

# WORKING DIFFERENTLY IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT-AFFECTED SITUATIONS



Failure to engage in fragile and conflict-affected situations differently and in an innovative manner is likely to entail major human, social, economic, and security costs.

## What is a fragile and conflict-affected situation?

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) identifies fragile or conflict-affected countries as those of its developing member countries with weak governance, ineffective public administration and rule of law, and civil unrest.

Below are four types of situations in Asia and the Pacific that ADB refers to as fragile and conflict-affected.

**Fragile situations** are small and geographically isolated, often with scattered, low-density populations and underdeveloped markets. Opportunities for economies of scale and scope, as well as human and financial resources and infrastructure, are limited and highly dependent on aid flows. Core state political, security, and service delivery functions are weak, unstable, and concentrated around urban areas. Countries in these fragile situations may also be particularly vulnerable to climate change and disasters.

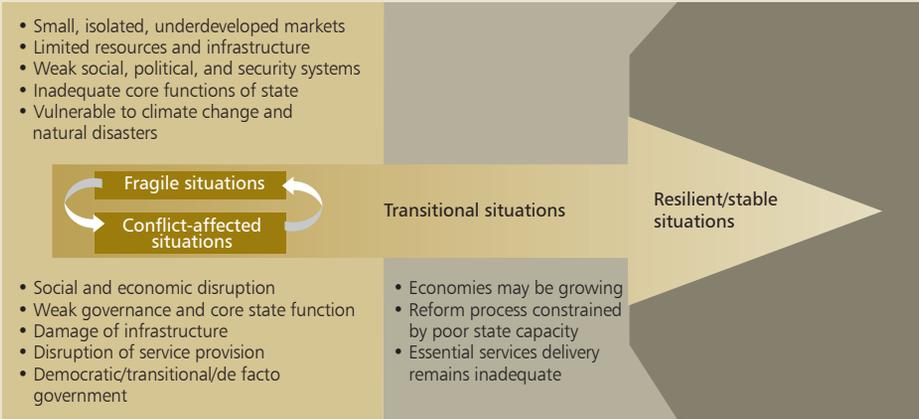
**Conflict-affected situations**—conflict or post-conflict, national or subnational—are those in which significant social and economic disruptions lead to weak governance, extensive damage to infrastructure, and disruption of service provision.

**Transitional situations** include countries exiting fragility and conflict, or other significant social or political upheaval, wherein economies may be growing. Typically, however, reform processes are constrained by weak state capacities or poor governance. Delivery of essential services remains inadequate. Some countries may no longer be identified as fragile or conflict-affected per se, but the fragility risk remains. A country's transition may take place over a generation—between 15 to 30 years.

**Subnational fragile situations**—as defined by The Asia Foundation—have been afflicted by conflict for decades, leading to protracted cycles of underdevelopment, poor governance, and instability. These conditions often create an environment that stifles local economic growth, prevents integration into national and regional economies, and leads to deteriorating social services and a consistently high level of violent conflict.



## Fragility Continuum in Asia and the Pacific



### Why do we need to work differently in fragile and conflict-affected situations?

Addressing the “weaker links” of economic growth could help boost the overall economy in Asia and the Pacific.



The abnormal circumstances brought about by fragility and conflict require special attention. Affected countries lag far behind in development as a result of political instability, weak governance, economic and geographic isolation, repeated cycles of violence, and vulnerability to climate change and disasters. For development aid to be effective, modes of engagement must be customized to the specific needs and local context of the affected country. Working differently in countries experiencing fragile or conflict-affected situations and helping them achieve and maintain peace and political stability are prerequisites to economic growth in these countries.

## How do we approach fragile and conflict-affected situations?

**The ADB approach to fragile and conflict-affected situations embeds the guiding principles of flexibility, sustainability, and partnership.**

ADB has adopted the 2007 Approach to Weakly Performing Countries (which it now refers to as fragile and conflict-affected situations or FCAS countries). ADB has a framework for identifying FCAS countries and planning and implementing appropriate interventions. The two pillars of the 2007 approach—selectivity and strategic partnerships—are consistent with the OECD Fragile States Principles. The approach also highlights the need for flexible institutional responses and modalities, working with non-state actors in civil society, adjusting staffing levels, and strengthening staff incentives to motivate staff to work in an FCAS country.

ADB encourages teams working in such countries to consider the modalities, tools, and instruments appropriate for the context. A menu of available financing modalities allows ADB to operate more flexibly in fragile and conflict-affected situations. This flexibility is especially useful because of the considerable variation among countries in political economy, development needs, capacity constraints, and reform orientation. It is important to determine, in any country or particular situation, which elements are most relevant.



## How do we operate in fragile and conflict-affected situations?

ADB maintains the relevance of its approach in fragile and conflict-affected situations by understanding the local context, anchored on sound assessments.



Considering the fluid conditions in fragile and conflict-affected situations, ADB adopts the following:

- A differentiated engagement for each country is formulated by considering a range of approaches, including country partnership strategies, interim operational strategies, regional strategies, and watching briefs.
- Strategic partnerships are established with the private sector, civil society and nongovernment organizations, and other development partners to inform and implement the country strategy. Partnerships are also deemed important in consultation and participatory approaches.
- Relevance of ADB's approach to fragile and conflict-affected situations is maintained by understanding the local context, anchored on sound assessments.
- A summary gender strategy is included in each country partnership strategy to address gender-related issues.
- Flexibility is built in during project design—in the preparation stage—to easily adjust to necessary changes in scope during implementation.
- More programmatic approaches are applied in project implementation to address security and inefficiency issues.

**ADB encourages new thinking and mainstreaming of innovative approaches to help development practitioners more effectively plan, design, and implement projects in fragile and conflict-affected situations.**

ADB has considerable experience with operations in small, isolated, and vulnerable economies; in much larger countries that are in transition from a closed economy to market-led development; and countries that are emerging from conflict. Staff members have developed innovative ways to work effectively in these contexts. The knowledge they have generated from experience has often been translated into new procedures, analytic techniques, financing instruments, and approaches to capacity building.



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