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'If you want to go far, go together'
Community engagement and infrastructure development in fragile settings

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In fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS), infrastructure development is a sharp double-edged sword: it can foster sustainable and inclusive development, but it can also exacerbate fragility and conflict. This brief argues that the substantial engagement of local communities has the potential to improve the conflict sensitivity of infrastructure efforts in FCAS. To ensure that these efforts have a positive impact on fragility dynamics, however, due attention should also be paid to the specific choices made in terms of project design and implementation. The brief offers a set of pragmatic considerations aimed at supporting practitioners in navigating such choices. In addition, to ensure a proper tailoring of project choices to the specific context, practitioners should rely extensively on conflict sensitivity analyses, thereby monitoring the interaction between the project and the context's underlying drivers of fragility throughout the whole project cycle. While community-centred approaches have so far been applied to small-scale infrastructure projects, efforts should be devoted to exploring whether and how they could be extended to larger infrastructure projects.

Introduction

In fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS), infrastructure development is a sharp double-edged sword.[1] New roads can connect remote areas to markets and services, but they can also enable the transport of troops and weapons.[2] New dams can provide electricity to large numbers of people, but at the same time they can displace communities or deny

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1   Infrastructure is hereby defined as "the basic physical and organizational structures and facilities (e.g. buildings, roads, power supplies) needed for the operation of a society or enterprise" ('Infrastructure', *The Oxford Essential Dictionary of the U.S. Military*, retrieved December 21, 2021, from https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199891580.001.0001/acref-9780199891580-e-4001). Infrastructure development includes both the construction of new assets and the rehabilitation of damaged existing ones.

2   Kantar, S. 2019. 'Military road defies Myanmar national ceasefire, fuels insecurity', *Al Jazeera*, September 11, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/9/11/military-road-defies-myanmar-national-ceasefire-fuels-insecurity (last accessed 21 December 2021). For a wider range of examples in this regard (e.g. in Cameroon, the DRC, Afghanistan, South Sudan), see Schouten, P. and Bachmann, J. 2017. *Roads to Peace: The Role of Infrastructure in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States*, DIIS/UNOPS Report, Copenhagen, 7-9.

them access to resources.[3] The construction of new infrastructure networks can stimulate the local economy and create jobs, but it can also create opportunities for corruption.[4] While far from being exhaustive, these examples illustrate the ambivalent potential of infrastructure in FCAS. On the one hand, developing infrastructure can foster sustainable and inclusive economic development, with the ability to influence the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[5] On the other hand, however, ill-advised infrastructure development in FCAS risks stoking further tensions and violence, thus exacerbating fragility.

The risks entailed by infrastructure development in FCAS are relevant for a wide spectrum of players, ranging from the local actors involved in and affected by infrastructure projects (e.g. target communities, government institutions, the local private sector) to the external actors supporting such projects (e.g. foreign governments, multilateral organizations, INGOs, international businesses). The conditions of insecurity and weak governance that are typical for FCAS mean that the risk of project failure is relatively high. This can lead to the loss of staff and assets, major financial damage (given the high costs usually associated with infrastructure projects), as well as reputational damage. Therefore, all stakeholders – from the local to the international level – have an interest in developing infrastructure in a way that minimizes such risks, while maximizing potential benefits.

Drawing on existing reviews of infrastructure development projects in FCAS and of community-driven development (CDD)

projects, this brief argues that the substantial engagement of local communities has the potential to improve the conflict sensitivity of infrastructure development efforts in FCAS. In this regard, it recommends: (i) to step up the use of CDD approaches in infrastructure development in FCAS; (ii) to increase reliance on conflict sensitivity analyses in support of CDD projects; and (iii) to explore the scalability of CDD approaches in large-scale infrastructure projects. The recommendations offered by this brief are relevant for the wide array of stakeholders – including national governments in FCAS, their foreign partners, as well as private sector players – interested in supporting infrastructure development in FCAS.

Lessons learnt from infrastructure development efforts in fragile settings

Over the last decade, infrastructure development in FCAS has come to be a growing priority for both national govern-ments and their international partners. Infrastructure funding in Africa, the continent hosting by far the largest number of fragile states, has exceeded USD 100 billion in 2018 – a growth by a third as compared to the 2015-17 average.[6] Despite this considerable sum, the continent reportedly faces an estimated USD 50-90 billion gap in infrastructure financing each year.[7] In recent years, this funding has been provided by a wide range of actors, including African national governments (39.9%), a large number of bilateral and multilateral foreign partners (53.4%), as well as local and

3   The Oakland Institute. 2019. *'How they tricked us': Living with the Gibe III dam and sugarcane plantations in southwest Ethiopia*, The Oakland Institute, Oakland.

4   UNECA. 2017. *Corruption in public procurement: The case of infrastructure in Africa*, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Addis Ababa.

5   Thacker, S. et al. 2018. *Infrastructure: Underpinning Sustainable Development*, United Nations Office for Project Services, Copenhagen.

6   Infrastructure Consortium for Africa. 2018. *Infrastructure financing trends in Africa – 2018*, African Development Bank, Abidjan. Out of Africa's 55 countries, 20 are classified as FCAS in the World Bank's categorization (World Bank. 2021. 'List of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations – Year 2022', https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/bb5 2765f38156924d682486726f422d4-0090082021/ original/FCSList-FY22.pdf, last accessed 21 December 2021).

7   Infrastructure Consortium for Africa. 2018. *Infrastructure financing trends in Africa*, 2.

international private sector actors (6.7%).[8] All these actors thus have an interest in minimizing the risks associated with their large investments, while maximizing the potential benefits.

The debate about the ambivalent impact that infrastructure development can have in FCAS has been constantly evolving over the past twenty years. Early works throughout the 2000s focused mostly on infrastructure development in post-conflict settings.[9] Successive works have then tried to systematically map the causal links through which infrastructure projects can have an impact on target countries, not only on economic development but also on fragility and conflict dynamics.[10] The most comprehensive work of this kind is arguably UNOPS' recent report 'Infrastructure for Peacebuilding', which maps both the positive and the negative impact that infrastructure development can have on different dimensions of fragility across the various phases of the conflict cycle.[11]

The next paragraphs outline the major lessons that can be learned from existing theoretical debates and practical experiences.[12] This review includes a wide range of infrastructure projects, with different scales (from small local projects to large infrastructure schemes), timeframes (from quick impact projects to projects embedded in long-term development strategies) and stakeholders (from local communities to national governments, from donors to businesses). The aim of the review is to identify broad, overarching lessons learnt on how infrastructure development in FCAS can avoid exacerbating underlying drivers of fragility, and rather contribute to addressing them.

Lesson 1: Developing infrastructure entails more than developing physical assets

To deliver real benefits to the target population, building or rehabilitating physical infrastructure assets is important, but it is not enough. Rather, these assets need to be adequately operated and maintained, and it must be ensured that access to services and long-term economic opportunities is achieved through such infrastructure.[13] For instance, a road needs to be constantly kept viable, and it should link communities to markets and economic opportunities. Similarly, the construction of a hospital cannot deliver real benefits if doctors are in short supply, are not trained or they lack equipment. This means that, in order to be effective, infrastructure development should be embedded in broader strategies that cater for issues related to operation and maintenance, service provision, as well as the creation of long-term economic opportunities.

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8   These figures refer to the 2014-2018 period. See Table 1.1. in Infrastructure Consortium for Africa. 2018. *Infrastructure financing trends in Africa*, 4.

9   MacDonald, M. 2005. *Provision of infrastructure in post conflict situations*, Department for International Development, London; Mashatt, M., Long, D. and Crum, J. 2008. *Conflict Sensitive Approach to Infrastructure Development*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington D.C.; Mardirosian, R.C. 2010. *Infrastructure development in the shadow of conflict: Aligning incentives and attracting investment*, Collaboratory for Research on Global Projects, Stanford.

10   Jones, S. and Howarth, S. 2012. *Supporting infrastructure development in fragile and conflict-affected states: Learning from experience*, Oxford Policy Management and Mott MacDonald; Schouten and Bachmann, 2017, *Roads to Peace*, op. cit.; Fantini, C. et al. 2020. *Infrastructure for Peacebuilding: The role of infrastructure in tackling the underlying drivers of fragility*, United Nations Office for Project Services, Copenhagen.

11   Fantini et al., 2020, *Infrastructure for Peacebuilding*, op. cit. The report is embedded in a broader research project on this topic, 'Roads to Peace', which should include case studies on the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan (see the website at http://www.roads-to-peace.org/).

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12   The findings are based on a meta-review, i.e. a review of existing reviews of theoretical debates and practical experiences.

13   Fantini et al., 2020, *Infrastructure for Peacebuilding*, op. cit.; Jones and Howarth, 2012, *Supporting infrastructure development in FCAS*, op. cit.; Haider, H. 2014. *Conflict sensitivity in education, the private sector and infrastructure development*, GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report 1136, Birmingham, UK.

The construction or rehabilitation of physical infrastructure assets should also be accompanied by efforts to build local capacity to manage such assets.[14] This capacity – which consists both of local stakeholders' expertise and institutional arrangements put in place to govern infrastructure – is often rather weak in FCAS. Capacity-building efforts can take several different forms (e.g. training, funding, the sharing of expertise, etc.), and their targeting should be broad, involving not only public authorities but also the local private sector and target communities. These efforts should also be embedded in economically viable and sustainable arrangements, in order to ensure that the capacity built is not lost. For instance, adequate salaries should be granted to doctors, in order to prevent them from moving into other more lucrative positions after receiving training. These arrangements are often best devised through broad cooperation involving both governmental actors and the local private sector.

Lesson 2: Infrastructure's benefits should be spread across groups in an inclusive way

Generating tangible benefits for the target population is a crucial goal of infrastructure development in FCAS. Yet, in these settings, the issue of *who gets what, when and how* is a particularly sensitive one.[15] Therefore, in order to ensure that infrastructure projects have a positive impact (or at least not a negative one) on fragility dynamics, the benefits generated by these projects should be carefully spread across different societal groups. This generally entails distributing sufficient benefits to actors that have the capacity to disrupt the project. These actors can be powerful players keen on preserving their position, but also more marginalized

groups: if the distribution of benefits is not sufficiently inclusive, or is not perceived as such, this could exacerbate existing grievances, thus furthering tensions and potentially violence. This means that any infrastructure project developed in FCAS should be particularly careful in anticipating and tracking the project's different impacts across various societal groups.

The development of infrastructure projects is bound to create "haves" and "have nots". At times, these dynamics are rather straightforward. The jobs and economic opportunities related to the infrastructure's construction, for instance, will be reaped by some groups or individuals, while others will be left out. Similarly, the infrastructure's benefits in terms of access to services and markets will be enjoyed by some communities more than by others. Some groups may even suffer as a result of the development of infrastructure. For instance, certain communities may be displaced during the construction phase, or their livelihood strategies may be undermined by the new infrastructure.[16] Moreover, the likely increase in land value around the new assets will benefit landowners while harming landless populations. These dynamics can reinforce existing patterns of inequality and marginalization, which have proved to be drivers of fragility.[17]

In addition to these more straightforward channels of influence, there are more subtle ways in which infrastructure development can widen inequalities and hence exacerbate fragility. For instance, past evaluations have shown how different health-related projects can impact different socio-economic strata of the population in distinct ways, as investments in latrines and health posts tend to benefit poorer households, while the construction of sewerage projects favours

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14 Fantini et al., 2020, *Infrastructure for Peacebuilding*, op. cit.; Markowitz, C. 2021. *Conflict-Sensitive Infrastructure Development: Key Considerations for the AU*, South African Institute of International Affairs, Policy Briefing 238, Johannesburg; Jones and Howarth, 2012, *Supporting infrastructure development in FCAS*, op. cit.

15 Laswell, H. 1936. *Politics; Who Gets What, When and How*, New York: Whittlesey House.

16 For instance, the construction of a bridge often leads to job losses for small-scale ferry operators.

17 Ngepah, N. and Ngepah, R. 2017. *Exploring the nexus of growth, inequality and fragility in Africa*, AERC Research Project on Growth in Fragile States in Africa, African Economic Research Consortium, Nairobi.

those who are better off.[18] Moreover, the way in which a project is financed can significantly affect patterns of inequality: a toll-based road, for instance, is likely to pose a larger burden on the poorest segments of society, thus also potentially preventing them from using the new infrastructure.[19] Giving adequate consideration to these dynamics and putting in place mechanisms to ensure a more inclusive (perceived) distribution of benefits is crucial to the success of infrastructure projects in FCAS.

Lesson 3: Sustainability and a long-term perspective are key

Developing infrastructure is a very expensive endeavour, and it is supposed to deliver benefits that last over a long timeframe. Consequently, it is crucial for infrastructure projects to be developed taking into account a long-term perspective from the very beginning. This, however, is not always easily done in FCAS, where there is often a sense of urgency to deliver benefits to the target population in order to promote or consolidate peace. In the past, such considerations have led to attempts at fast-tracking infrastructure building by lowering the quality of project processes as well as of the assets built. This has not only created more room for corruption and elite capture, but it has also resulted in the construction of poorly planned, low quality infrastructure that has remained in place for a long time, ending up hindering long-term economic development.[20]

Past experiences thus suggest that, to ensure that infrastructure projects deliver their expected results, considerable attention

should be devoted to the sustainability of these projects over the long term.[21] This may entail building infrastructure that is resilient to shocks, such as environmental degradation and the impact of conflict – a particularly crucial issue in FCAS.[22] It also entails incorporating, from the very beginning, plans for the operation and maintenance of infrastructure (often a challenging task in FCAS), and building the capacity needed to operate such maintenance, including by involving local communities and the local private sector (more details in the following sections).[23] While it is true that paying attention to these issues may somewhat slow down the process initially, it also lays the foundations for a successful project in the long run. Transitional arrangements may help in smoothening out this trade-off. For instance, the rehabilitation of existing infrastructure has proven to be more effective (in terms of both time and cost) than the creation of new infrastructure in delivering positive economic returns, and it could thus be leveraged to deliver quick wins.[24]

Lesson 4: The process through which infrastructure is executed matters

For infrastructure projects in FCAS to have a positive impact on fragility dynamics, what matters is not only the outcome of these projects, but also the process through which they are designed, implemented and operated within the specific context of the target communities.[25] Given the already high level of tensions that characterize FCAS,

18 This observation has been made in an evaluation of different projects in Nicaragua and has been reported by White, H., Menon, R. and Waddington, H. 2018. *Community-driven development: Does it build social cohesion or infrastructure? A mixed-method evidence synthesis*, International Initiative for Impact Evaluation, Working Paper 30, New Delhi, 21.

19 Salomonsen, A. and Diachok, M. 2015. *Operations and Maintenance of Rural Infrastructure in Community-Driven Development and Community-Based Projects*, World Bank Group, Washington D.C.

20 Fantini et al., 2020, *Infrastructure for Peacebuilding*, op. cit., 8

21 Fantini et al., 2020, *Infrastructure for Peacebuilding*, op. cit.; Jones and Howarth, 2012, *Supporting infrastructure development in FCAS*, op. cit.; Haider, 2014, *Conflict sensitivity*, op. cit.

22 Fantini et al., 2020, *Infrastructure for Peacebuilding*, op. cit.

23 Jones and Howarth, 2012, *Supporting infrastructure development in FCAS*, op. cit., 18-19; Haider, 2014, *Conflict sensitivity*, op. cit.; Salomonsen and Diachok, 2015, *Operations and Maintenance*, op. cit.

24 Jones and Howarth, 2012, *Supporting infrastructure development in FCAS*, op. cit., 16.

25 Fantini et al., 2020, *Infrastructure for Peacebuilding*, op. cit.; Jones and Howarth, 2012, *Supporting infrastructure development in FCAS*, op. cit., 23-24; Haider, 2014, *Conflict sensitivity*, op. cit.

it is crucial in these settings to be extra careful not to exacerbate existing tensions or create new ones. This means paying specific attention not only to what is done and how, but also to the way in which these actions are perceived by the target communities, as these perceptions will eventually shape the population's attitude towards the project and hence its success.

Attention to the process entails, for instance, ensuring transparency and accountability throughout the whole project cycle. This can help to reduce – or at least to anticipate and manage – risks related to corruption and to perceptions of unfairness among target communities. In this regard, it can be useful to put in place downward accountability mechanisms, providing a safe space for the population to complain about (and possibly address) perceived unfair practices.[26] Another major issue to be taken into consideration is that of expectation management. The development of unrealistic expectations and the subsequent delusion – a relatively frequent phenomenon in infrastructure projects – can lead to tensions that would better be avoided in already fragile settings.[27] It is therefore crucial to adopt a sound stakeholder management strategy, engaging all relevant stakeholders early on in the project cycle (e.g. at the planning stage). A proper management of expectations also requires an adequate communication strategy, in which complete information about the project – including both its benefits and its drawbacks – is shared with all relevant constituencies.

Lesson 5: Substantial engagement of target communities can deliver positive outcomes

Besides the broader lessons outlined in the previous paragraphs, various existing reviews of practical experiences of infrastructure development in FCAS share a common observation: infrastructure development projects featuring the substantial engage-ment of target communities generally have a positive impact on fragility dynamics.[28] Although far from being a silver bullet, community-driven projects have been found to have a positive record in terms of development, stabilization and peacebuilding in a range of different countries such as Nepal, Liberia, Afghanistan and South Sudan.[29] While this impact has been particularly marked in the water and sanitation sector, positive experiences have also been recorded in projects focusing on different types of infrastructure, such as for instance road construction (e.g. in Nepal). Following this lead, the next section expands on the potential of community-driven projects in ensuring that infrastructure development in FCAS has a positive impact on fragility dynamics in target countries.

The potential of community-driven approaches

Over the last two decades, there has been a growing awareness about the potential of local communities to lead their own process of socio-economic development. The basic premise underlying such considerations is

26 Wong, S. and Guggenheim, S. 2018. *Community-driven development: myths and realities*, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 8435, Washington D.C.; Ahmed, N. 2006. *Community-Driven Development in the Context of Conflict-Affected Countries: Challenges and Opportunities*, World Bank Social Development Department, Washington D.C; Haider, H. 2009. *Community-based approaches to peacebuilding in conflict-affected and fragile contexts*, GSDRC Issues Paper, Birmingham, UK.

27 Fantini et al., 2020, *Infrastructure for Peacebuilding*, op. cit.; Haider, 2014, *Conflict sensitivity*, op. cit.; Unruh, J. et al. 2019. 'Linkages between large-scale infrastructure development and conflict dynamics in East Africa', *Journal of Infrastructure Development* 11.1-2, 1-13.

28 Jones and Howarth, 2012, *Supporting infrastructure development in FCAS*, op. cit.; Haider, 2014, *Conflict sensitivity*, op. cit.; Ramos Suárez, E. and Pérez, G. 2018. *Development and conflicts linked to infrastructure construction*, United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago; Unruh et al., 2019, 'Linkages between large-scale infrastructure development and conflict dynamics in East Africa', op. cit.; Fantini et al., 2020, *Infrastructure for Peacebuilding*, op. cit.; Markowitz, 2021, *Conflict-Sensitive Infrastructure Development*, op. cit.

29 Jones and Howarth, 2012, *Supporting infrastructure development in FCAS*, op. cit., 38-41.

that local communities know best what they need and how to achieve that in their specific context. Thus, their involvement in planning, implementing and sustaining projects can make such projects considerably more effective, especially in the long run. Moreover, promoters of this approach have advanced the idea that an increased involvement of communities in development efforts can create new room for community members to engage in joint decision-making and action. This, in turn, can have a positive societal and political impact, for instance by increasing social capital and improving governance mechanisms.

This idea has been encapsulated in the concept of 'community-driven development' (CDD), which was introduced in the early 2000s and has since acquired greater prominence, particularly in development circles.[30] Between 2000 and 2008, the World Bank (the largest supporter of CDD) lent USD 1.3 billion per year to CDD projects across all sectors.[31] Over the following ten years, the Bank's annual lending to CDD projects has doubled, reaching an annual average of USD 2.6 billion (5-10% of the Bank's overall annual lending).[32] As of 2018, the Bank supported 190 projects in 78 countries around the world, covering a wide range of different sectors.[33]

The track record of CDD approaches

As CDD projects have been implemented in an increasingly large number of cases, including in several FCAS, their impact on economic development and on fragility dynamics has increasingly become a subject of careful evaluation.[34] Comprehensive reviews of CDD projects have shown that these projects have been rather successful in delivering small-scale infrastructure in remote areas in a cost-effective way.[35] This has established CDD approaches as a particularly attractive option to deliver infrastructure in fragile states characterized by weak governance and financial capacity. The evidence, however, has been somewhat more nuanced regarding the ability of these projects to deliver broader societal goals, such as improvements in social capital, governance dynamics and conflict resolution.[36] This relatively disappointing performance has been attributed by some to the overly ambitious goals set forth by CDD projects in terms of achieving broad societal change.[37] Other observers, however, have left the door open to the possibility that such positive changes may materialize in the future, although possibly only over longer timeframes and after CDD projects have been adequately brought to scale.[38]

30 For examples of the early works from the early 2000s, see: Dongier, P. et al. 2003. *Community driven development*, World Bank Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 1; Strand, A. et al. 2003. *Community Driven Development in Contexts of Conflict*, World Bank ESSD Concept Paper, Chr. Michelsen Institute, Bergen; Cliffe, S., Guggenheim, S. and Kostner, M. 2003. *Community-driven reconstruction as an instrument in war-to-peace transitions*, CPR Working Paper No. 7.

31 White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit., 1; Menon, R. and White, H. 2018. 'Moving the debate forward on community-driven development', *International Initiative for Impact Evaluation*, June 18, https://3ieimpact.org/blogs/moving-debate-forward-community-driven-development (last accessed 21 December 2021).

32 Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit., 8.

33 Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit., 8.

34 For an overview of the debate, see: Kuehnast, de Berry and Ahmed, 2006, *Community-Driven Development*, op. cit.; Haider, 2009, *Community-based approaches to peacebuilding*, op. cit.; Kyamusugulwa, P.M. 2013. 'Participatory Development and Reconstruction: A literature review', *Third World Quarterly* 34.7, 1265-1278; King, E. 2013. *A critical review of community-driven development programmes in conflict-affected contexts*, International Rescue Committee and UK-Aid; Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.; White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.

35 Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.; White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.

36 White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.

37 White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.; Anderson, B. 2019. 'Community-driven development: A reality check', *DevPolicy Blog*, March 26, https://devpolicy.org/community-driven-development-a-reality-check-20190326/ (last accessed 21 December 2021).

38 Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.

Box 1   The basic structure of CDD projects[39]

The basic structure of a CDD project envisions an implementing agency gathering funds and making them available to local communities to support a development project. In the initial phase of the project, the agency reaches out to potential target communities, creating awareness about the project's opportunities and stimulating local participation. Community members organize themselves – either through existing community organizations, or (most often) by establishing an ad hoc community project committee – in order to make decisions regarding the project. The implementing agency provides the community with the necessary funds, either via a direct transfer of funds (allocation model), or by asking different communities to devise project proposals in order to apply for funding (application model).

While the division of tasks between the local community and the implementing agency can vary from case to case, in CDD projects the community generally has a relevant role in selecting the nature of the project, designing it and implementing it, as well as in managing the funds. Communities can also contribute to the project by providing materials and labour. The implementing agency usually supports the project not only by providing funds, but also by facilitating community interactions (e.g. through mediation, conflict resolution, etc.) and supporting capacity-building efforts (e.g. through training). Community engagement in monitoring and evaluation can further strengthen the community-centred nature of CDD projects.

In terms of outcomes, the typical theory of change of a CDD project foresees two types of impact. First, the project is supposed to deliver practical results in terms of developmental outcome (e.g. construction/rehabilitation of infrastructure assets, the creation of jobs and economic opportunities, etc.). In addition, CDD projects are often expected to deliver broader societal benefits, most notably in terms of increased social capital (e.g. increase in trust, social cohesion, etc.) and improved governance mechanisms (e.g. decentralization, the use of democratic practices, etc.).

Existing reviews have also identified a number of features enabling CDD projects to achieve their desired impact. First and foremost, it has been suggested that CDD projects should provide local communities with opportunities for substantial engagement.[40] The potential level of community engagement can vary widely, from a token-like involvement (whereby projects are designed by an external implementing agency and hasty consultations with local communities are used to gain a degree of legitimacy) to full decision-making power (whereby critical decisions over the project's

design, implementation and operation are entrusted to local communities). Within this spectrum, a substantial engagement may entail, for instance, leaving ample room for local communities to define the nature of the project, either through a full open choice, or at least through a very broad range of options in the initial phase, to be later expanded into an open choice.[41] A particularly important issue is also that of financial management, as community control (or at least strong oversight) over the project's financial resources is an important element in

39 White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.

40 Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.

41 de Regt, J., Majumdar, S. and Singh, J. 2013. *Designing Community-Driven Development Operations in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations*, World Bank Social Development Department, Washington D.C.

ensuring real community engagement.[42] Failing to entrust local communities with actual decision-making powers may not only blunt the project's effectiveness, but also raise tensions, particularly if the narrative surrounding CDD approaches has built considerable expectations of empowerment among these communities.

In addition, reviews have suggested that, in order to have a perceivable impact on the lives of target communities, CDD projects should involve sufficiently large investments. While the sums transferred by CDD projects do not usually exceed USD 10 per capita per year, within this figure there is scope to ensure a real impact – although the precise amount of money involved should be carefully tailored to each specific case.[43] Moreover, it has been noted that CDD projects providing repeated funding over predictable cycles can deliver positive outcomes, most notably in terms of longer-term planning and partnership building, that one-off or unpredictable transfers cannot deliver.[44]

Finally, critical reviews of past experiences have highlighted some risks related to CDD approaches. A prominent risk is that elites and existing powerholders may exploit their dominant position to monopolize decision-making in community-driven projects, thus ensuring an outsized share of benefits (either financial or political) for themselves.[45] Such a development may reinforce existing patterns of marginalization, intensifying grievances and exacerbating drivers of fragility and

conflict. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that the establishment of new local governance mechanisms related to CDD projects can have a profound impact on existing governance arrangements.[46] While this impact may at times be positive (e.g. communities using the new local mechanisms to challenge oppressive governance structures), at times it may also be negative (e.g. new mechanisms destabilizing legitimate but fragile existing governance arrangements). Therefore, due attention should be paid to how the new local arrangements established by CDD projects interact with existing structures, including after the end of the project, to ensure that the project does not have unintended negative effects. (For further details on the risks associated with CDD projects, see Box 2).

Stepping up community engagement in infrastructure development in FCAS

The nature of CDD projects and their track record provide useful insights into why a sustained engagement of target communities may improve the performance of infrastructure development projects in FCAS. Community-driven approaches are by their very nature particularly suitable in fragile settings, where governments are often weak and/or not trusted by large parts of the local population. In such contexts, the direct engagement of communities represents an effective alternative to the state to deliver much-needed infrastructure and services in remote areas. When applied in practice, CDD projects have indeed proved to be able to do so in a cost-effective way, particularly for small-scale infrastructure projects.[47]

42 Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit. Note that the authors do not even consider as real CDD projects those that do not entrust financial management to local communities.

43 Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit., 12-13.

44 Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit., 12-13.

45 King, 2013, *A critical review of community-driven development programmes*, op. cit.; Kyamusugulwa, 2013, 'Participatory Development and Reconstruction', op. cit.; Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.; White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.

46 White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.; Kyamusugulwa, 2013, 'Participatory Development and Reconstruction', op. cit.

47 Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.; White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.; Menon and White, 2018, 'Moving the debate forward', op. cit.; Anderson, 2019, 'Community-driven development', op. cit.

Box 2   Potential risks associated with community-driven infrastructure development projects

In the framework of CDD projects, two potential risks deserve particular attention. The first is related to the capture of infrastructure projects by existing powerholders. At the inter-community level, it is important to recognize that different communities often have different levels of capacity (e.g. access to information, financial resources, time, etc.), which can considerably influence their ability to participate in CDD efforts. In terms of project design, this means that CDD projects working through an application-based financing model (whereby communities compete for funding based on project proposals they devise) are likely to favour communities that are already more advantaged (e.g. with higher levels of income, education, etc.), as these would be able to devise stronger proposals.[48] Similarly, contribution requirements in terms of materials and labour are bound to favour richer communities vis-à-vis poorer ones, as the latter may struggle to provide such contributions.[49] To avoid playing into such imbalances, which may exacerbate existing grievances and fuel tensions, CDD projects should exercise particular care in using application-based funding mechanisms and contribution requirements. In some cases, the use of eligibility criteria for targeting specific communities has at least partly compensated these intrinsic biases by providing an edge to more disadvantaged communities.[50]

The need to recognize existing power imbalances and their influence on projects is equally compelling at the intra-community level. Communities are heterogeneous groups, whereby elites may use their outsized influence in order to gain control over decision-making concerning CDD projects and hence reap an outsized share of benefits.[51] To navigate this, setting up adequate formal mechanisms of participation may not be enough, as elites often wield their power informally. Rather, it is crucial for project designers and implementers to be aware of existing power imbalances and adapt their actions accordingly. At times, this may involve working with local elites – in certain cases, CDD projects that fell under elites' control delivered better outcomes for marginalized groups than CDD projects where power was more evenly distributed.[52] At other times, addressing existing imbalances may entail providing extra support to marginalized groups, for instance through targeted capacity building and communication strategies, as well as through a careful facilitation of intra-community interactions.[53]

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48 White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.; Kyamusugulwa, 2013, 'Participatory Development and Reconstruction', op. cit.; de Regt, Majumdar and Singh, 2013, *Designing Community-Driven Development Operations*, op. cit.

49 White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit., 28.

50 This solution was used, for instance, in Tanzania's Social Action Fund, where eligibility criteria targeting populations defined by the project as vulnerable allowed for a more focused pro-poor targeting (White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit., 21).

51 King, 2013, *A critical review of community-driven development programmes*, op. cit.; Kyamusugulwa, 2013, 'Participatory Development and Reconstruction', op. cit.; Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.; White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.

52 Dasgupta, A. and Beard, V.A. 2007. 'Community driven development, collective action and elite capture in Indonesia', *Development and change* 38(2), 229-249. Note that there is a difference between 'elite capture', whereby elites take control over a project in order to further their own interests, and 'elite control', whereby elites take the lead in managing a project, potentially to the benefit of the broader community and even of its most marginalized groups.

53 Kuehnast, de Berry and Ahmed, 2006, *Community-Driven Development*, op. cit.; White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.; Haider, 2009, *Community-based approaches to peacebuilding*, op. cit.

Yet, the targeting of specific groups within a community should always be handled with extreme care, particularly in FCAS, as it is very difficult to implement, and it has the potential to exacerbate social tensions.[54]

The second major risk associated with CDD projects concerns the potentially disruptive effect of project-specific local governance mechanisms on existing governance arrangements.[55] Such disruption need not necessarily be a negative development. In some cases, for instance, the new governance mechanisms could be used by local communities to challenge existing structures perceived as oppressive. In other cases, however, the new mechanisms may destabilize legitimate but fragile existing arrangements, with a negative impact on local governance. To mitigate such risks, CDD projects should ensure a good level of coordination with existing governance structure, including governmental authorities whenever possible, especially at the local level.[56] The division of roles across different levels should be clarified at the outset of the project, although maintaining room for flexibility. A potential division of labour may see local communities in charge of building local infrastructure, operating it and providing small-scale maintenance, and government authorities in charge of service provision and larger maintenance operations – although specific decisions should vary in relation to the context.[57]

While the evidence on these projects' social and political impact is more debated, they still hold some potential to increase social capital and improve governance (and hence to address drivers of fragility), especially in the longer run.[58] In line with these considerations, almost 60% of the countries currently hosting World Bank-supported CDD projects are FCAS, and infrastructure has so far absorbed a significant share of the funds devoted to CDD projects.[59]

At the same time, however, to date the CDD approach seems to be used only in a limited fraction of infrastructure projects. This can be noted by analysing the recent portfolio of the World Bank, which is considered to be the most committed actor to the promotion of CDD approaches. While no exact figures on the Bank's allocation to CDD infrastructure projects in Africa are available, the Bank's overall CDD annual portfolio (USD 2.6 billion as of 2018) is only about a third of its overall investment in infrastructure in Africa (USD 8 billion in 2018), even as the former figure includes all sectors (not only infrastructure) and all continents (not only Africa).[60] These figures suggest that there is significant room for relevant stakeholders – not only the World Bank and other foreign

54 White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.; Haider, 2009, *Community-based approaches to peacebuilding*, op. cit.; de Regt, Majumdar and Singh, 2013, *Designing Community-Driven Development Operations*, op. cit.

55 White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.; Kyamusugulwa, 2013, 'Participatory Development and Reconstruction', op. cit.

56 King, 2013, *A critical review of community-driven development programmes*, op. cit.; Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.; Kuehnast, de Berry and Ahmed, 2006, *Community-Driven Development*, op. cit.; Haider, 2009, *Community-based approaches to peacebuilding*, op. cit.

57 Cliffe, Guggenheim and Kostner, 2003, *Community-driven reconstruction*, op. cit.

58 It should be noted that, given the relatively recent spread of CDD projects, existing evaluations cover only relatively limited timeframes. Future evaluations analysing the impact of CDD projects over a longer period may shed clearer light on the social and political effects of these projects (Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.)

59 Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit., 12; Menon and White, 2018, 'Moving the debate forward', op. cit.

60 Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit., 8; Infrastructure Consortium for Africa, 2018, *Infrastructure financing trends in Africa*, op. cit., 8.

donors, but also national governments and private sector players – to step up their commitment to engaging target communities when developing infrastructure in FCAS.

Yet, it is important to bear in mind that CDD projects should not be considered a silver bullet – in other words, simply stepping up community engagement is not enough to ensure that infrastructure development in FCAS has a positive impact on fragility dynamics. First of all, the outcome of any infrastructure development project (be it community-driven or not) depends to a significant extent on the overall governance framework in which the infrastructure is embedded. This can create uneasy dilemmas for policymakers, particularly concerning whether to prioritize governance reforms or infrastructure development. Moreover, as noted above, CDD projects can at times entail significant risks, which should be duly considered and minimized (for further details, see Box 2). Finally, while community engagement has the potential to address some of the issues raised in the first section of this brief, such potential is not automatically realised – rather, it hinges on a careful design, implementation and monitoring of CDD infrastructure projects. These issues are the focus of the next section.

Navigating difficult trade-offs

Ensuring that infrastructure development in FCAS has a positive impact on fragility dynamics is a challenging endeavour that largely depends on the specific choices made by stakeholders involved in these efforts. Regrettably, these choices often entail challenging trade-offs, whereby improving effectiveness in some regards may lead to complications on other fronts. This section focuses on five such key trade-offs, as highlighted by Schouten and Bachmann in the 2017 'Roads to Peace' report published by UNOPS.[61] For each of these trade-offs, this brief provides some pragmatic considerations based on the

existing body of evidence, with a specific focus on solutions in the context of CDD infrastructure projects. No univocal recipe can be provided to address these dilemmas, as any solution should be highly dependent on the specific context of each project. Yet, the reflections presented below seek to support practitioners in navigating these difficult trade-offs in a more evidence-based manner, in order to ensure that (CDD) infrastructure projects have a positive impact – or at least not a negative one – on fragility dynamics.

Challenge 1: Between 'do good' and 'do no harm'
Infrastructure development efforts in FCAS seek to have a positive impact on security and economic development. Yet, in fragile contexts, these efforts carry a high risk of aggravating tensions and conflict, thus potentially infringing the key principle of 'do no harm'.

In order to avoid doing harm, infrastructure development efforts in FCAS – much like any other policy intervention in such settings – should be preceded by a careful conflict sensitivity analysis. Such analysis should leverage in-depth context awareness to derive fragility drivers. Then, the interaction between the project and such drivers should be systematically monitored before, during and after the project's implementation. Having identified the potential risks associated with the considered project, the analysis could also suggest strategies to mitigate these risks and/or manage their consequences. The risks considered in these analyses should include direct impacts (e.g. increased contestation over funds and benefits; increased violence and illicit activities enabled by the infrastructure; etc.), as well as second-order effects (e.g. increases in land prices around the new assets and ensuing socio-economic changes; shifts in long-term migratory patterns and their impact on inter-communal tensions; etc.).[62] The application of CDD

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61   See Schouten and Bachmann, 2017, *Roads to Peace*, op. cit.

62   Schouten and Bachmann, 2017, *Roads to Peace*, op. cit.; Unruh et al., 2019, 'Linkages between large-scale infrastructure development and conflict dynamics in East Africa', op. cit.

approaches to infrastructure development can create additional specific risks, for instance in relation to project capture by existing powerholders, as well as the disruption of legitimate but fragile governance arrangements (further details in Box 2). Both the risks and the potential mitigation/management strategies will be highly context-dependent, and so should be the recommendations offered by the conflict sensitivity analysis.

Challenge 2: Between quick impact and long-term transformation

In FCAS, infrastructure projects are often expected to deliver quick wins in order to foster or consolidate peace. Yet, hastily developing infrastructure projects can compromise their positive impact in the long run.

As seen above, an excessive focus on short-term considerations can be extremely damaging in the domain of infrastructure, because assets have a long lifespan and hence a major lock-in effect.[63] Therefore, it is crucial to adopt a long-term perspective since the early stages of any infrastructure project. In the case of CDD projects, however, this trade-off becomes particularly challenging, as a meaningful engagement of communities since the early (pre-design) stages of the project can be particularly time-consuming. Yet, such meaningful engagement has been shown to be an important requirement for the success of CDD projects. Therefore, longer timelines – particularly in the initial stages of the project – should be accepted when implementing CDD infrastructure projects in FCAS.

To smoothen this trade-off, early efforts aimed at delivering quick wins can focus on rehabilitating malfunctioning and/or destroyed infrastructure assets. Besides being faster and cheaper than building new infrastructure from scratch, this option has also proved to be very successful: past road rehabilitation projects in Liberia, for

instance, have shown rates of return as high as 800%.[64] Moreover, in order to ensure long-term sustainability, CDD projects should already deal with issues of operation and maintenance in the early stages of the project.[65] The use of local labour, materials and techniques when building/rehabilitating infrastructure assets can be instrumental in building capacity among local stakeholders (e.g. community members, local firms in the construction sector and its value chain, etc.). This can enable local actors to deal on their own with maintenance issues likely to arise over the long term, when the project's implementing agency may have already disengaged.

Challenge 3: Between local and central state capacities

Having local communities in the driving seat can allow for an infrastructure project to effectively cater for local needs. Yet, such a focus can be blind to broader national level issues, including, for instance, the development of large-scale infrastructure and service provision strategies.

In order to smoothen this trade-off, it is crucial for community-led projects to ensure coordination between the community and government authorities – including at the national level, where large-scale infrastructure and service delivery are usually managed. A potential division of roles across these different levels sees the communities delivering on building local infrastructure, operating it and providing routine maintenance, with the government taking care of delivering services, addressing remaining bottlenecks (e.g. the creation of economic opportunities) and providing for larger-scale maintenance.[66] When working with the national government is particularly problematic (e.g. due to a

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63 Fantini et al., 2020, *Infrastructure for Peacebuilding*, op. cit., 3.

64 Jones and Howarth, 2012, *Supporting infrastructure development in FCAS*, op. cit., 16.

65 For a more thorough guide on managing operation and maintenance in CDD projects, see Salomonsen and Diachok, 2015, *Operations and Maintenance*, op. cit.

66 For further details, see Cliffe, Guggenheim and Kostner, 2003, *Community-driven reconstruction*, op. cit., 10.

history of neglect or abuses), local/regional government structures may act as mediators between the communities and the national government. Sound information campaigns informing local communities about broader (e.g. national level) needs may help in ensuring a degree of local buy-in for larger-scale projects spanning across different communities. Yet, so far the potential of community-centred approaches in large-scale infrastructure projects has not been thoroughly explored.

Challenge 4: Between specific beneficiaries and equal access

Specific (sub-)groups suffering from marginalization and abuses may require special measures in order to benefit from infrastructure projects. Yet, providing special attention to some (sub-)groups can create perceptions of unfairness, thus undermining the project's legitimacy and fuelling tensions.

This trade-off is particularly challenging in FCAS, where decisions related to the distribution of benefits across different (sub-)groups are particularly sensitive and can create/exacerbate tensions. To ensure a distribution of benefits that is adequate to the context, it is crucial for project designers and implementers to rely on thorough context analyses mapping existing tensions, as well as on feasibility studies that seek to anticipate the potential impact of planned projects on these tensions.

Key constituencies whose buy-in should generally be ensured include powerful groups with the capacity to spoil the project, as well as marginalized groups whose exclusion may exacerbate existing grievances and reinforce underlying drivers of fragility.

Targeting issues are particularly critical at the intra-community level. In FCAS, targeting specific sub-groups can be particularly appealing, as it allows for support to be given to, for instance, conflict victims (e.g. as part of transitional justice processes) and/or former combatants (e.g. as part of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration efforts). Yet, such targeting has often proved to be extremely complex to implement, and to carry a very high risk of exacerbating already marked societal divides. Past CDD projects targeting conflict victims in Indonesia, for instance, reportedly ended up increasing social tensions.[67] Intra-community targeting, therefore, should be used with extreme caution. A safer way to ensure the inclusion of marginalized groups in CDD projects can be to provide high-quality facilitation services for community decision-making processes (further details in Box 3).

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67 White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit., 21.

Box 3   The crucial role of the facilitator in CDD projects

Within the framework of CDD projects, high-quality facilitation can go a long way in ensuring that the voices of marginalized groups are considered in the community's decision-making process, without having to resort to intra-community targeting. The choice of the facilitator is typically a responsibility of the implementing agency. While criteria for the choice may vary from case to case, as a general practice it is good for the facilitator to have local knowledge (to ensure awareness of complex context-specific dynamics), while at the same time being external to the community (in order to avoid perceptions of partiality).[68] Possibly, the facilitator should also have experience in conflict management and/or should receive training in this matter. The facilitation team can also consist of several people, which may help increase the perception of inclusiveness.

In terms of actions, it is generally recommended that the facilitator adopts a non-intrusive approach, leaving important decisions (e.g. on project design, financial management, etc.) in the hands of community members (in line with the degree of

community engagement agreed upon in the early stages of the project). To ensure a real engagement of marginalized groups, the facilitator may use different techniques, including targeted sub-meetings and focus groups aimed at improving participation.[69] Particular attention should be devoted to the hidden (dis)incentives faced by certain groups. For instance, past CDD projects in Afghanistan have failed to include a number of community members due to the fact that project-related meetings would take place during the farming season.[70] A careful facilitator should be aware of such issues and seek to adapt the project programming (and timing) accordingly.

Challenge 5: Between international standards and 'fit for purpose'

External partners supporting infrastructure development in FCAS usually rely on a set of international standards to ensure a fair process and quality outputs. Yet, these standards can create major burdens for inexperienced local stakeholders, raising barriers to their engagement.

This brief has shown that community-driven infrastructure projects have a strong potential to have a positive impact in fragile settings, but also that these projects' success largely depends on the substantive engagement of local stakeholders. In FCAS, these stakeholders (e.g. community members, traditional authorities, the local private sector) usually have very low capacity in terms of dealing with complex bureaucratic procedures. In such a context, international standards on issues like corruption, procurement and quality control may represent insurmountable barriers to the engagement of local stakeholders, thus undermining the core of the CDD approach. To avoid this, it may at times be necessary to simplify these standards. This may entail, for instance, translating project rules into different local languages, devising simple enough rules so as to accommodate the low bureaucratic

capacity of local actors, as well as ensuring flexibility in order to adapt to the rapid changes typical of FCAS.[71] Adaptation to local customs may also at times enhance the project's effectiveness, for instance when dealing with sensitive issues such as accountability, where the perceptions of the local population are of crucial importance.[72]

Recommendations: Ensuring conflict-sensitive community-driven infrastructure development

Infrastructure development in FCAS remains a key priority internationally, both for target countries and for their foreign partners. Patterns of infrastructure financing in Africa, the continent hosting by far the largest number of fragile states, are instructive in this regard. The large and growing amount of funds flowing into the continent's infrastructure sector (over USD 100 billion per year in 2018, +33% vs. the 2015-17 average) still leaves an estimated financing gap of

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68 Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.; Haider, 2009, *Community-based approaches to peacebuilding*, op. cit.

69 Kuehnast, de Berry and Ahmed, 2006, *Community-Driven Development*, op. cit.; Haider, 2009, *Community-based approaches to peacebuilding*, op. cit.; White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.

70 White, Menon and Waddington, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit., 18.

71 Haider, 2009, *Community-based approaches to peacebuilding*, op. cit., 19-22; Dongier et al., 2003, *Community driven development*, op. cit.; Kuehnast, de Berry and Ahmed, 2006, *Community-Driven Development*, op. cit.; de Regt, Majumdar and Singh, 2013, *Designing Community-Driven Development Operations*, op. cit.

72 Kyamusugulwa, 2013, 'Participatory Development and Reconstruction', op. cit.; Kyamusugulwa, P.M., Hilhorst, D. and Jacobs, C. 2018. 'Accountability mechanisms in community-driven reconstruction in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo', *Development in Practice* 28(1), 4-15.

around USD 50-90 billion per year.[73] To fill this gap, the African Union and its members states remain engaged in major policy initiatives such as the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA).[74] At the same time, international initiatives aimed at stepping up infrastructure financing in developing countries are multiplying, with established initiatives such as China's Belt and Road Initiative and the G20's Global Infrastructure Facility recently complemented by efforts such as the US-led Build Back Better World partnership, as well as the EU's Global Gateway.[75] These public sector-led initiatives are being complemented by calls for a stronger involvement by the private sector, whose contribution has so far been marginal, but whose potential to support infrastructure development has been repeatedly highlighted.[76]

In this context, all relevant stakeholders – national governments in FCAS, their bilateral and multilateral foreign partners, as well as the local and international private sector – have an interest in ensuring that infrastructure development in FCAS does not exacerbate drivers of fragility, but rather contributes to addressing them. In order for this to happen, this brief offers the following recommendations.

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73 Infrastructure Consortium for Africa, 2018, *Infrastructure financing trends in Africa*, op. cit., 1-2.

74 African Union. 2020. 'Africa on the Right Track to Implement its Infrastructure Priorities for the Next Decade (2021-2030)', *African Union*, December 14, https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20201214/africa-right-track-implement-its-infrastructure-priorities-next-decade-2021 (last accessed 21 December 2021).

75 Holland, S. and Faulconbridge, G. 2021. 'G7 rivals China with grand infrastructure plan', *Reuters*, June 13, https://www.reuters.com/world/g7-counter-chinas-belt-road-with-infrastructure-project-senior-us-official-2021-06-12/ (last accessed 21 December 2021); European Commission. 2021. 'Global Gateway: up to €300 billion for the European Union's strategy to boost sustainable links around the world', Press Release, December 1, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_6433 (last accessed 21 December 2021).

76 Bielenberg, A. et al. 2016. *Financing change: How to mobilize private sector financing for sustainable infrastructure*, McKinsey & Company.

1. Step up the use of CDD approaches in infrastructure development in FCAS

The existing evidence suggests that stepping up the use of CDD approaches may significantly contribute to ensuring that infrastructure development efforts in FCAS have a positive impact on fragility dynamics. So far, CDD approaches have been applied only in a relatively small fraction of infrastructure development projects.[77] This leaves scope for all relevant stakeholders – including national governments, foreign partners and private sector players – to step up their commitment to meaningfully engage communities when developing infrastructure in FCAS. For actors with more experience in supporting CDD projects (such as the World Bank), this may entail setting up new targets aimed at increasing the share of infrastructure financing implemented via CDD projects. For other actors with less experience with such an approach, it may be advisable to start with a limited number of pilot projects, with a view to gradually stepping up their commitment to CDD over the medium term. The evidence gathered through the evaluation of past experiences over the last 20 years should guide these new efforts.

2. Increase reliance on conflict sensitivity analyses

Although CDD approaches have the potential to improve the conflict sensitivity of infrastructure development efforts, they are far from being silver bullets that automatically generate positive outcomes. By combining evidence from infrastructure development in FCAS, on the one hand,

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77 This can be noted by analysing the recent portfolio of the World Bank, which is considered to be the most committed actor to the promotion of CDD approaches. While no exact figures on the Bank's allocation to CDD infrastructure projects in Africa are available, the Bank's overall CDD annual portfolio (USD 2.6 billion as of 2018) is only about a third of its investment in infrastructure in Africa (USD 8 billion in 2018), even as the former figure includes all sectors (not only infrastructure) and all continents (not only Africa). Data from: Infrastructure Consortium for Africa, 2018, *Infrastructure financing trends in Africa*, op. cit.; Wong and Guggenheim, 2018, *Community-driven development*, op. cit.

and from CDD experiences, on the other, the previous section has offered a number of pragmatic considerations aimed at supporting practitioners in their decision-making process. In addition to these considerations, however, practitioners should always be guided by a sound understanding of the specific context in which they design and implement CDD infrastructure projects. Such understanding should go beyond feasibility studies focusing on the technical and economic viability of the project. In practical terms, this would entail dedicating adequate time and resources to conflict sensitivity analyses throughout the whole project cycle. Ahead of the design phase, a thorough political economy analysis can provide an in-depth understanding of the context by uncovering underlying power dynamics among key stakeholders. This awareness of the context should be used to identify key drivers of fragility and conflict. In the design phase, it would then be crucial to reflect on the potential interaction of the project with these drivers, and to monitor this interaction both during and after the project's implementation, providing room for feedback and adaptation.

3. Explore the scalability of CDD approaches in larger infrastructure projects

The existing evidence in relation to the performance of CDD approaches in infrastructure development is mostly related to relatively small-scale infrastructure projects (e.g. rural roads connecting neighbouring villages, localized water

management systems, hospitals and schools, etc.). To a large extent, the prevalence of small-scale projects is a consequence of the very nature of the CDD approach, whereby local communities are supposed to identify their own specific needs and to devise appropriate solutions. So far, efforts aimed at scaling up the application of CDD approaches have largely focused on replicating small-scale CDD projects in a larger number of cases across different regions.[78] Much less (if any) attention, however, has been dedicated to whether and how CDD approaches could be adopted in larger-scale infrastructure development projects cutting across different communities (e.g. long highways or railways, national water or electricity systems, etc.). Implementing the CDD approach in larger projects is bound to create new challenges – most notably, the presence of more stakeholders is likely to make it more difficult to reach agreements, thus increasing the chances that infrastructure development may lead to conflict. Researchers and practitioners alike should conduct a joint effort to explore these challenges and reflect on whether and how they can be mitigated. To this end, pilot projects could be established, applying the CDD approach to large-scale infrastructure development efforts. These projects should feature extensive monitoring, evaluation and learning efforts, aimed at distilling lessons learnt and making further progress in understanding how to make the best out of infrastructure development in FCAS.

78 Binswanger-Mkhize, H.P., de Regt, J.P. and Spector, S. (Eds.). 2010. *Local and community driven development: Moving to scale in theory and practice*. World Bank, Washington D.C.

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