

Classification of Fragility and Conflict Situations for World Bank Group Engagement

Introduction

1. The classification aims to inform strategic and operational decision-making within the World Bank Group (WBG) by providing a disaggregated classification of low- and middle-income countries that are affected by fragility and conflict—also known as Fragility and Conflict Situations (FCS). It aims to allow for effective and context-appropriate WBG engagement by providing a simple and practical operational framework (and associated metrics) that can both help identify countries most affected by fragility- and conflict-related issues and differentiate across such situations. It is part of WBG commitments made in the context of the 18th replenishment of the International Development Association (IDA) and the Global Capital Increase for the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD).

Purpose and use of the classification

2. The primary purpose of the FCS classification is to ensure that the WBG’s strategic and programmatic focus in countries affected by FCS-related issues is adapted and tailored to the diverse challenges faced by these countries. It distinguishes across countries based on the nature of the FCS-related issues they are facing to allow for a differentiation of approaches, policies, and instruments and to help adapt the WBG’s engagement to difficult and complex situations in a manner that is tailored to relevant contexts. It aims to ensure sound prioritization, selectivity, consistency, and fitness for purpose.

3. The classification is fully in line with the WBG Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (FCV) Strategy, which aims to develop a differentiated approach to defining and operating in FCV-affected countries so that the WBG can strengthen its impact and operational effectiveness in these contexts.

Typology of FCS

4. To capture the differentiated nature of fragility and conflict, the classification is based on methodologies that distinguish countries in the following categories:

- **Countries with high levels of institutional and social fragility**, identified based on public indicators that measure the quality of policy and institutions as well as specific manifestations of fragility.
- **Countries affected by violent conflict**, identified based on a threshold number of conflict-related deaths relative to the population.

5. The classification is expected to be complemented by ongoing work to support other countries that are less severely affected by FCV or affected by FCV spillovers, as well as to identify situations with increasing risks of fragility and conflict escalation. This would be part of wider WBG efforts to adopt a more risk-based approach to development and to support efforts aimed at mitigating FCV risks. These situations may not warrant additional allocations or specific policies or instruments, but instead management attention to allow for early action. The Global Crisis Risk Platform (GCRP) may provide a forum to identify such countries, based on a mix of qualitative and quantitative criteria, and to discuss the possible WBG responses.

Methodology

6. **Countries with high institutional and social fragility** include a range of countries that are facing deep institutional crises, that have very poor transparency and government accountability, or that have weak institutional capacity. These issues are sometimes compounded by threats posed by climate change (for example, for some small Pacific Islands states).

- **Fragile countries are defined as:**

- (i) those with one or more of the following: (a) the weakest institutional and policy environment, based on a revised, harmonized CPIA scoreⁱ for IDA countries (for which CPIA scores are disclosed)ⁱⁱ that is below 3.0; **or** (b) the presence of a UN peacekeeping operation because this reflects a decision by the international community that a significant investment is needed to maintain peace and stability there; **or** (c) flight across borders of 2,000 or more per 100,000 population, who are internationally regarded as refugees in need of international protection,ⁱⁱⁱ as this signals a major political or security crisis; and
- (ii) those that are not in conflict (see methodology below), as such countries have gone beyond fragility.

Sources of data for the CPIA are the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and the Asian Development Bank; the UN Department of Peace Operations for the presence of peacekeeping missions;^{iv} and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for numbers of refugees.

7. **Countries in conflict** are identified based on the number of conflict deaths in absolute terms and relative to their population.

- **Countries in conflict are defined as:**

- (i) those with (a) an absolute number of conflict deaths above 250 according to ACLED *and* 150 according to UCDP^v; and (b) above 2 per 100,000 population according to ACLED *and* above 1 according to UCDP; **or** (ii) countries with a rapid deterioration of the security situation, as measured by (a) an absolute number of conflict deaths above 250 according to ACLED *and* 150 according to UCDP; (b) a lower number of conflict deaths relative to the population between 1 and 2 (ACLED) *and* 0.5 and 1 (UCDP) and (c) more than a doubling of the number of casualties in the last year^{vi}.

The sources of data for conflict deaths are the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) and the Uppsala Conflict Data Project (UCDP).^{vii} To maximize the robustness of the classification, a country will be included in a certain category only if it meets threshold criteria in both databases.

Governance

8. **The FCS classification and associated list of countries is to be updated annually by the WBG's FCV Group**, in consultation with key World Bank business units: Operations Policy & Country Services (OPCS), Development Finance (DFI), and Regions. The update is to be circulated by July 1 each year (after CPIAs are finalized).

9. **The classification is publicly disclosed and the list is available here:**

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/harmonized-list-of-fragile-situations>

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- i The CPIA (Country Policy and Institutional Assessment) provides a rating of countries against a set of 16 criteria grouped into four clusters: economic management, structural policies, policies for social inclusion and equity, and public sector management and institutions. The list will use the lowest score of CPIAs from the World Bank, the African Development Bank, and the Asian Development Bank.
- ii See footnote i.
- iii People internationally regarded as refugees in need of international protection include refugees, people in refugee-like situations, and Venezuelans displaced abroad.
- iv This is updated continuously at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/where-we-operate>.
- v Ibid.
- vi In order to avoid that singular but highly fatal incidents results in countries being included on the list, cases where 75% of the annual fatalities are stemming from a three-day period, and the remaining 25% fatalities do not meet the threshold number for absolute conflict deaths based on both ACLED and UCDP data, the country will be deemed to *not* have met the threshold for absolute number of conflict deaths.
- vii Both ACLED and UCDP aim to record, report, and map conflict-related fatalities (stemming from state-based, non-state, and one-sided violence), and are considered by practitioners, researchers, and governments as reliable sources of such data. The use of two sets of data is necessary to even out discrepancies. For the purposes of this list, one-sided violence has been excluded from the UCDP data.