

Fragile and Conflict-Affected States in the Age of COVID 19

A 2020 Country Indicators for Foreign Policy Report

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List of Acronyms

ALC	Authority-Legitimacy-Capacity
CIFP	Country Indicators for Foreign Policy
FCAS	Fragile and Conflict-Affected States
FI	Fragility Index
LICs	Low Income Countries
LICUS	Low Income Countries Under Stress
MIFF	Middle Income Failed or Fragile
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FCAS) remain more relevant than ever. After a brief period of declining fragility at the turn of the century, FCAS have become more prominent as their precarious situation worsens in a COVID 19 world. In the last decade or so, we have seen an increase in armed conflicts and violence around the world. The COVID 19 crisis has further exacerbated FCAS performance in several important ways by further weakening their capacity for response and prevention and by delinking their economies from global financial, trade and aid flows.

In our latest ranking presented in this report, Chad tops the list of FCAS. Sudan, Somalia, the Central African Republic and South Sudan make up the top five. Ranks five to ten are occupied, in order, by Yemen, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, West Bank and Gaza, and Eritrea. A year-over-year comparison with previous rankings from the Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP) project shows that Somalia, Chad, the Central African Republic, Afghanistan, Sudan and South Sudan rank consistently among the top poor performers and usually almost always within the top five for several years. These are countries that we would typically characterize as being trapped in fragility.

The majority of the top 20 most fragile states are located in Sub-Saharan Africa, a finding that is consistent with our historical data (www.carleton.ca/cifp). The rest are in the Middle East and North Africa, namely Syria, Yemen and the West Bank and Gaza, and in Central and South Asia, namely Afghanistan and Pakistan. These regional distributions find concordance in our composite analysis of fragility using the Authority, Legitimacy and Capacity (ALC) cluster scores. The ALC and regional distribution assessments enable policy makers to evaluate the different characteristics of stateness, namely in terms of identifying the sources and extent of both weaknesses and strengths; it also assists policymakers in their decisions on where and how to engage by providing additional nuance to the question of fragility.

The remainder of this report examines the implications of COVID 19 for FCAS. We consider health, economic, and political related impacts. The report concludes with policy implications for donor engagement in FCAS.

1. Introduction

Before the COVID-19 outbreak started in China in December 2019 and was subsequently declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2020, the situation faced by Fragile and Conflict Affected States (FCAS) was already worrisome for a number of reasons. First, several recent studies and reports had indicated that the geography of poverty was changing in such a way that extreme poverty would become more concentrated in places characterized by fragility and conflict in the next few years (Gertz and Kharas, 2018; Foresight Africa 2019). Historically, since progress on poverty reduction had been the most difficult to achieve in FCAS, this did not bode well for the first Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of ending poverty. Second, evidence gathered in the last few years (see for example, ODI 2018) had shown that very few FCAS were on track to meet the other SDGs such as hunger (SDG2), universal access to sanitation (SDG 6) and secondary school completion (SDG 4). Finally, conflict and violence, inequalities, refugees and forced displacement – all of which are exacerbated by climate change – have also been on the rise in fragile contexts in recent years.

While one should expect countries considered fragile to face more challenges than non-fragile countries in dealing with the various impacts of COVID 19, FCAS are a heterogeneous group in terms of their characteristics and challenges that they face. Given the significant resources devoted to FCAS in the past few years, is it possible that some have been more resilient than others in coping with the current crisis? While it may be premature to answer this question, we draw on existing literature to briefly map out the impacts of COVID 19 in FCAS. To address the magnitude and impact of this pandemic, and in addition to what is being done locally, the reaction by donors and the international community has been and will continue to be to direct assistance to contain the spread of the virus and assist countries that do not have the capacity to support their populations economically. This makes sense given the low levels of health spending and the lack of social safety nets in FCAS. The danger, however, is that by redirecting spending to deal with the current crisis, we may lose sight of the root causes of fragility that have prevented FCAS from building resilience in order to cope with other crises such as COVID 19 in the future.

In this report, we follow the terminology used by the World Bank Group and OECD in describing countries deemed fragile as FCAS. As the development challenges facing fragile states became better understood, the World Bank Group's terminology has evolved over the years: from Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS) from 2006 to 2009, to the Fragile States List in 2010, to the Harmonized list of Fragile Situations

from 2011 to 2015, and currently the List of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations. These changes reflected the need to move beyond low-incomes (that is, capacity) and problems related to governance to those of weak institutions, to those of conflict and instability, and more importantly to recognize the various types of circumstances facing fragile states. Similarly, the OECD, which has been compiling lists of countries considered fragile since 2008, has increasingly recognized the multidimensional nature of fragility. In its latest *States of Fragility* report, the OECD (2018) identified 58 fragile contexts while the World Bank Group lists 39 countries in fragile and conflict-affected situations in fiscal year 2021. The World Bank Group listed 36 countries as fragile in 2018 and thus a much smaller number than OECD (2018).

Box 1: Conceptualizing Fragility

The definition of fragility that we use in this report is based on the one used by the Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP) project (www.carleton.ca/cifp), which considers fragility as a multidimensional phenomenon. Some states may be strong by some measures and weak by others; hence all states are fragile to some extent. A state's performance must be examined both in absolute terms and relative to other states as reference cases. And since these reference points are themselves evolving over time, it is important to understand that fragility is a relative term. According to CIFP's conceptualization, states are the main units of analysis and must exhibit the fundamental properties of authority, legitimacy and capacity (ALC) to function properly. States are affected by internal and external forces that are constantly changing over time and fragility measures the extent to which the actual characteristics of a state differ from their ideal situation. Weaknesses in one or more of the ALC dimensions will negatively impact the fragility of a particular state. **Authority** measures the extent to which a state possesses the ability to enact binding legislation over its population, to control its territory and to provide core public goods and security to its population. For example, measures of authority include conflict intensity, government effectiveness and political stability. **Legitimacy** refers to the extent to which a particular government commands public loyalty to the governing regime and domestic support for its legislation and policy. Typical measures found under legitimacy include the level of democracy and voice and accountability. **Capacity** refers to the ability of the state to mobilize and use resources for productive ends. Capacity is measured by indicators such as GDP per capita, education and life expectancy.

We are less concerned about producing a specific list of FCAS as the OECD or World Bank Group have done. We consider fragility as a matter of degree not kind. It is a measure of the extent to which the actual practices and capacities of states differ from their idealized image. It is intended to be a general term, one within which related, though more specific terms, including, statebuilding, weakness, failure, conflict and collapse may be located. Fragility is a measure of the extent to which the actual institutions, functions and political processes of a state accord with the strong image of sovereign state, the one reified in both theory and international law. By our definition, all states are to some extent fragile; this is, we believe, a closer representation of reality than an arbitrary line, however drawn, between weak and strong or resilient and

vulnerable. So even if we focus on the worst performers in the next section, we are aware that there are many others that are also weak in certain aspects of stateness.

Within the heterogeneous group of countries described as FCAS, some are mired in deep rooted conflict and violent transitions, others have “undergoverned” spaces with just enough linkages to the world to allow terrorists, drug lords, etc. to operate but not enough governance to purge these threats from the country while others are described as MIFFs (Middle Income but Failed or Fragile – The Economist, 2011) and combine reasonable economic performance with poor governance. We consider these countries to be either stuck in a “fragility trap” or “unstable”, that is, moving in and out of extreme fragility, with some experiencing conflict at different stages (Carment and Samy, 2019).

While much of the attention related to COVID-19 in the past few months has been on China, the Asian region and Western economies, FCAS also stand to suffer enormously as the impact of this current health and economic crisis on livelihoods will likely have prolonged effects on countries that are by definition quite weak. Most countries, whether fragile or not, are expected to face a recession in 2020, which will further worsen the trend of weaker growth that had been observed around the world pre-pandemic. Estimates from the World Bank indicate that global absolute poverty will rise by 40 to 60 million, causing it to go back to 2017 levels, and more pessimistic scenarios by Sumner et al. (2020) indicate an increase in poverty of 420 to 580 million people under a 20 per cent contraction. Even if the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in FCAS remain lower than in other regions¹, it is not obvious that many of them have the capacity to handle even modest surges that would require more lockdowns, pressures on already weak health systems and the type of economic vs. health balancing act necessary to curb the spread of the virus.

This report first provides an updated account of annual fragility rankings using the CIFP Fragility Index (FI) and its various sub-categories. As is common practice from previous reports, our 2019 FI and its various sub-categories are based on 2018 data due to lags in reporting of structural data by various organizations. CIFP’s full methodology combines different levels of information – structural data, events-based data, and expert and field surveys to conduct retrospective and predictive assessments of countries (see Appendix 1). However, the focus of the current report is on structural data and we expect to provide an update

¹ While each country is different, the lower case numbers is in all likelihood the combination of a few factors that include strict measures that were adopted in some places, experience with health crises such as Ebola in sub-Saharan Africa, and unfortunately, also lack of testing.

based on 2019 data in a few months, as well as a revision of rankings and scores (where needed) based on 2018 data presented in the current report. The rest of this report proceeds as follows. In the next section, we discuss the latest fragility ranking produced by the CIFP project and various dimensions of fragility. Section 3 examines the impact of COVID 19 on FCAS. Section 4 concludes with a summary of the main findings.

2. Country Rankings

Table 1 contains the global fragility ranking (top 50) for 2019 based on an overall sample of 197 countries. Overall fragility scores above 6.5 are color-coded in orange and are considered to be serious situations of fragility. 15 countries in total scored in this category and several of them such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan are countries that we consider trapped in fragility as they have been among the worst performers for decades. Countries performing at or around the median are color-coded in yellow, with fragility scores ranging from 3.5 to 6.5. Chad remains the most fragile country in the world according to our ranking, a position that it also occupied the previous year. Its fragility score has deteriorated slightly from 7.33 to 7.35. Chad is followed closely by Sudan with a score of 7.32. Chad, Sudan, Somalia, the Central African Republic and South Sudan are the five most fragile countries, with an average fragility score of 7.26 between them. Ranks five to ten are occupied, in order, by the Republic of Yemen, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, West Bank and Gaza, and Eritrea. Noteworthy among this list is Sudan, which saw its fragility score and ranking increase, respectively, from 7.08 and 7th in 2016, to 7.32 and 2nd in 2018. This dramatic increase in fragility is linked to Sudan's high Authority score, which is largely driven by the ongoing political crisis in Sudan that started with protests in late 2018 and culminated in a military coup in 2019 that led to the ousting of President al-Bashir.

Consistent with findings from previous years, many of the top 50 most fragile states are from sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East and North Africa regions. This continues to be consistent with the discussion presented in the World Bank Group's "Pathways for Peace" (2017, p.7) report which found that these regions have seen an overall increase in violent conflict since 2014, a trend which is expected to continue in 2020. Additionally, the rankings appear to approximate those from other sources, including the fragility matrix from the Center for Systemic Peace. Overall, the mean fragility score for countries in the top 50 is 6.33, which represents a very small decrease from an average of 6.40 for the top 50 in the previous year.

The upward trend (that is, deterioration) observed since 2011 based on the CFP rankings remains largely unaffected.

1	Chad	7.35	26	Iran	6.25
2	Sudan	7.32	27	Guinea-Bissau	6.25
3	Somalia	7.25	28	Guinea	6.23
4	Central African Republic	7.20	29	Mauritania	6.22
5	South Sudan	7.18	30	Sao Tome and Principe	6.22
6	Yemen, Rep.	7.03	31	Equatorial Guinea	6.16
7	Afghanistan	7.01	32	Liberia	6.15
8	Congo, Dem. Rep.	6.91	33	Comoros	6.10
9	West Bank and Gaza	6.87	34	Kenya	6.09
10	Eritrea	6.73	35	Myanmar (Burma)	6.08
11	Mali	6.72	36	Zimbabwe	6.06
12	Syria	6.58	37	Sierra Leone	5.98
13	Uganda	6.56	38	Gabon	5.95
14	Cameroon	6.55	39	Egypt	5.94
15	Nigeria	6.50	40	Malawi	5.92
16	Niger	6.48	41	Tajikistan	5.90
17	Pakistan	6.47	42	Rwanda	5.86
18	Burkina Faso	6.45	43	Cote d'Ivoire	5.84
19	Burundi	6.44	44	Lesotho	5.75
20	Mozambique	6.35	45	Djibouti	5.72
21	Gambia	6.33	46	Angola	5.71
22	Haiti	6.28	47	Togo	5.71
23	Iraq	6.26	48	Laos	5.70
24	Ethiopia	6.26	49	Timor-Leste	5.68
25	Congo, Rep.	6.25	50	Swaziland	5.67

Table 2 provides a comparison of the top 20 fragile states for 2019, 2018 and 2017, many of which have fragility scores of 6.5 or above, thus indicating a high degree of fragility. However, it is noteworthy that in 2019, the states ranked 16th through 20th positions actually fall slightly below this degree of fragility, compared to only one, and none, in the two previous years, respectively. Chad, South Sudan and Somalia have found themselves within the 5 most fragile countries consistently throughout this 3-year period. Chad rose from 4th in 2017 to the most fragile country in 2018 and 2019 even as it actually experienced a decrease in its fragility score from 2017 to 2018, before a smaller rise in 2019. South Sudan has also remained in the top 5 most fragile countries throughout this period. However, its ranking has improved, dropping from 1st in 2017 to 5th in 2019, and so has its score. Somalia, which historically was the most fragile, if not a failed state according to our data, has also slightly improved its fragility score in this period. In 2017 Somalia had an overall fragility score of 7.53, which decreased to 7.25 in 2019.

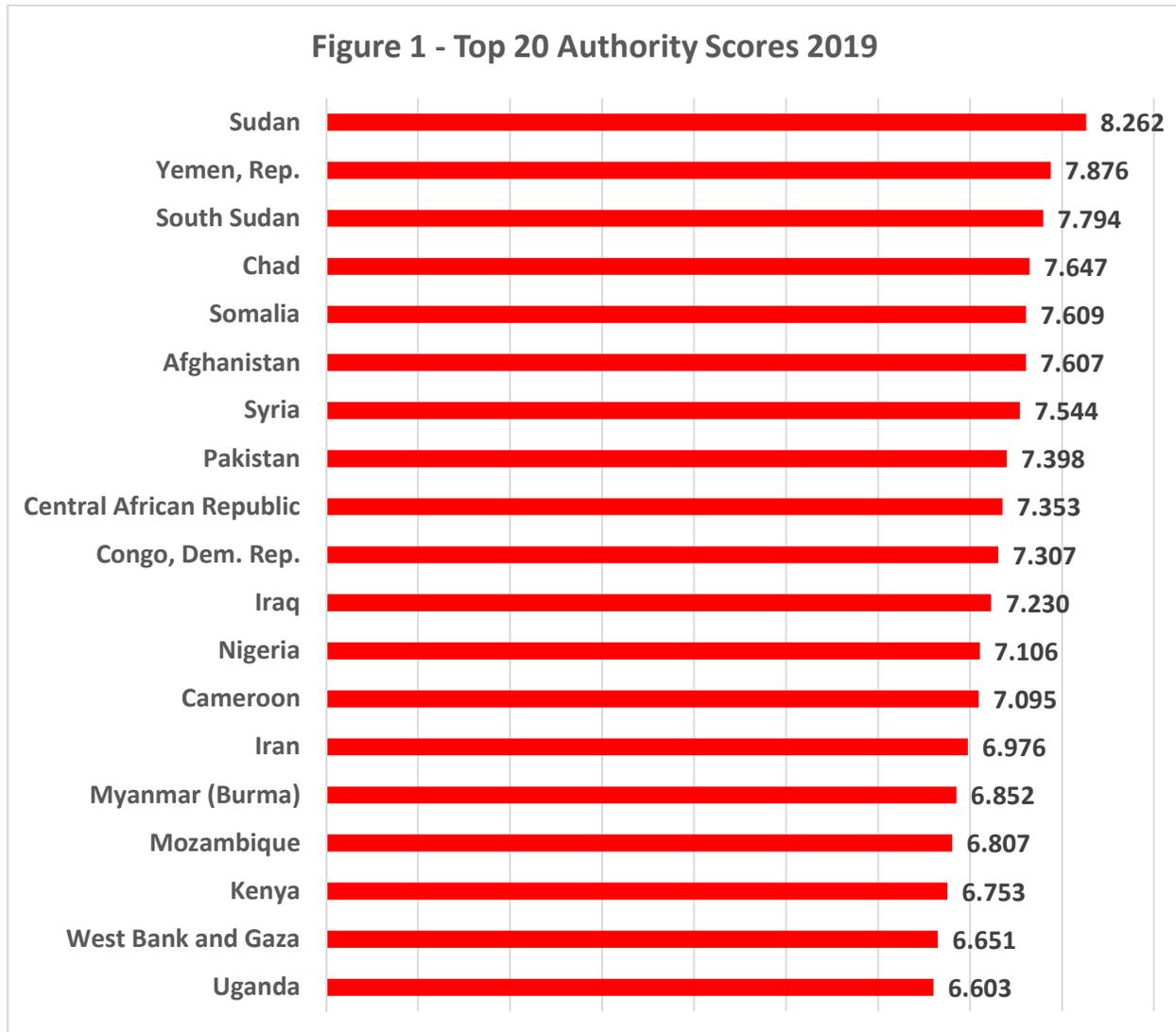
Table 2 - Highest Fragility Scores						
	2019		2018		2017	
1	Chad	7.35	Chad	7.33	South Sudan	7.85
2	Sudan	7.32	Somalia	7.31	Somalia	7.53
3	Somalia	7.25	South Sudan	7.19	Yemen, Rep.	7.45
4	Central African Republic	7.20	Central African Republic	7.09	Chad	7.38
5	South Sudan	7.18	Mali	7.07	Afghanistan	7.36
6	Yemen, Rep.	7.03	Yemen, Rep.	7.06	Central African Republic	7.17
7	Afghanistan	7.01	Afghanistan	7.01	Congo, Dem. Rep.	7.12
8	Congo, Dem. Rep.	6.91	Sudan	7.00	Sudan	6.99
9	West Bank and Gaza	6.87	Eritrea	6.99	Mali	6.99
10	Eritrea	6.73	Congo, Dem. Rep.	6.94	Eritrea	6.90
11	Mali	6.72	Niger	6.66	Niger	6.84
12	Syria	6.58	Uganda	6.64	Burundi	6.84
13	Uganda	6.56	Gambia	6.63	Congo, Rep.	6.77
14	Cameroon	6.55	Pakistan	6.62	Uganda	6.75
15	Nigeria	6.50	Cameroon	6.61	Ethiopia	6.74
16	Niger	6.48	Burundi	6.59	Syria	6.72
17	Pakistan	6.47	Syria	6.57	Gambia	6.72
18	Burkina Faso	6.45	Nigeria	6.53	Pakistan	6.60
19	Burundi	6.44	Ethiopia	6.52	Guinea	6.59
20	Mozambique	6.35	Guinea-Bissau	6.49	Cameroon	6.57

We should also note that there is not a large difference in the absolute value of the fragility scores of the worst performing countries (Top 5 or even Top 10) in any given year. In fact, the absolute difference between the most fragile and the 10th most fragile country never rises above 0.1 in this period. However, when we examine the situation over a longer period of time, we are able to see significant trends. In the last four years (that is, when we compare the current report to the one released in 2015) even amongst the 20 most fragile states, an overwhelming majority of 14 states out of 20 have improved their fragility scores. The states which have seen their fragility scores increase (that is deteriorate) in this period include Chad, Sudan, West Bank and Gaza, Cameroon, Burkina Faso and Mozambique. In the case of Chad, its fragility score is just below the 7.5 threshold that would classify Chad as a seriously unstable and potentially failing state. Encouragingly, no states pass this 7.5 threshold in 2019. It is worth noting that West Bank and Gaza, and Burkina Faso experienced the greatest absolute changes in fragility since 2015 with increases of 0.42 and 0.46 respectively indicating an increase in fragility.

Authority

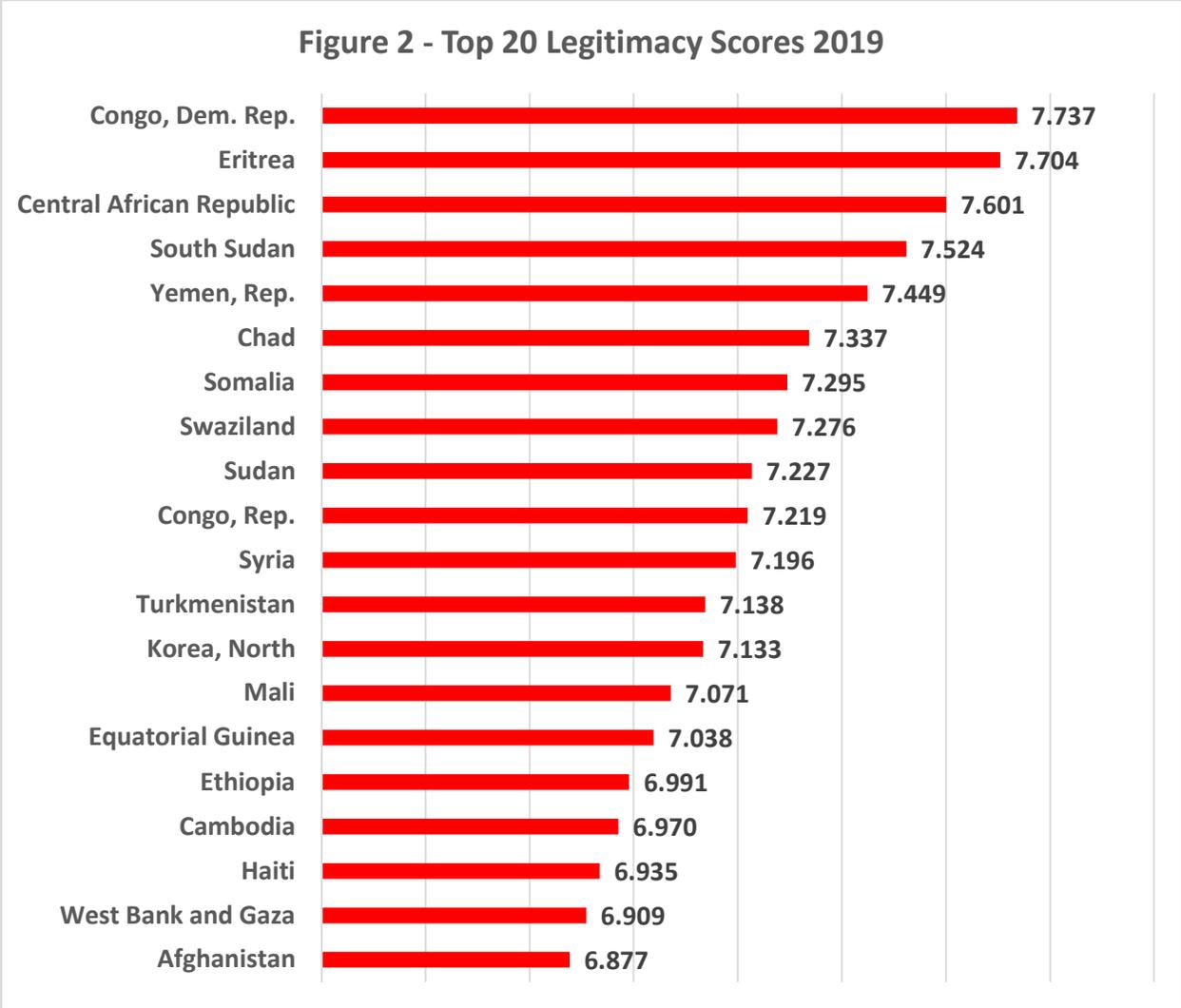
In 2019, the most authority-challenged state was Sudan, with a score of 8.26, an increase from 7.89 in 2015, and reflecting the political unrest that began in late 2018. Sudan is followed closely by the Republic of Yemen, South Sudan, Chad and Somalia with scores ranging from 7.88 to 7.61. Chad saw the greatest

increase in its authority score with a deterioration of 0.83 from 2015 to 2019. Also noteworthy is the inclusion of Pakistan and Iran, which both face persistent challenges in authority, despite a lack of large-scale conflicts, and instead significant terrorism-related incidents in the case of Pakistan.



Legitimacy

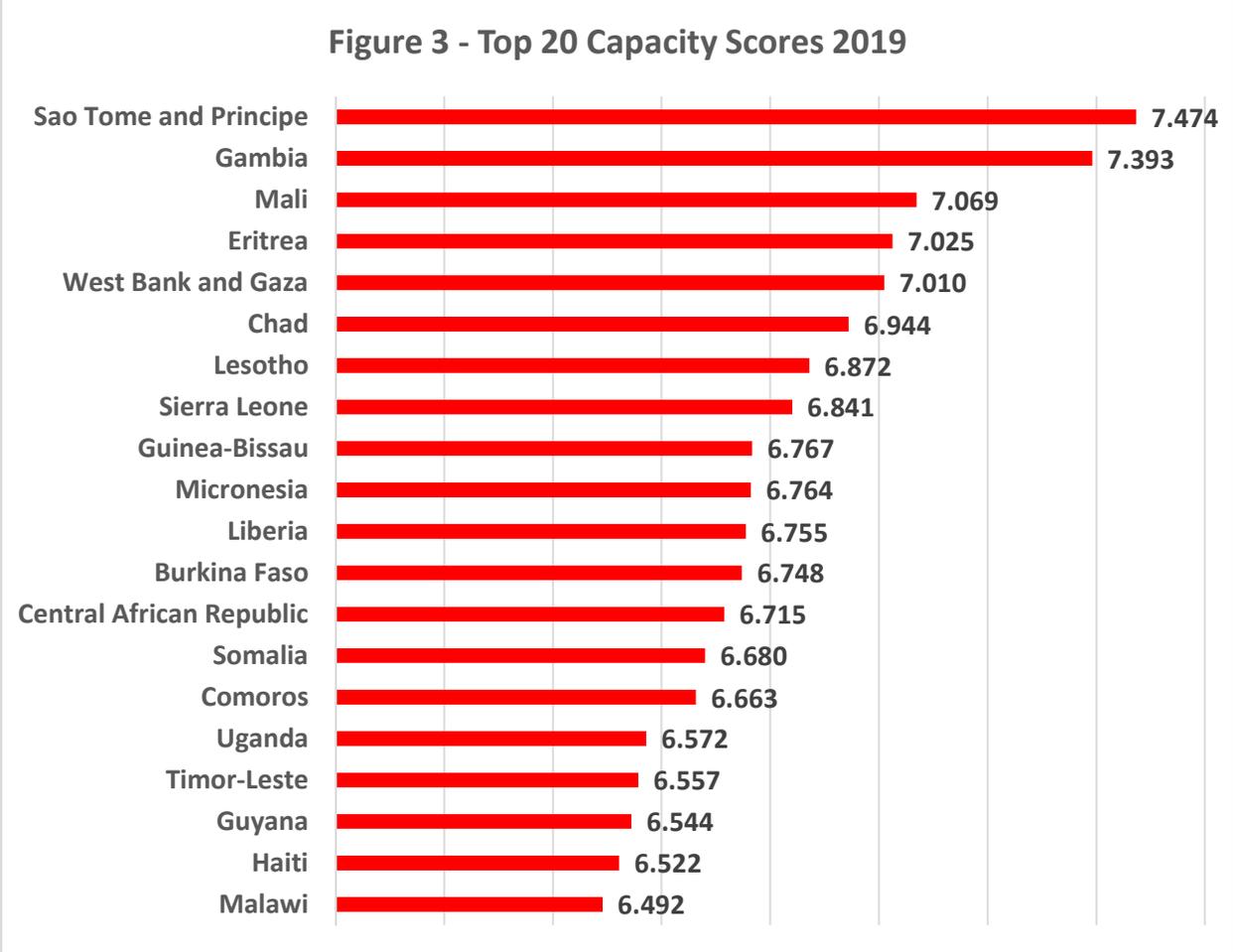
In terms of legitimacy, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has the most serious score at 7.74. It is closely followed by Eritrea, Central African Republic, South Sudan and Yemen. Within this category, the Democratic Republic of the Congo experienced the greatest decline in its government's legitimacy from 2015 to 2019 as its score increased from 7.50 to 7.74. In contrast, amongst the top 5 scoring countries for legitimacy, the Central African Republic experienced improvement. Its score improved from 7.98 in 2015 to 7.60 in 2019.



Capacity

For capacity rankings, Sao Tome & Principe is the highest scoring country with a capacity score of 7.47, trailed closely by Gambia, Mali, Eritrea and West Bank and Gaza. These top 5 scoring states have all scored above 7.0 in capacity. Sao Tome & Principe’s ranking may appear surprising, but we should note that this is because it is missing many indicators such as disaster risk, energy consumption, primary enrolment and trade openness that are used to calculate capacity. Compared to other countries, since it has more economic indicators in which it does very poorly in its basket of capacity indicators, it ends up as the worst performer. However, it meets our threshold for the minimum number of indicators that we consider sufficient for us to calculate a composite score. The worst performers in the capacity category have typically

been low-income and aid-dependent countries from sub-Saharan Africa and this is confirmed by the list in Figure 3, with a few exceptions.



Regional and Country-level Analysis

Figure 4 offers a comparison of six different regions based on their average authority, legitimacy, capacity and fragility scores. Consistent with prior years, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest scores in all categories with the exception of authority. South Asia, which includes Afghanistan and Pakistan, is the most authority-challenged region, with an average score of 5.91 compared to an average authority score of 5.74 for sub-Saharan Africa. Of significance are also the fairly weak legitimacy scores for both the Middle East and North Africa, and South Asia.

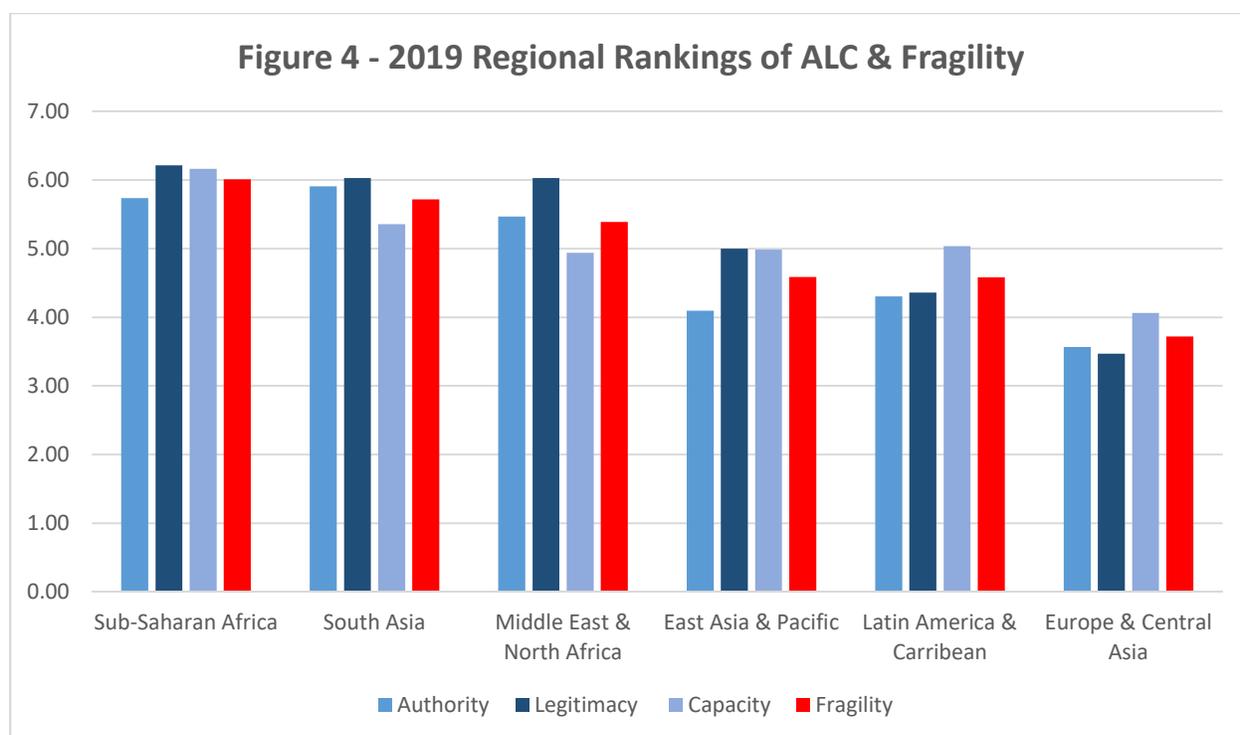
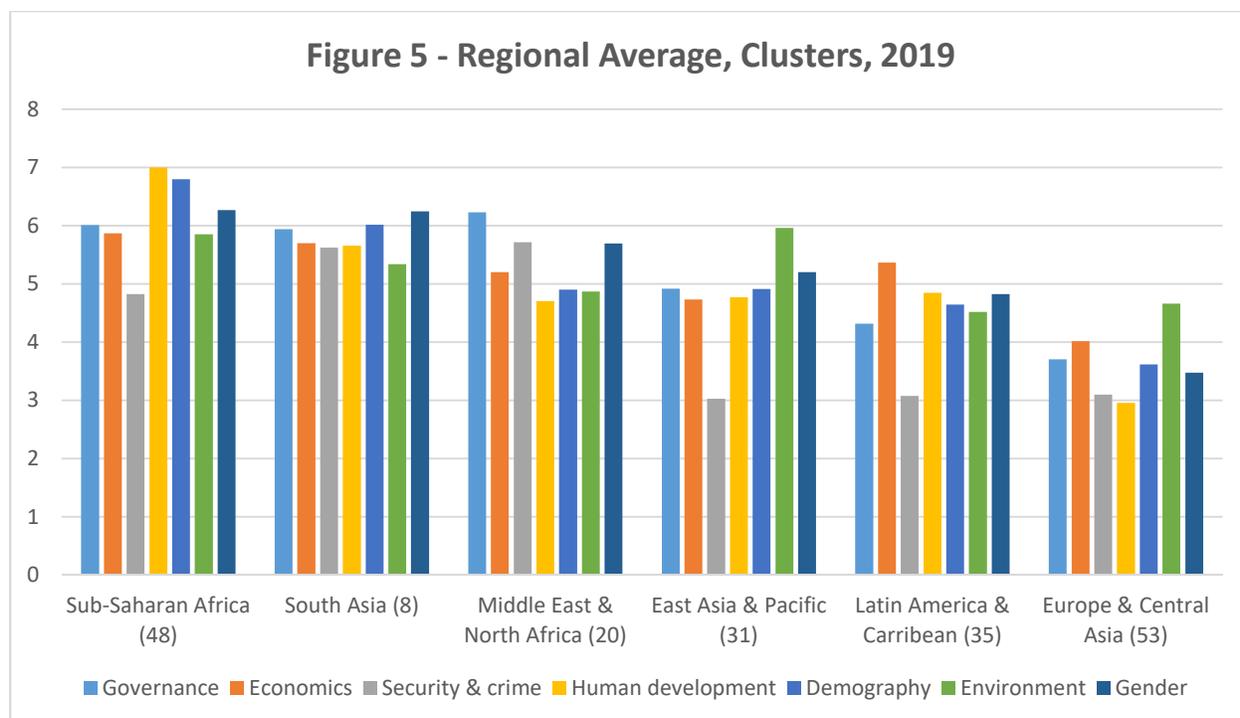
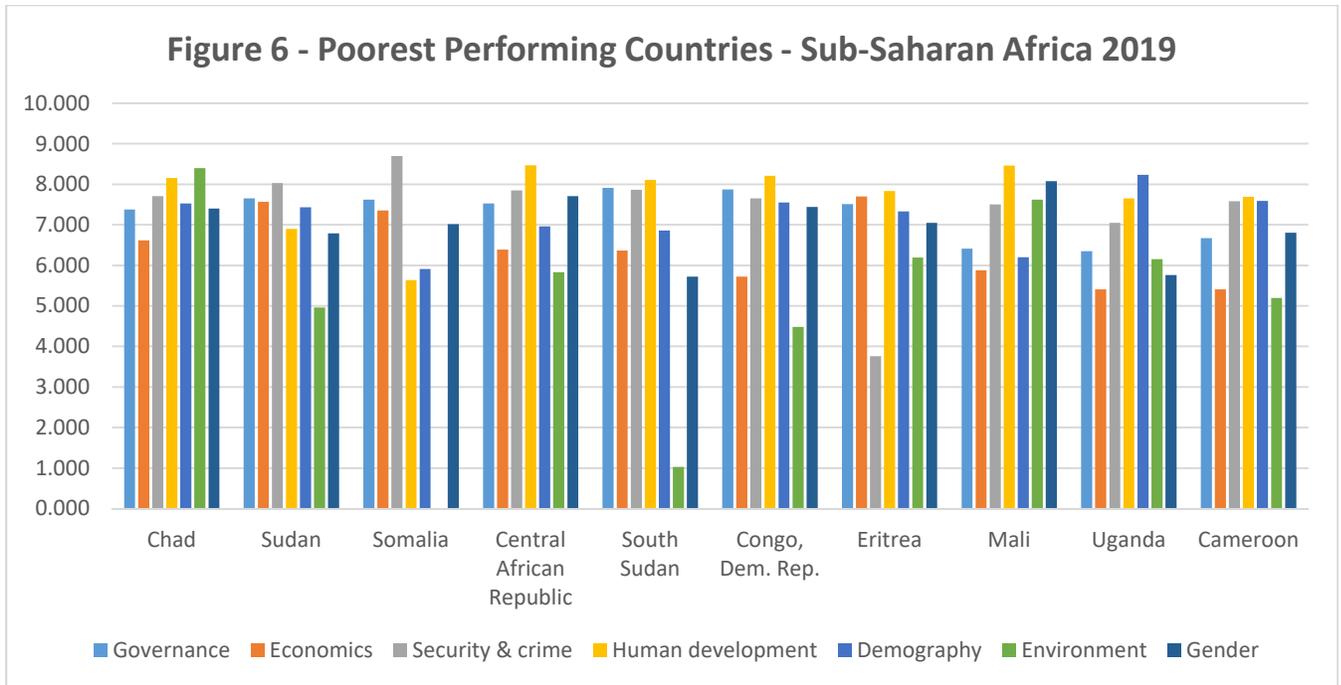


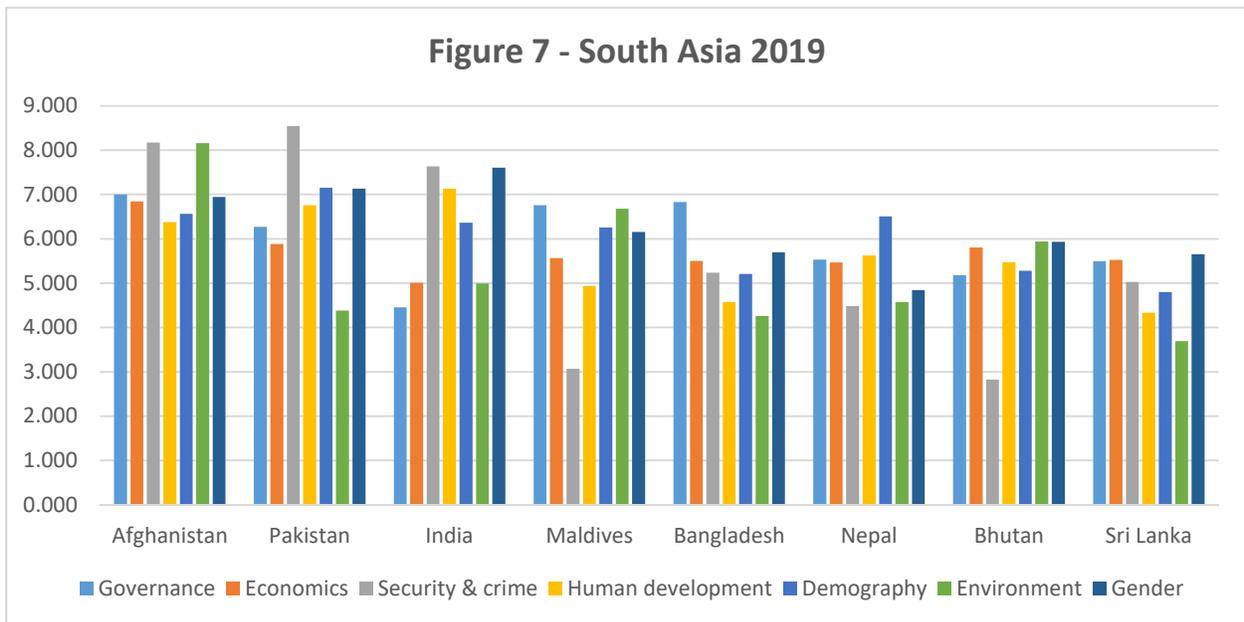
Figure 5 below shows a regional comparison based on seven indicator clusters: governance, economics, security and crime, human development, demography, environment and gender. An interesting and continuing trend is improvements in the environment cluster in South Asia. In 2015, this region was the poorest performer in terms of the environment, scoring above 7.0 on average. However, in 2019 the average score for the region is at an all-time low of 5.34. In contrast, average environment scores are highest in the East Asia and Pacific region. In general, Sub-Saharan Africa scores the highest on average across multiple areas, including economics, human development, demographics and gender. Gender scores are also quite weak for South Asia followed by the Middle East and North Africa. The latter is also the weakest region on both governance, and security and crime.



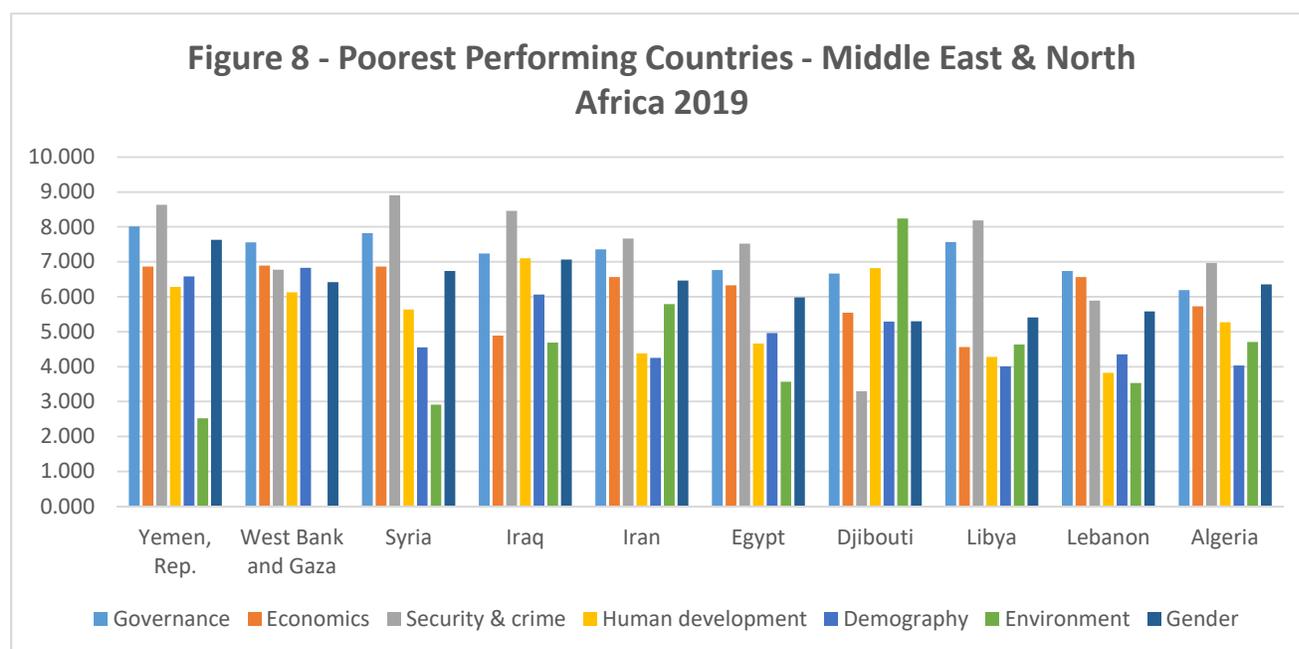
In Sub-Saharan Africa, the worst performing countries across the seven clusters are largely the same states which top the global list of most fragile states. This is not surprising because countries that are worst performers globally – those that we typically consider as trapped - are generally weak in several dimensions. Sub-Saharan African fragility can be clearly seen in the elevated human development scores throughout the region. 5 of the 10 states in Figure 6 had Human Development scores above 8.0, and 3 additional states had scores above 7.5, clearly indicating a critical situation. Continuing trends observed in prior reports, the driving factors of fragility in this region other than human development are governance, followed by security and crime. In terms of governance, six states out of ten have scores higher than 7.5. For security & crime, the situation is even more dire, with eight countries having scores higher than 7.5 in this area.



Afghanistan is by far the worst performing country in the South Asia region in terms of overall fragility. However, it only scores higher than its regional neighbors in governance, economics, and the environment. Its high fragility is thus driven by consistently high scores in every category, rather than outliers. Afghanistan is followed closely by Pakistan which has the highest and extremely high score of 8.55 in security and crime. Also noteworthy are India’s scores above 7.5 in gender, at 7.61 and in security and crime, at 7.64.

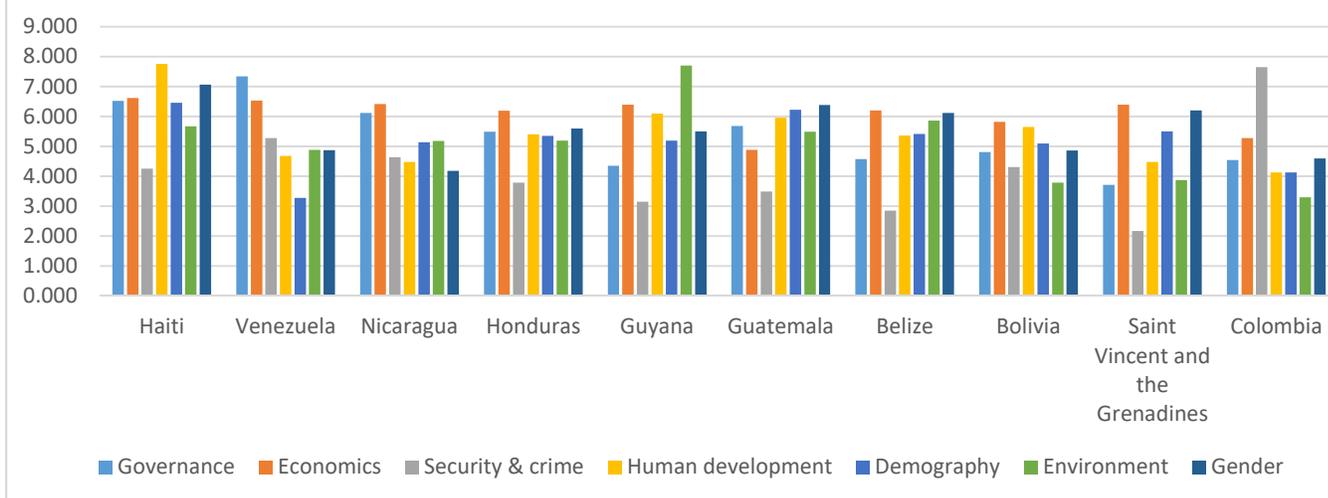


As of 2019, Yemen continues to be the poorest performing country in the Middle East and North Africa region. Yemen's fragility challenges are largely driven by governance (score of 8.01), security and crime (score of 8.63) and gender (score of 7.63). Yemen's fragility mirrors the challenges in the broader region. In these ten poorest performing countries, four countries have governance scores above 7.5 and six countries have security and crime scores above 7.5. Of secondary concern are consistently high – though somewhat lower than governance, and security and crime – scores in economics and gender, averaging 6.10 and 6.30 respectively.



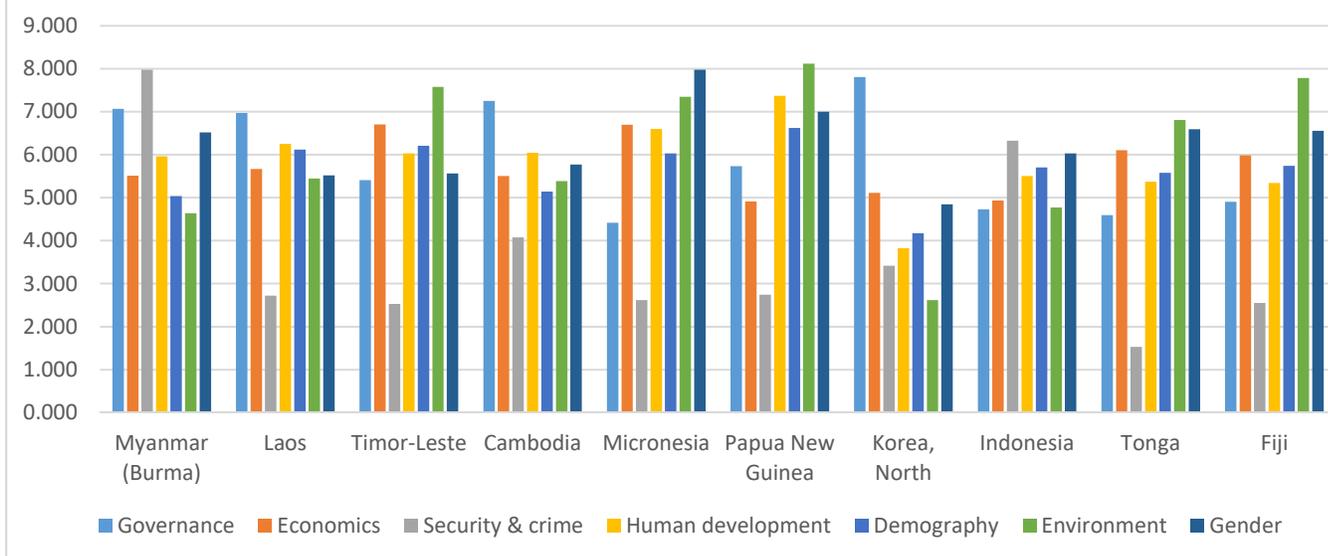
In the Latin America and Caribbean region, Haiti was once again the poorest performing country. Haiti scored worse than any other country in economics, human development, demography and gender. Venezuela's fragility continues to worsen, mainly driven by a governance score of 7.33, the highest in the region. Venezuela also saw poor performance in economics, at 6.53, and in security and crime at 5.27. Although, a score of 5.27 does not appear concerning at first glance, it is the second highest in the region. Only Colombia, with a security and crime score of 7.65 faces greater challenges in this area within the poorest ten performing countries in the region.

Figure 9 - Poorest Performing Countries - Latin America & Caribbean 2019

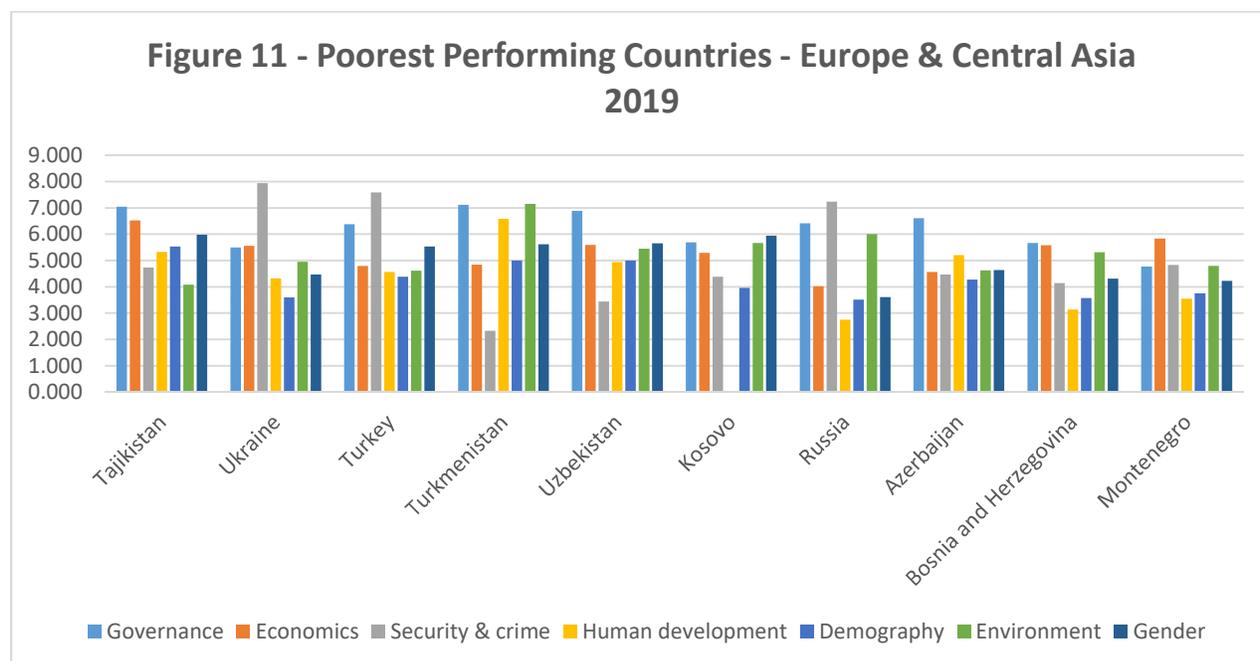


Myanmar was the worst performing country in the East Asia and Pacific region, driven largely by an extremely high security and crime score of 7.98 and a governance score of 7.07. These two facets reflect the longstanding ethnic divisions in the country and the more recent violence targeted towards, and the violent expulsion of, the Rohingya. Other noteworthy trends include the environmental factors and risks faced by many of the smaller island states. This is reflected in the high environment scores of Timor-Leste, 7.58, Papua New Guinea, 8.12 and Fiji, 7.78.

Figure 10 - Poorest Performing Countries - East Asia & Pacific 2019



Consistent with previous reports, Tajikistan is the worst performing country in Europe and Central Asia. Tajikistan scores poorly in governance (7.05), followed by economics (6.52) and gender (5.98). Russia, Ukraine and Turkey all face quite high scores in security and crime. This situation is largely driven by the ongoing War in the Donbass for Ukraine and Russia, and the regional effects of the Syrian Civil War on Turkey.



3. COVID 19 and FCAS

This section examines the impact of COVID-19 on FCAS. As of September 5th 2020, more than 26 million coronavirus cases have been identified worldwide (of which more than 17 million have recovered) and more than 850,000 people have died from the virus. The United States continues to lead both in terms of cases and deaths and does not seem to have the situation under control. However, other countries such as China and South Korea have been much more successful in containing the spread of the virus. According to data from the OECD's States of Fragility platform (<http://www3.compareyourcountry.org/states-of-fragility/covid/0>)², due to their relative isolation from the rest of the world, the number of cases and deaths in fragile contexts has remained relatively low when compared to other non-fragile developing contexts. It took a little bit longer for the virus to spread to fragile states but cases and deaths have been slowly increasing since about mid-March. As of August 24, 2020, confirmed cases and confirmed deaths from COVID-19 in fragile contexts were respectively 8% and 7% of total cases and total deaths globally. However, many of these calculations may be masking deep seated problems in accurately reporting cases and accurately measuring fatality rates due to COVID 19. Therefore, efforts to reduce the risk of exposure have not necessarily prevented countries from weakening even further.

Consider the case of Lebanon, which recently made headlines as a result of a massive explosion of ammonium nitrate on August 4th at the port of Beirut that killed nearly 200 people, causing billions in damages and leaving an estimated 300,000 people homeless. Lebanon was not among the top 40 fragile countries in our ranking and was in fact in 53rd position. However, even before COVID 19, its situation had deteriorated as a result of a dysfunctional government and poor economy. The explosion contributed to the collapse of the government in August 2020 despite measures to contain COVID 19 that included protocols for social distancing, reduced mobility and border controls, as well restrictions on refugees such as curfews (<https://carleton.ca/cifp/2020/fragile-states-and-covid19-lebanon-project/>). Low oil and gas demand worldwide due to COVID 19 has delayed offshore oil and gas exploration, and Lebanon's economy continues to face high levels of debt and unemployment rates exacerbated by the pandemic. As a mostly-service oriented economy heavily dependent on tourism, COVID 19 has led to massive unemployment and a scarcity of foreign currency (which normally comes from tourism, foreign aid and remittances). The country does not have a solid industrial base and depends heavily on imports for food and other basic

² Accessed on August 26, 2020.

necessities such as medicine and fuel that are paid from foreign exchange that has now become scarce. It did not help that Lebanon had been pegging its currency to the US dollar, which thus required ever increasing deposits of US dollars from private investors with the Central Bank to maintain its value. Maintaining the value of its currency by offering high interest rates to investors by the Central Bank has been likened to a Ponzi scheme that eventually fell apart.

For most FCAS, the COVID19 pandemic has not peaked. Over the next two years, worst-case scenarios will be more easily realised for those countries emerging from sustained humanitarian emergencies. Topping this list are Yemen, South Sudan and Afghanistan which are known vectors for the transmission of disease. All of these countries already impacted by war now face increased challenges due to uncontrolled displaced persons, refugee flows and arbitrary border closures (<https://carleton.ca/cifp/2020/fragile-states-and-covid-19-afghanistan-project/>). For high risk FCAS trapped in fragility as well as those in the middle tier beyond the top 20, long term recovery depends on developing vaccines, containing the virus, and stopping re-infections after the first wave. Indirect impacts include lower demand for commodity exports and reduced mobility for aid programming in urban centres. COVID 19 can only intensify economic crises and increase food shortages. Strained health systems resulting from a shortage of medicines as well as doctors and medical professionals will weaken response even further. For example, the Global Health Security Index score for South Sudan is 21.7 in 2019. This gives South Sudan an extremely low ranking of 180 out of 195 countries. Notably, South Sudan scored lowest within the category of having a sufficient and robust health system compared to the other categories that were analyzed. 56% of people do not have access to primary health care services and over half of the health facilities in the country are not operational (<https://carleton.ca/cifp/2020/fragile-states-and-covid19-south-sudan-project/>).

Table 3 below details confirmed COVID 19 cases and deaths per million in the 20 most fragile countries from Table 1.³ We observe wide variations in COVID 19 cases and deaths that exist even within the group of countries considered as fragile. For example, COVID 19 deaths per million were 36 in the case of Afghanistan and 28.4 in the case of Pakistan, compared to 0.08 in Burundi and 2.85 in neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo. Sudan, Afghanistan, West Bank and Gaza, Cameroon, Nigeria and Pakistan are all currently experiencing sizeable outbreaks of COVID 19 as of August 27th, 2020. For this

³ Although the ranking of countries from Table 1 is based on 2018 data, historically, countries that are very fragile take a while to exit the group of worse performers and are thus a realistic sample for 2020. We should also note that data on COVID 19 cases and deaths from the OECD's States of Fragility platform is available for the 58 fragile contexts identified in the OECD's 2018 States of Fragility report.

limited sample of the most fragile countries, there is a weak correlation between fragility on the one hand, and cases or deaths per million on the other. All FCAS have imposed restrictions and lockdowns and it would appear that the number of cases and deaths across countries reflects the unique circumstances that they each face. For example, the very high number of cases in the West Bank and Gaza is the result of the blockade that it has been facing since 2007 (Moss and Majadle, 2020). For others, it is a combination of various factors that include the degree of connectivity with the rest of the world, the extent of testing, and the accuracy of properly reporting cases and deaths. It is difficult to know whether certain FCAS have been more resilient than others thus far.

Fragility Ranking	Country	Fragility	Confirmed COVID-19 Cases	COVID-19 Cases per Million	COVID-19 Deaths	COVID-19 Deaths per Million
1	Chad	7.35	995	61	77	4.69
2	Sudan	7.32	12,974	296	819	18.68
3	Somalia	7.25	3,269	206	93	5.85
4	Central African Republic	7.20	4,691	971	61	12.63
5	South Sudan	7.18	2,510	224	47	4.20
6	Yemen, Rep.	7.03	1,934	65	561	18.81
7	Afghanistan	7.01	38,126	979	1,401	35.99
8	Congo, Dem. Rep.	6.91	9,915	111	255	2.85
9	West Bank and Gaza	6.87	20,677	4,053	141	27.64
10	Eritrea	6.73	315	89	-	-
11	Mali	6.72	2,708	134	125	6.17
12	Syria	6.58	2,440	139	98	5.60
13	Uganda	6.56	2,426	53	25	0.55
14	Cameroon	6.55	18,973	715	410	15.44
15	Nigeria	6.50	52,800	256	1,007	4.89
16	Niger	6.48	1,173	48	69	2.85
17	Pakistan	6.47	294,638	1,334	6,274	28.40
18	Burkina Faso	6.45	1,338	64	55	2.63
19	Burundi	6.44	430	36	1	0.08
20	Mozambique	6.35	3,508	112	21	0.67

Source: Data in the above table is as of August 27th, 2020; data for Democratic Republic of the Congo and West Bank & Gaza is from John Hopkins; all other data is from the WHO.

Significant differences have also emerged in the mortality and number of COVID-19 cases in industrialized countries versus developing states. Many have noted that COVID-19 has, so far, appeared to have had much less of a direct impact on developing nations, relative to the impact on industrialized nations such as France, Italy and the United States. Although this is a dynamic and evolving situation, and the differences may shrink as the pandemic continues to unfold, pertinent questions about these differences continue to be asked. At present, possible answers include demographic differences, with younger populations in

developing countries of sub-Saharan Africa (many of which are FCAS), as an example, being less impacted relative to the older populations of developed states. Additionally, the difference in cases – just as in the case of FCAS more specifically – may be a result of the degree to which they are connected with the rest of the world and/or can manage borders with other countries, and inadequate testing and tracking in states with limited capacity to accurately uncover and record both cases and deaths.

IMPLICATIONS OF COVID 19 FOR FCAS

First and foremost an unprecedented health crisis, COVID 19 quickly became an economic and social crisis as countries implemented social distancing measures, lockdowns and quarantines, as production of non-essential goods and services was interrupted, and as global supply chains were disrupted, and international travel came to a halt. In what follows, we consider the health, economic, and social and political implications of COVID 19 on FCAS.

Health Implications

The COVID-19 pandemic's most overt impacts are on the health of individuals who are infected, and on the collective health of a nation's population. In the case of citizens of FCAS, structural vulnerabilities can significantly heighten the health impacts of COVID-19 and potentially increase the spread of the disease. In many FCAS, healthcare systems have a very limited capacity to provide adequate care for individuals who are infected. Many FCAS have few medical personnel per capita, weak or nonexistent infrastructure, long-term chronic underfunding, limited numbers of hospital beds and limited ventilators. These structural issues limit the ability of FCAS to deal with the spread of COVID-19 and increase the mortality rates for their citizens who are infected. In several FCAS, such as Afghanistan, Yemen, and Syria, longstanding violent conflict has directly destroyed hospitals, caused medical personnel to flee the country and generally further weakened healthcare capacity (often funded by, and dependent on, foreign aid) in these states. In many instances, FCAS also lack the capacity to implement containment and contact-tracing measures. For example, testing facilities and equipment generally are virtually non-existent in many FCAS. As of May 7, 2020, an average of only 685 COVID-19 tests per million people had been conducted across all African states. In contrast, at that point in time, European countries had conducted just under 23,000 tests per million people.⁴ The most fragile state, Chad, was specifically noted as not having enough testing kits and was also experiencing staff shortages after many of those conducting tests fell ill. Instead of testing,

⁴ Houreld, K., Lewis, D., McNeill, R. and Granados, S., 2020. Virus Exposes Gaping Holes In Africa's Health Systems. Reuters. <https://graphics.reuters.com/HEALTH-CORONAVIRUS/AFRICA/yzdpxoqbvdx/>

aggressive and economically damaging shut-down policies are one of the only recourses for FCAS seeking to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Healthcare systems in FCAS are also strained by ongoing healthcare challenges such as cholera, HIV, Tuberculosis, Malaria and other diseases. In some FCAS the limited resources available are often strained by these long-standing health issues, hence they have fewer resources to face the new challenge posed by COVID-19. In Yemen, the largest modern cholera epidemic ever recorded is impacting the population concurrently with COVID-19. Yemen's lack of functioning healthcare facilities has combined with people's fear of contracting COVID-19. This has led many to not seek treatment for Cholera as the pandemic has unfolded. It is widely believed that Cholera cases are now being vastly under recorded and many individuals have been left untreated.⁵

Another highly visible example of the disruptive impact of COVID-19 on other health challenges has been the disruption and suspension of vaccination campaigns. COVID-19 has disrupted vaccinations in a number of FCAS. Disruptions have been caused by a number of factors, with one specific example being chronic staff shortages. The international personnel critical to many vaccination campaigns were forced to leave FCAS as shutdown policies and travel restrictions were implemented. For example, at least 30 measles vaccination campaigns had been canceled or are at risk of being cancelled as of July 2020. The WHO and UNICEF warn that these suspensions could result in measles outbreaks in 2020 and beyond. One of the crucial reasons for these suspensions is staff shortages, with healthcare workers unavailable because of travel restrictions.⁶

Economic Implications

The UN's Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to the COVID 19 Crisis warns "The COVID-19 pandemic is far more than a health crisis: it is affecting societies and economies at their core. While the impact of the pandemic will vary from country to country, it will most likely increase poverty and

⁵ Beaumont, P. and Wintour, P., 2020. Agencies Fear Hidden Cholera Deaths In Yemen As Covid-19 Overwhelms Clinics. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jul/28/agencies-fear-hidden-cholera-deaths-in-yemen-as-covid-19-overwhelms-clinics>

⁶ WHO. 2020. "WHO and UNICEF Warn Of A Decline In Vaccinations During COVID-19". <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/15-07-2020-who-and-unicef-warn-of-a-decline-in-vaccinations-during-covid-19>

inequalities at a global scale.”⁷ COVID-19 has had far-reaching economic impacts on FCAS as they are typically economically vulnerable nations that lack capacity. As states susceptible to economic crises, COVID-19 has and will likely continue to worsen poverty in FCAS. As was discussed in the introduction of this report, there are serious concerns that millions of people will fall back into absolute poverty as a result of the pandemic, and many of them live in fragile states where social safety nets are weak or non-existent. Another direct example of COVID-19’s economic impact are mass job losses. These job losses will continue to impact the citizens of FCAS, with the International Labour Organization estimating that “1.6 billion workers in the informal economy – that is nearly half of the global workforce – stand in immediate danger of having their livelihoods destroyed”. Given the relatively larger importance of informal economic sectors in FCAS, these job losses are likely to be felt even more strongly in fragile states. Additionally, women often make up a greater proportion of the workforce in certain informal sectors and are likely to be significantly impacted.

Other crucial economic impact areas for FCAS include reduced economic activity damaging states’ tax bases, remittance flows being severely curtailed by job losses abroad, potential reductions in foreign aid in the future, and worsening food insecurity. Food insecurity is of particular concern for FCAS in the context of COVID-19. Containment policies are likely to be less effective among the chronically hungry and the consequences of imposing such policies far more severe. Those who are food insecure and live in countries affected by prolonged conflict are one of the populations experiencing the greatest degree of socio-economic marginalization during this crisis.⁸ In the face of the ongoing risk of food system breakdowns the UN recommends taking all measures necessary, such as scaling up of food assistance programmes, to preserve food supply chains.

Social & Political Implications

The social impacts of COVID-19 are troubling and widespread. Domestic violence is widely reported to have risen significantly globally, and it is believed that this trend holds true in FCAS.⁹ For example, several

⁷ United Nations. A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19. April 2020. Available at: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_framework_report_on_covid-19.pdf

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ UN, 2020. “UN Supporting ‘Trapped’ Domestic Violence Victims During COVID-19 Pandemic”. United Nations. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/un-supporting-%E2%80%98trapped%E2%80%99-domestic-violence-victims-during-covid-19-pandemic>

harrowing reports of domestic violence have emerged from the Al-Bureij Refugee camp, in the Gaza Strip.¹⁰ Education systems globally have also been seriously disrupted by shutdowns, negatively impacting children and youth. In the most fragile education systems, the interruption of the school year is expected to have a disproportionately negative impact on the most vulnerable pupils. The most vulnerable students are impacted by conditions at home, such as lacking adequate internet, or a safe workspace, which negatively impacts their ability to continue learning at home.¹¹ In terms of the political impacts of COVID-19, the effect on FCAS varies. If a FCAS's government handles the crisis poorly, and even more importantly if its policies are perceived poorly enough as a result of lack of trust in the governing regime, COVID-19 may further damage authority and legitimacy in the long run, increasing their fragility. In some instances, this may drive significant unrest and could potentially lead to permanent political change. In some instances, currently, shutdown policies and their subsequent economic impacts have led to minor sporadic protests in FCAS, including in Zimbabwe and Nigeria.^{12 13}

Whether longer term political changes occur with COVID-19 as a primary cause is uncertain at this stage. Some groups in FCAS, such as Al-Shabaab, have attempted to use the pandemic to their benefit. Al-Shabaab have based some propaganda around COVID-19, claiming that coronavirus was spread “by the crusader forces who have invaded the country and the disbelieving countries that support them.” It is clear that armed groups may take advantage of the uncertain environment created by the pandemic and as the case of Lebanon discussed earlier shows, COVID 19 may itself cause civil unrest as socioeconomic conditions in FCAS deteriorate further. In contrast, some limited and emergent evidence suggests that COVID-19 may have contributed to a successful restart of stalled ceasefire negotiations in Afghanistan. However, in other areas of conflict, such as Syria, conflict has not slowed perceptibly at all, even during the early and intense stage of the pandemic. The concern, however, is that the longer the pandemic prevents a return to normalcy, the more difficult it will be to maintain the flow of humanitarian assistance and the momentum to continue efforts towards mediation and peace operations in conflict affected regions. Whether COVID 19 will ultimately worsen current conflict situations or not remains uncertain at this point.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ United Nations. *Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond*. August, 2020. Available at: https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2020/08/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf

¹² NST Online. April, 2020. “Nigerian Workers Riot Over Covid-19 Lockdown”. New Straits Times. <https://www.nst.com.my/world/world/2020/04/588042/nigerian-workers-riot-over-covid-19-lockdown>

¹³ Mutsaka, F., 2020. Zimbabwe Police Accused Of Assaulting Young Female Activists. ABC News. <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/zimbabwe-police-accused-assaulting-young-female-activists-70701508>

4. Conclusion

Given the extraordinary circumstances in which FCAS find themselves, it is worth asking if current response strategies are sufficiently robust to prevent the emergence and spread of the virus. The answer to that will depend largely on the presumed lower overall impact COVID19 is having on FCAS and the ability of FCAS governments to withstand the pressures placed on their strained health care systems, whether they can continue to mobilize resources domestically and from foreign sources, distortions in government spending, reduced labour mobility and exacerbated tensions between displaced persons and local populations among other things. For some countries such as Yemen and Lebanon, COVID19 has already had devastating impacts on their economy, their governance and social cohesion. The current crisis has been likened by some to a war and while it isn't a perfect analogy, they do have a few things in common. Obviously, pandemics, like wars, have a number of negative impacts on various aspects of societies that are magnified when the latter are fragile. However, individual privations have the possibility of leading to innovation and spontaneous local economic development delinked from the global economy.

For the aid community, there are tough choices ahead. Beyond supporting measures to prevent the spread of the virus, donors will need to consider the expected impact their policies, projects and programmes will have on local efforts to function despite the presence of the virus. A key question to ask is – given current trajectories of COVID 19 in FCAS, would the absence of a project contribute to increasing conflict and fragility risk? In answering this question donors will need to think about how they plan to engage FCAS where the risks to aid workers are significant and vulnerable populations even more so. Will donors work “in, on or around” COVID19? By deciding to work “in” a COVID 19 situation, projects and planning should take into account an environment in which COVID is likely or current with procedures in place to ensure successful project implementation and reduce exposure to risk for those people involved in its completion as well as beneficiaries and stakeholders. By deciding to work “on” COVID 19, projects and funds should have very specific goals of reducing the spread and impact of COVID 19 among the affected population whether as a positive externality or an impact specifically tailored to meet the needs of the affected population. Working “around” COVID19 means putting in place procedures to ensure any negative impacts the pandemic might have on the success of donor projects by avoiding those activities, populations and stakeholders directly affected. These choices are obviously not mutually exclusive, and their successful application will be determined in large part by the capacities, needs and interests of the local populations.

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About CIFP

Country Indicators for Foreign Policy is an independent research organisation based at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University, in Ottawa, Canada, focusing on fragile state, democracy and governance, aid monitoring, conflict risk analysis, early warning and mainstreaming aid effectiveness. Led by David Carment the project has over 18 years' experience in developing methodologies, training and working with local, national and regional organizations and governments. Funders, supporters and users include the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), Department of National Defence (DND), Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Conflict Prevention Network, the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, the World Food Program, Criminal intelligence Services of Canada, Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA), The International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the OECD's International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and private sector firms, including extractive industries.

About the Authors

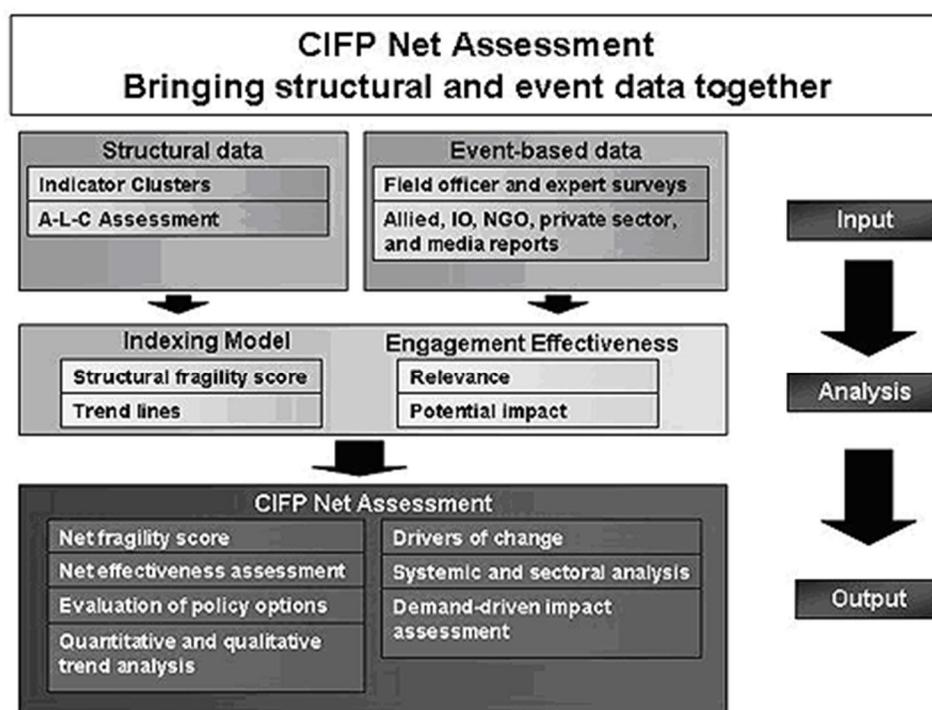
David Carment is a full Professor of International Affairs at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs and has over 20 years' experience in policy relevant research on fragile states, conflict prevention, mainstreaming risk analysis and aid allocation. He led a CIDA funded initiative on mainstreaming research on failed and fragile states into policy making over the 2005-2008 period. He also served DAC-OECD's working group on fragile states. He has developed risk analysis training workshops for NGOs in Africa, Asia and Europe. He is the editor of *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal*.

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Appendix 1

As part of a broader effort to enable more effective international engagement in failed and fragile states, a team from Carleton's Country Indicators for Foreign Policy project (CIFP - www.carleton.ca/cifp) has been working with the Canadian government in a multi-year initiative that has three objectives. First, we have developed a number of wide-ranging tools that encompass, among other things, the monitoring, forecasting, and evaluation of failed and fragile states, as well as the assessment of supporting policies intended to address the development, security, and economic challenges they represent. The following diagram outlines the full extent of the CIFP analytical framework - known as the CIFP Net Assessment (CNA) - identifying the various modules involved in the analysis.



Second, the project presents a methodology for evaluating individual country performance. This drill-down capability provides guidance to programming officers at CIDA and other government departments working in complex and fragile environments. It enables them to focus efforts and resources on the root structural causes of fragility rather than the outward symptoms of the problem, while simultaneously identifying areas of comparative strength within the state that may provide valuable points of entry for international

development efforts. At the same time, it allows them to avoid decisions likely to further destabilize the country through otherwise unforeseen consequences of programming activities.

Third, the project engages in statistical and theoretical research, regarding the nature of the relationship between state fragility and selected key variables. The findings provide some insight into the varied causes of state fragility. Several important avenues requiring further study have been extensively covered in publication form. Such research is particularly relevant, given that the now broadly acknowledged lack of progress toward global attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is to a certain extent explained through the poor performance of the world's fragile and failed states (Samy and Carment, 2011). Furthermore, progress on the newly-adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will require significant resources and focus on fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS).

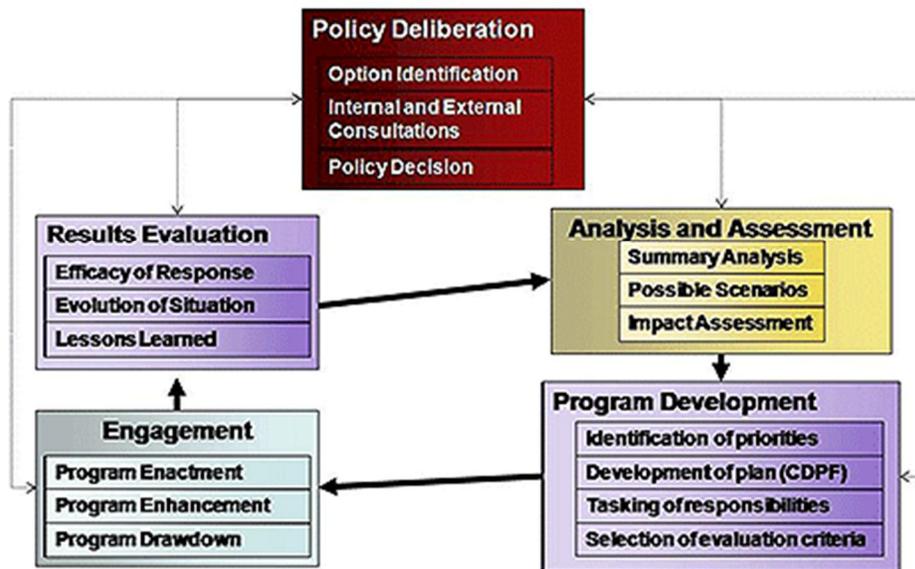
Innovations in Research Design and Methodologies for Risk Analysis, Country Monitoring and Impact Assessment

Effective policy in fragile states requires a solid analytic base that:

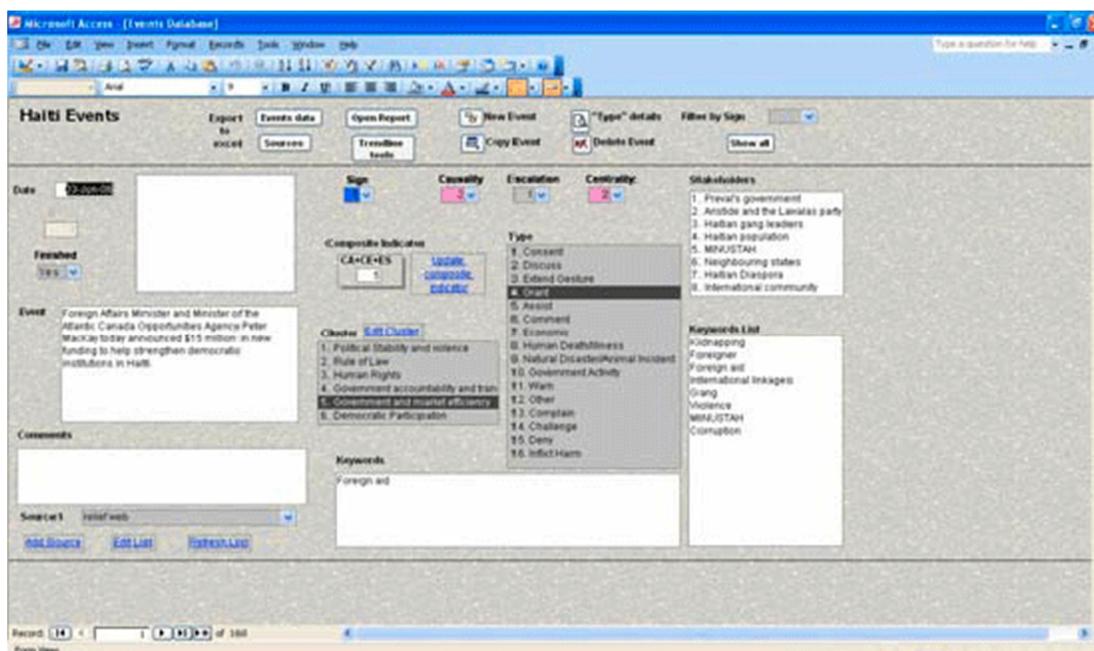
- Is sufficiently nuanced to allow the observer to understand differentiated performance in different areas of fragility, rather than presenting processes and performance in an oversimplified manner;
- Identifies both positive and negative sectors in each state's performance, thereby highlighting potential points of entry for external actors;
- Combines real time dynamic event and actor analysis with long-term structural information to counter time lags between developments on the ground and their reflection in statistical indicators and resulting programming priorities and timelines;
- Provides policy relevant diagnosis by matching the analysis to the end user's operational capacity; and
- Provides an evaluative framework with which to assess policy impact both before and after programs are implemented.

The relationship between these objectives and the policy cycle are shown here:

Development Policy Cycle



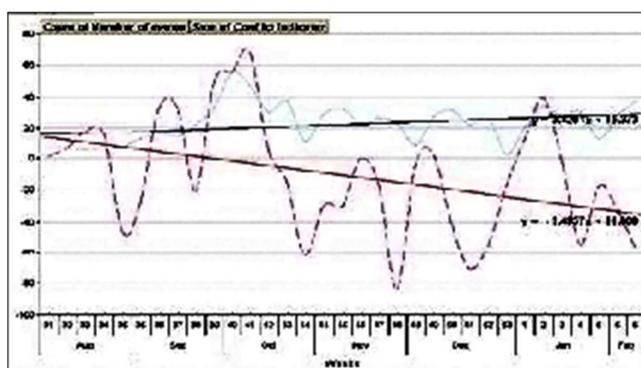
In order to address these policy objectives, the CIFP Fragile States Project has developed a three tiered multi-source, multi method policy relevant tool kit. Our argument has been that if they are to have any significant impact, fragile state policies require a multifaceted but focused analysis based on an appreciation of the relative risks that exist within and between states and, more importantly, the development of effective policy-relevant tools for international engagement. One of the key innovations has been the construction of a web-based country monitoring tool, shown here:



First, structural data, such as GDP per capita, political indices and human rights measures, provide a sturdy platform on which to build country analysis. Structural data are compiled by recognized organizations, sometimes in partnership with host nations. Structural data allows the end user to rank countries for quick assessments of performance within sub-sectors. Country level structural data also enable comparative analysis. For example, one may compare the voting rates among women in Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire using data collected by the UNDP or the World Bank. Using the same indicators and econometric analysis it is possible to determine in what way women's voting rates in Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire are influenced by education levels, rural and urban environments, and formal employment.

Second, the systematic collection and evaluation of dynamic data also known as events-based information analysis, is highly relevant to fragile states programming and processes. Dynamic data analysis whether it draws on information from media sources or country experts, is useful for identifying up-to-date trends in popular perceptions, preferences and stakeholder behaviors. Dynamic data analysis can add considerable value through regularized and standardized reporting. It can deepen understanding of trends found in structural data, and can highlight trend reversals. For example, a statistical study may show a steady decline in violent events over a series of years, but current events may evidence a sudden surge in violent demonstrations, one that will show up in structural data only until after the fact. Events-based information can also provide a window into stakeholder perceptions, how they are reacting to real-time changes and why they are doing so.

The figure below shows patterns of decline in governance performance approximately a year prior to the declared state of emergency in Pakistan in 2007. The red regression line in the graph represents the overall trend in events. Clearly, in the case of Pakistan, there was considerable evidence of an approaching crisis. Such evidence, if properly understood, can allow policymakers to respond in a timely fashion to impending problems, rather than simply responding after the fact.



Third, the project employs qualitative information, as a valuable complement to the systematic collection of statistical data, as it uncovers details and nuance. Put simply, when correctly structured, expert opinion can provide the "why" behind the "what" revealed through structural and dynamic data analysis. Expert opinions can provide detailed insight into specific issue areas, as well as offer ideas about what areas deserve the most attention going forward, either because they are functioning well and can be used to propagate positive reform in other parts of the governance system, or because they are weakening and threaten to undermine stability and development in other sectors. For example, CIFP's expert survey on Ghana highlighted the problem of low popular expectations of government as an obstacle to improving governance performance. Ghanaians had become so accustomed to limited government capacity that they had ceased to seriously challenge the government on its service delivery.