar. World Vision believes that this negative trend in global politics creates a permissive environment for violations and abuses against children and other civilians in conflict zones. The international community must collectively turn this worrying tide and the World Bank has a critical role to play by ensuring that equity, good governance, rule of law and political accountability are emphasised in its strategy. The 2018 *‘Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict’* report articulates the World Bank’s position on these challenges well.

**Recommendation:** World Vision recommends that the World Bank ensure its strategy appropriately leverages its role, influence and mandate to contribute to building long-term political will for sustainable solutions to fragility as well as technical and financial resources to: (1) address disputes between state and non-state actors before they lead to violence and conflict by building the capacity of states to support peace and reconciliation processes; (2) strengthen the rule of law and access to justice for all citizens nationally and internationally; and (3) build social equity and inclusive politics.

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