

CORPORATE-LEVEL EVALUATION ON IFAD'S ENGAGEMENT IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED STATES AND SITUATIONS

## Unbundling the fragility concept: defining and classifying fragile and conflict-affected states

**A key challenge to emerge from the corporate-level evaluation (CLE) carried out by the Independent Office of Evaluation on the engagement of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in fragile and conflict-affected states and situations (FCS) is that of definition and classification. This insight aims to highlight the key challenges IFAD faces in defining its work in this context and classifying FCS in an evolving global scenario. It looks at how other organizations define fragility and summarizes key findings and recommendations offered by the evaluation.**

The evaluation looked at IFAD's work and related it to the evolving international approach to FCS over a 10-year period from 2004 to 2013. Around 40 per cent of current IFAD operations are in countries classified as FCS and, in line with increasing global attention, its commitment to them is rising.

### Classification

There exists no common international classification of FCS and IFAD does not have its own system. Thus, at present, IFAD combines the lists of four organisations, the Asian Development, the African Development Bank, the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD/DAC) and the World Bank.

This leaves the Fund with a 'super list' that is longer than that of all the other institutions who not only differ among themselves as to classification but who do not have the same specific mandate and comparative advantage as IFAD, which is smallholder agricultural development.

Furthermore countries that may not register as fragile on any current lists but which have situations of fragility and conflict in certain areas are not taken into account. Aspects of fragility can be found in low income, lower middle and upper middle-income countries and, indeed, in developed countries as well.



Haiti - Small-scale Irrigation Development Project, Calon Nan Jules, North-west region. Men build stone barrages on the upper watershed slopes

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### Definition

The definition adopted by IFAD for its work in fragile states is as follows: "Fragile states are characterized by weak policies, weak institutions and weak governance, resulting in meagre economic growth, widespread inequality and poor human development. Fragile states are more exposed to the risk of outbreaks of violence than are non-fragile states. Fragile states may be well endowed with natural resources or be resource-poor".

This definition was included in IFAD's corporate Policy on Crisis Prevention and Recovery, which was adopted by the Executive Board in April 2006 and, despite the fact that the global situation has evolved considerably since then, it has not been revisited.

In addition the 2006 definition does not address fragile situations but rather post-conflict scenarios or the process from crisis to rehabilitation. A further complication not addressed is that countries may be fragile in some respects and not others, and they may also move in and out of that condition.

In practice, IFAD's partners often emphasize different aspects of fragility, reflecting their own internal policy stance, and to draw a contrast between fragile countries facing permanent conflict and those which are fragile but without conflict.

Reasserting the link between fragility and conflict has created a broader understanding of the multi-dimensions of fragility – political, economic and social – beyond the symptoms of institutional weaknesses.

The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have clarified this link as follows:

- Economic, political and social changes favour tensions and conflicts between interests and values in societies;
- States or institutions are expected/required to have the capacity, accountability or legitimacy to manage such tensions or conflicts effectively;
- When and where there is a lack of or inappropriate state responsiveness to such tensions or conflicts, the risk of violence increases.



**Nepal - High-Value Agriculture Project in Hill and Mountain Areas.** The project aims to reduce poverty and vulnerability of women and men in hill and mountain areas of the Mid-Western Development Region.

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The Department for International Development (United Kingdom) links violent conflict with bad governance and the lack of a broad-based economic development. International non-governmental organizations such as International Alert, also refer to the political and economic arenas, but with their civil society perspective, highlight the requirement for equal opportunities and political participation.

The 2011 New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States which brought together 19 FCS and the G7+ refers to fragility as a period of time during nationhood when sustainable socio-economic development requires greater emphasis on complementary peace-building and state-building activities such as building inclusive political settlements, security, justice, jobs, good management of resources, and accountable and fair service delivery.

By 2012, the OECD had developed its definition to include considerations of external shocks and development towards resilience, though not explicitly dealing with conflict. It states that: "Fragility and resilience should be seen as shifting points along a spectrum".

This evolving conceptualization of fragility is significant for IFAD in the following ways.

- IFAD's definition does not reflect the spectrum from crisis to resilience.
- The fact that fragility can exist at a sub-national level has implications for contextual analysis and programming strategy.
- IFAD's rural-urban nexus is directly oriented towards building resilience in fragile situations through food security and well-being.

## Recommendations

The evaluation recommends that IFAD should have its own classification system based on its work and track record and that the system should take as its starting point not FCS but rather fragile situations.

It also recommends that IFAD strive to formulate a single overarching policy in relation to FCS that reflects the evolving concept of fragility and offers a single definition that would promote common understanding among staff, Member States and other development partners on focus and priority areas of work.

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### Further information:

IFAD's Engagement in Fragile and Conflict-affected States and Situations, Corporate-level Evaluation, Report No. 3704, May 2015, ISBN 978-92-9072-568-8, Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD, Via Paolo di Dono, 44, 00142, Rome, Italy. The report, Profile, Insights and infographic are available online at: [www.ifad.org/evaluation](http://www.ifad.org/evaluation); email: [evaluation@ifad.org](mailto:evaluation@ifad.org).