

# MAKING THE IMPOSSIBLE, POSSIBLE

An Overview of Governance Programming in  
Fragile Contexts:



Citizen Voice in MP/Public Dialogue, South Sudan, Feb 2013. Photo: Crispin Hughes

**Oxfam Programme Insights**

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# INTRODUCTION

Oxfam works in many countries that are considered fragile – where governance<sup>1</sup> is weak or authoritarian, where people face significant poverty and marginalization, and where the challenges of doing ‘aid’ work are huge.

Oxfam does not have a list of the countries we work in that are considered to be fragile. We recognize that some countries may have certain characteristics of fragility but also elements of stability (such as Angola); that some countries may seem stable, but have underlying factors which may tip them into fragility (as was the case in Syria); and that positive change can help countries move towards stability and development (Myanmar, for example).

## What does fragility mean for states?

While acknowledging that it is not a rigid category, what are the broad characteristics of fragility? Countries might be regarded as fragile for a number of reasons, principally where governments fail – through lack of capacity or will – to reduce poverty and vulnerability and to provide public goods (such as safety and security, economic well-being, and essential social services) to their citizens.

Fragile contexts are also often characterized by poor infrastructure and communications, dysfunctional markets, vulnerability to shocks (including sudden and unpredictable political developments), inaccessible or ineffective security and justice systems, inability to mobilize resources for development, and weak or authoritarian governance. Fragile states may experience chronic crises (political, economic or social); and, above all, fragility may be characterized by a country’s inability to withstand and recover from shocks in the way that a more stable country would be able to.

## What does fragility mean for citizens?<sup>2</sup>

The experience of poverty for people living in fragile contexts involves far more than not being able to meet their basic needs. It may include: lack of access to justice; previous experience of conflict; high risk of conflict in the future; social inequality; lack of social mobility; lack of access to basic services; lack of an effective voice; high vulnerability and weak resilience to shocks; significant gender inequality; lack of productive assets; and an unaccountable government that does not engage with its citizens. In such contexts, ethnic rivalries, religious tensions and ultra-conservative patriarchal social norms are also likely to flourish.

Yet civil society in fragile contexts is often not well organized and has limited capacity and legitimacy. It is therefore not able to express the views and needs of citizens effectively, to ensure that those views are taken into account by government, or to push for more accountable and effective government.

## The future of poverty and aid in fragile contexts

Given the particularly complex nature of poverty in fragile contexts, and the multiple challenges faced by citizens and communities, the rationale for focusing attention on such contexts is compelling; donors, including the UK government’s Department for International Development (DFID), are increasingly targeting aid towards fragile areas.

It is estimated that one-third of the world’s poor people currently live in fragile countries, but there is some debate about whether, in future, more poor people will live in fragile or middle-income states.<sup>3</sup>

Kharas and Rogerson,<sup>4</sup> for example, project that ‘by 2025, the locus of global poverty will overwhelmingly be in fragile, mainly low-income and African, states...’ On the other hand, Edward and Sumner<sup>5</sup> suggest that ‘one third, and in some scenarios quite possibly more than a half, of global poverty in the coming decades will be in countries that are *not* [our emphasis] currently fragile...’

What does seem clear is that while global poverty is expected to fall by 2030, fragile contexts do not look like they will be part of this fall. Where governments in stable countries may work with donors and the private sector to reduce poverty, poor governance in fragile contexts (whether because of lack of capacity or lack of political will) makes this unlikely. This suggests that donors will continue to focus attention on fragile contexts, and increasingly look to international non-government organizations (NGOs) to deliver a greater proportion of programming in these contexts.

## **So how should international NGOs respond?**

Oxfam has been delivering humanitarian aid in fragile situations since its foundation in 1942. We are very aware that we must be at our most agile, creative, and effective to have a positive impact in fragile contexts; our experience shows the multiple challenges and practical difficulties of such work (staff retention, dealing with insecurity, logistics, etc). Now, Oxfam is increasingly looking to go beyond humanitarian service delivery to work on strengthening governance in order to tackle the underlying causes of fragility in such contexts. Through doing so, we are starting to learn interesting lessons about what approaches and interventions can make a positive impact – and how we can overcome some of the practical difficulties involved in programme delivery, as we explore below.

## **WHAT IS OXFAM DOING?**

Oxfam has been working in fragile contexts for many years, responding to humanitarian need and delivering services in places where the government is unable or unwilling to do so. It has become clearer over time, however, that if countries are to get to the point of not needing such support, we must also address the issue of governance.

Failures of governance are usually failures of power-holders in the state to enable citizens to participate in decision-making and governance. To ensure sustainable, long-term change that is owned by citizens and the state, this cannot be resolved by outside agencies with technical quick fixes, but must be embedded in, and develop from, local and national political systems and reconciliation processes. It is also the case that empowered, active and organized citizens are better able to engage with such systems and processes. So while Oxfam has continued to respond to humanitarian needs in fragile contexts, many programmes are also supporting citizens to engage with governance structures at various levels.

Within and Without the State (WWS) is an example of such work. Funded by DFID from 2011 to 2016<sup>6</sup> under the Conflict, Humanitarian and Security Programme Partnership Arrangement (CHASE PPA), WWS is piloting innovative approaches to building the capacity of civil society groups and organizations, and supporting them to engage with power-holders to promote more accountable governance in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. The individual case studies that accompany this overview paper explore the work of WWS in Afghanistan, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel, South Sudan, and Yemen.

# WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT GOVERNANCE PROGRAMMING IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS?

## Civil society

The starting point for the WWS programme in each fragile context was working with civil society. Citizens in fragile and authoritarian contexts have less opportunity to participate in governance, and less voice and power, than those in well-functioning democratic states. This may raise the question as to whether working with civil society is an effective strategy in fragile contexts – or whether Oxfam should instead focus on building state capacity, strengthening other institutions, or providing basic services directly. But the prospects for peace and development in fragile and conflict-affected contexts depend not only on building accountable governments, but also a vibrant civil society – one that can raise the voices of citizens, particularly the most vulnerable, and hold the state to account for its performance in reducing poverty and upholding all citizens' human rights. Oxfam's experience shows that governments are not homogenous and, even in authoritarian or unaccountable states, there may be pockets of good governance or potential allies willing to work for change (a particular minister or government department, or local government structures in particular areas of the country, for example).

WWS has built the capacity of civil society groups and organizations in order to enable them to engage constructively with power-holders and processes of state building. We have found that it is possible to take very practical steps towards building a shared agenda so that the elusive 'political will' can actually begin to be built, as power-holders see that engaging productively with citizens can build legitimacy and make political processes more robust. WWS has therefore promoted positive opportunities to allow civil society to engage effectively with power-holders, such as the 'public dialogues' in South Sudan (in which constituents question their elected MPs about the allocation of public resources).

WWS's partnerships with civil society have included not only constituted groups such as community-based organizations (CBOs) and local and national NGOs, but also unions, religious groups and leaders, informal youth movements and, more recently, individual change agents. The particular focus is on organizations and individuals that can effectively represent the interests of the poorest and most marginalized people, whether those are familiar kinds of partnerships or new collaborations. WWS has seen that it is important for Oxfam to use its power as a 'broker' to link such civil society groups with other powerful non-state actors and institutions that can support their advocacy work – including the private sector, universities, media, and elite groups. Building the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) has involved helping to build their management and governance capabilities, as well as helping to develop their technical skills in areas such as advocacy and influencing. In addition, WWS's capacity-building support includes helping civil society groups and actors to develop the skills and abilities to organize, to analyze effectively and articulate arguments, to navigate politics, and to advocate and negotiate.

One common challenge in fragile contexts is for civil society as well as the state to develop capacity, accountability, and legitimacy over the longer term. CSOs, if they are to be influential and effective, need legitimacy. As the Afghanistan case study in particular shows, part of the challenge of developing civil society lies in building trust and solidarity between different CSOs. As well as contributing to building 'power with' – so that separate organizational voices can add up to something bigger – this can contribute to strengthening the cohesion of civil society if it helps different groups and interests understand and respect each other's positions, priorities and perspectives.

## The Social Contract: A useful tool

In fragile contexts, demand-led advocacy (where citizens make demands of the state) may not be appropriate, as the state may have neither the will nor the capacity to meet these demands. Experience from WWS shows that the idea of a social contract can be a useful tool to promote constructive engagement between citizens and the state, and promote accountability and good governance.

The social contract refers to the (largely informal) agreement of citizens to submit to the authority of government in exchange for protection of their rights and access to services, security and justice. Citizens will refrain from anarchy and respect the law; government will govern according to the law, and promote peace and development. Developing a social contract in a fragile context, as elsewhere, will be the product of ongoing explicit and implicit negotiation between different interest groups and a range of formal and informal power-holders; the resultant 'contract' will not be a static agreement but will be subject to renegotiation and changes in circumstances over time.

The advantage of using the social contract model in governance work is that it emphasizes the roles and responsibilities of each party (citizens and government), and shows that by engaging with each other and taking a collective problem-solving approach (rather than by confrontation or challenge), a constructive engagement can be built between different actors. It is, however, a model that requires subtle application, and needs to be carefully adapted to the real environment. In some contexts, relationships between citizens and the state are minimal, and the idea that a state could and should respond to its citizens is novel. Relationships of trust and expectation have to be built over time. In the shorter term, care is needed to understand where responsibility and legitimacy currently lie (which is often with parts of the state, church, and traditional governance structures), and how to proceed from there.

The experience of WWS in Yemen shows how formal civil society networks can be empowered and supported to engage with local authorities to secure improved services such as health and water, helping to build a social contract between citizens and power-holders. And in the West Bank, communities have been empowered to engage with power-holders and express their priorities and needs; while this has resulted in limited change because the relevant duty-bearers are, as yet, unable or unwilling to meet these needs, it has helped build civil society's understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizens and governments, which is an essential element of good governance.

Oxfam's experience in fragile contexts suggests that even within poorly functioning states, there are pockets of functionality where engagement between citizens and the state is possible and can be productive. This has been borne out by the experience of WWS; even in contexts of violent conflict, there are spaces where progress can be made. In South Sudan, for example, after the renewed conflict in December 2013, WWS was able to continue to work with local power-holders even when the national government had become deeply contested.

Inclusive processes also require more capacity from the state as well as from civil society. WWS projects have found that they need to encourage individuals and institutions to be more inclusive, and to support them to engage responsively and constructively, understanding engagement as opportunity rather than threat. In South Sudan, accountability forums organized by WWS's partner CEPO (Community Empowerment for Progress Organization) and the government's Anti-Corruption Commission have created a safe space for citizens to question officials about the allocation of public funds, and for officials to consider issues of corruption, transparency and accountability. Participants, especially civil servants, felt able to speak openly about corruption and the failure by government to deliver services because the basic rules of engagement laid down by the moderator encouraged participants to respect each other's views and *'be as honest and as transparent as you could possibly be'*. And because the forums were moderated by CSOs, the space was seen as safe and people from



all walks of life took part: *'It would be unthinkable to say the things we are able to speak about in an office setting'*, one participant commented.

## The need for strong analysis and agility

In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, it is essential to have both breadth and depth of analysis to underpin programme design. But WWS has found that it is equally important to revisit this analysis on an ongoing basis, informed by monitoring and learning, so that adjustments can be made and the programme remains relevant and effective.

Power and conflict analysis can reveal where informal or hidden power lies in any particular context, in order to consider how to target the source(s) of power, and who can help to influence them. The breadth of analysis is important because in complex situations it is often not obvious where the power to make change actually lies, or which of the multiple factors and actors are most salient. Depth of analysis is essential to avoid being misled by situations that superficially look like one thing, but are actually something else. It is vital to use a range of sources for analysis, including published information, stakeholder interviews, and informal sources such as 'the word on the street'.

Ongoing analysis has led to more gradual tweaking and adaptation of the WWS programme in the countries involved. In Afghanistan, very good progress has been made on building the capacity of the civil society network ACSONP (Afghan Civil Society Organizations Network for Peace). The focus of work has been able to gradually shift towards opportunities to work at community level to mobilize change agents, address women's participation, and to engage with religious leaders to explore some of the issues of power and traditional governance structures.

## Engaging with informal power

WWS's experience has highlighted the extent to which power in fragile contexts may be held not by the state but by informal power-holders such as tribal, traditional or religious leaders, and/or by leaders with informal economic power.

These informal power-holders may act either as 'blockers', who can prevent any changes they do not see as desirable, or 'enablers', who can influence formal power-holders in the state to achieve change. Strengthening governance may also involve working to improve the accountability and transparency of these informal power-holders, and ensuring that they exercise their own power in the interests of citizens and communities. This underlines the importance of conducting a detailed power and conflict analysis, as already discussed.

WWS's experience also shows that it is important to find new and innovative ways to build relationships and work effectively with informal power-holders. This may include working to better understand their context and world view, taking a flexible and informal approach to engaging with them, and involving them as stakeholders in activities from the start in order to build their trust and encourage their 'buy-in' to the work.

In **Afghanistan**, WWS is running a project that pairs traditional religious leaders with high-profile women, trained in *Sharia* law. Each pair works together to settle local disputes, challenge harmful practices (such as giving away girls), and promote women's rights. The *Ulema* (traditional religious leaders) are also working with community leaders to gain acceptance of women's participation in community peace councils. While religious leaders *can* sometimes act as blockers, this project attempts to build on their sense of responsibility for their communities and enlist them as allies for change.

## Putting gender at the heart of programming

WWS has always considered gender in its programming. In South Sudan, the WWS programme is working at community level to strengthen women's ability to make decisions within the household. In the West Bank, activities have focused on strengthening women's voices in the public life of their communities and developing their leadership skills. But in order to make sure that the gender element of WWS was as effective as possible, in July 2013 we conducted a review of the gender aspects of the programme.<sup>7</sup>

The review explored some of the issues that make it particularly hard to address gender inequality in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. These include: weak CSOs, which lack experience of working together, let alone working on women's rights; patriarchal attitudes and beliefs that shape gender roles; and the challenge of working on gender equality and women's rights when women's basic needs may remain unmet.

The review pointed out that gender issues tend to be disconnected from broader efforts to understand and respond to fragility, and there may be a feeling that it is not possible to challenge gender roles and inequality in such difficult contexts. But it also showed that if WWS is to address the causes and drivers of fragility, as well as its impact, it must put gender at the heart of the programme in two ways:

First, despite the difficulties involved, WWS needs to make a 'push' to more robustly and effectively advance women's rights and challenge patriarchal gender roles, because any approach that ignores gender maintains an unjust *status quo*, which perpetuates fragility.

Second, WWS needs to make a 'shift' in thinking to better understand the issue of gender as a driver of fragility. In Afghanistan, for instance, girls are given away to other families or communities to settle disputes or in compensation for crimes; and in South Sudan, high bride price encourages cattle raiding and conflict between tribal groups. In many contexts, the patriarchal gender norms and systems of power which lie at the heart of gender inequality fuel militarized notions of masculinity and thus continued conflict and fragility. Developing a better understanding of the complex relationship between gender and fragility will help WWS, and Oxfam more broadly, to design more effective programming in fragile contexts.

Following the recommendation of the gender review, WWS has now developed a gender strategy and placed new emphasis on activities to challenge patriarchal views of gender, which lead to gender inequality and perpetuate fragility. In South Sudan, for example, WWS is seeking new partnerships with women's rights organizations as these have been shown to be more effective than 'mixed' anti-poverty organizations in achieving change for women. In Yemen, WWS is building relationships with many new civil society groups led by young women, which are eager to take advantage of the political transition. In Gaza, WWS will be targeting efforts on building the capacity of women's rights organizations.

## WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT?

WWS is demonstrating that it is completely possible to work to promote good governance, even in some of the most difficult contexts. There are specific challenges to be overcome for this to happen, but adopting certain ways of working can make a significant difference to what can be achieved, as we explain below.

## Planning, monitoring, evaluation and learning

Fragile contexts are inherently unstable and unpredictable, and offer particular challenges in terms of monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Setting meaningful indicators, milestones and outcomes can be difficult. Gathering the right information to tell you whether you are meeting them can be equally challenging. And it is hard to keep track of changes in the context – and the dynamics that lie behind such changes – so that you respond in an agile manner and keep your programme relevant and effective.

WWS found that establishing a theory of change at the start of a project – a clear statement describing how we expected the programme to contribute to change – was an extremely effective way to help guide and monitor the work. WWS spent considerable time thinking through and refining the theory of change at the start. This gave us the confidence that our planned ‘outputs’ would lead to positive ‘outcomes’ – even where we knew these would be difficult to track and measure.

In such complex contexts, WWS needed to monitor the elements most within its control. Key project outcomes and indicators were ‘proxy’ indicators based around increased capacity of partners, CSOs, and CSO networks, measured by baseline and, subsequently, annual assessments. Longer-term M&E of real changes in governance and tracking changing conflict dynamics has been more challenging, but has included interviews with communities and power-holders, and tracking evidence of impact such as public statements by power-holders and changes to draft legislation on which WWS has lobbied.

There are practical challenges involved in both monitoring and evaluation in fragile contexts. Ongoing or one-off incidents of insecurity and conflict (such as the conflict which erupted in South Sudan in December 2013) can make it impossible to conduct field assessments or interviews. Poor communications technology can make it hard to track changes in policy or in the attitudes of power-holders or citizens. And conducting M&E activities may itself put partners, staff or communities at risk; where this is the case, the ‘do no harm’ principle is paramount.

One key lesson from the WWS programme is the importance of setting ‘process’ milestones rather than specific outcomes to guide both planning and assessment of achievements. For example, eliminating corruption may be a very long-term process; but an admission of misappropriation of funds by local authorities or a perception survey which reveals increased trust in power-holders by citizens can indicate good progress, which will contribute towards the long-term outcome.

There are a number of techniques that can support M&E and learning in fragile contexts. These include remote monitoring (where staff are not in the area but rely on trusted partners to supply information), and data collection from communities via mobile phone. One of the most innovative and interesting approaches tried by WWS was a real-time evaluation conducted in South Sudan in 2012. This technique, adapted from the humanitarian sector, allowed WWS staff, staff from other programmes, and an external consultant to spend a week in the field conducting interviews, collecting information, and sharing their reflections on the programme. The evaluation provided an important space for learning and reflection outside the day-to-day programme work or annual monitoring, and such spaces are vital to effective programming in this context.

## Insecurity and risk

WWS also faced the challenge of day-to-day violence and insecurity in some locations (particularly Afghanistan and Yemen), renewed conflicts in South Sudan (December 2013) and Gaza (November 2012), and the inability of different groups to work together because of militarized control on people’s movement in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Although it is not easy to carry out activities that address issues of power and accountability in such contexts, WWS (and the country programmes



within which it works) have managed to do so – and learned more about how to monitor and manage risk and adapt programming (see Box 1 for an example from the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel).

### **Box 1: Managing risk and insecurity in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel**

The action research project originally planned to work with three groups of researchers in Gaza, the West Bank and Israel. In reality, checkpoints and other restrictions on movement prevented the groups from meeting and working together, and the Israeli and Palestinian groups were wary of working together. The project plan was revised so that the groups could work separately. The project was also affected by the Israeli offensive on Gaza in November 2012, which killed 1,300 Palestinians and had a devastating effect on morale. A workshop in Amman, Jordan, enabled the Palestinian groups to meet briefly at the end of the project, and allowed the Gaza group time to reflect and consider – a creative response to the reality and restrictions of life in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

In Afghanistan, CSO members often had to pull out of training sessions and workshops at short notice due to violence and insecurity. Threats to civil society leaders stopped them from attending high-profile events, making them less effective. And campaigning activities had to be scaled down or moved at the last minute to avoid clashes with the authorities.

The WWS team found that developing good relationships with government and security agencies, and constantly gathering and reviewing information about security and the socio-political context, was vital. Using this analysis, they could try to ensure that activities were appropriate and not likely to evoke violence or threats from authorities or insurgents, and that plans were flexible and could be adapted (or cancelled) if need be in the light of security challenges. Both conflict sensitivity and the 'do no harm' principle can contribute very helpfully to risk analysis and management, as well as to programme design/adaptation.

In South Sudan, constant context analysis had already revealed power struggles and government rifts, and highlighted the possibility of renewed conflict. Contingency plans were therefore already in place when violence broke out in December 2013. Some international staff were relocated and continued to work outside the country; the emergency programme was scaled up; and newly strengthened CSOs and networks were able to advocate for a peaceful settlement even without Oxfam's direct support.

The WWS programme in South Sudan resumed once the ceasefire had been signed, operating in those regions less directly affected by the ongoing tensions. This showed that it is possible to stop, adapt and continue governance programming in response to such shocks, as well as dealing with everyday violence and conflict; but great care is required, with constant monitoring and adaptation. Risk management will take additional time and resources, and this way of working inevitably requires huge resilience and determination from staff. It is important that organisational policies reflect the reality of fragile contexts, and adequately support staff and programmes working in such environments.

## **People management**

One of the biggest challenges Oxfam has experienced in managing and delivering its WWS programme relates to human resources (HR).

Recruiting staff with the right experience, skills and knowledge is especially important in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. There are three main challenges. First, the complex and difficult nature

of the context requires a specialist set of skills among senior staff, which few people may possess. Second, the requirement for senior staff to have good local knowledge and language skills may be hard to meet in fragile settings, where few nationals may have the qualifications, experience or training required. Finally, the risks inherent in such contexts can make taking on such roles less desirable, especially if staff have family members to consider.

But Oxfam has a great deal of support available to help managers recruit and retain experienced staff in fragile contexts. Knowing the different rewards that can be made available to staff – including monetary incentives and flexible working arrangements, as well as specific professional capacity-development opportunities – can make all the difference in getting the right person for the job. Having HR support people who are well informed about the specific issues and are flexible in their attitudes also makes a big difference. This flexibility has, for example, allowed South Sudan to recruit a strong WWS team and senior managers at country level, after a number of failed recruitments and a period of rapid staff turnover.

High staff turnover is also a significant issue. In the more challenging contexts, international staff tend to stay for relatively short periods (less than two years is not uncommon); similarly, national staff tend to move on quickly in contexts where there is high demand for competent staff. Both these factors consume resources and contribute to discontinuities and loss of organizational knowledge.

In humanitarian work, this is expected, and fits the shorter timeframes and responsive nature of such programmes; but for the longer-term work WWS is engaged in, staff turnover has been a disruptive feature across all the countries. WWS's global co-ordination team, based in Oxford, has learned that their role in building close relationships with WWS staff in-country can be a vital safety net in ensuring continuity of knowledge, bridging gaps, and inducting new staff.

## CONCLUSION AND WHAT NEXT?

Experience from the WWS programme demonstrates that it is possible to achieve change in fragile contexts through long-term programming work on governance, alongside active humanitarian responses where necessary.

For WWS, the 'big' governance problem we have been addressing is the absence of a functioning social contract between citizens and the state. We know this is something that can only emerge over time, but it certainly requires civil society (including citizens, constituted organizations and others) to be able to engage with, and influence, power-holders. WWS's primary approach has therefore been to build civil society capacity and promote opportunities for participation in governance, building on our partners' capacities, interests and dynamics, and seeking opportunities to engage with individuals, departments or institutions of government that are interested in change. While the WWS programme is still ongoing, and the governance challenges in the countries where we work are immense, it is clear that WWS has effectively built the relationship between citizens and state in these contexts, which can contribute to more accountable governance in the long term.

Another key lesson emerging from our work is that the dynamics of fragility and conflict are fluid, complex and volatile – and change often emerges in unpredictable ways, at a specific moment in history, rather than being the inevitable result of a set of programme activities. Shocks (such as large-scale natural hazards or outbreaks of violence) can often be a significant factor in bringing about change, as can 'moments' such as elections and leadership changes. Sometimes it is during these moments that those seeking change have the opportunity to make 'the impossible' possible (as when the seemingly immovable Egyptian regime tipped into unpredictable and rapid change with the Arab spring). This is especially the case if those seeking change have the skills, ideas and networks to help

them make the most of the opportunity, which again underlines the importance of building the capacity of civil society.

Another thing that has become clear is that effective long-term development work in fragile contexts requires changes in the 'nuts and bolts' of delivery, such as HR and programme planning. There are a number of policies and tools to support programme management, HR, and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) in fragile contexts; but it is also essential for practitioners and policy makers to change their *mindset*. The new mindset needs to recognize the value that active citizens can add to nation building and good governance, and it needs to prioritize an agile, emergent way of thinking and operating, which is able to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

Oxfam will continue to emphasize work in fragile contexts over the next five years, and the DFID-funded WWS programme will operate until March 2016. Work to develop active citizens and more accountable and effective governments cannot wait until the problems of conflict and fragility have been resolved. Governance work is actually *essential* to tackling fragility, promoting stability and overcoming poverty. WWS has shown that it *is* possible to do this, even in some of the most difficult contexts. Although progress may be hard and slow, opting to not tackle the underlying features of fragility may simply entrench weak governance, and fails to invest in the possibility of real change and development.

# NOTES

- 1 'Governance' is taken to mean much more than national government at country level and will include the operation of formal power, at national, regional and local levels, as well as the way that informal power-holders influence those in power, and civil society engages with, and influences, formal power-holders. Good governance institutions will be transparent and accountable to citizens, ensure that citizens' views and experience are considered, and work to ensure that their needs are met.
- 2 'Citizen' is taken here to mean a person living in a particular state. It does not necessarily imply that the person has the nationality of the country concerned, or has formal citizenship rights.
- 3 Today, one-third of the world's poor people live in fragile countries; by 2018, that share is likely to grow to one half, and in 2030 to nearly two-thirds. The proportion of young people in those states is approximately twice that in non-fragile countries, and the populations of these states are growing roughly twice as fast. Although 35 fragile states have made significant progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and will be able to meet at least one by the 2015 deadline, progress towards the MDGs has been much slower than in other developing countries. Of the seven countries that are unlikely to be able to meet any MDG by 2015, six are fragile. As a consequence, in five years' time, extreme poverty is expected to be concentrated mainly in fragile states. OECD (2014) *Fragile States 2014: Domestic Revenue Mobilisation in Fragile States*. Paris: OECD, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/incaf/FSR-2014.pdf> (last accessed 9 June 2014).
- 4 H. Kharas and A. Rogerson (2012) *Horizon 2025: Creative Destruction in the Aid Industry*. London: Overseas Development Institute
- 5 P. Edward and A. Sumner (2013) *The Future of Global Poverty in a Multi-Speed World: New Estimates of Scale and Location, 2010–2030*. Washington DC: Center for Global Development. [http://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/future\\_of\\_global\\_poverty.pdf](http://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/future_of_global_poverty.pdf) (last accessed 9 June 2014).
- 6 WWS was originally funded from 2011–2014 by the UK's Department for International Development, and then extended for a further two years until 2016. It has a budget of less than £500,000 per annum, divided between the four focus countries and a global co-ordination team in Oxford. It is one part of a wider programme of work in fragile contexts, supported under Oxfam's Strategic Plan.
- 7 J. Enarsson (2013) *A Push and a Shift: Light Strategic Gender Review of WWS Programme*. Oxford: Oxfam GB.

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## OXFAM

Oxfam is an international confederation of 18 organizations networked together in more than 90 countries, as part of a global movement for change, to build a future free from the injustice of poverty.