



# Empowerment in fragile states and situations of fragility

Lyndsay Hilker, Social Development Direct

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## Introduction

### *Overview*

This Good Practice Note describes how to support the empowerment of poor people as a route to pro-poor growth and poverty reduction in situations of fragility. It is informed by recent analysis and approaches related to state building and peace building in fragile states; aid modalities in fragile states; the dynamics of pro-poor growth; and processes of empowerment. In practice, the distinction between fragile states and other low-income countries is rarely clear-cut and some approaches outlined in the other Good Practice Notes of this collection are also appropriate in fragile states. This paper complements these Good Practice Notes and the Policy Guidance Note by focusing explicitly on the challenges and opportunities in different situations of fragility and what these mean for donor interventions in the area of empowerment.

- Considering the strategies for economic, political and social empowerment outlined in the other Good Practice Notes, this Note highlights the specific interventions likely to be priorities in various types of fragile states.
- It outlines whether and how implementation should be different in fragile states and provides examples and guidance of good practice for donors.
- It also highlights a number of additional priority areas of intervention in fragile states.

### **Key messages**

- In fragile states, economic recovery and growth should be among the core priorities of donors. The empowerment of poor people – economic, political and social enables them to contribute to, participate in and benefit from this growth and longer-term statebuilding and peacebuilding.
- Fragile states present specific opportunities and challenges for empowerment processes due to failings in state authority, legitimacy and capacity, weak social and human capital and high levels of inequality and exclusion.
- There is a huge variation between and within fragile states – it is important to analyse the specific features of a particular “fragile” state and society in order to design appropriate support.
- Donors often overlook non-state or informal institutions that regulate economic activity, provide services, livelihood protection and degrees of security and justice in the absence of more formal state structures. It is critical to understand these institutions and look for ways to work with them and link them to the state.
- Many approaches to empowerment used in low-income countries are also relevant in fragile states, – although implementation strategies may need adjusting. Additional priority interventions in fragile states include: enabling poor people to deal more effectively with livelihood vulnerabilities through humanitarian aid and social protection; supporting inclusive peace agreements and political settlements; strengthening social capital and inter-community co-operation; and restoring the dignity and identity of war-affected populations.

### ***Relevance of empowerment to pro-poor growth and poverty reduction***

There is powerful evidence to show that (sustained) economic growth is necessary for poverty reduction.<sup>1</sup> However, whilst the main ingredients of growth are relatively well understood,<sup>2</sup> the strength of the link varies between countries and there is no one-size-fits-all growth policy. Poverty is multidimensional and pro-poor growth depends on a mix of policies that address both growth and distributional objectives, promote equity and empowerment and deal with gender, ethnicity and other biases. Empowerment is an important component of pro-poor growth, both as a driver and a consequence. Many economic theories demonstrate that equality of access to, influence over or ownership of economic resources is necessary for sustainable, long-term growth (Rawls, 1971; Besley, 2002). Only when individuals are able to acquire or dispose of assets freely and equitably can their value be fully realised and used optimally to meet society's different needs, and incentivise investment in the future. Inequality of assets and opportunity hinders the ability of poor people to participate in and contribute to growth. High levels of income inequality lower the poverty reduction impact of growth and can reduce the political stability and social cohesion needed for sustainable growth (OECD, 2006a).

Fragile states are characterised by even lower economic growth rates than the average for low-income countries.<sup>3</sup> Fragile states also tend to have unequal wealth and income distributions, factors that increase the risk of violent conflict. External factors such as international trade, foreign investment and returning diaspora can change these negative dynamics of fragility – creating new sources of wealth, generating jobs which give people a stake in a peaceful future – but are often limited while risks are high. Change in fragile states must therefore begin from within, through domestic actors – including poor people – who are empowered to initiate it if pro-poor growth policies are to emerge. However, these contexts face severe challenges such as insecurity, weak institutions and markets, depleted human capital, persistent socio-political tensions, humanitarian crises and a legacy of civil war (BMZ, 2007, 2009; DFID, 2010a, 2010b; GTZ, 2008; OECD, 2008a, 2008b, 2010a, 2010b). “Conventional” development strategies may be inappropriate or ineffective and need to be adapted or supplemented. Given that a third of the world's poor live in fragile states, it is essential to consider whether and how processes of empowerment and pro-poor growth might differ in fragile contexts and how donors might support these processes.

## **Empowerment and pro-poor growth in fragile states**

### ***Understanding the different dimensions and dynamics of fragility***

The concepts of “fragility” and “fragile state” remain contested. Whilst most donors have converged around the DAC definition: “States are fragile when state structures lack political will, and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard, the security and human rights of their populations” (OECD, 2007a), others stress that fragilities also exist within wider society and compound state fragilities, that there is huge variability within and between states, and that fragilities have international as well as domestic causes (Stewart and Brown, 2009; Engberg-Pedersen, Andersen and Stepputat, 2008). There is therefore a need to carefully analyse the specific weaknesses and failings of each “fragile” state and society in order to provide appropriate support.

**State fragilities:** The following typology is useful to analyse the dimensions of state fragility:<sup>4</sup>

- *Authority failures*: Situations where the state cannot or does not protect its citizens from violence and/or criminality.
- *Service failures*: Situations where the state cannot or does not provide access to basic services such as health care, education, and infrastructure.
- *Legitimacy failures*: Situations where the state lacks public support or is only supported by a small minority or interest group within the country.

**Societal fragilities** can compound state fragilities and present challenges for long-term development (Oosterom, 2009; Engberg-Pedersen, Andersen and Stepputat, 2008). The following “societal fragilities” are particularly significant for processes of empowerment:

- *Weak human capital*: Societies where conflict and deprivation have weakened people’s physical and intellectual capabilities e.g. low levels of education, skills, poor health etc.
- *Weak social capital*: Societies where conflict and deprivation have weakened co-operation and collective action and there may be significant levels of mistrust between groups.
- *Significant inequality and/or exclusion*: Societies characterised by significant levels of vertical or horizontal inequality and/or the exclusion/marginalisation of particular groups.

### ***How fragility influences the potential for empowerment***

Each of these dimensions of state and societal fragility can create particular opportunities and challenges for processes of empowerment of poor people to support broad-based inclusive growth (Table in Annex 4.A1). However, fragile situations are not static and the direction of travel is extremely important (DFID, 2010b; BMZ, 2007). The most promising routes to empowerment will vary across the following categories of fragile states:

- *Immediate post-conflict countries*, especially where peace is the result of a negotiated settlement (*i.e.* peace agreement), can offer a unique opportunity to re-balance power relations, redefine political settlements, legislate for new forms of participation and reform institutions. However, the “window of opportunity” is often short and unequal power structures can quickly become (re)entrenched.
- In *resource-rich fragile states*, where state revenues come directly from nationalised export earnings, governments are often “strong and unwilling” and largely unresponsive to pressures from their own populations. In the short-term, these governments may be responsive to top-down, internationally linked accountability initiatives. However, it is also important to support bottom-up processes to strengthen state-society relations and empower citizens to make demands and hold institutions to account. It is at this local level that citizens tend to experience exclusion, arbitrariness and dispossession from the state, which in turn can lead to fear, frustration and disempowerment (Haar, van der, 2009).
- *Low-capacity fragile states*, whose governments are “willing but weak” will need help to address the structural sources of their fragility, implement reforms and gradually improve their responsiveness to their populations. In these situations, a range of non-state, informal and community institutions have often been delivering services to local populations and may have greater legitimacy and capacity than

the state. In some cases, these institutions may provide valuable routes to empower poor people and can act as building blocks to gradual engagement with the state as its capacity grows.

- In *situations of deteriorating governance*, where there is an increasing risk of conflict and/or increased threat of state failure, the government may be unwilling to engage in dialogue with its own population or the international community. Opportunities for external actors to enable empowerment processes are likely to be limited, but it is essential to act to protect the livelihoods and assets of poor people, to reduce tensions and promote ongoing exchange and co-operation between different parts of society.

## Key issues, challenges and controversies

### *The relationship between conflict, fragility and change*

Fragility and conflict are often the result of processes of political change. Historically, elites have used coercion to build states, popular resistance has forced them to exercise constraint and provide protection, (Tilly, 1985) and marginalised groups have used violence to challenge state authority. The use or threatened use of violence is one route through which groups seek to bring about changes to the political or social conditions under which they live. It is often used as a strategy when they cannot achieve their ends through conventional politics or non-violent protest. In some cases, the use of violence has resulted in a degree of positive change and empowerment for some groups<sup>5</sup> (Richards, 1996; Peters and Richards, 1998). Donors wishing to support political and social change which empowers excluded groups are therefore faced with the challenge of supporting an agenda for genuine transformation, whilst trying to ensure it occurs at a pace and in a manner that fosters negotiation and compromise and minimises violence between competing groups.

### *Donor decisions about when and why to engage in “fragile states”*

Donor conceptions of what constitutes “fragility” and the different (and sometimes competing) objectives of donor countries – related to humanitarian relief, poverty reduction, conflict prevention, economic interests and global security – affect where donors engage, what they focus on and why. For example, in some states not considered “fragile”, there are “pockets of fragility” – neighbourhoods or regions that experience ongoing violence and criminality (e.g. southern Thailand, northern Uganda, *favelas* in Brazil, townships in South Africa, garrisons in Jamaica) – (see for example, Pearce, McGee and Wheeler, forthcoming; Moncrieffe, 2008) which donors have largely ignored (see for example, Caddell and Yanacopolus, 2006).<sup>6</sup> In some cases, this can mean that significant numbers of poor people are excluded from the development and growth benefiting the rest of the country, and this can lead to disempowerment and longer-term instability.

### *The choice of aid instruments to support empowerment for pro-poor growth in fragile states*

The aid environment in fragile states is challenging for initiatives to address empowerment:

- The short funding cycles and demands for rapid results – especially, but not exclusively, from humanitarian agencies – can militate against the adoption of less tangible empowerment objectives.

- The focus on establishing security and re-building core state functions, combined with concerns over fiduciary risk and “harmonisation”, often leads to the neglect of “softer” development concerns.
- “Higher-level” aid instruments such as budget support and sector-wide programmes can make an important contribution to state building and peace building objectives. Yet, the needs of excluded and marginalised groups are rarely included in these centralised national development approaches (Booth and Curran, 2005).

Addressing exclusion and enabling processes of empowerment in fragile contexts requires a mix of higher-level instruments that create an enabling environment – through supporting wider state building and peace building objectives – and more targeted work at a local level (Social Development Direct, 2006), including by using more traditional aid instruments in innovative ways, for example:

- *Projects* play a critical role in reaching harder to reach groups and provide the opportunity to pilot approaches to empowerment.
- *Technical co-operation (TC)* can be vital to turn policy into action, for capacity building, developing key relationships and trust, strengthening marginalised institutions and their strategic thinking.
- Carefully designed *humanitarian aid* can provide targeted inputs to address the immediate needs of women, children and other vulnerable or marginalised groups.

Donors need to think strategically and flexibly from the onset and become more adept at converting the potential of individual interventions into wider strategic impact. Interventions to foster empowerment need not be in competition with higher-level governance and economic policy agendas; rather, they support and complement each other. Some recent innovations in aid instruments have sought to combine these different objectives *e.g.* the World Bank’s Social Funds, which accord block grants via the state to communities for micro-projects – ranging from infrastructure to social services – of their choice and at the same time, strengthen the relationship between communities and local government (Pavanello and Darcy, 2008).

### ***Working with non-state as well as state actors***

In situations where the state is weak or absent, various alternative or informal (non-state) institutions emerge to regulate economic activity, provide services and transmit information (Wennmann, 2010; Dixit, 2004). In some contexts, state functions – such as service delivery or security provision – are assumed by private companies, customary authorities, community groups, local militias, gangs or opposition groups. These institutions vary in their activities, effectiveness, legitimacy and accountability to the local population, but in many cases have more authority and capacity than the formal state. Yet donor policies have prioritised working with the state and have limited engagement with non-state actors. There is concern that supporting non-state and community-based institutions may create systems and mechanisms of service delivery that are parallel to or in competition with, rather than integrated with the state. Yet, it is possible for donors to support non-state actors, whilst incorporating “hand-back” mechanisms from the outset of programmes so that initiatives can be linked to, and ultimately incorporated into the public service delivery track (Commins, 2005; OECD, 2008a; OECD, 2006a; Pavanello and Darcy, 2008). Such approaches, which build on what exists, but also seek to build capacity, foster inclusion and raise awareness, can prove especially effective for enabling processes of empowerment at a local level. However,

working with non-state actors can also be more risky. Donors will require greater flexibility, political skills, sensitivity and tolerance of higher levels of ambiguity and uncertainty (Scheye, 2008; IKV Pax Christi, 2009).

### ***Being realistic, letting go and taking time***

Evaluations have highlighted cases where donors have disempowered communities or limited their empowerment by giving them limited decision making powers – for example, ordering a list of pre-defined priorities, even if this list does not match community concerns. In order to enable genuine empowerment, donors need to relinquish a significant degree of control over decision making. This may mean that decisions taken by partner organisations and beneficiary communities are at odds with donor priorities. In fragile states, longer timeframes are also needed to foster state or community participation and ownership of initiatives; develop confidence; and sustain programmes, particularly given weak management capacity and institutional support (World Bank, 2006a). Short-term funding can create a gap between expectations and the ability to deliver and prevent longer-term processes of empowerment within communities (Box 4.1).

#### **Box 4.1. The failure to empower communities through reconstruction in Timor Leste**

The World Bank's Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project (CEP) aimed to support community reconstruction in newly independent Timor-Leste. The project provided USD18 million to over 400 local development councils created to manage their community's development needs. However, tight deadlines to disburse project funds and bureaucratic rules meant that the councils were not able to develop into robust participatory structures, and were reduced to acting as transmission mechanisms for bank-controlled funds.

*Source:* Moxham, B. (2005), "The World Bank's Land of Kiosk: 'Community Driven Development' in East Timor", *Development in Practice*, Vol. 15, No. 3 & 4.

## **Intervention strategies and good practice for donors**

### ***The importance of good context analysis***

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to growth, empowerment or engagement in fragile states. Given the large variation in the characteristics between and within different fragile states, it is essential that donors and programme managers conduct a thorough and fine-grained analysis of the particular local or national context where they intend to implement a programme. Analysis should cover the following areas:

- *A conflict and fragility analysis* seeks to understand the specific characteristics and dynamics of conflict, state and societal fragility in different regions and localities. This analysis should be regularly updated to identify emerging opportunities for and challenges to processes of empowerment for pro-poor growth.
- *A governance/political economy/"drivers of change" analysis* identifies the political and institutional factors that shape development outcomes and opportunities to work with particular state actors or institutions in specific sectors to create the enabling

conditions for empowerment. Where capacity is weak, it is important not to overload state institutions, so this analysis should help donors to focus interventions where they are most likely to achieve results.

- *An analysis of local power relations and dynamics (e.g. using the “Power Cube”)* (Gaventa, 2005) helps understand the forms, distribution and dynamics of power between and within groups at a local level – including gender relations – and how these link to the national and global level, and the multiple ways in which particular groups and interests are marginalised from (or included in) decision making. It helps donors to identify which actors to work with and develop strategies to shift unequal power dynamics and foster inclusion.
- *An analysis of the conflict-sensitivity of interventions/“do no harm”* – all programmes should take account of the political, economic and inter-group dynamics that have emerged from or contributed to conflict and therefore avoid actions that could increase social tensions or the likelihood of a relapse into conflict. For example, donors should avoid interventions that might undermine local legitimacy and capacity, but at the same time ensure they do not reinforce parallel structures that compete with the state for legitimacy (Overseas Development Institute, 2009). Donors should also be aware that injecting large amounts of aid resources into conflict-affected environments may exacerbate tensions and reignite violence (Slaymaker and Christiaansen, 2005).

### ***Economic empowerment in fragile states***

Where security and justice are poorly or partially provided by the state, weaker members of society lack basic safety from predation and cannot protect their assets of survival. Addressing the primary needs of physical survival and security (see Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Needs”, 1943) upon which other rights and powers can be built is a priority in the very low-income and unstable conditions of fragile states. Tackling inequalities is particularly important, as they affect growth outcomes, and can constitute a source of tension and conflict, particularly when they map onto ethnic or other culturally defined groups (“horizontal inequalities”). Economic empowerment can break into the cycle of fragility by helping to address high levels of economic inequality and increasing the opportunity cost of rebellion (*i.e.* where people lack basic means to provide for their families, joining an armed group becomes a viable livelihood strategy). Within the broad areas highlighted in other Good Practice Notes, the following are priority interventions to support economic empowerment in fragile states:

- securing land and property rights, especially for excluded groups
- rehabilitating local infrastructure to provide access to markets
- supporting microfinance initiatives to provide access to credit
- increasing employment opportunities, especially for marginalised youth
- strengthening livelihood security through humanitarian aid and social protection
- supporting the delivery of basic services, including through non-state actors

### ***Securing land and property rights, especially for excluded groups***

**Why is this important?** In fragile states, land issues are often a major source of tension, whether as a result of population growth, environmental stress or conflict-induced displacement. Many people have limited or insecure access to land and property, due to a lack of legal protection and/or the risk of seizure of land by the more powerful.

Even when poor people have property, this is often not registered, surveyed or titled and thus not recognised in law. Commonly excluded groups include women, pastoralists and indigenous people. Securing land rights for these groups is particularly important for their empowerment. Given that land rights are a contentious issue at the best of times, large-scale reforms are likely to be most feasible in post-conflict situations and situations of improving governance. However, broader reforms such as land registration, planning rules and communal practices may be possible in all fragile situations.

**What can donors do?** Good Practice Note 1 outlines good practice to secure poor people's rights to natural resources and land across low-income countries. Fragile and post-conflict situations present particular opportunities and challenges to establish legitimate land institutions and legislation and to ensure poor and excluded groups benefit from processes of land reform and redistribution. There are additional lessons and good practices relevant to fragile states:

- In the post-conflict period, there is often a “window of opportunity” for large-scale land reform. Donors can support the development of accountable national land institutions, pressing for widespread consultation and transparent debate, and ensuring a focus on war-affected and excluded populations.
- In situations of low government legitimacy, civil society organisations and local customary institutions can promote public ownership of the land reform process, provide a channel for poor and excluded groups to voice their views, and monitor government decision making/implementation of land policy.
- Following conflict, a large proportion of households tend to be female-headed. Strengthening women's land and property rights is therefore a priority through a combination of improving inheritance rights through legislative reform (e.g. provision for spousal co-ownership, giving women rights to own land) and wider action on education, legal literacy and legal aid (AU/ADB/UNECA, 2006).
- It is important to establish/improve mechanisms for the resolution of land disputes to protect groups who face discriminatory practices and insecure access to land – in particular women (e.g. widows, girl orphans, survivors of sexual and gender-based violence), pastoralists and returning refugees/IDPs<sup>8</sup> (Cotula, 2005; FAO, 2010).

### *Rehabilitating local infrastructure to provide access to markets*

**Why is this important?** In post-conflict and fragile countries, physical infrastructure is often damaged, destroyed or inexistent, restricting the capacity for economic recovery. Rehabilitating local infrastructure and improving transport links enables conflict-affected communities to re-engage in economic activities and creates employment opportunities – including for ex-combatants and displaced people.

**What can donors do?** Some lessons and good practices from fragile and conflict-affected contexts include:

- Use rehabilitation approaches that source materials and labour locally as this can have multiplier effects on local communities and the economy (Box 4.2). Yet, in Iraq, foreign contractors used capital-intensive methods and labour from South Asia, despite local unemployment rates being 50% (UNDP, 2008).
- It is important to focus both on large-scale infrastructure projects and community level infrastructure. Improving secondary roads is important to facilitate access to services and markets, and to open up construction and maintenance opportunities (International Alert, 2007).

- The need for conflict sensitivity is critical. This includes understanding the social, political and ethnic dynamics that contributed to or resulted from the conflict to ensure they are not exacerbated by infrastructure programmes – for example by reconnecting some communities and not others.

#### Box 4.2. Rural infrastructure rehabilitation projects in Cambodia and Rwanda

In Cambodia and Rwanda, labour-based infrastructure construction was 10-30% less expensive than capital-intensive methods and created two to four times more employment. From 1992 to 2002, the labour-based Rural Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project in post-conflict Cambodia provided local workers with over 3 million paid workdays (50% of which were for women) and trained hundreds of managers, private contractors and government staff. It rehabilitated over 600 km of rural roads, 80 bridges, 460 culvert crossings, 26 irrigation water gates and 55 km of irrigation canals.

*Source:* United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2008), *Post-conflict Economic Recovery: Enabling Local Ingenuity*, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNDP, New York.

#### *Supporting microfinance initiatives to provide access to credit*

**Why is this important?** In fragile situations, particularly in post-conflict countries, financial institutions are often weak or dysfunctional and it is difficult for poor people to access credit. Yet, the amounts of credit needed to re-establish subsistence farming or a small business are small and can make a significant difference to poor people (Greeley, 2007). The provision of loans in fragile contexts also promotes joint production and business, which can help build trust – a key ingredient for economic progress when legal provisions for enforcement of contracts are weak (Zohir and Martin, 2004, cited in Greeley, 2007) – and can generate economic interaction damaged by conflict.

**What can donors do?** The UN outlines three preconditions for effective microfinance interventions: *i*) sufficient political stability; *ii*) sufficient economic activity capable of using credit services (De Vries and Specker, 2009)<sup>9</sup> and *iii*) a relatively stable client population (United Nations, 2008). In fragile states, none of these preconditions are likely to be met. However, experience suggests that even in times of tension/low-level conflict, microfinance initiatives can be successfully implemented if programming is responsive to borrowers' needs and is tailored to context. Reviews of microcredit schemes highlight the following lessons and good practices in fragile states:

- Use flexible repayment models tailored to ongoing conditions (Avery, 2005; Dowla, 2009). In unstable contexts, borrowers may lack the financial cushion to absorb financial shocks and may periodically struggle to balance immediate consumption needs against the long-term investments needed to build sustainable businesses. They may also suffer unexpected losses due to conflict such as injury, illness or the death of an animal.
- Safety and security issues can impact borrowers' ability to access loans and staff ability to monitor the programme. The lack of infrastructure, such as roads, can also affect access to and by borrowers.
- Where possible, link with existing informal credit and savings systems that poor people use, such as rotating credit and savings associations, safekeeping services,

traders, pawning and money-lending services. These are often more familiar and accessible to poor borrowers.

- Certain groups suffer disproportionately from a lack of access to credit or other resources and this makes them extremely vulnerable. Donors should target credits to high need groups, e.g. displaced people, ex-combatants, marginalised groups, women, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) survivors (Box 4.3).
- Combine microfinance support with skills training where needed: Some poor people (e.g. women and marginalised groups) do not participate in microfinance programmes because they fear being unable to repay loans, or because they lack entrepreneurial skills and experience to make use of the credit.
- Combine microfinance support with other measures to build social capital and trust: forming groups of borrowers may be difficult where tensions/mistrust within and between communities are high (Vries, de and Specker, 2009).

#### Box 4.3. The MISFA microfinance programme in Afghanistan

The Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan (MISFA) is one of the world's largest microfinance programmes in a conflict-affected setting – benefiting over 350 000 clients as of February 2007. Loans are used mainly for livestock, small business, self-employment and housing. In all, 81% of loans have been used to either start a new business or expand an existing one. It is estimated that every client generates 1.5 employment opportunities. A 2009 study of the MISFA concluded that microfinance interventions can have the most impact when they:

- recognise the importance of economic and social context to the successful use of microcredit;
- understand informal credit systems and design client-responsive microcredit programmes and products;
- understand that credit has meaning beyond the value of the money itself, through its value in creating and maintaining relationships; and
- develop success indicators that assess client viability, rather than just sustainability of the microfinance institution.

*Source:* Greeley Greeley, M. and M. Chaturvedi (2007), *Microfinance in Afghanistan: A Baseline and Initial Impact Study for MISFA*, Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan; Kantor, P. (2009), *From Access to Impact: Microcredit and Rural Livelihoods in Afghanistan*, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, Kabul; UN, (2009), *United Nations Policy for Post-Conflict Creation, Income Generation and Reintegration*, United Nations, Geneva; UNDP, (2008), *Post-conflict Economic Recovery: Enabling Local Ingenuity*, Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNDP, New York.

#### *Increasing employment opportunities, especially for marginalised youth*

**Why is this important?** In fragile states, there are usually many poor people and few jobs, often depressing wages below survival levels and rendering the terms of exchange between worker and employer highly unequal. In countries emerging from conflict or at risk of decline into conflict, it is important to focus on employment to secure livelihoods and promote stability and economic recovery. It is particularly important to focus on the participation of youth in the labour market (UNDP, 2006; ILO, 2009; USAID, 2005). With their energy and skills, young people can be a force for growth and peace building, but if

they are marginalised and excluded, they can also engage in political or violent activities that threaten these goals.

**What can donors do?** Good Practice Note 5 highlights strategies and good practice to increase employment opportunities across low income-countries. Many of these approaches are equally valid in fragile situations. However, in post-conflict situations, it is critical to balance short-term employment creation and longer-term investments in the enabling environment for the private sector. The UN (2009) proposes a three-track approach for employment creation in post-conflict situations:

- Track A: Stabilising income generation and emergency employment (short-term) – providing emergency temporary jobs such as large-scale public works, as well as livelihood and self-employment start-up grants for women, ex-combatants, young men, returnees, IDPs.
- Track B: Promoting employment opportunities at the local level – capacity development, community-driven recovery programmes and local economic recovery measures.
- Track C: Supporting sustainable employment creation and decent work *e.g.* employment policies and private sector development programmes. Long-term measures should aim at improving productivity and working conditions in the informal economy; facilitating formalisation; encouraging entrepreneurship; and supporting productive, decent employment in the formal economy.

Additional good practice and lessons learned in fragile states include:

- Integrated or multi-sectoral approaches can often be an effective way of addressing the range of issues confronting poor people in fragile states. For example, employment programmes may need to be combined with programmes on education, childcare, vocational training and healthcare.<sup>10</sup>
- Programmes need to be inclusive, understand the needs of different groups and avoid reinforcing existing inequalities. For example, youth empowerment programmes can be captured by elite youth and not reach the most excluded, increasing the risks of frustration and possible violence (Danish Institute for International Studies, 2008).
- Address employment needs in urban as well as rural contexts. Research in West Africa, for example, has found that mainstream youth employment approaches tend to focus on rural areas and the formal sector, whereas youth are increasingly concentrated in cities and in the informal sector (Sommers, 2007).

### *Enabling poor people to deal more effectively with livelihood risks and vulnerabilities*

**Why is this important?** In fragile contexts, especially those prone to conflict and/or natural disasters, poor people need to develop capacities to withstand and reduce livelihood risks, adopting strategies to balance their immediate needs with investments in future livelihoods. In many cases, humanitarian aid and social protection mechanisms are vital mechanisms of support, especially in the aftermath of disaster or conflict. Social protection can have a positive impact on empowerment and pro-poor growth and also contribute to political stability and the re-forging of the “social contract” between the state and its citizens (Darcy, 2004; Harvey, 2007).

**What can donors do?** Donors need to provide flexible, long-term and harmonised funding working with a range of instruments and actors to deliver humanitarian aid and social protection. This can include multi-donor trust funds, which enable governments and aid agencies to plan, programme, build staff capacity, and make strategic long-term commitments to local communities/partners (Box 4.4).

#### Box 4.4. Productive Safety Nets Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia

The Government of Ethiopia has implemented the PSNP since January 2005, with technical and financial support from a joint donor group (World Bank, European Commission, Irish Aid, DFID, USAID, CIDA). As well as a public works programme, the PSNP provides multi-annual, predictable financing for social protection, including in fragile regions. It offers direct unconditional transfers of cash or food to vulnerable households with no able-bodied members who can be employed in the public works programme. The PSNP aims to provide smallholders with greater flexibility over consumption decisions and to stimulate the development of rural markets. An appraisal of the PSNP concluded:

- Cash transfers had a significant impact in terms of nutrition, attitudes and risk-taking behaviours. People spent some of cash on health, education, paying debts and taxes, purchasing livestock and investing in their businesses.
- Enabling households to “graduate” into food security requires a combination of different programmes. A safety net programme cannot operate in isolation and it is important to look at the complex graduation processes involved. For example, another study into the PSNP (IFPRI 2008) found that households with access to both the PSNP and packages of agricultural support were more likely to be food-secure, to borrow for productive purposes, use improved agricultural technologies, and invest in their own non-farm business activities.

*Source:* Government of Ethiopia (2004), *The Ethiopian Productive Safety Net Program: Zero Draft*, Government of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa.; Gilligan *et al.*, (2008), *The Impact of Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Net Programme and its Linkages*, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Washington, DC; Harvey, P. (2007), *Cash Based Responses in Emergencies*, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London.

The OECD publications *Promoting Pro-Poor Growth: Social Protection* (2009), *Social Protection in Fragile States: Lessons Learnt* (2009) and *Empowerment in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management* (2010) provide a review of good practice. To support empowerment in fragile states, key lessons include:

- Cash transfers have been successful in fragile states, even when conflict was still ongoing (e.g. in DR Congo, Somalia, and Afghanistan). However, cash transfers are not universally appropriate and may be difficult to deliver in certain contexts, harder to target, more prone to corruption and capture and inflationary. They are a complement to, not a replacement for in-kind assistance (Harvey, 2007).
- Donors should draw on the full range of social protection and livelihood support instruments and adapt them to different contexts of fragility (Harvey, 2009) e.g. agricultural input subsidies; interventions to support markets; waiving fees for health and education; insurance mechanisms to respond to food insecurity and disasters; and interventions to support pastoralist livelihoods, such as destocking and fodder provision.

- It is important to target vulnerable groups as appropriate *e.g.* conflict-affected groups, the elderly, orphans, people with disabilities and SGBV survivors. In many crisis situations, women become the primary carers and breadwinners, yet humanitarian aid and social protection support has frequently been channelled through men, resulting in poorer outcomes for women and their dependents.
- Focus on long-term sustainability: integrate livelihoods programming into humanitarian relief; work to transform emergency interventions into longer-term social protection programmes; and build in graduation systems so programmes do not create dependency (which is antithetical to empowerment).

### *Supporting the delivery of basic services, including through non-state actors*

**Why is this important?** Supporting governments to deliver basic services can (re)establish state legitimacy, demonstrating government willingness and capacity to respond to citizens' needs and demands. This is particularly important in post-conflict contexts where the rapid re-establishment of services can give populations a stake in the peace. Post-conflict contexts and situations in which states are "weak, but willing" offer a "window of opportunity" for transforming service delivery to empower poor people, and to deliver services in a way that minimises tensions between groups and reduces grievances (UNDP, 2007; OECD, 2008c; UNDESA, 2010). Service delivery is also important to give people the basic education, skills and health needed to achieve the minimum level of survival and security, contribute to and benefit from pro-poor growth.

#### **Box 4.5. The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) in Afghanistan**

The NSP was launched in 2007 after its predecessor was criticised for its poor outreach to the regions, lack of transparency and accountability and limited consultation with stakeholders. The NSP provides communities with block grants, used on the basis of participatory decision making processes led by community development councils (CDCs) elected by secret ballot. The CDCs produce community development plans, harmonise community-level government programmes and help with sector planning at the district, provincial and national levels. Facilitating partners help communities to elect CDCs, plan and implement projects and build financial management capacity. Activities are implemented by communities or through private subcontractors. Lessons learned include:

- Large-scale community projects are possible even in fragile contexts.
- More than 80% of projects selected by communities have been related to infrastructure (*e.g.* irrigation, roads, electrification, drinking water supply), which are critical for recovery of the rural economy.
- Tensions can arise around CDC composition, especially where traditional leaders have not been elected. Thus, it is important to both encourage new leadership and allow opportunities for traditional leaders to be involved.
- While women are involved in electing the CDCs, and women-only CDCs give them equal opportunity to take part in village-level activities, their input into sub-projects and the use of block grants remains limited.
- Although the involvement of facilitators adds costs, they have also encouraged innovation.

*Source:* World Bank (2006), *Fragile States: The Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) Initiative*, World Bank, Washington, DC.

**What can donors do?** The DAC Paper *Service Delivery in Fragile Situations* (OECD, 2008c) gives comprehensive guidance on key approaches to service delivery in fragile states. In terms of supporting processes of empowerment and pro-poor growth specifically, good practices and lessons learned in fragile states include:

- Contrary to fears about parallel service provision, where public institutions are weak, unwilling or enjoy little legitimacy, community-based approaches can and have been used to strengthen local governance and connect citizens with the state. Community participation in managing services can improve wider participation in decision making about the management of public resources, meet local needs, strengthen civil society and improve state-society relations (Box 4.5).
- Approaches need to be flexible, innovative, tailored to the local context/sector and use the resources available. Where the state is lacking in capability or will, other delivery models include contracting out, NGO provision, co-provision, community-based approaches or working with the private sector.
- Ensure that access to services is equitable for different social groups and geographical areas. Improved access to basic services is critical to the empowerment of excluded groups and vital to support the transition to peace, political stability and economic growth in fragile and politicised environments where the perception of an inefficient or unfair system can be highly damaging (Brahimi, 2007).

### *Political empowerment in fragile states*

Through the laws, regulations and institutions they create or support, governments can determine the “rules of the game” through which individuals engage with each other in the economic sphere. Poor people need the capacities to influence these rules and wider policy-making processes, make demands and hold state institutions accountable. Thus, strengthening the capacities of poor people and the organisations that represent them (e.g. women’s organisations, farmer’s groups, trade unions) to engage with the state, conduct analysis and propose policy changes is critical to create an enabling environment for pro-poor growth. The following are priority areas for intervention in fragile states:

- supporting inclusive peace agreements and political settlements
- strengthening access to information and government transparency
- ensuring the delivery of justice and security to excluded and marginalised populations
- supporting decentralisation and strengthening local governance
- strengthening citizen engagement and collective action

### *Supporting inclusive peace agreements and political settlements*

**Why is this important?** In countries emerging from conflict, peace agreements and political negotiations provide important opportunities to change the way power is organised amongst political elites, to reshape the relationship between elites and the rest of society, to broaden participation, address exclusion and develop citizenship. Both the substance of the settlement and the processes through which it emerges are important *i.e.* who participates and how (Conciliation Resources, 2009). There are various mechanisms for ensuring participation in political negotiations including: representative political parties; consultative mechanisms through which civil society can engage; and direct participation by citizens. It is particularly important to ensure women are included in these processes. As the Solomon

Islands and Uganda demonstrate, women often play key roles in creating the conditions for peace, but often struggle to be included in political negotiations and as a result, vital opportunities for women's empowerment and the transformation of gender roles are missed (Pollard, 2000; Webber and Johnson, 2008; Moser, 2007; UNIFEM, 2008).

**What can donors do?** Donors can help create space for inclusion and participation by encouraging governments and armed groups to open up the peace or political reform process to wider groups. They can also provide political, financial and technical support prior to and during negotiations to help groups – especially women and marginalised groups – to develop strategies, articulate their views, build consensus and negotiate effectively (Barnes, 2009; Samuels, 2009). Donors can also help provide a sufficient level of security to enable safe public participation in negotiation processes as well as elections (particularly important for women) (Conciliation Resources, 2009); International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, 2010). Specific lessons learned and examples of good practice to ensure inclusive political settlements include:

- Donors need to understand the distribution of power and how interactions/coalitions between the leaders/elites who dominate different organisations and sectors will shape the political settlement (Leftwich, 2009).
- A new constitution alone cannot address entrenched institutional practices and power relations that exclude people. Changing the dynamics of power and exclusion requires broad public support generated through societal dialogue and consensus-building on the constitution (DFID, 2010a; Samuels, 2009).
- Support participatory peace/political processes and information campaigns at the local level: The issue of how conflict is generated, escalated and managed at the local level is often neglected in peace negotiations. National power sharing often cannot bring about a solution at the local level and may even impede local solutions to the problems underlying the conflict (Mehler, 2008).
- Communities and marginalised groups should decide who will represent them and who should be invited to negotiations (outside actors have often invited to negotiations pre-war political formations or rebel groups with questionable popular credentials).
- Support women to organise and participate in negotiations by supporting female delegates to meet with women's organisations; facilitating linkages between national and international actors; and organising nationwide consultations of women (Banaszak *et al.*, 2005).
- In fragmented societies, public participation can pose risks to ordinary people and debate can become polarised (Barnes, 2009). Donors must carefully assess and respond to ongoing political and security risks.

### *Strengthening access to information*

**Why is this important?** In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, public policy decisions are often shaped by narrow political and economic interests amid a culture of secrecy, non-transparency and disinformation, which can disempower people and heighten grievances that can lead to conflict.

**What can donors do?** Lessons learned and good practices to promote poor people's access to information and increase transparency in order to support empowerment in fragile states include:

- Donors can provide technical and financial assistance to support the development and implementation of legislation to establish citizen rights to information, the government's obligation to provide it, and locally appropriate media laws that create an enabling environment for a free, independent media (Kalathil *et al.*, 2008).
- Ensure that information is provided in accessible, relevant ways for poor people. In fragile contexts where there is limited media infrastructure, community radio can provide a low-cost option for reaching poor communities – including through broadcasts in multiple local languages – ensuring that citizens' voices, especially marginalised groups, are heard and supporting community mobilisation (Haider, 2009).
- Support the use of the media to promote debate on key issues in society, promote reconciliatory processes, and provide civic education (UNDP, 2003). However, close monitoring is key as the media can also be used to disseminate propaganda, aggravate tensions and promote violence *e.g.* Rwanda in 1994.
- New information and communication technologies (ICTs) can be used to promote government transparency and accountability and empower citizens. The increasing use of mobile telephones for film and photo documentation and the use of SMS for networking and mobilisation have created new opportunities for citizen participation. Donors can support public information and literacy campaigns via mobile telephones as well as citizen monitoring of government and donor programmes (Association for Progressive Communications, 2009).
- Donors can also support civic education programmes for civil society organisations and citizens, which enhance understandings about rights to information and increase engagement in dialogue processes.
- Build the capacities of poor people and community-based organisations to analyse and understand information and to act on it by communicating and discussing their views. These skills can be developed through involvement in mechanisms such as public hearings, public meetings and participatory planning and by developing people's skills in advocacy, negotiation and mediation.

### *Supporting the delivery of justice and security to local populations*

**Why is this important?** Fragile states are often characterised by periodic or endemic insecurity and limited access to justice, which tend to affect poor and vulnerable groups disproportionately. Without minimum levels of security, protection from violence and mechanisms to hold public and private actors to account for abuses, poor people will lack the confidence to participate in politics and decision making (Pearce J., McGee, R. and Wheeler, J., forthcoming).

**What can donors do?** In areas where there are failures of state authority and/or abuses by state security forces, security and justice are often delivered by non-state actors (*e.g.* community groups, traditional authorities,<sup>11</sup> militias) with varying levels of legitimacy and accountability. The first step is therefore to undertake an analysis of who delivers justice and security, how and with what outcomes. Lessons learned and good practices to deliver security and justice in a way that promotes empowerment include:

- Past attempts to introduce a uniform national security and justice system have often failed to take into account local realities and expectations and have not succeeded or have aggravated tensions (Hohe and Nixon, 2003; Nathan, 2009; OECD, 2007b).

Where non-state providers enjoy some legitimacy with local populations, donors should aim to strengthen their performance, capabilities and accountability whilst building longer-term state capacities (Willems *et al.*, 2009; OECD, 2007b).

- There is often limited political will at a local level to undertake reforms, which has sometimes led donors to overlook local ownership especially when working to tight timeframes (Nathan, 2009). Instead, donors need to encourage local debate and discuss with local elites how international principles can be reconciled with local practices and values, reflect their own interests and respond to people's needs.
- Build the capacities, resources, skills and knowledge (*e.g.* of human and legal rights) of poor and marginalised groups so they can to engage in decisions about how their security and justice needs will be met and demand greater accountability of providers (Donais, 2009; Born, 2009).
- Invest in accountability systems that can monitor various providers of security and justice (*e.g.* independent media sources, diverse types of civic watchdog organizations, independent unions, women and youth organizations) in terms of their levels of legitimacy with the local population, their transparency, responsiveness, inclusivity and compliance with international human rights law (OECD, 2007b).
- Invest in community security initiatives such as community-based policing that bring together the police, civil society and local communities to develop local solutions to security concerns (Baker, 2007) (Box 4.6).

#### **Box 4.6. Addressing citizen security through community-based policing (CBP) in Kenya**

In 2004, Saferworld piloted a pilot community-based policing programme in Kibera, Kenya. This included consultations between the local community, civil society and police to produce a detailed analysis of the factors driving crime and insecurity in the area; provided training and awareness-raising for police officers and communities; established community safety and information centres; and provided anonymous information “drop-in” boxes to facilitate information exchange on community safety issues. The various positive outcomes from the project included:

- Training built police, civil society and community capacity to develop security policies, strategies, programmes.
- The accountable, responsive approach gave citizens greater confidence to openly discuss safety/security issues.
- Information sharing between communities and police has helped police take crime prevention action.
- Increased police patrols have improved neighbourhood safety.
- CBP has created local ownership by giving communities the opportunity to develop their own safety initiatives.
- CBP can target specific constituencies *e.g.* young people are involved in CBP efforts to improve safety.
- CBP develops synergy between community and national levels. CBP pilot sites have informed the process of developing the national government's community policing policy.

*Source:* Finnegan, L., C. Hickson, C. and S. Rai (eds.) (2008), *Implementing Community-Based Policing in Kenya*, Saferworld, London.

### *Supporting decentralisation and strengthening local governance*

**Why is this important?** Although there is debate about whether decentralisation works in fragile states, decentralisation has been actively pursued by donors in “willing but weak” and more authoritarian states – including post-conflict states – as it is believed to improve service delivery, bring government closer to the people, allow citizens to participate in decision making and learn democratic skills and how to exercise their rights (Brinkerhoff and Azfar, 2006). It is also argued that decentralisation can redistribute power and reduce social tensions through providing a space for conflicting groups to mediate differences through legal, non-violent methods (Oosterom, 2009; Brinkerhoff and Johnson, 2008; Haar, van der, 2009).

**What can donors do?** Good Practice Note 3 provides detailed guidance on how to support decentralisation processes in ways that empower citizens. Additional lessons and good practices that are relevant to empowerment in fragile states include:

- In fragile contexts, decentralisation must be informed by a detailed political analysis of individual and group interests, networks, informal rules and power dynamics in order to ensure it does not aggravate tensions, result in elite capture or the exclusion of minority groups (Scott, 2009; Cammack *et al.*, 2007).
- Where state capacity and human capital are particularly low, a long-term approach is required to develop administrative and technical capacity amongst local level institutions and to build the resources, skills and knowledge of poor/marginalised groups to be able to participate in reforms.

#### **Box 4.7. Reforming local governance through the Seila Programme in Cambodia**

The Government of Cambodia’s Seila programme, supported by the IBRD, World Bank, UN system and bilateral donors, was launched in 1996 and functioned as an aid mobilisation and co-ordination framework to support decentralisation reforms. It enabled local-level commune councils, district planning units, and provincial-level line ministries to jointly prioritise, plan and implement the disbursement of donor funds, in line with needs identified at the local commune level. Among the wide range of positive outcomes were delivering essential basic services to more than 2 000 villages, and promoting widespread participation in planning and visibly changing attitudes toward democratic values and good governance, including increasing activism, self-reliance, and self-esteem amongst communities that were formerly passive recipients of assistance. Seila’s success has been due, to a great extent, to its flexibility and ability to make incremental shifts over time into new areas, and to continue to provide incentives for government to remain engaged. Other lessons include:

- Experimentation and the ability to recognise and capitalise on successful experiments are important.
- Identifying and responding to the needs and concerns of stakeholders are critical to keeping them engaged.
- In fragile contexts, programmes should start with a low level of resources until systems are firmly in place and then to increase them incrementally.
- It is useful to develop close relationship with key political players at all levels.

*Source:* Manor, J. (2007), *Aid that Works: Successful Development in Fragile States*, World Bank, Washington, DC; Andersen, H. (2004), *Cambodia’s Seila Program: A decentralised approach to rural development and poverty reduction*, IBRD/The World Bank, Washington, DC.

- In post-conflict and fragile contexts, governments are unlikely to have the resources in the short-term to devolve funding to local government for local service delivery. Donors can provide interim funding to ensure that resources are available to provide immediate tangible benefits at a local level (Box 4.7).
- In cases where state authority, legitimacy and capacity are particularly weak, it may be appropriate to build on existing de facto local governance arrangements, which may include non-state institutions and systems, including religious, traditional and community leaders. Again the priorities are to promote responsiveness, accountability and the inclusion of poor/marginalised groups (Brinkerhoff and Johnson, 2008).
- In post-conflict contexts, women are often the primary breadwinners and carers and it is particularly important that decentralisation programmes focus on enhancing women's capacities to participate, their access to information and their leadership capacity.

### *Strengthening citizen engagement and collective action*

**Why is this important?** Recent evidence suggests that donors need to work on “both sides of the equation”, *i.e.* to reform state institutions and build capacity at a national level and to strengthen citizens' ability to voice their needs and demand accountability (Benequista, 2010). However, in fragile and conflict-affected states, research suggests that most cases of citizen engagement take place over the long-term, through involvement in self-organised local-level associations (Eyben and Ladbury, 2006; Bigdon and Korf, 2004; Gaventa and Barrett, 2010; Haider, 2009; Benequista, 2010) or social movements (Kamete, 2009) – which are also more likely to include vulnerable groups than formal elite-driven community-based organisations. Over time, these groups may develop into larger community structures, which interact with government and other external agencies (*e.g.* in Angola, when citizens were fully involved in planning the delivery of a water supply system). This not only resulted in access to a basic service, but also helped create new relationships between citizens and state officials (Haider, 2009).

**What can donors do?** Good Practice Note 3. Empowerment through local citizenship and 4. Working with social movements demonstrate that citizens engage with the state and other powerful actors in various ways including through local government bodies; NGOs; user management committees; social accountability mechanisms; and social movements. They detail strategies and good practice for donors to support inclusive citizenship, participation and local accountability and to engage with social movements. In fragile and conflict-affected states, there are a number of additional considerations, lessons and good practices:

- In fragile contexts where there is social fragmentation and limited state authority, community networks and associations can prove surprisingly resilient. New forms of solidarity and associationalism based may also emerge (*e.g.* farming co-operatives, savings and credit groups). Donors need to pay more attention to these structures and support them to play a role in including and empowering poor people.
- Nonetheless, in some fragile contexts, there may be a culture of powerlessness or dependency, which needs to be addressed in order to foster citizenship engagement and collective action (Haider, 2009).

- Donors need to expend significant time understanding and reconciling the interests of different groups – governments, private companies, community groups – especially where there is a legacy of division and mistrust due to conflict and instability (CommDev, 2008).
- In post-conflict situations, local needs are particularly highly variable, so providing opportunities for communities to be involved in the allocation of resources can be an effective way of targeting resources to areas of need and of using strategies articulated by the communities themselves.
- Community-based institutions are not inherently more inclusive and are likely to reflect existing political and social dynamics and inequalities (e.g. the predominance of men or certain ethnic groups) (Nathan, 2007, cited in DfID, 2010c). Where it is perceived that certain groups have captured community-based programmes, this can disempower others and exacerbate social divisions (Box 4.8) (Haider, 2009).

#### Box 4.8. The exclusion of vulnerable groups from community development mechanisms

An assessment of seeds-and-tools programmes in 19 villages in post-conflict Sierra Leone found that NGOs seed targeting and distribution systems involved collaboration with village development committees (VDCs) who helped identify and register intended participants. Research found that the VDCs were generally comprised of elders and elites and that vulnerable groups, like women, youth and those from more remote settlements, were not included. There was misappropriation of resources by elite groups, a lack of popular awareness of the law or citizens' rights and no popular participation in decision-making processes. The assessment concluded that such inequalities in seed distribution could kindle local animosities.

*Source:* Archibald, S. and P. Richards (2002), "Seeds and Rights: New Approaches to Post-war Agricultural Rehabilitation in Sierra Leone", *Disasters*, Vol. 26, No. 4, pp. 356-367.

- It is therefore important to include minimum standards or mechanisms designed to specifically target women and marginalised groups in programme design to ensure that they can participate, whilst being careful not to create perceptions of bias and exacerbate tensions (DfID, 2010c).
- Donors can promote the development of local associations through the deployment of trained facilitators or social mobilisers, at the community or village level. These volunteers can disseminate information, provide training and support and promote the inclusion of poor and marginalised groups. However, facilitators need to be careful not to take over and undermine processes of empowerment (Bigdon and Korf, 2004; Haider, 2009).
- In fragile states, where management and institutional capacity are weak, longer timeframes are needed to foster state or community participation and ownership, develop confidence, scale up and sustain programmes. Short-term funding can create a gap between expectations and the ability to deliver.
- Participatory planning and budgeting processes have been effective in some fragile states, empowering local community groups and institutions by giving them joint control (with local government and/or the private sector) over the allocation of municipal resources.

- In fragile states, service delivery or resource management arrangements that bring the community together with local government and civil society organisations (e.g. water user or education committees, Box 4.9) can promote greater responsiveness and fairness in decision making through increased transparency and consultation (Helling *et al.*, 2005). There is evidence that in conflict settings in particular, community institutions are often used initially to get resources quickly to people, but over time can evolve into more complex interventions that address comprehensive planning issues (World Bank, 2006a).

#### Box 4.9. Community Organised Primary Education (COPE) in Afghanistan

The COPE programme, run by CARE, aims to provide greater access to basic education for school-age girls and boys in rural areas of Southeast and Central Afghanistan. COPE has established a large network of schools and provides training for teachers to help upgrade their skills. The programme was established in the 1990s, when, despite Taliban restrictions on girls' education, it allowed communities to take control of who taught their girls and boys and where they were taught. Because the project approach built on the traditional education system where instruction takes place in mosques or private houses and teachers are hired from local communities, communities were able to resist Taliban efforts to close schools. The programme has also established Village Education Committees (VECs), which manage and maintain the school facility and hire teachers. Parents, VEC members and schoolteachers negotiate the school fee per child to pay teachers' salaries, and select students from poorer families to be exempted from payment. The project cycle lasts two years after which CARE support phases out and the school is handed over to the local authority. The VECs remain ultimately responsible for the management and financing of the schools at the community level.

*Source:* Slaymaker, T. and K. Christiaansen with I. Hemming (2005), *Community-based Approaches and Service Delivery: Issues and Options in Difficult Environments and Partnerships*, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London.

### *Social empowerment in fragile states*

Social empowerment is the process through which individuals and groups develop a sense of autonomy and self-confidence and act to change the social relationships, institutions and discourses that exclude them and keep them in poverty (Eyben *et al.*, 2008). Poor people need the knowledge, awareness and confidence at an individual level to act autonomously, build relationships and networks, exercise their rights, envisage and make demands for change. In fragile states, social empowerment includes overcoming feelings of isolation, humiliation and powerlessness that often result from ongoing violence and bringing about changes in how people see themselves and others. Thus, the priority areas for intervention to promote social empowerment in fragile states are:

- strengthening “bridging” social capital and inter-community co-operation;
- restoring the dignity and identity of war-affected populations.

### *Strengthening “bridging” social capital and inter-community co-operation*

**Why is this important?** In fragile contexts where the state is weak or absent, people may develop allegiances to groups based on ethnicity, religion or region as a means to compete for scarce resources. Conflict can occur along these lines and leaves a legacy of

tension and mistrust both between communities and between citizens and the state, making it difficult for collective activities that depend on trust and co-operation – such as trade and exchange – to succeed (World Bank, 2006a). Supporting individuals and groups to interact with each other and with local institutions through participation in common projects can help them recognise their interdependence, dispel negative perceptions about the “other” and begin to re-establish social and institutional relationships, intergroup co-operation and interpersonal trust (*i.e.* “bridging social capital”) (Haider, 2009).

**What can donors do?** Divided groups are more likely to participate in projects that address common needs (Haider, 2009). Overall, the lessons and good practices that emerge from projects and programmes designed to promote build social capital, promote social cohesion and reconciliation include:

- Community-led processes, such as working through decentralised local community councils, can build social capital by providing safe forums for interaction, discussion and joint decision making (Box 4.10).

#### Box 4.10. The Tajikistan Rural Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project

The World Bank’s Rural Infrastructure Rehabilitation Project in Tajikistan was implemented in a context where the civil war had resulted in high levels of anger and resentment, the disruption of utility services and blocked access to social services. The project encouraged the active involvement of different stakeholders through the creation of water user associations (WUAs) to increase local ownership of project activities and resource use. The project provided the training, technical assistance and start-up facilities to establish the WUAs via a participatory process and develop plans based on the views and priorities of water users. However, because communities distrusted each other, and initially the government was very fragile and sensitive to the idea of devolving power, the programme adopted an “attraction” model, through which WUAs were set up slowly, aiming to build small-farm productivity and, in this way, encourage greater interest from the community. This gradual approach, which introduced concepts of participation and empowerment in a non-threatening way, helped bring communities back into productive contact.

*Source:* World Bank, (2006), *Community-Driven Development in the Context of Conflict-Affected Countries: Challenges and Opportunities*, World Bank, Washington, DC.

- The process of developing social capital within and between communities requires local ownership and leadership and takes time. It must be initiated or strongly supported by key individuals within communities and requires a gradual increase in people’s capacity and willingness to engage with others.
- The success of projects may depend on a degree of interdependence and social integration already being present (Haider, 2009). For example, in some contexts, working on economic exchanges through the marketplace has provided an important avenue for rebuilding social capital and improving social cohesion (Box 4.11).
- However, working together on a community-based project will not immediately result in wider societal cohesion. There is some evidence to suggest that cohesion from community-based co-operation is not reflected in broader social life until people have worked together for four or five years (World Bank, 2006a).
- It may be necessary to work separately with different groups, at least initially, for example through third party mediators familiar with local communities and belief

systems (and where possible reflecting the social composition of the communities) (Pottebaum and Lee, 2007), allowing relationship-building and cohesion to develop over time.

- Informal institutions can play an important role in rebuilding social capital, for example faith-based actors can allow donors direct access to communities through pre-existing relations and channels (Colletta and Cullen, 2000). They can engage in mediation and inter-faith dialogue, provide emotional and spiritual support and reconciliation activities. However, they can also act in exclusionary or divisive ways by supporting only their followers.
- Creative forms of communication can be used to encourage dialogue between social groups and communities, promote reconciliation and provide civic education (e.g. radio soap operas, participatory video, theatre productions and puppet shows, designed and conducted by communities).<sup>12</sup>
- It is also important to work to build leadership capacity through training that includes different groups and is supported by local leaders (e.g. formal training in personal empowerment and transformational leadership); practical training in participatory planning, facilitation and communication.
- Conflict-affected communities are often affected by displacement. This can affect the composition of community committees, as well as the commitment that displaced people have to one community.

#### Box 4.11. **Building trust through the market in Cambodia**

UNDP's Carrere Project and the World Bank-financed Northeast Village Development Project (NVDP) in Cambodia put the management of community resources in the hands of the village itself, building on existing institutions and relations and creating new ones. The aim is to connect to markets and create a form of social capital that arises from community traditions and familial solidarity, but also from repeated and predictable economic and social exchanges connecting people of diverse backgrounds to each other in numerous overlapping and reinforcing relationships.

*Source:* Colletta, N. J. and M. L. Cullen (2000), *The Nexus between Violent Conflict, Social Capital and Social Cohesion: Case Studies from Cambodia and Rwanda*, World Bank, Washington, DC.

#### *Restoring the dignity and identity of war-affected populations*

**Why is this important?** Certain groups suffer disproportionately from the effects of war including religious and ethnic groups targeted for persecution, ex-combatants (especially child soldiers) and women, who are often targets of sexual violence and left as primary breadwinners and carers during and after conflict. Recovery from trauma is a complex process through which individuals and communities acknowledge what happened, seek justice and eventually reach a state of acceptance or forgiveness. People need adequate support to come to terms with their suffering, to restore a positive sense of identity and to enable them to re-engage in social, political and economic activities.

**What can donors do?** Relief and recovery programmes often fail to adequately target vulnerable groups, instead putting resources into the hands of powerful groups and reinforcing inequalities. Furthermore, such programmes often fail to address the less

tangible psychological and social impacts of violence, which can leave individuals feeling powerless, frightened and humiliated. Key lessons for donor support include:

- Provide psychosocial healing and support: For groups to recover from war, traumatic events must be discussed, acknowledged and mourned within and between communities (Gutlove and Thompson, 2003). Healing strategies include counselling, self-help groups, providing a psychologically and physically safe space in which people can rebuild their social relationships,<sup>13</sup> and symbolic healing, for example the construction of a monument (Bloomfield *et al.*, 2003).
- Transitional justice and truth-telling processes can contribute to individual healing by helping people come to terms with their pain and loss as well as help overcome social divisions by encouraging a reframing of the “other” and a recognition of shared suffering (Franovic, 2008).
- Where appropriate, reconciliation programmes should build on local customs and rituals, which promote healing, reconciliation and social solidarity – whilst ensuring that these local traditions do not reinforce structural causes and dynamics of conflict, particularly the exclusion of women (Murithi, 2006).
- Healing and reconciliation must be locally owned. Only local people can know and understand the suffering has been caused to their communities. Donors should focus their efforts in facilitating processes through capacity building using local organisations and people (Box 4.12) (Bloomfield *et al.*, 2003).

#### **Box 4.12. Rebuilding the confidence of SGBV survivors and women at risk in Haiti**

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is widespread in Haiti, especially domestic violence and, to a lesser but still significant extent, rape. Although there has been an increased willingness of women to declare cases of violence, many are still reluctant to speak out. In 2007, with DFID funding, UNIFEM Haiti initiated a programme in nine communities to build the capacities, skills and resources of grassroots women’s community organisations to respond to the needs of SGBV survivors and to raise women and men’s awareness about the cause and consequences of SGBV. In each community, the women’s organisation established a “security committee” bringing together key community representatives and service providers (*e.g.* local authorities, police, judiciary, church, voodoo community) to work together to prevent and respond to SGBV. In 2009, an independent evaluation of the programme noted the following achievements:

- increased capacity and confidence of women’s organisations and their members to act and campaign to prevent SGBV in their communities;
- an increase in the number of individual SGBV victims speaking out, seeking support from women’s organisations and going to the police – with an average of 50% of known cases now reported to the police and 40% of these cases tried and decisions rendered;
- women reported an improved response from the police commissariats in the nine communities and their increased satisfaction with police action.

*Source:* Social Development Direct (2009), “Review of UNIFEM Programme: Supporting Women’s Engagement in Peacebuilding and Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict: Community-led approaches, Report for the Department for International Development (DFID)”, London; UNIFEM Haiti (2008), *Strengthening State and Civil Society Accountability for Ending Violence against Women in Haiti: Annual Progress Report for the Haiti component of the UNIFEM Global Programme: Supporting Women’s engagement in Peace Building and Preventing Sexual Violence: Community Led Approaches.*

- Setting up channels for ongoing communication and information exchange between groups is critical to the social reconstruction process. This has symbolic value, demonstrating the gains in trust and human connection, and practical value, allowing lessons to be learned and put to use (Gutlove and Thompson, 2003).
- Survivors and victims' groups provide valuable support to individuals, helping them to acknowledge what happened, find missing relatives and hold perpetrators responsible for crimes. However, these groups can sometimes reinforce ethnic boundaries, which can disrupt the peace building process (Franovic, 2008).

## Notes

1. In recent years, economic growth has lifted more than 500 million people out of poverty and accounts for an estimated 80% of poverty reduction (Dollar and Kraay, 2002).
2. *I.e.* Macroeconomic stability; security and protection from predation; competitive markets; financial capital; human capital; connectivity; openness to the global economy; increased agricultural productivity.
3. Compared to 2% in peaceful countries (Collier, Hoeffler and Rohner, 2009). These are figures from a statistical cross-country analysis. There are exceptions from these general observations *e.g.* Sri Lanka enjoyed decades of growth while formally in conflict.
4. This typology was conceived by Stewart and Brown (2009).
5. *E.g.* youths who joined the RUF in Sierra Leone as a means of challenging the repressive neo-patrimonial power structures that excluded them and failed to meet their educational and other needs.
6. Although many donors have more recently engaged in northern Uganda.
7. [www.powercube.net](http://www.powercube.net).
8. For example, the *Conventions locales* in the West African Sahel.
9. Functional commercial banks and a minimum level of trust between entrepreneurs is also required.
10. See the case story in this series on the Kenya Youth Empowerment Programme, available for download at [www.oecd.org/dac/poverty](http://www.oecd.org/dac/poverty).
11. Traditional authorities often play an important role in dispute resolution *e.g.* over access to property and other natural resources.
12. For example, in Afghanistan, the long-running radio drama *New Home, New Life* presents its characters with various dilemmas (around women's rights for instance) that are closely related to actual experience.
13. See evaluation of psychosocial assistance programmes in former Yugoslavia (Gutlove and Thompson, 2003).

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*Annex 4.A1*

**The characteristics of fragile states and societies and opportunities and challenges for empowering poor people**

Dimension of fragility	Description	Characteristics can include:	Opportunities and challenges for empowering poor people
<b>STATE FRAGILITY</b>			
<b>Authority failures</b>	Cases where the state lacks the authority to protect its citizens from violence of various kinds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant organised political violence, often described as civil war.</li> <li>• State authority does not extend to a significant portion of the country.</li> <li>• Periodic political or communal violence causing deaths and destruction.</li> <li>• Very high levels of criminality with almost no state action to control it nor a working justice system.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where state authority is weak or absent, informal systems emerge to manage and overcome livelihood risks and vulnerabilities and (sometimes) provide a degree of security and justice to populations.</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In violent/unstable situations, people lack confidence in their ability to retain the returns on any investments in the future, and become unwilling to accumulate and maximise their assets.</li> <li>• Social exchanges are characterised by unpredictability – economic activity becomes restricted to small kin/same ethnicity groups and focussed on insuring against risk (rather than investing in the future).</li> <li>• Violence and crime tend to reinforce social differentiation and mistrust, reducing the scope of any collective action/co-operation (weakening bridging social capital between groups)).</li> <li>• Violence/crime at the state level tends to be replicated at the household and personal level, reducing health and education indicators, affecting livelihoods, political participation and collective action.</li> <li>• Informal systems of power and authority can be autocratic and repressive.</li> </ul>
<b>Service failures</b>	Cases where the state fails to ensure that all citizens have access to basic services (low/unequal coverage)*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate delivery of health services</li> <li>• Inadequate delivery of basic education</li> <li>• Inadequate delivery of water and sanitation</li> <li>• Inadequate delivery of basic transport &amp; energy infrastructure</li> <li>• Inadequate social safety nets (prevention of destitution)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-state institutions tend to fill the void and fulfil service delivery functions with varying degrees of accountability and effectiveness. It may be possible to work with/build on these institutions.</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-state provision of infrastructure can be high cost and reduced scope, restricting economic activity and reinforcing cases of regional – and therefore often ethnic – isolation.</li> <li>• Non-state provision of services can sometimes be detrimental to state building through creating parallel structures and lines of accountability.</li> <li>• Where distributive mechanisms operate based on patronage and clientelism, this leads to economic inefficiency and heightens social and ethnic tensions.</li> </ul>
<b>Legitimacy failures</b>	Cases where the state lacks validity amongst part of its population. It is typically not democratic, often with the military (or other elites) ruling directly or strongly dominating the government.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No democracy (i.e. no free, fair elections).</li> <li>• A strong governmental role for the military</li> <li>• Acquisition of power by force</li> <li>• Suppression of opposition</li> <li>• Control of media</li> <li>• Exclusion of significant groups of the population from power</li> <li>• Absence of civil and political liberties, with arbitrary arrest, absence of free speech...</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Military governments can be non-partisan and are often effective at large scale/emergency service delivery (e.g. roads, literacy, health campaigns), especially in the early phase of power.</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The institutions of security and justice become focussed on keeping the ruling elite/party in power, instead of mediating conflict within society.</li> <li>• A lack of civil and political liberties can create a climate of fear in which people are afraid to speak out and make demands on the state.</li> <li>• Participation may be restricted to non-political, technocratic arenas e.g. service delivery or markets.</li> </ul>

Dimension of fragility	Description	Characteristics can include:	Opportunities and challenges for empowering poor people
<b>SOCIETAL FRAGILITY</b>			
<b>Weak human capacity</b>	Societies where conflict and deprivation have weakened people's physical & intellectual capabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low levels of education and skills</li> <li>• Poor health/physical capability</li> <li>• Depleted household assets</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small improvements in basic service delivery will have significant impact on individual empowerment.</li> <li>• Risk and resource pooling measures to reduce vulnerability may have potential.</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State capacity is weakened due to low numbers of capable, skilled individuals.</li> <li>• People are often focused on survival and have limited capacities to engage in individual or collective action to try to change their circumstances.</li> </ul>
<b>Weak social capital</b>	Societies where conflict and deprivation have weakened co-operation and collective action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weakened social networks/social fragmentation</li> <li>• High levels of fear and mistrust between groups</li> <li>• Low levels of associationalism and inter-group co-operation</li> </ul>	<p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breakdown in social capital and growth of fear and mistrust can be a key factor in intergroup violence</li> <li>• Social fragmentation can have significant economic ramifications e.g. lack of trust in economic transactions, credit markets etc.</li> <li>• Low levels of intergroup co-operation and associationalism and social fragmentation significantly reduce the potential for collective action to make demands on the state and service providers.</li> </ul>
<b>Significant inequality and exclusion</b>	Societies characterised by significant levels of vertical or horizontal inequality & exclusion of particular groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharp vertical inequality (class-based)</li> <li>• Sharp horizontal inequalities (i.e. on the basis of ethnicity, religion, region)</li> <li>• Exclusion/marginalisation of particular minority groups</li> </ul>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeted interventions may be possible and may have a significant impact on marginalised groups.</li> </ul> <p><b>Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The exclusion of particular groups/regions can exacerbate socio-political tensions, compound state fragility and provoke violence.</li> <li>• Where sharp horizontal inequalities exist, competition over scarce resources often takes place along ethnic, regional or religious lines and the introduction of resources can exacerbate tensions.</li> </ul>

\* Stewart and Brown (2009) stress that the dividing line is difficult to determine here as most poor countries have failures with respect to comprehensive service delivery. It might be argued that in some cases this failure stems from poverty and is not a state failure at all, but a development failure. Hence they propose these additional criteria for service entitlements to count as state failure.

## *Annex 4.A2*

### **Monitoring and evaluating impact in fragile states**

The ongoing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of development programmes is critical in order to increase the likelihood that the objectives of programmes remain relevant and that they achieve the desired medium-term results and longer-term impacts in an efficient, effective and sustainable manner (OECD, 2006b). However, as discussed in Good Practice Note 9. Monitoring and evaluating empowerment processes, monitoring and evaluating empowerment is particularly difficult because it involves tracking changes in relationships, capabilities and perceptions, which are dynamic and contextual, and can be difficult to observe and quantify (OECD, 2010c). Furthermore, there is a tension for donors between adopting the kind of flexible approach need to support nascent processes of empowerment and social change and the need to meet internal procedures, demonstrate results and measurable impact (Gujit, 2007).

In many ways, these difficulties and tensions are more acute in fragile states, which can pose a number of additional challenges for monitoring and evaluating programmes, in particular empowerment programmes:

- **Fragile environments are usually “data poor”:** Due to capacity and security constraints, even the most basic data can be inexistent, patchy, unreliable or difficult to obtain, making it difficult to prepare baselines, track changes and measure results.
- **Capacity constraints:** In fragile contexts, implementing partners and local institutions may suffer from weak human and logistical capacity and lack the skills and resources for effective monitoring.
- **Security risks:** Even once M&E systems are in place, ongoing security risks may prevent staff from travelling, hinder data collection from population, and impact on regular monitoring checks.
- **Shifting objectives/activities:** In insecure or volatile contexts, programme objectives and activities are often fluid, making it difficult to maintain a coherent approach to monitoring and particularly difficult to demonstrate causality and attribution.
- **Data collection is expensive and time-consuming:** Given the constraints and lack of data, donors/partners will often have to conduct their own survey work, which is time-consuming and costly.
- **The pressures for rapid delivery:** In fragile states, particularly those emerging from conflict or humanitarian crisis, needs are often great and require a rapid response. This can mean that, even if empowerment issues are considered, there is little time to conduct a thorough social assessment or baseline at the onset of a programme (World Bank, 2006b).

- **Sensitivities of data collection:** In conflict-affected or transition contexts, there can be particular sensitivities around data collection on issues such as inclusion, accountability and access to resources.

In spite of these challenges, the monitoring and evaluation of empowerment is important if donors and partners are to ensure effective programme delivery (and learn lessons about how to encourage empowerment processes in different contexts, through post-programme evaluations to assess longer-term impacts). Whilst there is limited experience of specifically monitoring empowerments in fragile contexts, some broad lessons can be drawn from work on M&E in fragile contexts, which can supplement the guidance in Good Practice Note 9. Good Practice Note on monitoring and evaluating empowerment processes):

- **Ongoing monitoring and risk management is vital:** In an unstable context, regular monitoring of the political and conflict dynamics is required to assess the risks for programme delivery, including security risks to partners and beneficiaries.
- However, it is **better to go for “good enough” monitoring** and track a few key indicators using easily accessible data sources and simple low-cost “sentinel” or “snapshot” surveys of fast-moving situations, rather than designing complex systems that end up being too difficult and costly to deliver.
- **Participatory monitoring and evaluation** can be particularly effective in building partner and beneficiary capacity and ownership, increasing transparency, and sourcing data from unstable or inaccessible areas in ways that respect local knowledge, support learning and reflection and hence are empowering (Estrella and Gaventa, 1998).
- **Strengthen indigenous information systems where possible** *i.e.* the systems that people use in everyday life to track local wage rates, prices of everyday goods etc. This ensures that M&E is less extractive, builds capacity and links to wider initiatives to empower people through promoting transparency and access to information. Although it is also important to be aware that in some cases local knowledge can be biased, especially in situations divided by conflict.
- **A combined quantitative-qualitative approach is likely to be most effective:** Qualitative data becomes particularly important in fragile contexts where the systems and processes are often not in place to collect quantitative data accurately and reliably, but there may also be additional barriers to qualitative data collection caused by fear, mistrust and disinformation. The best approach is to combine and triangulate qualitative and quantitative data, proxy and direct measures.
- **Evaluate the positive and negative effects on the dynamics of conflict and fragility:** Monitoring and evaluation in fragile contexts should capture any impacts – direct or indirect – of the programme that might have aggravated tensions or perpetuated conflict.
- **Disaggregating data is particularly important:** In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, where tensions between groups are high, it is especially important to collect disaggregated data, looking at the impacts of the programme on different groups by region, age, gender, religion, ethnicity, etc.
- Evaluations should provide contextual reflection on the **factors of success in the particular context** and the extent to which the approach might be replicated elsewhere.

- **All partners need to evaluate their own impact:** Evaluations should reflect on the agency and impact of both donors and partners (as well as other external parties) on the empowerment processes they seek to encourage. This is especially important in post-conflict situations where the donor may be heavily involved politically or militarily in the transition process.
- **Ensuring monitoring and evaluation activities “do no harm”:** In fragile situations, it is particularly important to reflect on the way monitoring and evaluation activities themselves might impact both positively and negatively on local power relations, capacity constraints and social tensions.