

Planting Roots in Shifting Soil

Building Social Protection Systems in
Fragile, Conflict and Violence-Affected
Settings: An Approach Paper



Overview: what the paper offers

> What the Paper Provides

- Assesses FCV challenges and impact
- Defines objectives and functions for SP engagement
- Outlines operational pathways to system building
- Demonstrates country examples

> What this Enables

- Guide dialogue with government
- Inform new operations
- Shape coordination with humanitarian actors
- Align strategic direction across country teams

Persistent fragility and conflicts are pushing more people into extreme poverty

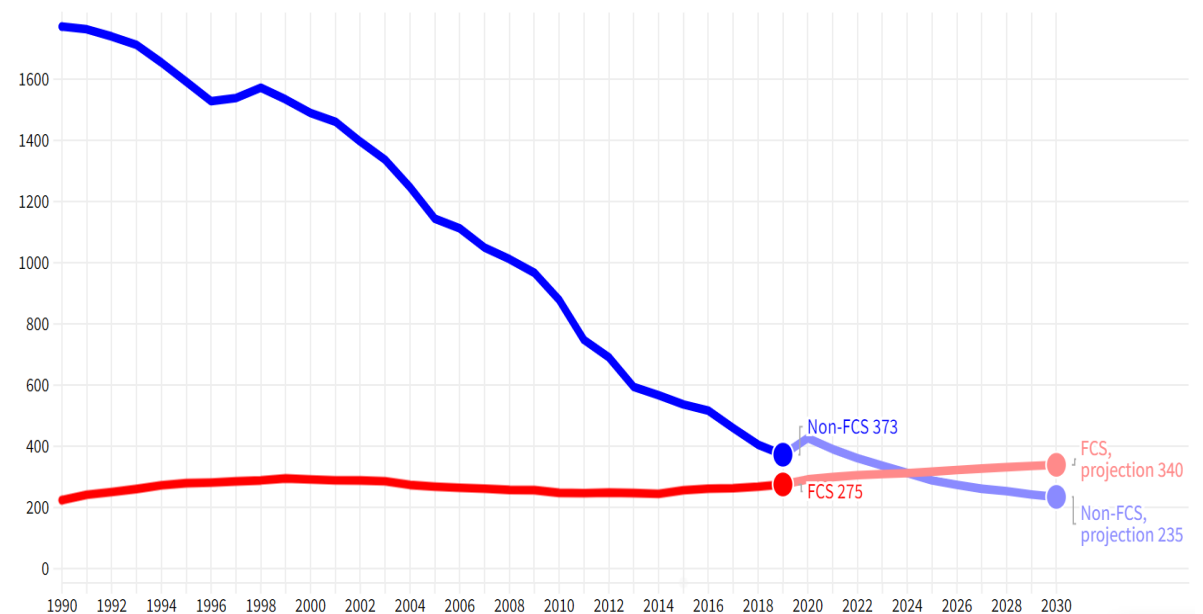
340 million

Estimated number of the world's extreme poor living in FCV contexts by 2030

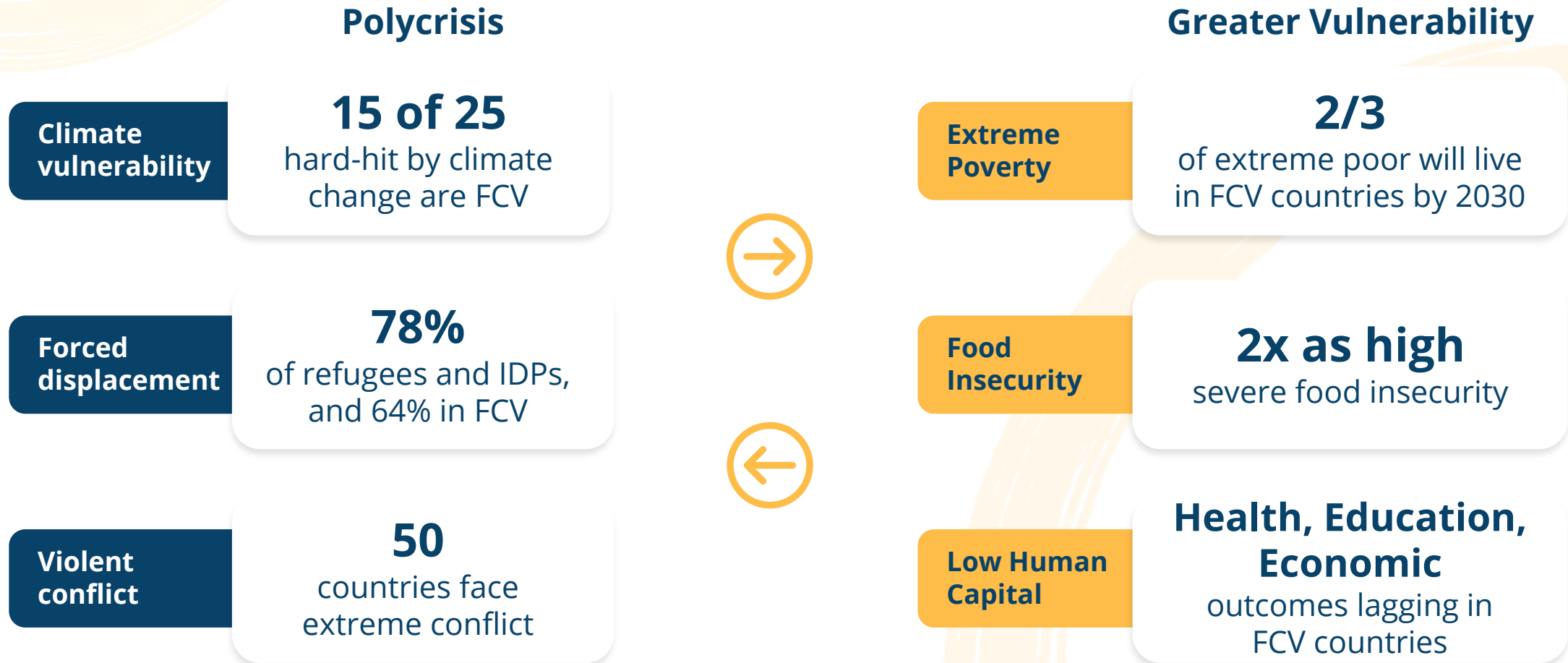
projected to reach 60% by 2030 from 23% in 2010 to 41% in 2020.

Targeted investments are critical for poverty reduction and to reach 500 million people with social protection

Poverty Shifting Toward Fragile and Conflict-Affected Countries



Intersecting crises deepen poverty and vulnerability



People in fragile settings are left behind and trapped in cycles of deprivation



Children face higher risks:
Survival and nutrition rates rank among the lowest globally.



Education outcomes lag:
FCV countries have 2–3 fewer learning-adjusted years and lower test scores.

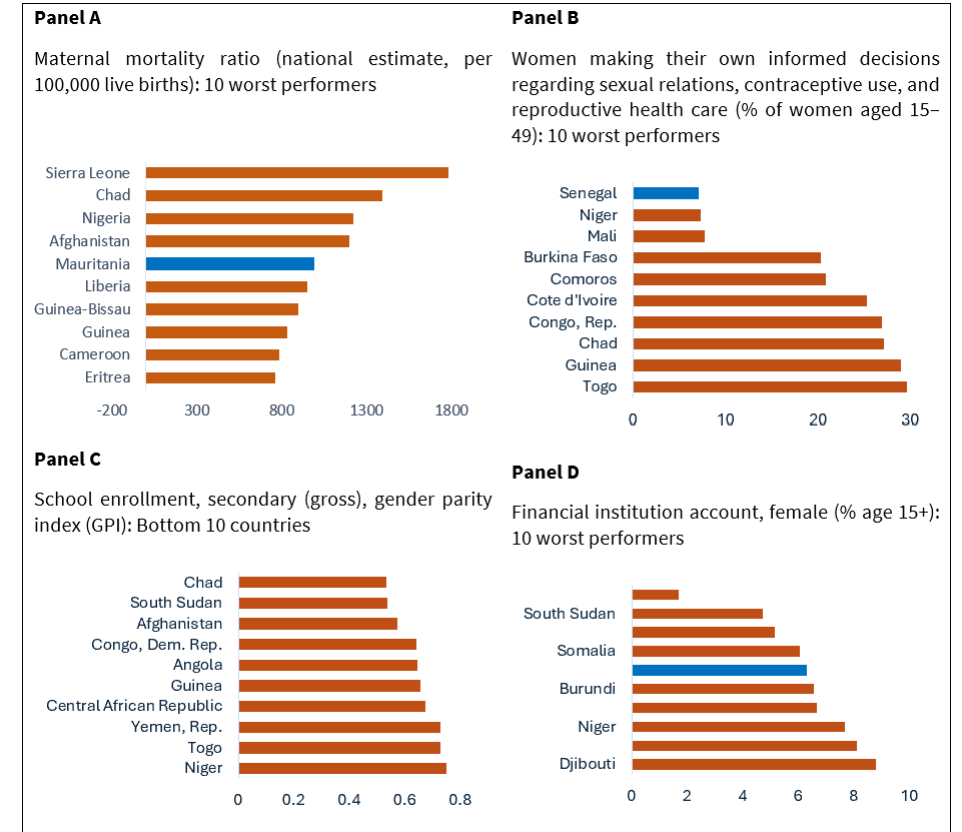


Adults face reduced life expectancy:
Survival rates (ages 15–60) are far below the global median.



Women face profound disadvantages:
On key indicators—maternal health, decision-making, schooling, and financial access—scores are among the lowest globally.

Countries with the lowest performance on key gender indicators



Source: Hanmer, L. et al (2023). *Increasing gender equality in fragile, conflict, and violence settings*, World Bank Gender Thematic Policy Note Series

Source: WBG' FCV Strategy 2020 - 2025

A Paradigm Shift Toward Building Social Protection Systems

Maximize the impact by investing in solutions that strengthen people, institutions, and systems for stability and resilience

Humanitarian assistance—while essential—is not designed for addressing fragility and support recovery

- In 2022, 92% of humanitarian funding (US\$33B) went to protracted crises, underscoring a reliance on short-term relief.
- Development assistance continues to decline, with funding falling between 2017–2021, constraining countries' ability to rebuild and recover.
- The result is a growing dependence on humanitarian aid amid tightening global budgets

Social Protection as foundation for resilience, recovery, and stability

- **Government-Owned Social Protection Systems** enable sustainability
- **National ownership** builds trust and accountability
- **Adaptable, inclusive, and conflict-sensitive** systems build resilience - ensuring support reaches those most in need
- Serve as **coordinated platforms** under strong country leadership

Social Protection: Proven investments in FCV settings



Human Capital

- Yemen: Cash for Nutrition reduced childhood malnutrition by 35.8%.
- Niger: Emergency cash + education improved child weight and reduced malnutrition and reduced early marriage among girls..
- Mali, Burkina Faso & Cameroon: Cash transfers improved dietary diversity, food security and school attendance.
- Afghanistan: Integrated support increased consumption by 30% and sustained well-being.
- Haiti: safe spaces for women and girls linked to SP programs provided entry point to addressing GBV



Economic Opportunities and Productivity

- Mali: Income-generating activities led to 57% and 39% consumption increases.
- Yemen: Training + asset transfers improved income and resilience.
- Niger: Economic inclusion programs diversified livelihoods with lasting effects.
- Burkina Faso: SSN program increased HH income from agriculture related activities by 23.5%



Resilience to Shocks

- Niger: Wadata Talaka raised consumption by 10% and maintained food security during droughts.
- Iraq: Cash transfers helped retain assets and reduce negative coping strategies.

Strategic framework for building social protection systems

Two interconnected dimensions



Strategic Dimension: "What"

Defines what SPL can achieve in FCV

- identifies **objectives, priority actions,** and **instruments** to reach those objectives






Operational Dimension: "How"

Focuses on the **operational considerations**

- navigate security and institutional challenges
- adapt programs, delivery mechanisms, and implementation arrangements
- design scalable and effective interventions

Social Protection Policy Levers in FCV Settings

	 Human Capital	 Resilience	 Recovery
Strategic Objectives	Protect and advance human capital to reduce fragility	Enable people and Institutions to withstand shocks	Build foundations for social cohesion and post-crisis recovery
Priority Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food and income security, livelihood support, basic and psychosocial services, GBV prevention, and inclusive approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build adaptive systems, expand livelihoods and economic opportunities, strengthen community institutions, engage youth and women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rebuild livelihoods, strengthen institutions, reintegrate displaced populations, build local capacity, strengthen gov't stewardship
Instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Productive safety nets, school meals, GBV referral and psychosocial support, case management, SP linkages with health, education, and employment opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shock-responsive safety nets, integrated health/nutrition/labor services, economic inclusion (income support combined with, capital, coaching for entrepreneurship) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public works, economic inclusion programs with skills training, psychosocial and reintegration support, capacity building. Policy support

Adaptive sequence

The Operational Engagement: Key Considerations

Assess the context



Is the country facing active conflict or fragility?

Determine engagement model



Can the government be engaged directly, or are alternatives needed?

Check government access



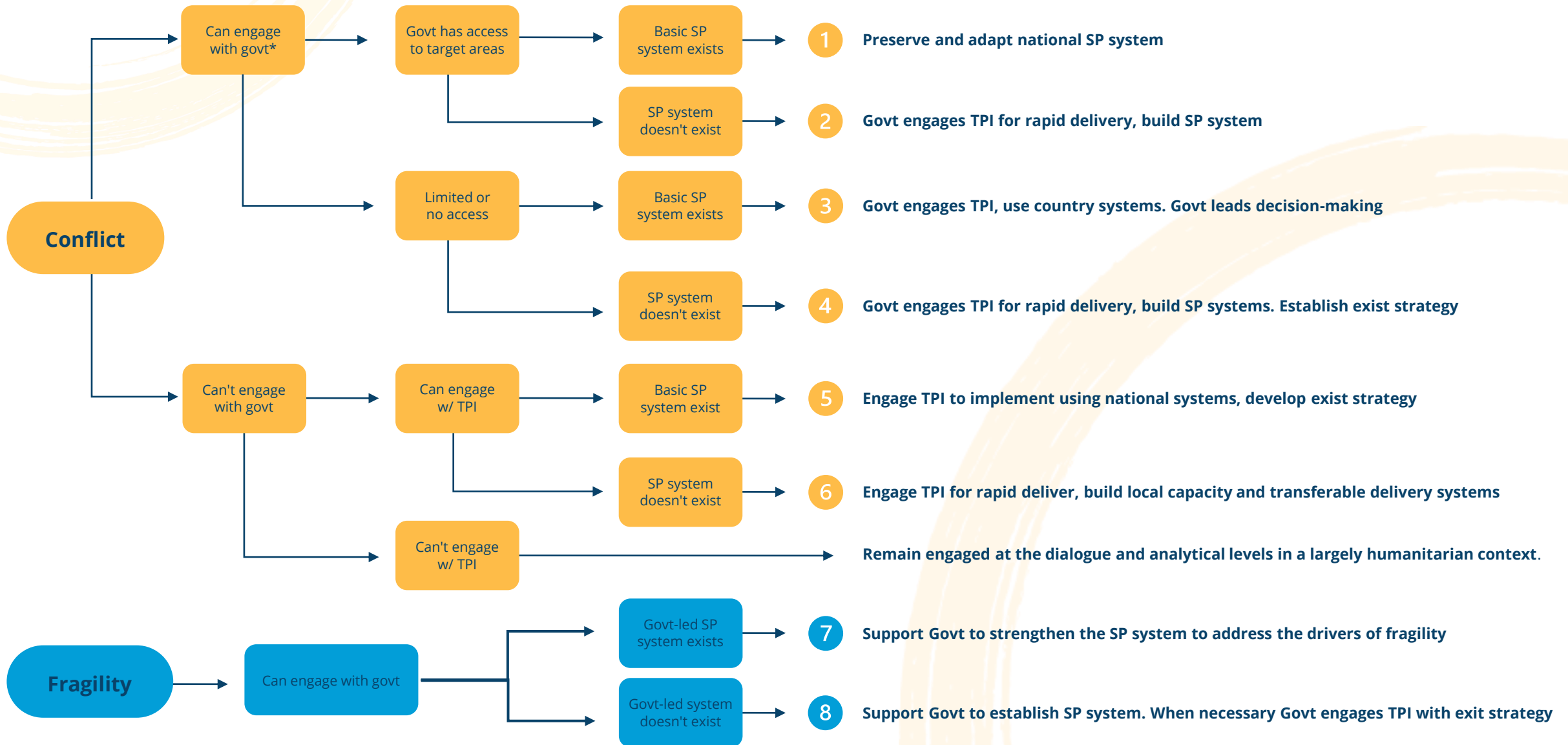
Does the government have capacity to reach target areas and populations?

Evaluate system readiness



Is there a government-led SP system, and what's the level of development and maturity?

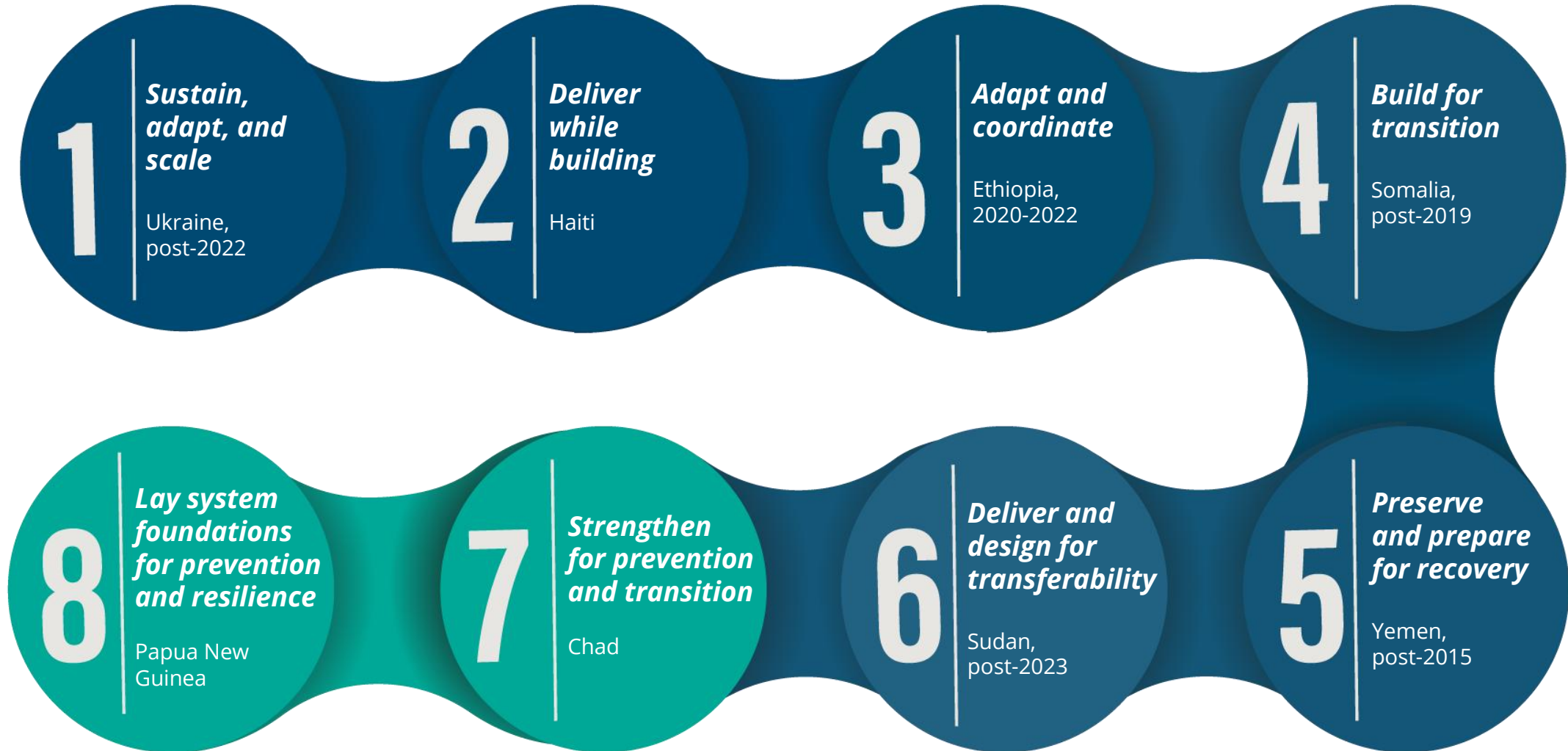
Decision Tree for Operational Engagement





Applying the Framework: Illustrative Country Examples

From Framework to Action: Engagement Pathways



Pathway 1: Sustain, adapt, and scale

Ukraine, post-2022

Engagement focus and adaptations:

- Adapted application procedures for most vulnerable (e.g., people with disabilities, IDPs) to facilitate application without physical presence in a given location.
- Automatic extension of program benefits without reapplication.
- Shift from commercial banks to post office to distribute payments.
- Reform of social assistance administrative system toward greater centralization

FCV Context:

- Active conflict
- Direct engagement
- Government access
- Gov't SP system exists



Pathway 2: Deliver while building

Haiti

Engagement focus and adaptations:

- Bundle of unconditional cash transfers and accompanying measures focused on nutrition, education, financial inclusion, and GBV prevention to support human capital and resilience
- Shift to digital payments to mitigate security challenges
- Initial government-led implementation through WFP, with handover of full implementation to government as delivery systems and capacity are established

FCV Context:

- Widespread violence
- Direct engagement
- Government access
- Lacking gov't SP system



Pathway 3: Adapt and coordinate

Ethiopia, 2020-2022

Engagement focus and adaptations:

- Scale back of public works components in favor of direct cash and food transfers in high-risk areas.
- Flexible targeting
- Expanded use of mobile registration and rapid assessments.
- Leverage local engagement through existing community structures to preserve legitimacy and participation
- Rely on government-contracted TPI in high-risk and inaccessible areas with exit strategy for handover.

FCV Context:

- Active conflict
- Direct engagement
- Limited government access
- Gov't SP system exists



Pathway 3: Adapt and coordinate

West Bank and Gaza, post-2023

Engagement focus and adaptations:

- Adapted questionnaire for registry data collection through shortened forms.
- Online applications for social support through social media platforms and Ministry portal.
- Use of government-contracted TPI for in-kind assistance delivery with continued investment in the capacity building.
- Facilitate creation of Social Protection and Cash and Voucher Assistance Thematic Working Group, co-led by Ministry and OCHA to foster alignment between humanitarian and development partners.

FCV Context:

- Active conflict
- Direct engagement
- Limited government access
- Gov't SP system exists



Pathway 4: Build for transition

Somalia, post-2019

Engagement focus and adaptations:

- Establishment of first gov't-led safety net program, progressively serving as a platform for shock-response and employment interventions.
- Establishment and strengthening of core delivery systems, i.e., social registry, MIS, GRM, and payment system.
- Adapted targeting to ensure equity and transparency in highly fractured communities.
- Reliance on government-contracted TPI with plans since early on to handover to government (process almost concluded).

FCV Context:

- Active conflict
- Direct engagement
- Limited government access
- Lacking gov't SP system



Pathway 5: Preserve and prepare for recovery

Yemen, post-2015

Engagement focus and adaptations:

- Direct TPI implementation while delivering through existing national programs with planned handover to full government-led implementation.
- Robust capacity building of existing national institutions.
- Shift payments to vetted private financial institutions
- Introduce conflict-sensitive targeting
- Scale digital ID and financial inclusion.

FCV Context:

- Active conflict
- No direct engagement
- Engagement with TPI
- Gov't SP system exists



Pathway 6: Deliver and design for transferability

Sudan, post-2023

Engagement focus and adaptations:

- Full reliance on World Bank contracted TPIs for rapid delivery, pipeline plans for building system components to be later handed over to government
- Leverage strategically community-level institutions, local NGOs, and decentralized administrative bodies—preserving local capacity
- Unconditional cash and maternal health-sensitive transfers, with close alignment with health sector investments to incentivize uptake of services.
- Use of participatory delivery mechanisms such as Mother Leaders and community monitoring committees—ensuring transparency, accountability, and adaptability to the evolving context.

FCV Context:

- Active conflict
- No direct engagement
- Engagement with TPI
- Lacking gov't SP system



Pathway 7: Strengthen for prevention and transition

Chad

Engagement focus and adaptations:

- Initial support targeted to refugee-hosting areas to promote social cohesion
- Progressive geographic expansion to additional provinces as capacity grew.
- Expansion of government social registry and institutional strengthening.
- Introduction of psycho-social support modules and mobile ID-based payments to address displacement.

FCV Context:

- Fragility
- Direct engagement
- Gov't SP system exists



Pathway 8: Lay system foundations for prevention and resilience

Papua New Guinea

Engagement focus and adaptations:

- Collaboration among development partners: Asian Development Bank, Australia's DFAT, and World Bank
- Coordinated social assistance, social registry development, and strengthening delivery capacity.
- Private sector engagement to build critical digital infrastructure

FCV Context:

- Fragility
- Direct engagement
- Lacking gov't SP system exists



Key Takeaways

Fragility and protracted crises undermine global progress



FCV erodes development gains, with conflict, displacement, and climate shocks trapping countries in cycles of instability and poverty.

A paradigm shift is needed



Humanitarian aid alone isn't enough; building national social protection systems is strategic for stability, resilience and recovery.

Building national systems is feasible—and essential — even in FCV



Country-led SPL systems can operate even in low-capacity, high-risk settings, and essential for restoring trust and facilitate coordination.

Social protection and labor systems are nation-building tools



Adaptive, inclusive systems stabilize societies, rebuild trust, and enable recovery.

Sustainable SPL solutions require vision and coordination



Tailored approaches, strong government leadership, and predictable financing are key.

THANK YOU

<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099110525135539956>