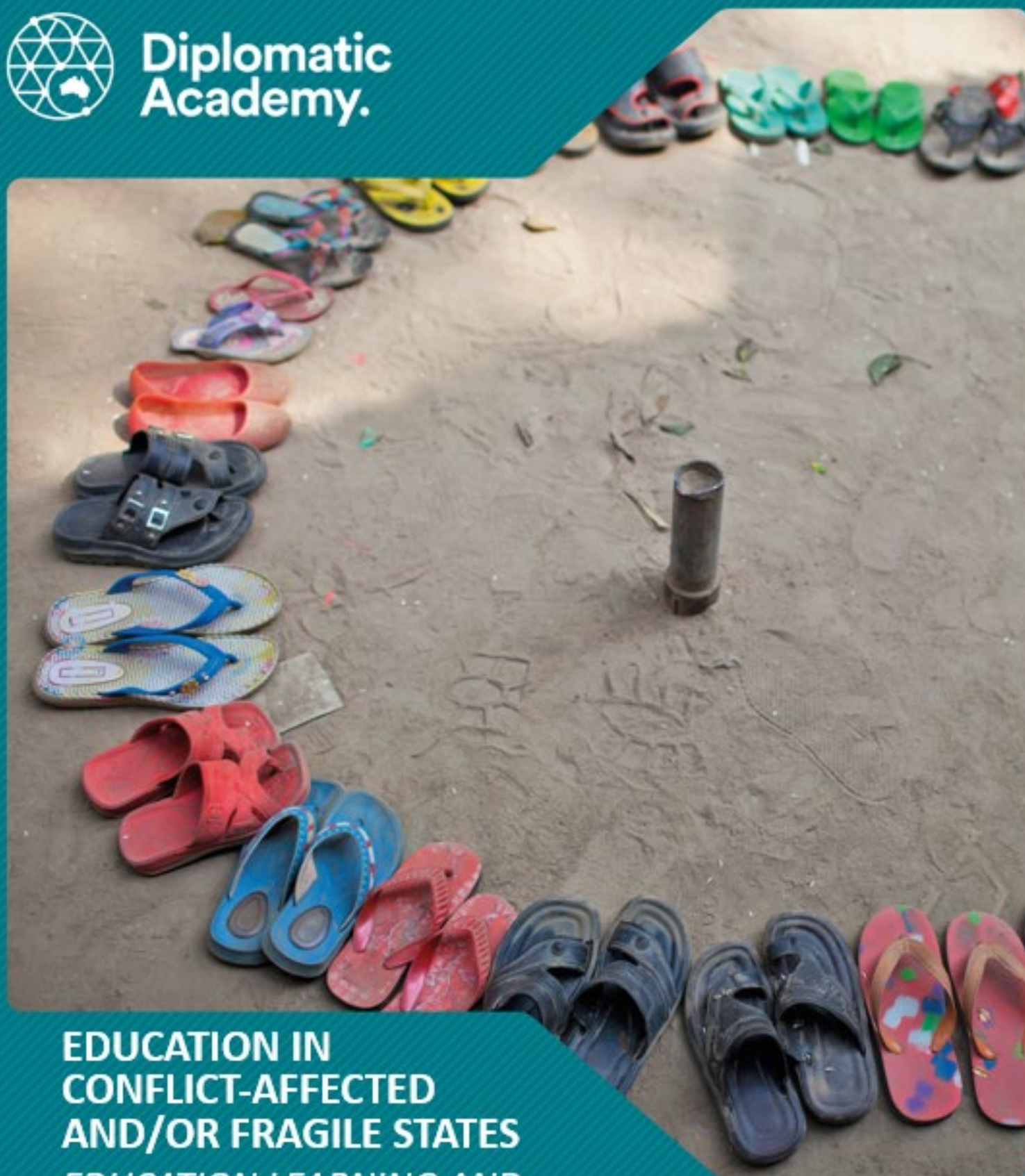**Australian Government**

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Diplomatic Academy.

EDUCATION IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED AND/OR FRAGILE STATES

EDUCATION LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT MODULE

Foundation Level

2021

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

BEAM	Basic Education Assistance for Muslim Mindanao
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EFA	Education Framework for Action
EMIS	Education Management Information System
GEM	Global Education Monitoring
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
INEE	International Network for Education in Emergencies
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
PRTs	Provincial Reconstruction Teams
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development, Development Assistance Committee
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this module is to provide introductory information about the importance of education in conflict-affected and/or fragile situations. This includes understanding and defining fragility and conflict, education's relationship to fragility and conflict, and critical links with other sectors. It provides a foundation to engage in this topic and apply advice from staff with operational or expert levels of knowledge in education. On successful completion you will be able to be an informed participant in forums related to education in conflict-affected and/or fragile situations.

2   WHAT ARE FRAGILITY AND CONFLICT AND HOW ARE THEY LINKED?

The role of education in fragile and conflict-affected states has received increased attention in recent years because of its significance for the achievement of the Education for All (EFA) goals, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the Sustainable Development Goals. It is widely recognised that crisis and conflict are barriers to education access, which in some cases have stalled and even reversed progress towards these goals.

The international community has reiterated its commitment to addressing education in conflict and emergency situations in the Education 2030 Framework for Action. It explicitly calls for countries to:

> *'institute measures to develop inclusive, responsive and resilient education systems to meet the needs of children, youth and adults in crisis contexts including internally displaced persons and refugees.'*

Source: UNESCO et al., 2015, Education 2030: Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4.

Defining fragility and conflict

Approaches to defining fragility and conflict vary. The Organisation for Economic and Cultural Development, Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) in its report States of Fragility 2016: Understanding violence, defines fragility as:

> *'a combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, system, and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks.'*

The report proposes a multi-dimensional concept of fragility which aligns with the goals and targets of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. It identifies five dimensions of risk and vulnerability linked to fragility:

- **Economic:** Vulnerability to risks stemming from weaknesses in economic foundations and human capital including macroeconomic shocks, unequal growth and high youth unemployment.

- **Environmental:** Vulnerability to environmental, climatic and health risks that affect citizens' lives and livelihoods. These include exposure to natural disasters, pollution and disease epidemics.

- **Political:** Vulnerability to risks inherent in the political processes, events or decisions; lack of political inclusiveness (including of elites); transparency, corruption and society's ability to accommodate change and avoid oppression.

- **Security:** Vulnerability of overall security to violence and crime, including both political and social violence.

- **Societal:** Vulnerability to risks affecting societal cohesion that stem from both vertical and horizontal inequalities, including inequality among different societal groups.

Source: OECD, 2016a, States of Fragility: Understanding Violence; United Nations, 2015, Sustainable Development Goals.
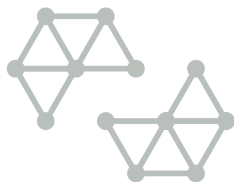
Fragility caused by the COVID-19 pandemic

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic created disruptions to education systems worldwide due to the near universal closure of schools which, at its peak, left 85 per cent (approximately 1.6 billion) students out of school. There are concerns that shocks to the education system as a result of the pandemic threatens global education progress, particularly for the most vulnerable learners, due to the potential impact of learning loss, increased drop-out rates and the exacerbation of existing inequalities in the education system. Through concerted efforts, the impacts of the pandemic can be mitigated by adopting effective crisis-recovery strategies that focus on long-term education improvements in areas such as assessment, a focus on student learning, financing and parental involvement.

Source: World Bank, 2020, The COVID-19 Pandemic: Shocks to education and policy responses.

The 2030 Agenda recognises the need for coordinated international action to tackle fragility and conflict. This is captured under Sustainable Development Goal 16:

> *Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.*

Linked to this objective is Sustainable Development Goal 4:

> *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all.*

This includes a specific peacebuilding target to ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through

education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.

Source: OECD, 2020, States of Fragility: Highlights; United Nations, 2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

How are fragility and conflict linked?

Fragility and conflict are often closely linked. In particular, large-scale violence is more likely in fragile situations. In the OECD-DAC report, States of Fragility 2016: Understanding violence, there was clear evidence of the linkages between fragility and conflict. Armed conflict and terrorism were found to be more prevalent in moderate to highly environmentally fragile contexts, and contexts with high political fragility are more likely to be in conflict or have a recent history of conflict.

Source: OECD, 2016a, States of Fragility: Understanding Violence.

What are fragile situations?

DFAT's Effective Governance: Strategy for Australia's aid investments describes fragile situations as those where there are repeated cycles of political and economic instability, violence and crime, subnational conflict, stagnant human development, very low capacity, and vulnerability to natural and human induced shocks. Poverty and gender inequality are persistent features of fragile situations, where development occurs slowly. States are less able to control their borders. Regional spillover effects, such as cross-border health challenges and increased reach of violent extremist organisations, are common. Countries experiencing conflict lose on average 30 years of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth and attract far less foreign direct investment. At best, a country recovering from conflict needs 20 years before its bureaucracies function at a basic level, and 41 years before key rule of law institutions are working effectively.

Source: DFAT, 2015, Effective Governance: Strategy for Australia's aid investments.

Is violence always present in fragile states?

In some fragile situations, violent conflict is not present. In many countries in which Australia has development partnerships, there is no violent conflict but the country is considered fragile due to ongoing governance challenges, climactic shocks and natural disasters, macroeconomic shocks and high youth unemployment. However, many countries and sub-national areas considered fragile face cycles of repeated violence, weak governance, and instability. In many instances, conflicts are not one-off events, but ongoing and repeated: 90 per cent of the last decade's civil wars occurred in countries that had a civil war in the last 30 years.

Source: World Bank, 2011, World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development.

Programming in fragile situations

DFAT's approach to programming in fragile and conflict-affected situations is informed by governance and risk management strategies. Remaining realistic about what can be achieved, and building in flexibility into all aspects of the program are key to effective programming in fragile situations. Change may take a long time and can be non-linear, particularly where there is or has been conflict. The development program should operate in a conflict-sensitive way as part of core business. Where possible, opportunities should be sought to actively promote peace and stability.

Risk can be managed by adopting a balanced portfolio within a country program – where the mix combines low-risk investments with more experimental programs.

3   THE CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Facts about fragility and conflict

- In 2020, 1.8 billion or 23 per cent of the world's population live in fragile contexts.

- An estimated 40 per cent of post-conflict countries relapse into conflict within 10 years.

- Each year of education reduces the risk of conflict by around 20 per cent.

- Fragile and conflict-affected situations account for a third of deaths from HIV/AIDS in poor countries, a third of the people who lack access to clean water, as well as half of all child deaths.

- At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, 222.7 primary school aged children were out-of-school in fragile contexts – 107.5 million of them girls.

- Children in fragile, conflicted-affected countries are more than twice as likely to be out of school compared with those in countries not affected by conflict.

- Girls are almost two and a half times more likely to be out of school if they live in conflict affected countries.

- Between 2015 to 2019, there were more than 11,000 reported attacks on education, harming more than 22 thousand students and educators in at least 93 countries.

Sources: OECD, 2020, States of Fragility: Highlights; Hoeffler, 2012, Growth, aid and policies in countries recovering from war; Collier, 1999, Doing well out of war; World Bank 2012, Fragile and conflict affected situations; UNESCO, 2016a, Leaving no one behind: How far on the way to universal primary and secondary education?.
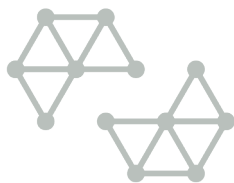
Fragility and Australia's development assistance

Of the 58 contexts considered by the OECD-DAC to be fragile and conflict affected, many are recipients of bilateral Australian Official Development Assistance (ODA) including Afghanistan, Iraq, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Cambodia.

Source: OECD, 2020, States of Fragility: Highlights.

The New Deal, OECD DAC and the UN General Assembly

At the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan in 2011, more than 40 development partners (including Australia), governments and civil society agreed to a 'New Deal' for Engagement in Fragile States and a revived commitment through the Stockholm Declaration. These international policy framework and commitments guide priority investments in peacebuilding and statebuilding in fragile contexts. It includes three core principles:

1. Five Peacebuilding and Statebuilding Goals (legitimate politics, security, justice, economic foundations, revenues and services)

2. FOCUS Principles – country-led pathways out of fragility

3. TRUST Principles – commitment for results.

The UN General Assembly resolution on 'the right to education in emergency situations' emphasises the obligation to secure education for all children regardless of context. The UN Secretary General's call to action, Education First, upholds the right to education in conflict and humanitarian emergencies, reinforcing the General Assembly resolution.

Recognising the multidimensional nature of conflict and fragility and the need to adopt new approaches to address fragility under the SDGs, the OECD-DAC produced a report, Good Development Support in Fragile, At-risk and Crisis-affected Contexts, as a guide to working more effectively in fragile, at-risk and crisis-affected contexts. The report identifies 12 good practice lessons under three broad thematic areas: 1) building institutional fitness; 2) aspiring to deliver change; and 3) leaving no one behind. Figure 1 outlines how these might be put into practice.
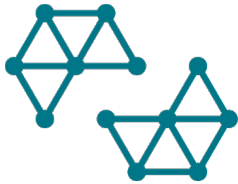
Sources: International Dialogue on Peacebuilding & Statebuilding, 2016, Fifth Global Meeting, Stockholm Declaration, Addressing Fragility and Building Peace in a Changing World; OECD, 2011, Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness: Proceedings; OECD, 2016b, Good Development Support in Fragile, At-risk, and Conflict-affected Contexts; UNESCO, 2014, Global Education First Initiative.

Figure 1 – Twelve characteristics of good development support

BUILDING INSTITUTIONAL FITNESS

1. **CREATE THE ENVIRONMENT TO ENABLE CHANGE**
Review the business process: simplify, clarify, and build common understanding

2. **INVEST IN INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY**
New sets of skills, incentives and staff management are required

3. **USE THE FULL RANGE OF TOOLS AND INFLUENCE**
Set and communicate common objectives and principles, improve information sharing and communication

4. **BECOME 'SYSTEM PLAYERS'**
Each donor has a role to play: know and explicitly work towards your comparative advantage and the contribution it makes towards the collective response

ASPIRING TO DELIVER CHANGE

5. **INVEST IN CONTEXT AND PROBLEM-LED PROGRAMMING**
Bring context and problem analysis into the core of donor behaviour

6. **RE-CALIBRATE APPROACHES TO MANAGING RISK**
Invest in the capacity to understand, better anticipate, detect, and respond to risks

7. **SUPPORT LOCALLY-LED CHANGE**
Broaden the concept of 'local systems' to include support to inter-dependent elements at the sub-national and local level

8. **LEARN, ADAPT, ADJUST**
Regularly review programmes against updated context analysis to ensure they remain flexible enough to respond appropriately to changing circumstances

9. **RETHINK OUTCOMES**
Incentivise more adaptive problem-solving programming by utilising metrics that measure progress and success along these lines

10. **RESPONSIVE INSTRUMENTS AND PARTNERSHIPS**
Adapt partnerships and funding to ensure flexible response to crisis situations and shifting priorities

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

11. **ADVOCATE FOR INCLUSION OF THOSE MOST LIKELY TO BE LEFT BEHIND**
Create incentives to support neglected crises and marginalised groups

12. **GLOBAL APPROACHES TO GLOBAL CHALLENGES**
Reinforce country-level programming with investment in public goods at the regional and global level

Source: OECD, 2016, Good development support in fragile, at-risk and crisis affected contexts.

The multidimensional understanding of conflict and fragility

Fragility exists on a spectrum of dimensions and risks. Fragility can be transnational and requires collaborative, regional and global efforts to tackle the root causes and consequences of fragility. It also requires a holistic approach through the use of institutional influences, policy levers and expertise beyond aid.

Source: OECD, 2016b, Good development and support in fragile, at-risk and crisis-affected contexts.

The International Network for Education in Emergencies

The International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) was established in 2000 and is a global network of more than 9,000 practitioners, students, teachers and staff from United Nations agencies, non-governmental organisations, development partners (including Australia), governments and universities. The INEE Minimum Standards define the minimum level of educational quality for people affected by crisis.

Source: INEE, 2010, INEE Minimum Standards.

In addition, the INEE Secretariat supports the INEE Working Group on Education and Fragility and developed guidance and tools for education practitioners for programming in conflict-affected and fragile states (see the INEE Guidance Note on Conflict Sensitive Education).

Source: INEE, 2013, INEE Guidance Note on Conflict Sensitive Education.

In a similar vein, Save the Children and Search for Common Ground have developed comprehensive guides for education investments in fragile and conflict-affected situations. The Search for Common Ground publication examines emerging practices for design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation for education investments.

Source: Search for Common Ground, 2015, Emerging practices in design, monitoring and evaluation for education for peacebuilding program.
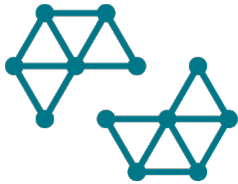
Case study: Afghanistan

Attacks against schools, teachers and students have been a feature of the insecure environment in Afghanistan. Girls' schools and schools associated with the Government and Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) have been attacked frequently. Schools and education programs that are owned and driven by the local community fare considerably better than those with limited community buy in. Community based education programmes have an advantage as there is often no investment infrastructure needed as schooling may take place in homes or mosques. The community can identify the teachers they want, and local support to the school is provided by community-run school management committees. Education programming in this context focusses upon ongoing support and training for the teachers and local management committees. It is important that there are links with the Ministry of Education to ensure that the community based schools reflect the education curricula, receive education department textbooks, and for community based school teachers, where possible, to be placed on the Ministry's teacher payroll.

Source: Rohwerder, 2015, Delivering education through conflict.
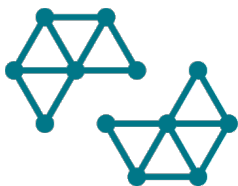
Case study: Mindanao

The Southern Philippines has a long history of conflict with armed groups, clan militias and criminal gangs all active in the area. The Australian Government's education program: Basic Education Assistance for Muslim Mindanao in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (BEAM:ARMM) contributed to the alleviation of poverty, and in the longer-term the provision of support to the ongoing peace process through closely targeted investments in basic education, coupled with skills training for out-of-school youth and high school students.

Over 300,000 children in remote and poor communities received formal education for the first time through purpose built learning centres. As part of the Alternative Delivery Model component, over 1000 Learning Centres were established, the majority of which are located in barangays (local government areas) where there were no government schools and where many children were unable to receive formal education due to poverty, conflict and inadequate transportation facilities. The successor program to BEAM is Education Pathways for Peace in Mindanao.

Sources: Cardno, n.d, Basic education assistance for Muslim Mindanao; DFAT, 2019, Development assistance in the Philippines.

4 THE 'TWO FACES' OF EDUCATION IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SITUATIONS

The past decade has also seen an increased awareness of the 'two faces' of education, which recognises that education may sometimes be bi-directional – exacerbating or mitigating fragility and conflict.

Education's relationship to fragility/conflict

How can education contribute to fragility/conflict?

Education can actively or deliberately reinforce and perpetuate fragility, e.g. through the politicisation and manipulation of access, structures, curricula, and textbooks; by reproducing and/or failing to challenge existent patterns of division, inequality, violence, corruption, and inefficiency. This occurred in the fragmented education provision and unequal access in Bosnia Herzegovina during the post-war period after 1995 as well as in Afghanistan in the 1980-90s through the printing and distribution of textbooks with violent content and the demonisation of certain groups. Education programs that do not provide pathways to employment for all groups can also entrench and even exacerbate existing social divisions and tensions.

How can education reduce fragility and conflict and contribute to peacebuilding?

In recent years, research has increasingly focused on the positive benefits of education to peace building and reducing conflict and fragility. Increased equal access to education can strengthen governance and accountability by restoring trust in the government's will and capacity to serve the needs of the population. Education can also strengthen community participation and ownership, and promote the development of an active citizenry.

Findings from the Global Education Monitoring Report 2016 showed that education itself does not bring about more peace, but the right type of education can help mitigate the impact of conflict. The key messages are:

- Education enables people to participate in political processes constructively and non-violently.
- Where there is better education there are more women in political leadership.
- An inclusive and equitable education is a powerful preventive tool for conflict.
- Education has a role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.
- Education can reduce crime and violence against children and youth.
- Educational programs help people access justice and legal protection.

Source: UNESCO, 2016b, Global Education Monitoring Report: Education for people and planet.

The table below summarises these exacerbating and mitigating factors.

Table 1 – Type of impact of education on fragility

Type of impact of education on fragility	Example
Education actively or deliberately reinforcing and perpetuating fragility	Education deliberately used to reinforce or perpetuate fragility through the politicisation of structures, curricula, and textbooks; targeted exclusion and marginalisation; attacks on schools.
Education reflecting the status quo	Not challenging the status quo can reproduce existing patterns of division, inequality, violence, corruption, and inefficiency. 'Doing things as we've always done' can reinforce fragility and conflict.
Education inadvertently favouring fragility	Well-intentioned, but inadvertently counter-productive interventions, ranging from peace agreements that further entrench social divisions, to vocational education and/or accelerated learning initiatives that lead to frustration among unemployed graduates.
Education enabling people to live with fragility	Education that enables people to live and operate in the existing fragile context by softening its impact. This includes curricula-enhancing capabilities in livelihoods, health, and conflict resolution.
Education making inroads into fragility	Education that starts to break the cycle of fragility itself. This includes effects of education that challenge the reproduction of inequality and division, enhance national unity and national hope for the future, strengthen civil engagement and build government legitimacy.

Case study: Solomon Islands

Inclusive and peace-oriented curricula and textbooks can promote nation-building and social cohesion. Positive values education can contribute to social transformation, from a society of exclusion towards one of inclusion.

In 2004 in the Solomon Islands, in response to the Tensions and to counter the recruitment of children and youth by armed groups, a peace education module was developed for use in both formal and non-formal education settings. The module: "Come Together, Talk Together, Work Together: Practicing Peace" highlighted the views and inputs of community leaders, educators, young people and NGOs. Published by UNICEF, it covered topics on understanding peace and conflict; practicing interpersonal and intergroup peace; and good governance and peace. The module was used in the informal education sector, while individual lessons and learning objectives were integrated into elementary and secondary school curriculum.

Source: UNICEF, 2005, "Come Together, Talk Together, Work Together": Practicing Peace - A Peace Education Module for Youth and Young Adults in Solomon Islands.

5 WHY IS EDUCATION IMPORTANT IN CONFLICT-AFFECTED AND FRAGILE CONTEXTS?

In addition to being a right, clearly articulated in numerous international treaties and declarations, education is also an *enabling* right. Gaining and utilising the knowledge and skills that a basic education affords permit the exercise of other fundamental rights.

> *"Education is the armor that will protect you in life."* (Muzoon Almellehan, resettled refugee and Malala Fund Girl Advocate)

Figure 2 outlines the right to education, as presented by the Education Cannot Wait global fund – the first global fund dedicated to education in emergencies and protracted crises. Education Cannot Wait highlights that the right to education is most at risk during emergencies, but it is the time when children and youth need education the most. While communities often highlight the importance of education during crises, education receives less than four per cent of humanitarian funding.

Figure 2 - The right to education
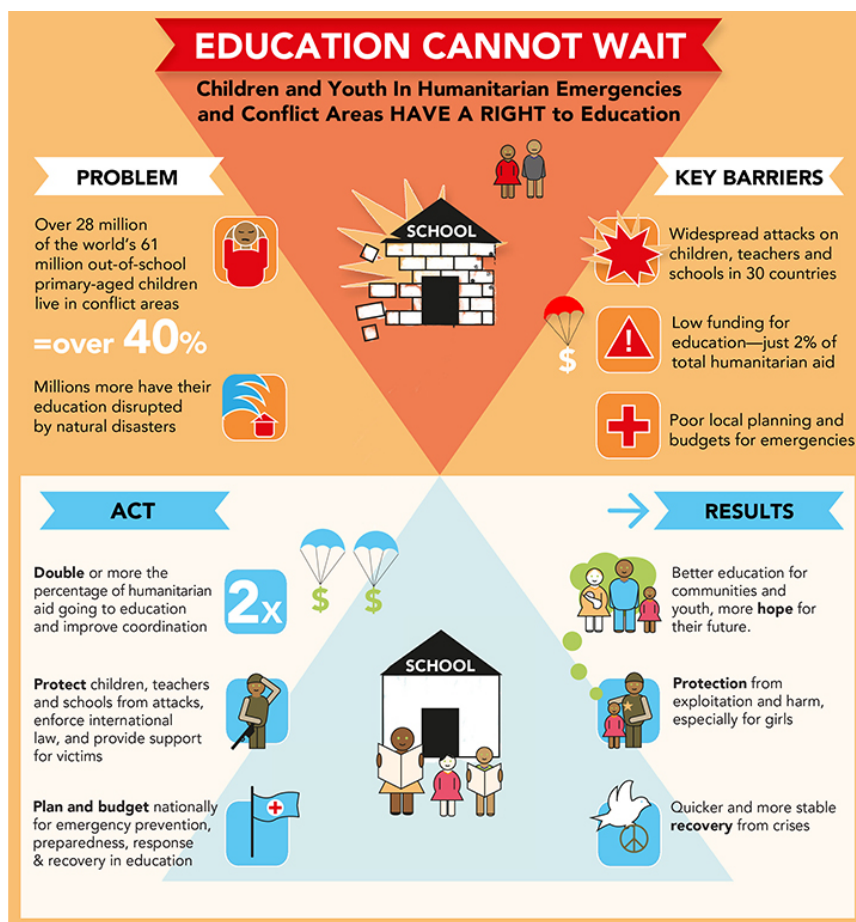
Sources: UNHCR, 2016, Syrian refugee girl emphasizes importance of education; UNICEF, 2019, Education Cannot Wait; Global Partnership for Education, 2012, Education Cannot Wait: Protecting children and youth's right to a quality education in humanitarian emergencies and conflict situations.

Education's role in helping children to cope

Education can play a crucial role in helping children cope with their situation in conflict-affected and fragile contexts by the following support.

- Providing psychosocial protection and support. Recreational activities, such as sport and play, as well as learning opportunities are important in re-establishing a feeling of normality. Education, by providing structure and stability, can be a critically important step on the road to recovery.

- Education programs can facilitate on-going screening and support for those who need additional support.

- Schools can provide a mechanism to bring parents, children, and community leaders together. Schools can create a sense of accomplishment and hope, helping to re-establish community bonds by providing a meeting place for sports, social activities, and community dialogue.

- Schools can, when effectively managed, provide a safe learning environment for children where they are less likely to be sexually or economically exploited or exposed to other risks, such as recruitment into a fighting group or a gang.

- Well-designed education programs can convey life-saving information and essential survival skills on how to avoid landmines; how to protect oneself against sexual abuse, including HIV/AIDS; how to access health care and food distribution; and how to deal with anger and resolve interpersonal conflicts peacefully.

- Education programs can be a key component in preventing violent extremism by providing inclusive learning environments that ensure students do not feel marginalised in school settings; and by equipping teachers with countering violent extremism learning and teaching tools.

6 EDUCATION'S CRITICAL LINKS WITH OTHER SECTORS

For an effective education response that addresses children's holistic needs, coordination and close collaboration between education and other sectors is required. An inter-sectoral approach to education is even more vital in conflict-affected and fragile situations where education can provide a sense of normalcy, psychosocial support, protection against harm, and a place for delivery of other vital services (e.g. immunisation). It is important to establish linkages during program design through multi-sectoral needs assessments, followed by joint planning.

In response to the complex operating environment during emergencies, UNICEF and Save the Children International led a project on effective coordination and equitable resourcing of education in humanitarian crises. An evaluation in 2020 found that the Global Education Cluster Action project contributed to useful global and regional coordination in education in emergencies and strengthened connectedness with other development and humanitarian actors. It highlighted the importance of a collective approach in addressing the education needs of children in fragile contexts that may include humanitarian response, health, nutrition, water and sanitation.

Source: UNICEF, 2020a, Evaluation of the Global Education Cluster Action 2017-2019: Strengthening Coordination in Education in Emergencies.
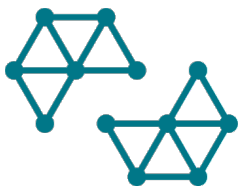
Inter-sectoral links that reinforce coping mechanisms

These inter-sectoral links reinforce coping mechanisms.

Protection: Education provides psychosocial support and protection by establishing daily routines and a more stable sense of the future; reduces vulnerability to trafficking, exploitation and child labour; engages children in positive alternatives to military recruitment, gangs and drugs; provides a means to identify children requiring additional support, e.g. due to experiences with trauma or family separation; facilitates social integration of vulnerable children.

Safe learning spaces: Wherever possible schooling locations (established schools, temporary structures, people's homes, community/village centres, places of worship) should remain safe centres of learning and if possible meet some minimum standards including safe access to water and sanitary facilities. In some cases, schools may be temporary and shift location (e.g. from home to home) to maintain a degree of security – what is key is that they remain places where safety and security are paramount.

Water and sanitation: A priority is safe water, with gender-segregated and appropriate sanitation facilities for learning spaces and schools. Another important area for collaboration is hygiene promotion. Due to COVID-19, appropriate water and sanitation access and behaviours (e.g. regular hand-washing) are more important than ever. For example, see UNICEF guidance on COVID-19 infection prevention and control measures in schools.

Health: Schools and temporary learning spaces provide an environment in which children can have safe and reliable access to various health services, be provided with basic knowledge on health and hygiene, and urgent life-saving health information.

Nutrition: Children's immediate nutritional needs can be improved by the provision of meals or nutritious snacks as part of school feeding programs.

Source UNICEF, 2020b, COVID-19 Emergency Preparedness and Response WASH and Infection Prevention and Control Measures in Schools.

Cross-cutting issues in education programming in conflict-affected/fragile situations

It is important to identify excluded or marginalised groups and to address their educational needs in fragile contexts. According to the Global Education Monitoring Report 2016, refugee children and adolescents are five times more likely to be out of school than non-refugee children and youth. The poorest children and those from ethnic minority groups are often disproportionately disadvantaged in conflict-affected areas. Girls are almost two and a half times more likely to be out of school if they live in countries affected by conflict and young women are nearly 90 per cent more likely to be out of secondary school than their counterparts in other countries.

Source: UNESCO, 2016b, Global Education Monitoring Report: Education for people and planet.

Gender, conflict and natural disasters

There is now increased awareness of how emergencies such as conflict and natural disaster are experienced differently by men and women, boys and girls. The different roles, activities, skills, positions and status of men and women in families, communities and institutions create gender-differentiated risks, vulnerabilities and capacities in fragile and conflict-affected situation.

For example, many more women than men died in the 2004 South Asian tsunami because women were more likely to be at home at the time. Women were also physically less able to run from the enormous waves and to climb trees. In conflict situations, men and young boys may be at greater risk of recruitment into fighting forces and into potentially-lethal active combat, but women and girls may be forced to serve as sex slaves and cooks, or to take on other non-combatant roles. Levels of sexual violence and exploitation of women and girls can also increase when natural disasters strike, as well as in the aftermath if displaced families are crowded into poorly-designed camps with few protective features such as good lighting and separate toilet/washing facilities for females. Unfortunately, the desire to protect women and girls from such risks can also mean that they are prevented from accessing education, health and other critical support services.

At the same time, emergency situations and the priority to survive mean that both men and women often have to take on non-traditional gender roles and activities. In the aftermath of the South Asian earthquake of October 2005, for example, widowed men were cooking food for their children for the first time in their lives. In some circumstances, women affected by a crisis may also benefit from the 'window of opportunity' to access new opportunities – for example, to go out to work and control family finances for the first time. In some emergency situations, especially conflicts in which ethnicity and cultural identity are threatened, traditional gender differences and patterns of activity become even more rigidly adhered to, and women and girls are subjected to increased limitations on mobility and participation.

Similar to other crises, the COVID-19 pandemic affects men and women, boys and girls, differently. Gender inequalities that already exist are often exacerbated during a pandemic. While school closures had an impact on all learners, girls are at greater risk of violence and child marriage due to the lack of social protective measures that a school environment provides. When schools reopen, experience from the Ebola crisis showed that many girls may not return. Women and girls are also more likely to take on an increased burden of care in the home during the pandemic, which jeopardises their own opportunities to earn an income or go to school.

Increasing access to education

Targeted and gender-responsive measures are required to ensure that girls and boys, particularly adolescent girls and boys, have equal access to education in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

Strategies include:

- Locating schools and learning spaces close to the learners' homes and away from different kinds of dangers, such as soldiers' quarters and dense bush; involving community members to ensure safe travel to and from school, particularly for girls.

- Proactively recruiting women teachers and providing support for additional professional development activities to complete these teachers' own education; timing classes and terms to enable girls and boys with other responsibilities to attend (e.g. accounting for harvest busy periods).

- Providing childcare facilities for women teachers and girl-mother students.

- Providing sanitary materials and facilities for girls and women teachers.

- Providing school feeding programs or take-home rations (including for the babies of girl mothers).

- Engaging girls and boys in the preparation of a 'missing-out map' – that is, a map of the children in the community who are currently not in school – and in the design of gender responsive education programs to reach out-of-school children.
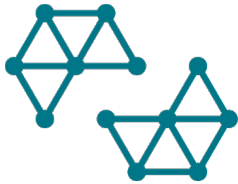
Inclusive education

Despite international commitments to making education inclusive and accessible to all, in fragile and conflict situations there are often concerns that many are still excluded, particularly people with disabilities. There is often a perception that greater stability is needed before efforts to reach excluded groups can move forward. However, there are actions that everyone involved in an emergency education response can take, from the start, to include more people in learning. These include:

- Monitoring, assessing and recording how well the education investment is meeting the needs of the most marginalised.

- Making efforts to liaise with representative organisations and groups in the affected areas (such as disabled people's organisations) so that you can keep adding to the picture of who is excluded, and take steps to increase inclusion.

- Exploring options for alternative delivery modes such as remote education that is hosted in the home or a community location, using take home lessons, and radio/television broadcast where available.

- Ongoing assessment of what is needed to make education more accessible for the most vulnerable students.
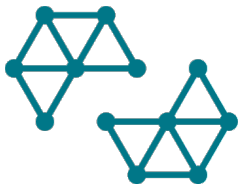
Can stability and proximity be enabled?

Urbanisation and refugee contexts can enable the stability and proximity needed for some children to attend school for the first time. Non-formal, flexible community-based alternatives can encourage and provide first-time access for girls, working children, former child soldiers, and other marginalised gender-specific groups as a temporary measure toward developing a seamless transition and equal access to formal education settings.

Case study: The impacts of the Syrian conflicts on education

According to data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics, Syria achieved universal primary enrolment and high secondary enrolment in 2001. However, hundreds of thousands of children in Syria stopped attending school as a result of the ongoing conflict in the war-torn country.

The Effects of The Crisis on Education in Areas Controlled by The Government of Syria, 2010-2015 report noted that "the war set back educational progress by more than two decades". Years of conflict had increased the number of school-aged Syrian refugees from 100,000 in 2012 to 1.3 million in 2015, with more than 600,000 of these refugees out of school. For non-refugee children, the 2014/15 kindergarten to grade 12 gross enrolment rate was 60 per cent, with the majority of losses in enrolment occurring in basic education. Outside of basic education, Kindergarten and vocational secondary enrolments fell by 89 per cent and 64 per cent, respectively.

Some 12,000 (or 55 per cent) schools were damaged, closed, or occupied by displaced people. Others were deserted as parents kept their children at home for fear of bombings and arbitrary attacks. Schools were amongst the most dangerous places in Syria. In addition to the lack of suitable, safe school buildings there was also a shortage of trained teachers, particularly in Aleppo. This, coupled with a lack of access to text books and other teaching equipment, impacted heavily the quality of education available to children in Syria.

Source: UNICEF, 2015, The effects of the crisis on education in areas controlled by the Government of Syria, 2010-2015.

An activity for you

Read the case study on 'The Impacts of the Syrian Conflicts on Education' and review the attached links to other sources of information. Reviewing the material presented in this module, consider and respond to the questions found below.

Question 1: What have been the immediate impacts of the conflict on education in Syria?

Question 2: What are some of the potential medium to longer-term impacts on education?

Question 3: What are some of the cross-cutting issues that you would identify as important in planning an education program in Syria?

Check your answers.

Question 1:

- Significant rise in the number of out of school children.

- More than half of Syria's schools destroyed or damaged, with impacts on regular attendance (important to assess cross-cutting impacts including gender/disability/ethnicity/religious/tribal affiliations).

- Significant disruptions to regular schooling routines impacting on learning outcomes.

- Teachers are not able to attend classes regularly given the fluid nature of conflict.

- Teachers' salaries are not paid regularly/on-time with consequent incentive impacts on teacher attendance and performance.
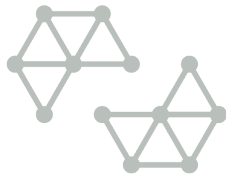
Question 2:

- Depending on the length of the conflict, interrupted schooling and lower completion rates.

- Depending on scale/location/impact of conflict, lower education attainment rates.

- Regular assessment of learning outcomes (including examinations) disrupted with system wide impacts on tracking system performance.

- Potential impacts on transition to secondary education and beyond with system wide/capacity impacts at all levels and in all sectors.

- University education/teacher training institutions disrupted – with medium to long-term impacts on teacher supply.

- Entrenched economic/social/political inequities due to fragility/conflict impacts (and across and within gender/ethnicity/religion/disability/rural-urban/language groups) – with potential medium-longer term impacts on fragility and conflict.

- Unemployment, disenfranchisement and lack of trust in the state to guarantee security and justice for all.

Question 3:

Health, gender, refugee and internal displacement, ethnicity, religion, children with existing disability, children with fragility/conflict-related disabilities (including both physical and psycho-social trauma), literacy and numeracy standards, education pathways and links to employment.

7 TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Assessment questions

Answer the following questions by ticking 'True' or 'False'. Once you have selected your answers to all the questions, turn the page to 'The correct answers are...' to check the accuracy of your answers.

Question 1

Fragility and conflict are always due to political factors.

Is this statement true or false?   ☐ True   ☐ False

Question 2

Effective education responses in fragile and/or conflict-affected situations usually require development partners to lead the engagement.

Is this statement true or false?   ☐ True   ☐ False

Question 3

Inter-sectoral coordination is not important in developing programs in conflict-affected or fragile situations.

Is this statement true or false?   ☐ True   ☐ False

Question 4

Fragility and conflict have largely negative impacts on gender relations.

Is this statement true or false?   ☐ True   ☐ False

Question 5

As fragility and conflict impacts on enrolments and school attendance, this should be the key area of focus for education programming.

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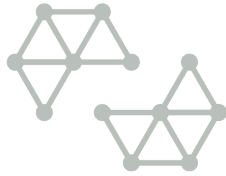Is this statement true or false?　　　　　　　□ True　　　□ False

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Question 6

Education can contribute to fragility.

Is this statement true or false?　　　　　　　□ True　　　□ False

The correct answers are...

Question 1

Fragility and conflict are always due to political factors.

This statement is false. Fragility is a multi-dimensional concept. Although some situations can be fragile due to poor governance, there are other key factors which are linked to fragility:

- Economic: Vulnerability to risks stemming from weaknesses in economic foundations and human capital including macroeconomic shocks, unequal growth and high youth unemployment.

- Environmental: Vulnerability to environmental, climatic and health risks that affect citizens' lives and livelihoods. These include exposure to natural disasters, pollution and disease epidemics, such as COVID-19.

- Political: Vulnerability to risks inherent in political processes, events or decisions; lack of political inclusiveness (elite capture); transparency, corruption and society's ability to accommodate change and avoid oppression.

- Security: Vulnerability of overall security to violence and crime, including both political and social violence.

- Societal: Vulnerability to risks affecting societal cohesion that stem from both vertical and horizontal inequalities, including inequality among different societal groups.

Question 2

Effective education responses in fragile and/or conflict-affected situations usually require development partners to lead the engagement.

This statement is false. As noted in the New Deal, it is key wherever possible for development efforts to be country-led and defined. The New Deal also notes that it is important for development partners to support peace and state-building goals, to commit to transparency, risk sharing, the use of country systems and strengthening of capacities, as well as timely and predictable development assistance.

Question 3

Inter-sectoral coordination is not important in developing programs in conflict-affected or fragile situations.

This statement is false. An inter-sectoral approach to education is even more vital in conflict-affected and fragile situations. Education provides a sense of normalcy, psychosocial support, protection against harm, and a place for delivery of other vital services. It is important to ensure that linkages are made early on in program design through multi-sectoral needs assessments, followed by joint planning. See Section 6 for the range of issues to consider.

Question 4

Fragility and conflict have largely negative impacts on gender relations.

This statement is false. Fragility can both negatively and positively affect gender relations. In situations where armed conflict is an element of the fragility, girls and boys may not have equal access to safe and secure quality education due to politicised curriculums, attacks on schools or teachers, and the recruitment of child soldiers through schools. Moreover, the economic instability prevalent in fragile situations may have gender-related implications for working children and adolescents.

In contexts where equal access to quality education for girls and boys has been a struggle, fragility can provide opportunities to address long-standing issues. For example, infrastructure development can allow communities to develop sufficient facilities with separate entrances, sections, and hygiene facilities for girls and boys, as appropriate. COVID-19 has brought a strong focus on water and sanitation (regular hand-washing), which has enabled reviews of gender appropriate facilities at schools. Urbanisation and refugee contexts can enable the stability and proximity needed for some children to attend school for the first time. Non-formal, flexible community-based alternatives can encourage and provide first-time access for girls, working children, former child soldiers, and other marginalised gender-specific groups as a temporary measure toward developing equal access to formal education settings.

Question 5

As fragility and conflict impacts on enrolments and school attendance, this should be the key area of focus for education programming.

This statement is false. Conflicts and on-going fragility have wide-ranging impacts on education, from the school level (e.g. disruption of regular school schedules and destruction of learning materials and schools) to the system level where security and violence can impact on the number of teachers available; willingness to work in schools and the regularity and quality of teacher training; and the quality of educational data if educational monitoring systems (such as EMIS) are affected. At the community level, trauma and anxiety in affected communities can impact on education outcomes.

Responses need to take account of immediate and medium-longer term needs and focus on both the school and system levels. Access, quality and governance (or system) impacts

should be assessed and an appropriate mix of strategies developed that recognise that engagement may need to be beyond the immediate conflict phase.

Question 6

Education can contribute to fragility.

This statement is true. Education may sometimes be bi-directional – exacerbating or mitigating fragility and conflict.

Education can actively reinforce and perpetuate fragility through:

- The politicisation and manipulation of access, structures, curricula, and textbooks.

- Reproducing and/or failing to challenge existent patterns of division, inequality, violence, corruption, and inefficiency.

- Not providing pathways to employment for all groups thereby entrenching/ exacerbating existing social divisions and tensions.

Education can also have positive benefits for peace building and reducing conflict and fragility by:

- Strengthening governance and accountability through restoring trust in the government's will and capacity to serve the needs of the population.

- Strengthening community participation and ownership.

- Through inclusive and peace-oriented curricula and textbooks that promote nation-building, social cohesion, and positive values.

- Challenging stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes. For example, gender-sensitive policies in education can address patterns of discrimination, oppression, and violence.

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Learn more about…

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- *OECD's work on conflict, fragility and resilience, found at,* http://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/

- *OECD DAC Principles for Good Engagement in Fragile States and Situations, found at,* http://www.oecd.org/dac/conflict-fragility-resilience/docs/38368714.pdf

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