

LITERATURE REVIEW ON HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS

Towards a Fragility-Informed Approach
for Policy Advice

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1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, conflict and state-society fragility are on the rise, and this trend is increasingly prevalent in many of the European Training Foundation (ETF) partner countries¹. Fragility and conflict result in deteriorating human capital development outcomes, which cumulatively also further contribute to increased fragility and/or conflict. Conversely there are opportunities in fragile and conflict-affected contexts for tailored support to contribute to strengthening resilience and peacebuilding, with the potential to mitigate the impacts of fragility and conflict. To strengthen the ETF approach in fragile and conflict-affected contexts the ETF is developing a framework for fragility and conflict informed policy advice. This framework will support ETF in the navigation of these complex challenges and further guide how ETF provides policy advice on education, training, employment and labour in fragile and conflict-affected partner countries.

Fragility presently impacts human capital development outcomes in 24 of the 28 ETF partner countries.
Source: Fund for Peace Fragile States Index (2024)

1.1 Purpose of Literature Review

The purpose of this report is to provide a foundational evidence base from available literature, to contribute to the development of a framework to steer how ETF provides fragility and conflict informed policy advice. The framework will aim to guide analysis of fragile, and conflict-affected contexts to further analyse the dynamics between these context factors and the impacts on human capital development outcomes of direct relevance to ETF (education, training, employment and labour). The framework will include a Fragile and Conflict Affected Contexts (FCAC) Analysis Tool, that will include questions based on key quantitative indicators, where they are available, and if data is not available, guidance for the use of more qualitative analytical evidence.

1.2 Structure of the literature review report

The literature review report is structured as follows:

- **Section Two - Strategic Context:** Context and strategic priorities for ETF work in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.
- **Section Three – Definitions:** Definition of key fragility and conflict terms.
- **Section Four –Approaches:** Analysis of approaches of key international agencies to inform adoption of definitions and approach most relevant to the work of ETF.
- **Section Five – Available Evidence:** Review of readily available quantitative data and qualitative analysis on fragility, conflict and the impact on human capital development.
- **Section Six – Implications:** Summary of the implications for the development of the ETF FCAC framework and analysis tool.

¹ [Where we work | ETF](#)

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The review of the literature on fragility, conflict and human capital development outcomes has focused on those elements of greatest relevance for the ETF, and due consideration has therefore been given to the ETF mandate and future strategies within the ETF.

2.1 ETF Mandate

The ETF is the EU agency that helps transition and developing countries harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training, and labour market systems, and the ETF achieves this through the four pillars of the ETF mandate:

1. **Support to the European Commission** (EU institutions and Delegations) in the **programming** cycle of EU external assistance in the field of human capital development (HCD), particularly in education, vocational education and training (VET), skills, and employment.
2. Provision of **policy analysis and advice** to countries neighbouring Europe (ETF's partner countries) to strengthen their HCD systems, including the formal Torino annual review process, ETF's flagship participatory policy review.
3. **Dissemination of knowledge** generation and facilitation of international exchange and mutual learning in human capital development.
4. **Promoting systemic reforms** in education, training, and labour markets that contribute to sustainable economic development, social cohesion, and resilience, in line with the EU's priorities.

A core service of the ETF is to provide policy advice, including through EU actions and investments. To maintain relevance and quality of the policy advice, it is important to be aware and focus on the policy implications of the impact of fragility and conflict in each of the ETF partner countries.

2.2 Strategy and Future Direction

The ETF 2027 Strategy outlines the future direction of ETF adapted to the context of conflict-affected and fragile contexts, noting the importance of deeper understanding of the context and how human capital development is impacted and the ETF prioritisation of life-long learning and informal education and training and the need to work with a broader set of partners.

Box 1 - ETF Strategy 2027 Strengthening work in fragile and conflict-affected contexts

“an increasingly prevalent pattern is emerging in partner countries and other developing economies, characterised by various facets of fragility. These manifestations encompass poverty, conflicts, fragility and forced displacement, and they are intricately interconnected. To effectively tackle these challenges in a unified and holistic manner, it is imperative to address their underlying causes comprehensively and proactively, ideally through anticipatory measures. This underscores the necessity of addressing root causes at all levels. Helping fragile contexts requires support at the nexus of development, aid and peace in order to enable recovery, peace and resilience, while strengthening long-term governance, reconciliation, economic growth, and state building or the capacity for affected countries to re-build their own social contract between the state and its citizens via inclusive governance and local agency. Partnerships with civil society organisations (CSOs), local authorities and social partners facilitate the understanding of needs on the ground and the contextualisation of solutions proposed.” “facing an increasing level of fragility in its partner countries, the ETF is also adjusting its operations to the context of (post)-conflict countries and protracted crises to ensure the relevance of its interventions and supporting the resilience of lifelong learning systems. In doing so, the ETF will continue to strengthen partnerships for a rapid, efficient, effective, systemic and innovative response, thus co-creating solutions with partners, and leveraging the EU's role in political dialogue and bilateral support by following a needs-based prioritisation.”

Source: ETF 'Single Programming Document 2025-27'

3. DEFINITIONS

International agencies have adopted a variety of ways to define key terms, approaches, and tools to guide their work in fragile and conflict-affected countries. As ETF works towards a fragility and conflict-informed approach to policy advice, it is important that ETF adopts a unified definition of key terms and an overall approach to working in the context of fragility and conflict. Through this review of the various definitions and approaches, those most appropriate for the ETF are suggested. The proposals and suggestions are based on wider literature review (key publications which are most relevant for the ETF are listed in Annex 1).

3.1 Fragility

The term fragility relates to the degree of resilience (or coping capacity) to risks of a given country, with more fragile countries having a lower level of resilience to risks, and more stable countries having a much higher level of resilience. Fragility also relates to the impact of a given risk when it materialises (exposure), which is dependent on the nature and scale of the specific risk and how these risks interplay with country-specific resilience characteristics. Once highly fragile countries are exposed to a risk will have their resilience tested and potentially overwhelmed.

The literature demonstrates a divergence in approaches to how fragility is defined. Many definitions focus solely or more heavily on the fragility and resilience of the state, which is particularly common approach for the international financial institutions such as the IMF². These state-centric definitions are appropriate for organisations with mandates focused on macro-economic policy issues. Alternative definitions adopt a more holistic and balanced approach that encapsulates the fragility of both state and society. This is a more common approach to defining fragility amongst international NGOs, the EU and OECD³, where programme and policy support is focused on strengthening the resilience of both society and state structures. This approach is more appropriate to defining fragility for the requirements of ETF, as it ensures a focus on:

- Understanding how state fragility undermines state capacity to mitigate risks to education, training, employment and labour development outcomes, and potentially the breakdown of these institutions as the main service provider for these outcomes.
- Understanding how society fragility shapes the ability of communities and civil society to contribute to the achievement of the same human capital development outcomes, particularly in the context of denuded state services.
- The links between fragility and conflict and humanitarian crises.

Based on these considerations the OECD definition of fragility (Box 2) is proposed as the most appropriate definition for ETF, providing an added strength since it also ensures alignment with wider EU definitions and fosters coherence in an EU-wide comprehensive approach.

Box 2 – Definition of fragility

Fragility is the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks. Fragility can lead to negative outcomes, including violence, the breakdown of institutions, displacement, humanitarian crises or other emergencies.

Source: OECD Definition – No. 4 Annex One

² See definitions to fragility adopted in the reviewed literature in Annex 1, specifically Nos. 1, 2, and 3.

³ See definitions to fragility adopted in the reviewed literature in Annex 1, specifically Nos. 4, 5, and 6.

3.2 Conflict

The literature on conflict and conflict mediation identifies that conflict is an inherent human and social condition, where individuals, communities or states consider their interests are incompatible and that this can be a positive social or political process. It is therefore important to distinguish between conflict per se and when conflict evolves into violent conflict. The following definition of conflict and violent conflict is proposed for adoption by ETF (Box 3).

Box 3 – Definition of conflict

“Conflict occurs when two or more parties believe that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes or take action that damages other parties’ ability to pursue their interests. It becomes violent when parties no longer seek to attain their goals peacefully, but resort instead to violence in one form or another.”

Source: UK Government Definition – reference No.7 in Annex 1

Stable states and societies play a key role in regulating the inherent social, economic and political conflicts. For example, tripartite arrangements between employers, trade unions (representing employees) and the state play a key role in managing and mitigating potential conflicts in labour markets.

More fragile states and societies are less capable to regulate these conflicts and are more prone to conflict transforming into violent conflict. In conflict-affected contexts ETF needs to adapt policy advice and support to EC programming based on understanding of the context-specific conflict dynamics.

The impact of conflict on human capital development outcomes is both direct and indirect in nature. Direct impacts can include the destruction of schools and training facilities, displacement of teacher and pupil populations. Impact can be indirect, affecting economies and resulting in loss of jobs, inflation, and economic activity blockades or disruptions. In parallel, these direct and indirect impacts can also contribute to further entrenching conflicts, for example with increased politicisation of educational curricula further reinforcing socio-political divisions between communities amid conflict, or through divergent community access to training, education and employment services and opportunities.

Box 4 – Example of Gaza (2023)

Direct impacts: 97% of schools have been damaged during the ongoing conflict (UN, 2025), and all children have lost at least one year of schooling, with associated psycho-social impact on the youth, with similar impacts on further education and vocational training (UNRWA, 2024).

Indirect impacts: Unemployment has shot up to 80% following the recent rise in conflict (ILO, 2024), and the productive infrastructure base has largely been destroyed, undermining broader economic activity with GDP dropping to 82% of pre-conflict levels (UNCTAD, 2024).

Opportunities: Approaches to online and remote vocational training have enabled the sustainment of some training even during the present conflict (ETF pilot). If a transitional authority is established following a potential ceasefire, there will be many opportunities to support rehabilitation of education and training, including a more inclusive curricula, alongside the reconstruction of facilities. The reconstruction programme will also present real opportunities for training for at risk or vulnerable groups to benefit from employment generated during reconstruction.

Sources: ETF

Conflict can be **regional, or local in nature, often crossing national boundaries** (Box 5). Whilst many of the International Financial Institutions (IFI) focus on analysing conflict in each country within national boundaries, this is largely due to their focus on how conflict impacts the macro-economic stability of individual countries. The IFIs tend therefore to refer to conflict-affected states. Other donor and international organisations adopt a more holistic approach to recognising that conflict can take on cross-border or regional dynamics, therefore tend to take on a broader approach and refer to **conflict-affected contexts**. This thereby frames a strengthened understanding and approach to mitigating conflict, which can be more adapted to the specific geographical dynamics of each conflict.

Box 5 – Regional conflict dynamics

In the Middle East region many of the socio-confessional identities and communities' cross-national boundaries, and many of the conflict causes and dynamics are thereby regional in nature, with conflict in one country directly resulting in a rise in conflict in another country.

3.3 Conflict Sensitivity

Conflict sensitivity is an approach to understanding how a programme or policy initiative is implemented in the context of an ongoing conflict, based on an understanding of the conflict, and the positive and negative dynamics between the conflict and the programme or policy initiative. This is a valuable approach for ETF to adopt both in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, to be able to inform how policy advice is provided in challenging contexts. Early approaches to considering the impact of international development and humanitarian operations in conflict-affected countries adopted the principle of Do No Harm (Anderson, 1999). This approach promoted an analysis of the context of conflict-affected countries to understand how programmes can have unintended consequences that exacerbate tensions and conflict and based on the analytical understanding mitigate these risks. Since then, the literature has developed further to understand how the conflict context can impact the programme and how the programme can both negatively and positively impact the conflict context. This approach is now commonly referred to as conflict sensitivity and is now the more commonly used approach and can be considered to have superseded the earlier Do No Harm approach.

The application of best practice in conflict sensitivity by ETF, will therefore need to consider potential negative impacts as well as positive impacts of ETF work on both conflict and fragility. One of the positive ways that ETF can apply this principle in **policy and programming in conflict-affected contexts is how ETF can contribute to peacebuilding**. For example, the adoption of inclusive educational curricula that foster understanding and peace between the youth of communities in conflict, targeted vocational training can foster alternative livelihoods for at-risk communities or for the reintegration of former combatants.

The definitions of conflict sensitivity adopted by many international NGOs and development agencies tend to focus on conflict sensitivity of projects or programmes only. These types of definitions tend to ignore that conflict sensitivity applies equally to diplomacy, advocacy, advice and technical inputs to the reform and shaping of policy in a conflict-affected country. This broader approach defining conflict sensitivity is of greater relevance to the policy-focused support provided by ETF. It is therefore proposed ETF adopt this broader definition, as developed by Saferworld (2012), that is endorsed and used by most donors, including SIDA and the UK government (Box 6).

Box 6 – Definition of Conflict Sensitivity

“Conflict sensitivity involves recognising that any intervention in a conflict-affected environment will interact with that conflict – producing positive or negative effects – and requires a deliberate, systemic approach to minimise harm and maximise benefits.”

Source: Saferworld definition as detailed in the UK government guidance on conflict sensitivity, No.8 in Annex 1

As the definition illustrates, it is imperative that the principles of conflict sensitivity are fully embedded across all the work of ETF as a substantive and refreshed approach if a “deliberate and systematic approach” is to be adopted.

Whilst the EU has not formally adopted a definition for conflict sensitivity, the European Commission Guidance Notes on Conflict Sensitivity (2024) broadly frame the concept as a systematic approach embedded across all phases of EU interventions to avoid exacerbating conflict and proactively support peace. This is consistent with the above definition and therefore supports its adoption. The EU Guidance Notes and related frameworks highlight how conflict sensitivity is broadly integrated across the EU:

- **Institutional Mainstreaming:** Conflict sensitivity is not an add-on or purely compliance function, it is integrated into programming norms and procedures across EU HQ and Delegations.
- **Conflict Analysis as a Foundation:** Joint conflict analyses bring EU actors and member states together to develop a shared understanding of a conflict in a partner country, to ensure shared understanding of the local conflict dynamics and risks drives joint interventions.
- **Comprehensive Application Across Programme Cycle:** Conflict sensitivity guides strategy, design, implementation, quality assurance, monitoring, and evaluation.
- **Aligning with EU Policy Pillars:** Conflict sensitivity is linked to the EU’s Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises and the European Consensus on Development, reflecting Treaty obligations to preserve peace and strengthen international security.

The ETF can usefully follow a similar approach to integrating conflict sensitivity across all areas of work and across all steps in the policy advice cycle, as well as to European Commission (EC) programming cycle, when ETF is asked to provide input.

4. APPROACHES

Different **approaches are used by international agencies** in how they understand fragile and conflict-affected contexts, and how they apply this understanding to shape their policy and programmatic support. The following review examines the strengths and weaknesses of each approach to inform the approach proposed for the ETF.

4.1 Categorisation of Contexts

Some agencies heavily rely on categorisation of countries by the intensity and type of fragility and/or conflict they are experiencing at a given point in time. The level of reliance on strict categorisation of countries heavily shapes their approach to supporting these countries.

The World Bank adopts an approach whereby countries are categorised as either fragile or conflict-affected. The definition of a country as conflict-affected is based on thresholds of conflict-related deaths, which are then further categorised based on the level of conflict intensity determined by specific numbers of conflict-related deaths (No. 11 in Annex 1). The World Bank then uses these categories to guide their analysis, and approaches in these countries. Regional development banks tend to also adhere to this approach.

The World Bank approach can be considered an **artificial extraction of reality** to some degree, encouraging the binary, rather than dynamic, analysis of fragility and conflict. Equally, this approach also discourages viewing the temporal trends in the understanding, whereby countries fragility and level of conflict affectedness vary over time. This approach implies a static movement from fragile, to pre-conflict, to conflict and then to post-conflict. The reality is quite different, with very few countries following such a linear trajectory.

Box 7 – Example of Lebanon

Lebanon is formally classified as a fragile country with moderate intensity conflict: this rigid categorisation overshadows the specific history and geography of fragility and conflict in Lebanon which has been fragile since it was established. Lebanon has been occupied at different times by Syria and Israel, experienced an intense civil war, and various fluctuating periods of internal, regional and neighbourhood conflicts. The structural fragility of confessional elites' capture of the state and economy, the recent economic crisis, and denudation of public services remain prevalent, with conflict presently most intensive in the south, Bekaa valley and border areas.

Source: World Bank FY26 classification and OECD 'States of Fragility 2025'

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) considers these thresholds do not reflect the per capita nature of the conflict-related deaths and adopts a broader approach that examines the impact of both fragility and conflict on the macroeconomic stability of the country to determine if a country is impacted by fragility and/or conflict (No. 12 in Annex 1).

Whilst these approaches are relevant for large IFIs, to adapt their macro-economic analysis, policy and funding approaches for countries based on strict categorisation of countries as fragile and/or conflict-affected, this approach is not suggested for the ETF that is focused on the human capital development, rather than simply macro-economic, attributes of countries affected by fragility and conflict.

Box 8 – Example from Ukraine

Ukraine is formally classified as a fragile country with high intensity conflict. The rigid categorisation of Ukraine as fragile, overshadows the fact that Ukraine was not considered fragile prior to the annexation of Crimea and occupation of parts in Donbas in 2014, and then the full-scale invasion by Russia in 2022. Prior to 2014 Ukraine experienced several vulnerabilities (political instability, economic transition and corruption), but this was not fragility per se. Ukraine has proved to be extremely resilient to Russian aggression, and yet this has caused an externally imposed increase in fragility and war in Ukraine.

Source: World Bank FY26 classification and Fragile States Index (2023), 'Cascading Fragility: From Ukraine to the World'

A more advanced and more widely used (outside of IFIs) approach adopted by various organisations including the EU, OECD, the UK government and the UN, is to identify those countries in a broader classification of fragile and conflict-affected countries or states, rather than trying to sub-divide countries into one category or another.

The strengths and weaknesses of both approaches are summarised in Table One below. The ETF will benefit from adopting the approach used by other non-IFI agencies, to ensure countries are grouped as Fragile and Conflict-Affected and focus tools and guidance to support a more holistic and context-specific approach to work in such partner countries.

Table 1: Approaches to Categorisation as Fragile and Conflict-affected

	IFIs	Other Agencies
Approach	Use of fixed indicators on fragility and conflict to define if a country is either fragile or conflict-affected. The IMF applies an additional criterion of per capita economic impact to further define a country as conflict-affected. Regional banks follow a similar approach.	A broader framework to guide agency understanding and apply approaches in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Contexts. Guidance focuses on understanding and applying approaches in specific contexts.
Strengths	Provides large institutions with an objective system to determine when the IFI needs to consider adapting its approach in fragile and conflict-affected contexts	This approach is more reflective of the reality of the interplay of fragility and conflict, is responsive to changes over time and focuses on applying principles in an appropriate way to a specific context, providing for more strengthened diagnostics and intervention design.
Weaknesses	Approach over-simplifies the context as either fragile or conflict-affected, misrepresenting how fragility and conflict overlap, and the temporal and geographical dynamics.	This approach does not guide agencies in the identification of priority contexts most impacted by fragility or conflict and does not support comparison between countries.

The use of the term country or state can potentially further misrepresent reality, in contexts where the fragility or conflict dynamic is specific to a locality within that country or where the conflict is by its nature regional (involving more than one country with conflict dynamics crossing international borders). Therefore, reflecting the latest literature, it is proposed that ETF broadly adopt the following term: Fragile and Conflict Affected Contexts (rather than country or state).

4.2 EU Approaches

The key EU strategic frameworks that define the EU approach to fragile and conflict-affected contexts, apply directly to the ETF as an EU institution (Table 2). These frameworks prioritise a comprehensive and integrated approach, which needs to guide ETF to focus on conflict prevention, strengthening resilience, contribute to peacebuilding, and state building in fragile and conflict-affected states.

The European Consensus on Development (2017), highlights the importance of conflict-sensitive approaches to strengthening human capital development outcomes in conflict-affected contexts, including outcomes in education, training and employment directly applicable to the ETF. The EU strategic frameworks provide a rich resource base and guidance on cross-EU working, for ETF to further integrate into its approach to a fragility and conflict informed approach to policy advice by the ETF.

Table 2: Summary of EU Strategic Frameworks on Fragility and Conflict

EU Strategic Frameworks	Purpose	Relevance for ETF
EU Global Strategy (2016)	Sets the overarching foreign and security policy direction for the EU.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Prioritises conflict prevention, resilience building, and stabilisation in fragile states and regions.Emphasises the “Integrated Approach to external conflicts and crises”.Promotes security-development nexus, linking diplomacy, defence, and development.
Integrated Approach to External Conflicts and Crises	Operationalises the EU Global Strategy in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Combines EU instruments (diplomacy, development, security, humanitarian aid) for coherent conflict response.Aims to prevent escalation and support peacebuilding, state-building, and resilience.Promotes coordination among EU institutions, Member States, and local actors.
European Consensus on Development (2017)	EU’s framework for development cooperation and policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Highlights fragility as a cross-cutting challenge affecting development outcomes.Advocates for peaceful, inclusive, and resilient societies.Integrates conflict sensitivity into development programming.
Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (2021–2027)	Main EU funding instrument for external action (development, neighbourhood, and international cooperation).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provides flexible financing for fragile and conflict-affected countries.Supports conflict prevention, stabilisation, resilience, and peacebuilding programs.Promotes the EU’s strategic objectives in fragile contexts (security, governance, human capital development).

The EU does not have a single, formal fragility/conflict classification system in the same way as, for example, the World Bank (No. 11 Annex 1) or the OECD (No. 5 Annex 1). The EU adopts the more advanced approach of focusing more broadly on fragile and conflict-affected contexts, rather than strict categorisation of countries. The EU relies more on a policy-based and context-specific approach rather than a fixed list. This approach is more relevant to the work of the ETF, with the additional advantage of ensuring alignment with EU best practise.

Further to the clearly articulated strategic frameworks, the EU has a rich library of technical guidance for working in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, which is also of direct relevance to the work of ETF. The EU has guidance on how to conduct country or regional level conflict analyses to guide

programming and diplomacy⁴. The EU uses this to undertake Conflict Analysis, Risk and Resilience Assessments, and Conflict Sensitivity Assessments for fragile or conflict-affected countries. Where these are available for ETF partner countries these assessments are of direct relevance for the ETF work. These are usually published internally and are therefore available for use by ETF.

Yet these EU conflict assessments are not systematically and regularly produced for each FCAC. In such cases there are alternative EU sources for robust analysis on FCAC countries including human rights reviews, diplomatic statements, and peacebuilding updates (Box 9). Additional examples of such analysis include:

- **EU Annual Reports on Human Rights and Democracy:** These often contain conflict-related overviews alongside human-rights monitoring for specific countries.
- **EEAS country pages:** These provide background on political relations, security, humanitarian support, and peacebuilding measures.
- **Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessments (RPBA) reports:** Developed in coordination with UN and international institutions, to assess post-conflict recovery needs.
- **Official statements and press releases:** Statements often provide the EU policy line and analysis on evolving conflict situations (e.g., EU-Troika statements on incidents or political developments).

Box 9: Examples of use of resources for Syria

EEAS Syria country page: This resource provides a solid political analysis of Syria and the EU political stance, with links to key country strategy papers and official statements and press releases. This page also highlights proposed activities of direct relevance to the work of ETF, including prioritisation of education and vocational training, in the EEAS 'Whole of Syria Approach'.

An additional EU priority for Syria is: "Support to prevent further radicalisation in northeast Syria by...support for social cohesion, and life skills and vocational training".

ECHO Humanitarian Programme Documents: Identifies immediate humanitarian priorities as "Back to Learning" campaigns, identifying out-of-school children, and promoting inclusive education efforts.

Broader socio-economic recovery plans prioritise livelihoods and job creation.

The EU strategic frameworks, conflict assessments and additional EU reporting sources provide a very rich resource to shape the development of the ETF approach. These EU resources also provide useful qualitative analytical input for the ETF to consider when conducting basic screening or in-depth analysis of FCAC partner countries.

4.3 Other Agency Approaches

Most donors, international development organisations and NGOs adopt a similar approach to the EU, which is based on the principles of conflict sensitivity, including the importance of conducting conflict context analysis to inform how conflict sensitivity is applied throughout the programme life cycle. The strengths of each approach and the implications for ETF are summarised below (Table 3).

⁴ See the EU *Global Europe* (NDICI-2021-2027) instrument

Table 3: Approaches by other international agencies

Organisation	Approach	Implications for ETF
United Nations	Focuses on application of conflict sensitivity in all aspects of programming, with a variety of tools to support applying these principles and broader peacebuilding principles into their work (No. 17 Annex 1).	The UNDP guidance on integrating peacebuilding within all aspects of conflict sensitivity is useful for ETF. The focus on programming and exclusion of specific approaches for policy advice means this is less useful for ETF than the EU approach and guidance.
International Organisation for Migration	A robust approach to integrating conflict sensitivity into programming, management structures and processes and monitoring and evaluation (No. 18 Annex 1).	Useful insights for ETF on integrating conflict sensitivity into monitoring systems. Similarly the focus on programming means this is less relevant for ETF.
Save the Children International	Guidance is available in four languages to promote the utility of the guidance for all staff and partners and to embed it in all programming and management systems, with rich resources on applying this in a participatory manner in a community setting (No. 20 Annex 1).	Useful insights on applying conflict sensitivity principles internally and at the community level. Not useful for ETF work at the policy level but can be helpful reference for policies focused on access at the community level.
UK Government	The UK (as does the EU and many other donors) relies heavily on the definitions and approaches they have jointly developed in the context of the best practice of the OECD, this includes UK specific guidance on conflict sensitivity for programming and diplomacy/policy and detailed conflict guidance – Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (No. 10 and 16 Annex 1).	The guidance here is relevant to the ETF as it is based on the comprehensive approach and informs diplomatic, policy and programming support in FCAC partner countries. As a bilateral agency this can be used by ETF to complement the primary focus of drawing on and aligning with the EU approach.

Whilst it is useful to draw on the experience of other agencies, including the above and additional conflict sensitivity forums and hubs, it is more important to follow the existing EU guidance and approaches. Alignment with existing EU approaches to conflict sensitivity will assist joint working across the EU agencies. This is a strong foundation to promote strengthened EU joint work on policies and programmes based on using the same language, definitions, approach and integrated analysis to guide shared understanding.

ETF staff should be encouraged to participate in cross-EU learning and policy initiatives focused on FCAC, join EU FCAC networks and access the EU hub of resources, and primarily rely on EU analysis, and cross-EU policy and programming initiatives in ETF partner countries.

5. AVAILABLE EVIDENCE

Building on the definitions and approach analysis presented above, the review further examines the global and open-source data, analysis and wider evidence that is available to specifically input evidence into the ETF work in FCAC countries. This analysis of available evidence includes a review of both the quantitative indicators and qualitative analytical evidence sources and proposes those most relevant and reliable for inclusion in the ETF work.

Annex 2 provides a detailed listing of available evidence sources that were reviewed (Table 1 a summary of data sources, Table 2 and 3 a breakdown of FSI and OECD fragility indices, and Table 4 a summary of additional quantitative conflict indicators).

Annex 3 provides the list of the most appropriate, reliable and readily available evidence on fragility and conflict human capital development outcomes relevant for ETF (Table 5 list of quantitative indicators, Table 6 a list of qualitative evidence sources, and Table 7 provides an analysis of how to align the new data to the existing KIESE indicators).

5.1 Fragility and Conflict Evidence

The review of available evidence first examines the quantitative and qualitative evidence focused on fragility and conflict and proposes those most relevant for the ETF work.

5.1.1 Global Fragility Indices

The very nature of fragile and conflict-affected contexts means that it is very common that the data is often unreliable or not available, in part as formal public systems of data collection are directly impacted by the challenges prevalent in these countries.

Equally, quantitative data alone does not directly translate to understanding and insights, as robust evidence-based analysis and understanding requires more than a list of quantitative indicators.

Conversely, the collection of quantitative data when it is available and reliable is a useful data source, that when combined with qualitative data and wider analysis, can provide the evidence required to conduct a basic screening of the context in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

Two main reliable global composite indicators that collect quantitative data for the ETF partner countries are focused on assessing fragility and these are: Fragile State Index (FSI) and OECD State of Fragility framework.

The Fragile States Index (FSI), published annually by the Fund for Peace, provides a composite measure of state fragility based on twelve indicators grouped into four dimensions: cohesion, economic, political, and social. Each country receives both an overall score and disaggregated indicator scores, allowing for comparisons across countries and over time. The index combines quantitative data with qualitative assessments from content analysis, offering a global ranking of 179 countries that highlights pressures and risks to stability.

The OECD State of Fragility Framework assesses fragility across six dimensions: economic, environmental, political, security, societal, and human. Each dimension is measured through a set of indicators drawn from international data sources, providing both composite fragility profiles and disaggregated scores.

There are several over-arching weaknesses for both fragility indices that need to be considered when using these indices:

- Data is often aggregated at national level, missing sub-national heterogeneity critical for ETF understanding of regional and sub-national fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

- Updates are annual (FSI) or biennial (OECD), which means that the dynamic nature common in fragile and conflict-affected countries not being regularly updated, with recent events and developments not being captured.
- Rankings and trends should be interpreted as signals of the complexity of the policy environment, requiring ETF to complement them with contextual and qualitative analysis. Alone, they do not generate enough contextual depth to build a country-specific narrative. Whilst there are some individual indicators on employment and education it does not cover the full spectrum of the ETF human capital development activities (such as the exclusion of data on Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), and labour market trends).
- A few of the ETF partner countries are not included in the OECD Fragility framework.

A comparison of the individual strengths and weaknesses of each index are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 4: Comparison of Composite Fragility Indices for ETF operational needs

	FSI	OECD State Fragility Framework
Strengths	Provides a single composite score (and ranking) of fragility, easy to communicate to policymakers.	Incorporates risk and vulnerability modelling (forward-looking, not just descriptive).
	Covers all ETF partner countries annually (global scope, 179 countries).	Links fragility analysis with financing flows and development effectiveness, aligning with donor perspectives.
	Time-series since 2005 allows for trend analysis.	
Weaknesses	Heavy reliance on media content analysis (CAST) introduces subjectivity.	Analysis only applied to 5 ETF countries (Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan) over the 61 fragile contexts designated by OECD in 2025.
	May overemphasise political/military fragility compared to socio-economic resilience factors.	Focus is more on donor policy and aid allocation, less on sectoral entry points like education, skills, or employment.
		Methodology and thresholds are less transparent compared to FSI, limiting replicability for ETF use.
Risks to mitigate	The overall score, and component score do not explain the drivers behind change nor identify the stakeholders involved, which limits their direct operational use.	The indicators provide only indicative snapshots with limited trend data and without clarity on the timeliness of underlying sources.

The breadth, depth and broad coverage (of ETF partner countries) means that both indices **will be useful quantitative data sources for the ETF**, as they provide a very comprehensive understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of fragility.

For fragile countries affected by conflict this also provides useful insights on the drivers, causes and dynamics of conflict in ETF partner countries. To avoid misuse, ETF should resist over-reliance on rankings or thresholds and instead treat index scores as indicative entry points for further analysis and dialogue (see Figure 1 flowchart).

5.1.2 Additional Conflict Indicators

In addition to global fragility measures, a set of conflict-specific indicators can provide ETF with sharper insights into the context of the conflict and the inherent risks and opportunities for human capital development outcomes in fragile and conflict-affected partner countries.

These include:

- **Upsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP):** This provides a geo-referenced event dataset, which enables the classification of types of violent conflict (state-based, non-state, one-sided), it can calculate the share of civilian versus combatant deaths and distinguishes between minor conflicts and wars using standard fatality thresholds. As events are geo-tagged, conflict intensity can also be expressed at a regional and sub-national level, allowing ETF to identify sub-national hotspots where education and skills systems face the greatest disruption. Complementary sources can enrich this picture to be found at the national level. This data source also enables the production and use of conflict maps that can be a useful input to the ETF work (No. 21 Annex One, and Table 5 in Annex Two).
- **Armed Conflict Location and Events Data (ACLED) Conflict Data⁵:** This data set adds real-time data on event frequency, the share of large-scale clashes, and tags on heavy weaponry or airstrikes that signal infrastructure destruction, including to schools and education facilities.
- **Displacement data from United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC):** Captures the intensity of population movements that interrupt education and training pathways, which when used in parallel with the UCDP's data on civilian fatality ratios can also highlight the degree to which learners and teachers are directly targeted.
- **International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO):** Provides reliable data on attacks against humanitarian workers which can potentially be used as a proxy indicator of humanitarian access as it is a reliable indicator of the operational risks for supporting human capital development outcomes in the most heavily conflict-affected contexts.
- **Country-specific indicators:** Whilst the above indicators have a broad reach across many of the ETF partner countries impacted by fragility and conflict, some of the most reliable conflict data sources are specific to a single country. For example, in Ukraine the most reliable data source on conflict trends, and intensity is produced by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW)⁶. Similarly in Syria the longest time-series and most reliable data series on conflict intensity is produced by the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights⁷. Whilst it is challenging to integrate country-specific indicators into the ETF work, future use of these additional indicators can be considered by ETF.

Taken together, these indicators will enable ETF to analyse how conflict manifests territorially, whom it affects, the level of infrastructure damage and how persistent conflict is temporally, all **essential elements for understanding the conflict context essential for designing conflict-sensitive and resilience-oriented human capital development interventions**. These additional conflict indicators are proposed for inclusion as sources in the ETF work in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

5.1.3 Qualitative data

There are multiple organisations that systematically use quantitative and qualitative data to analyse conflict in specific countries and regions. The most reliable analytical reports that cover most of the ETF partner countries have been summarised in Table 8 in Annex 3.

The ETF can usefully reference links to these country level reports as a means for ETF teams to access high quality analysis of the context in conflict-affected countries. This additional evidence

⁵ See: <https://acleddata.com/>

⁶ See: [Home - Institute for the Study of War](#)

⁷ See: [HOME - The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights](#)

source can be triangulated with quantitative indicators above, as well as the qualitative analysis on fragility from the FSI and OECD indices listed above. Additional links to conflict maps from UCDP and ACLED shall be included in the ETF approach to provide a geographical understanding of conflict dynamics in each partner country. This will provide an over-arching picture of conflict and fragility dynamics for each ETF partner country.

5.2 Human Capital Development

The review of available evidence builds on the preceding analysis of fragility and conflict evidence to now examine the quantitative and qualitative evidence focused on human capital development outcomes relevant for ETF (education, training, employment, and labour) and proposes those most relevant for the ETF work.

5.2.1 Quantitative data

Human capital development indicators provide a structured way to measure how individuals acquire, use, and maintain the skills and knowledge needed to prepare for active participation in society and to access economic opportunities. They typically cover three main dimensions: education (access, attainment, quality of learning, equity of opportunities), employment (labour force participation, skills utilisation, productivity, inclusion of youth and vulnerable groups), and broader socio-economic outcomes (health, governance, migration, and resilience factors). Quantitative indicators—drawn from international sources such as UNESCO, ILO, World Bank, OECD, and UN agencies—offer comparability across countries and over time.

The monitoring strand of the ETF Torino Process provides an annual, structured assessment of how VET and lifelong learning systems perform in ETF partner countries. It is based on a subset of the ETF KIESE indicators, which are aggregated into System Performance Indices (SPIs).

The KIESE database compiles a comprehensive set of indicators across education, skills, employment, migration, and governance in ETF partner countries. It offers robust coverage of human capital development dimensions, including access, attainment, and quality of education (enrolment, completion, years of schooling, teacher qualifications, learning outcomes, and digital skills); labour market structures and outcomes (participation, youth unemployment, persons Not in Education, Employment or Training, skills mismatch, job vacancies, and earnings); as well as migration and displacement patterns (asylum seekers, emigrants, remittances, and refugees) and systemic features such as expenditure, bargaining coverage, and accountability mechanisms. The strengths of the KIESE data-set lie in its breadth, harmonisation, and comparability, as well as the inclusion of new domains like digital competencies, environmental knowledge, and global citizenship.

To operationalise the integration of fragility and conflict analysis into ETF's human capital development work, the ETF should ensure that global fragility indicators are systematically connected to the education, skills, and labour market evidence already available in KIESE, by:

- Using ETF Key Indicators in Education, Skills, and Employment (KIESE) to deepen context analysis within FCAC: Analysing KIESE indicators to understand how risks flagged by fragility data translate into concrete challenges for education, skills, and labour markets.
- Map country-specific strengths, weaknesses, and risks: At the national level, identify the main vulnerabilities and resilience factors in education, skills, and employment systems, highlighting where ETF can mitigate risks and build on opportunities.
- Link fragility dimensions with KIESE pillars: Connect global fragility dimensions (economic, political, social, security, environmental, human) with KIESE's education, employment, and socio-economic indicators to ensure ETF's analysis captures both the broader fragility context and its direct implications for human capital development. A first outline of this alignment is presented in Table Seven (Annex Three).

5.2.2 Qualitative data

In addition to quantitative monitoring through KIESE indicators, the Torino Process systematically integrates qualitative sources to capture the context, drivers, and institutional dynamics behind education and skills system performance. Through national self-assessments, stakeholder consultations, and expert reviews, the process gathers evidence on policy priorities, governance arrangements, inclusiveness, and system responsiveness that cannot be reflected in statistics alone. The existing ETF insights when combined with the evidence from the ETF FCAC Analysis Tool will provide an even richer understanding that ETF staff can usefully integrate as a basic screening in key processes and tasks to fulfil the ETF mandate.

To capture the full complexity of human capital development, KIESE can be effectively complemented with the above quantitative indicators and the following additional qualitative information, to provide a rich picture of the inter-play of conflict and human capital development in each of the ETF partner countries. This will include:

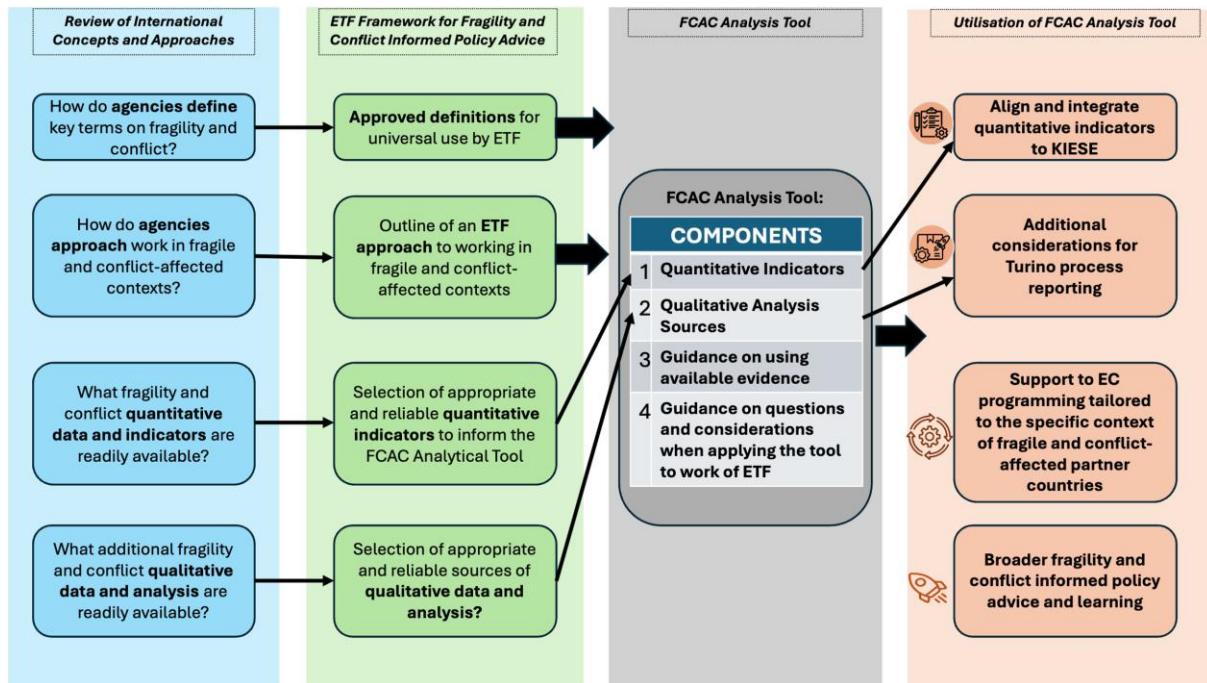
- Context analysis: How conflict affects school operations, mobility of teachers, labour markets.
- Stakeholder perspectives: Voices of teachers, employers, communities on the relevance and inclusiveness of skills systems.
- Institutional assessments: Analysis of policy continuity, governance capacity, resilience of education and employment institutions during shocks.

This qualitative evidence will ensure that the ETF approach can support explaining why certain trends emerge in the quantitative data, highlight sub-national disparities invisible in national averages, and identify emerging risks and opportunities that numbers alone cannot capture.

6. IMPLICATIONS OF ANALYSIS

The review of the literature, preceding analysis and proposed ETF adoption of specific definitions of terms, approaches, and evidence sources contribute to the ETF framework for a fragility and conflict informed approach to policy advice, and more specifically to the shape, content and evidence source to be used for the development of the ETF FCAC Analysis Tool. Figure 1 shows how this evidence will be used to both contribute to the wider ETF framework and the development of the tool.

Figure 1: Summary of Other Agency FCAC Approaches and Implications for ETF



ANNEX 1 – SUMMARY OF LITERATURE

Annex one provides a full reference, direct link, and summary of the key documents identified during the literature review that provide a useful evidence base to inform the development of the Fragility and Conflict-Affected Country (FCAC) ETF approach and Analysis Tool. The summary of the literature is structured below based on the relevant sections of the report for ease of reference.

Definitions

No. 1	Reference	Link
	Fund for Peace – Fragile States Index (CAST Model)	<i>Fragile States Index – What does state fragility mean?</i>

Summary and Implications for ETF

A very comprehensive data-set and analysis of fragility covering many of the ETF partner countries, with indicators of direct relevance for the ETF work. Definition: “A state is fragile if it loses control over territory or monopoly on force, its authority erodes, it cannot provide basic services, and it struggles to engage internationally.”

No. 2	Reference	Link
	Brookings Institution – Fragility 2.0 (2016)	<i>Brookings – Fragility 2.0: Ideas to Action</i>

Summary and Implications for ETF

Policy focused analysis of fragility, which encompasses considerations of capacity, political legitimacy and resilience, of direct relevance to the ETF work. Definition: “State fragility is the absence or breakdown of a social contract between people and government, marked by deficits in institutional capacity and political legitimacy, leading to instability, conflict, and reduced resilience.”

No. 3	Reference	Link
	IMF Working Paper (2021)	<i>IMF – Defining Fragile and Conflict-Affected States</i>

Summary and Implications for ETF

Aggregating international institutions' views, fragile states have *weak/failing institutions*, lack of authority and legitimacy, and inability to perform core state functions—amounting to a broken social contract. For ETF the considerations are useful for understanding the importance of institutional capacity, legitimacy and the social contract. The over focus on macro-economic stability is less directly relevant to ETF.

No. 4	Reference	Link
	OECD Glossary	<i>socialprotection.org</i>

Summary and Implications for ETF

Fragility is the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, system, and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks. This may result in violence, poverty, inequality, displacement, and environmental degradation. This is a useful approach but more focused on social protection rather than specific needs of the ETF with a focus on education, training and employment/labour.

No. 5	Reference	Link
	OECD – States of Fragility (2022)	OECD – States of Fragility 2022

Summary and Implications for ETF

A very comprehensive data-set and analysis of fragility covering many of the ETF partner countries, with indicators of direct relevance for the ETF work.

Definition: “Fragility is the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks. Fragility can lead to negative outcomes, including violence, the breakdown of institutions, displacement, humanitarian crises or other emergencies.”

Fragility is multidimensional—encompassing drivers like *violence, justice, institutions, economy, resilience*. Many fragile contexts are not in open conflict but still experience systemic vulnerability.

The OECD embeds conflict within its multidimensional fragility framework, which spans five dimensions:

Political fragility → weak governance, corruption, lack of legitimacy.

Security fragility → armed violence, terrorism, organised crime.

Economic fragility → inequality, unemployment, resource dependence.

Societal fragility → exclusion, horizontal inequalities, lack of cohesion.

Environmental fragility → climate change, resource scarcity, disasters.

No. 6	Reference	Link
	OECD – States of Fragility (2025)	States of Fragility 2025 (EN)

Summary and Implications for ETF

Slight modification to the 2024 system of classifying fragility that addresses political sensitivities. The paper also addresses the impact of recent geopolitical shifts, and a greater integration of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Directly relevant to a deeper understanding of fragility dynamics in specific sectors, of particular importance for ETF when considering dynamics in education, training, employment/labour sectors.

No. 7	Reference	Link
	EU – From fragility to resilience, from conflict to peace	International Partnerships

Summary and Implications for ETF

The EU adopts a multidimensional understanding of fragility, closely aligned with the OECD framework, encompassing economic, political, societal, environmental, and security dimensions. Fragile countries are more susceptible to shocks due to weak institutional capacity and legitimacy. Hence, the EU emphasises building resilience, shifting from reactive crisis containment to proactive and preventive approaches that strengthen state and societal adaptability. Critical for ETF to ensure coherence across the EU institutions and to promote understanding, co-working and sharing of resources across the EU.

No. 8	Reference	Link
	Scheffran et al. (2012), 'Thematic Note Cross-cutting theme conflict and violence'	https://www.gov.uk/research-for-development-outputs/thematic-note-cross-cutting-theme-conflict-and-violence

Summary and Implications for ETF

Useful analysis of the distinction between normal societal conflict and how this can transform into violent conflict. Useful definition to underpin ETF policy frameworks on conflict.

Definition: "Conflict occurs when two or more parties believe that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes or take action that damages other parties' ability to pursue their interests. It becomes violent when parties no longer seek to attain their goals peacefully, but resort instead to violence in one form or another." In other words, conflict is the result of (perceived) incompatible aims, perceptions or behaviours of at least two actors.

No. 9	Reference	Link
	UK Government – Stabilisation Unit: <i>Conflict Sensitivity: Tools and Guidance</i> (2016)	Conflict Sensitivity: Tools and Guidance (UK Gov) GOV.UK

Summary and Implications for ETF

A well-recognised donor-level tool for conflict sensitivity, which includes consideration of policy initiatives as well as programming, which is of direct relevance for ETF.

UK Government cites - International Alert uses the definition from the Conflict-Sensitivity Consortium, of which it was a member:

"Conflict sensitivity involves recognising that any intervention in a conflict-affected environment will interact with that conflict—producing positive or negative effects—and requires a deliberate, systematic approach to minimise harm and maximise benefits."

No. 10	Reference	Link
	International Monetary Fund (IMF)	IMF+1

Summary and Implications for ETF

The IMF doesn't offer a standalone definition of conflict but regards *fragile and conflict-affected states (FCS)* as those with war conditions and institutional breakdowns that are *macroeconomically critical* to stability and global resilience challenges. The overt focus on macro-economic stability means this is less relevant to the work of ETF.

Approaches

No. 11	Reference	Link
	UK JACS	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/joint-analysis-of-conflict-and-stability-jacs-guidance-note

Summary and Implications for ETF

Analytical Framework (JACS Guidance): In the UK's Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability (JACS) methodology, conflict analysis explores causes (root & proximate), actors, dynamics, and resilience factors, without strictly defining conflict, but treating it as a dynamic process of instability. A useful example of how to conduct a more detailed analysis of conflict, which can be used to inform ETF approaches to detailed analysis.

No. 12	Reference	Link
	World Bank — Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations (FCS) Classification	databank.worldbank.org+1

Summary and Implications for ETF

The World Bank Group publishes an annual list of Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations (FCS) to guide its strategic decision-making, policy adaptation, and operational support in challenging environments. The list is not exhaustive nor a ranking but signifies which countries need tailored approaches due to fragility. Countries are categorised based on two main dimensions:

- **Institutional and Social Fragility** - Based on indicators measuring governance quality, institutional strength, and societal stability (e.g., CPIA scores).
- **Conflict-Affected Countries** - Identified by thresholds of conflict-related deaths relative to population, with sub-categories for high-intensity and medium-intensity conflict.

Useful resource to understand broad approach of IFIs, and to understand the macro-economic dimensions. Although the strict categorisation of countries less directly relevant for ETF.

No. 13	Reference	Link
	EU Core Companion Document: "Guidance Notes on Conflict Sensitivity in Development Cooperation"	Guidance Notes (2021) Publications Office of the EU

Summary and Implications for ETF

Purpose: Updates and extends the 2015 EU Staff Handbook on operating in conflict and fragility. A mandatory reference under the NDICI-Global Europe regulation.

Content & Structure:

- Outlines EU policy foundations: Treaty obligations (e.g., Article 21.2 TEU), the Integrated Approach to Conflicts and Crises, and the Development Consensus.
- Highlights the interlinkages between fragility and conflict, and the need for shared understanding via joint conflict analyses and conflict-sensitive programming.
- Supports delegations and HQ in implementing conflict sensitivity—including early warning follow-up, quality assurance, and resilience monitoring.

This guidance is incredibly useful to the work of ETF and should be used to inform development of tools and guidance, in particular Guidance Note Number 12 on Education.

No. 14	Reference	Link
	EU Conflict Analysis Guidance (2020)	capacity4dev.europa.eu

Summary and Implications for ETF

Offers structured support on how to conduct and utilise conflict analysis in EU external action design. Accessible via Capacity4Dev groups. Highly relevant internal EU guidance for politically-informed conflict analysis and example assessments, which needs to be widely circulated and used by ETF staff.

No. 15	Reference	Link
	Capacity4Dev Knowledge Exchange	capacity4dev.europa.eu

Summary and Implications for ETF

Hosts training modules, didactic tools, and thematic resources under the Fragmentation & Crisis Situations group. Highly relevant internal EU conflict and fragility resource hub, with plenty of tools, guidance and assessments, which needs to be widely circulated and used by ETF staff.

No. 16	Reference	Link
	EU Programming Tools Session (Nov 2021)	International Partnerships

Summary and Implications for ETF

A webinar introducing how conflict sensitivity is integrated into NDICI programming cycles and results chains. Shared processes and indicators for Action Documents and M&E. A very useful resource which should be promoted amongst ETF staff.

No. 17	Reference	Link
	UK Government – Stabilisation Unit: Conflict Sensitivity: Tools and Guidance (2016)	Conflict Sensitivity: Tools and Guidance (UK Gov) GOV.UK

Summary and Implications for ETF

Practical tools to assess impacts, applicable throughout development, diplomacy, defence, and security programmes. For ETF this guide is of particular utility as it includes guidance on applying conflict sensitivity principles in the context of policy advice, whereas other guidance tends to focus solely on programming.

No. 18	Reference	Link
	United Nations – Good Practice Note on Conflict Sensitivity, Peacebuilding, and Sustaining Peace (2022)	UN Good Practice Note (Conflict Sensitivity, Peacebuilding) unsdg.un.org

Summary and Implications for ETF

Purpose: Offers UN entities structured guidance for embedding conflict sensitivity into programming, with tools for conflict-sensitive design, integration of peacebuilding principles, and monitoring/evaluation. Components include:

- Embedding conflict sensitivity into sustainable development.
- Building organisational values and systems around conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding.
- Tools for monitoring and evaluating conflict-sensitive outcomes.

Useful conflict sensitivity resource for ETF for large-scale programming to inform how ETF supports EC programming.

No. 19	Reference	Link
	IOM (International Organisation for Migration) – Conflict Sensitivity Page	IOM – Conflict Sensitivity iom.int

Summary and Implications for ETF

Approach: Conflict sensitivity is a core, organisation-wide principle recognising that all interventions in fragile contexts can affect peace dynamics. It includes:

- Context-specificity – deep understanding of the local dynamics.
- Two-way interaction – anticipating how the intervention and context influence each other.
- Beyond Do No Harm – minimising negative outcomes and actively seeking positive impact.
- Operationalisation: Features tools like IOM's Conflict Sensitivity Analysis System, capacity-building programs, and involvement in global coordination platforms.

Useful resource for ETF, particularly in how this focuses on positive peacebuilding impact of programming, and helpful insights on capacity building.

No. 20	Reference	Link
	Saferworld / Conflict Sensitivity Consortium – How to Guide to Conflict Sensitivity (2012)	How to Guide to Conflict Sensitivity – Saferworld saferworld-global.org

Summary and Implications for ETF

Scope: Practical guidance for agencies working in conflict-affected areas, emphasising understanding intervention impacts and steps to ensure programming contributes to peace. Contextual focus: Draws from experiences in Kenya, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka. Covers mainstreaming conflict sensitivity at both project and organisational levels. An acclaimed and widely used guidance for ETF to refer to for principles of conflict sensitivity, in particular how organisations mainstream these principles, yet the focus on programming is of less relevance to work of ETF.

No. 21	Reference	Link
	Save the Children International – Conflict Sensitivity Guide (2021)	Conflict Sensitivity Guide – Save the Children resourcecentre.savethechildren.net

Summary and Implications for ETF

Focus: Institutional roadmap to mainstream conflict sensitivity within programming. Helps teams assess current practices and enhance conflict-sensitive approaches across functions. Multilingual availability: English, Spanish, French, Arabic. Less relevant to work of ETF, compared to other conflict sensitivity guidance documents as mostly focused on NGO approaches to applying at project level.

No. 22	Reference	Link
	Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) Datasets	https://ucdp.uu.se/

Summary and Implications for ETF

The UCDP, hosted by the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, is the world's leading source of systematic data on organised violence and armed conflict. It provides multiple interlinked datasets, including:

- UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset (state-based conflicts since 1946, ≥ 25 battle deaths/year)
- Georeferenced Event Dataset (GED) (event-level time and location data on organised violence)
- Dyadic Dataset (state–opposition actor pairs in conflicts)
- Battle-Related Deaths Dataset (fatality estimates from battle-related violence)
- Non-State Conflict Dataset (violence between non-state groups, 1989–2013)
- External Support Dataset (records of foreign support to intrastate conflicts, 1975–2010)

Together, these datasets allow researchers to analyse conflict onset, intensity, geography, actors, fatalities, and external involvement across different types of violence. A very useful dataset for use by ETF within the FCAC Analysis Tool component focused on conflict geography and intensity.

ANNEX 2 – SUMMARY OF EXISTING INDICATORS FOR CONFLICT AND FRAGILITY

The analysis of available quantitative indicators focused on those related to the context (namely the fragility and conflict related dimensions) as well as conflict-related human capital development outcomes (education, training, employment and labour) that are not already captured in the existing ETF data tools. The analysis identifies specific quantitative indicators, coverage (related to ETF partner countries), strengths, weaknesses and nature of the data collected. Additional analysis including more qualitative data are also summarised where there is good availability across all ETF partner countries to bolster understanding drawn solely from the quantitative data.

Table 1: Summary of Main Sources of Quantitative Indicators

Guide to Use by ETF: This table maps the key data providers across the main dimensions of conflict, fragility and human capital development outcomes relevant to ETF priorities (education, training, employment and labour). It has been used in this review as a reference point to consult specific indicators, track trends, and triangulate data with ETF's own sources.

Dimension	Dataset / Source	Key Indicators	Coverage / Frequency	Strengths	Weaknesses	Link
Education	UNESCO UIS	Enrolment (primary, secondary, tertiary), literacy, gender parity, public spending on education/TVET	Global, annual	Authoritative, standardised	Delays, missing fragile states	http://uis.unesco.org/
	World Bank EdStats	Learning outcomes, completion rates, education financing	Global, annual	Rich coverage, linked to WDI	Gaps in fragile states	https://databank.worldbank.org/source/education-statistics-%5eedstats
	UNHCR Refugee Education Data	Refugee enrolment, access to primary/secondary/tertiary	Global, annual	Focused on displacement	Limited comparability	https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics
Politics	Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI)	Government effectiveness, rule of law, corruption, stability	Global, annual	Widely used	Perception-based, aggregate	https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/

Dimension	Dataset / Source	Key Indicators	Coverage / Frequency	Strengths	Weaknesses	Link
	Political Stability Index (TheGlobalEconomy)	Political stability & absence of violence	Global, annual	Easy comparability	Simplistic, broad	https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/wb_political_stability/
	Constitution Building Processes in Fragile Settings (IDEA)	Peace/constitution processes (1990–today)	48 countries, process stages	Comparative insight	Process data, not indicators	https://pccbp.constitutionnet.org/
Employment	ILOSTAT	Labour force participation, NEET, informal employment, gender gaps	Global, annual	Labour-focused, disaggregated	Inconsistent national reporting	https://ilo.stat.ilo.org/
	World Bank WDI	Youth unemployment, Gini Index	Global, annual	Standardised, long time series	Missing fragile contexts	https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators
	ETF Torino Process	Skills supply/demand, VET system performance	ETF partner countries, periodic	Context-specific, tailored	Limited global comparability	https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/practice-areas/torino-process
Conflict	UCDP (Uppsala Conflict Data Program)	State-based conflict, non-state violence, fatalities	Global, annual + event-level	Longitudinal, credible	Underreporting in low-visibility contexts	https://ucdp.uu.se/
	ACLED	Conflict events, fatalities, locations	Global (many fragile states), weekly	Real-time, geocoded	Uneven coverage	https://acleddata.com/
	PA-X Peace Agreements Database	Peace agreements, provisions (incl. gender, local peace)	1990–present, 260+ issues	Rich qualitative coding	Not a monitoring tool	https://pax.peaceagreements.org/tracker/
Composite Indicators	Fragile States Index (FSI) – Fund for Peace	Composite index: security, governance, economic, social pressures	Global, annual	Widely cited, longitudinal	Aggregate, may mask subnational variation	https://fragilestatesindex.org/

Dimension	Dataset / Source	Key Indicators	Coverage / Frequency	Strengths	Weaknesses	Link
	SDG targets	SGD rank index; SDG index score; Spillover score	Global, annual		Aggregate for all SDGs, no score by SDG	https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/profiles/albania/
Multi-indicators database	OIC statistics database			Rich set of indicators; 16/28 ETF PCs		https://oicstat.sesric.org/query

Table 2: Breakdown of sub-indicators for the Fragile States Index

Guide to Use by ETF: This table explains how the Fragile States Index (FSI) is constructed and clarifies the meaning of its components. It should be used as a companion guide to interpret both the overall score and the individual component scores.

Dimension	Indicator	What it Measures	Key Sources Used (examples)
Cohesion	Security Apparatus	Presence of armed conflict, security threats, violence, and militarisation	ACLED, UCDP, SIPRI, media monitoring (CAST system)
	Factionalised Elites	Divisions and competition among political elites, use of nationalistic or exclusionary rhetoric	Content analysis (CAST), expert assessments
	Group Grievance	Tensions and violence between groups (ethnic, religious, political), discrimination, and persecution	Human Rights Watch, Amnesty, OHCHR, World Values Survey, CAST
Economic	Economic Decline	Economic distress, GDP decline, inflation, debt, unemployment	World Bank (WDI), IMF, ILO
	Uneven Development	Inequality across regions, groups, and classes (income, education, labour access)	World Bank (Gini Index), UNDP HDI, UNESCO UIS
	Human Flight & Brain Drain	Emigration of skilled professionals, migration pressures, remittances	UN DESA migration, UNESCO education mobility data, World Bank
Political	State Legitimacy	Public confidence in government, corruption, elections, representation	Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), Transparency International, CAST

Dimension	Indicator	What it Measures	Key Sources Used (examples)
	Public Services	Provision of health, education, water, infrastructure, and social services	World Bank (education, health), UNESCO UIS, WHO
	Human Rights & Rule of Law	Civil and political rights, freedom of expression, judicial independence	Freedom House, Amnesty International, OHCHR
Social	Demographic Pressures	Pressures from population growth, youth bulges, food and water scarcity, disease, natural disasters	UN Population Division, FAO, EM-DAT (disasters), WHO
	Refugees & IDPs	Displacement internally and across borders, refugee inflows/outflows	UNHCR, IDMC
	External Intervention	Influence and presence of external actors, foreign assistance, peacekeepers	OECD, IMF, donor data, CAST

Table 3: Breakdown of sub-indicators of the OECD States of Fragility Framework

Guide to Use by ETF: This table details the construction of the OECD States of Fragility Framework and the meaning of its dimensions. It should be used as a companion guide to interpret both the composite indicator of fragility in profiles and the individual dimension scores.

Dimension	Example Indicators	Key Sources Used (examples)
Economic	GDP per capita trends, debt levels, volatility in growth, market access, youth unemployment	World Bank (WDI), IMF, ILOSTAT, OECD DAC
Environmental	Disaster exposure, climate-related displacement, environmental degradation, water stress	EM-DAT (CRED), UNEP, UNDRR, World Bank Environmental Indicators
Political	Government effectiveness, rule of law, corruption, policy continuity, political stability	World Bank WGI, Transparency International, V-Dem
Security	Battle-related deaths, civilian fatalities, conflict event frequency, violent crime rates, displacement flows	UCDP GED, ACLED, UNHCR, IDMC
Societal	Income inequality (Gini), trust in institutions, social cohesion, civic participation, demographic pressures	World Bank WDI, Gallup/GWPS, WVS, UN Population Division
Human	Education access/enrolment, literacy, health indicators, life expectancy, social protection coverage	UNESCO-UIS, WHO, UNDP (HDI), UNICEF

Table 4: Summary of Conflict Intensity Indicators

Guide to Use by ETF: This table compiles conflict intensity indicators beyond the aggregated measures of the FSI and OECD States of Fragility Framework. It provides details on data sources and country coverage.

Indicator	Indicator detail	Disaggregation Available?	ETF coverage (out of 28)	Source	Note
Type of violence		event based and geo-located	24/28	UCDP	UCPD data is already used in FSI
Share of civilian vs. combatant deaths	to be calculated	event based and geo-located	24/28	UCDP	
Conflict intensity	Minor conflict: 25–999 battle-related deaths/year War: ≥1,000 battle-related deaths/year	possibility to calculate by subnational areas	24/28	UCDP	
Population-adjusted intensity	based on UCDP, fatalities per 100,000 population (using WorldPop or UN population grids).		24/28	UCDP	
Geospatial conflict intensity through dynamic frontline maps, time-lapse territorial control changes, and written assessments capturing real-time shifts in key battles.		event based and geo-located	28/28	Ukraine: Institute for the Study of War (ISW)	
Detailed, conflict-specific fatality counts, and tracked annually.		disaggregated by actor category (e.g., civilians, pro-government forces, rebel groups, ISIS, foreign troops)		Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR)	
Number of violent events per year	Captures recurring disruptions to education and skills infrastructure		28/28	ACLED – real-time political violence data (ACLED, data.humdata.org, ACLED)	
Share of high-fatality events (>25 casualties)	Differentiates higher-impact episodes within conflict settings		24/28	UCDP GED or ACLED Conflict Index (ACLED, Wikipedia)	

Indicator	Indicator detail	Disaggregation Available?	ETF coverage (out of 28)	Source	Note
New IDPs/refugees per population	Highlights where sudden displacement disrupts education pathways		28/28	UNHCR Refugee Data Finder / IDMC (UNHCR, internal-displacement.org) / IOM DTM	
Civilian fatalities as % of total deaths	Indicates conflict's direct impact on learners and educators		24/28	UCDP GED (civilian deaths)	
Fatalities per km ² or % of territories affected	Useful for prioritising regions with concentrated conflict risk		24/28	UCDP / ACLED spatial data	
Number of consecutive years with high-intensity (>25 deaths) events	Captures chronicity of conflict and zoning for longer-term support		24/28	UCDP GED time-series	
Airstrike events / heavy weapon usage incidents	Proxy for extent of infrastructure destruction		28/28	ACLED special tags (e.g., 'airstrike') (ACLED)	
Attacks against humanitarian workers	Highlights high-risk zones affecting education and response systems		3/28	INSO	

ANNEX 3 – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FCAC ANALYSIS TOOL

Following the detailed review of all available indicators and qualitative evidence sources, the following are proposed for inclusion in the FCAC Analysis Tool, based on being the most appropriate, universally available, reliable and informative evidence sources.

Table 5: Proposed Quantitative Indicators for FCAC Analysis Tool

Guide to Use by ETF: This table proposes the quantitative indicators (conflict, fragility and ETF human capital development outcomes) to be collated for inclusion in the FCAC Analysis Tool.

Dimension	Indicator	Source	Link	ETF coverage (out of 28)	Notes & References
Employment	Percent of firms identifying an inadequately educated workforce as a major or very severe constraint	World Bank Enterprise Surveys	https://www.enterprisesurvey.s.org/	20	Captures employer side of skills demand, uneven country coverage; no disaggregation
Conflict	Attacks on education/training facilities	GCPEA, ACLED	https://acleddata.com/ https://eua2024.protectingeducation.org/#end	GCPEA: 5/28	GCPEA reports on targeted attacks - country profiles, no disaggregated data; ACLED: after checking, no data or tagging possible on education-related events. Such data exists from Ukraine but need a paid membership.
	Type of violence	UCDP	event based and geo-located	24/28	
	Conflict intensity	UCDP	possibility to calculate by subnational areas	24/28	Minor conflict: 25–999 battle-related deaths/year War: ≥1,000 battle-related deaths/year
	Population-adjusted intensity	UCDP		24/28	based on UCDP, fatalities per 100,000 population (using WorldPop or UN population grids).
	New IDPs/refugees per population	UNHCR Refugee Data Finder / IDMC (UNHCR, internal-displacement.org) / IOM DTM		28/28	Highlights where sudden displacement disrupts education pathways
	Civilian fatalities as % of total deaths	UCDP GED (civilian deaths)		24/28	Indicates conflict's direct impact on learners and educators

Dimension	Indicator	Source	Link	ETF coverage (out of 28)	Notes & References
	Number of consecutive years with high-intensity (>25 deaths) events	UCDP GED time-series		24/28	Captures chronicity of conflict and zoning for longer-term support

Table 6: Proposed Qualitative Assessments and Analysis Reports for FCAC Analysis Tool

Guide to Use by ETF: This table presents key qualitative sources to be integrated into the FCAC Analysis Tool. These sources should be used alongside quantitative indicators to enrich interpretation and support context-sensitive analysis.

Source	Description	Link
OECD – States of Fragility Reports	Multidimensional analysis of risks and resilience (economic, political, societal, security, environmental, human) across fragile contexts.	OECD States of Fragility
World Bank – FCV Group (Pathways for Peace, Country Diagnostics)	Narrative analysis of fragility drivers, governance, peacebuilding, and socio-economic resilience.	World Bank FCV
UNDP – Human Development Reports & Crisis Assessments	In-depth country and thematic reports on governance, resilience, and societal cohesion.	UNDP Human Development Reports
International Crisis Group (ICG)	Country and regional conflict briefings and reports with detailed qualitative political analysis.	International Crisis Group
ACAPS – Crisis Analyses	Humanitarian and fragility context analyses, forward-looking risk scenarios, and profiles.	ACAPS Analysis Hub
OCHA – Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNOs)	Country-level narrative assessments of humanitarian needs, drivers, and impacts on education and livelihoods.	OCHA ReliefWeb
GCPEA – Education Under Attack	Reports on targeted attacks and threats to education in fragile/conflict settings.	GCPEA Reports
ILO – Skills Needs Assessments / Country Reports	Qualitative assessments of employment, informality, labour market pressures, and vocational training.	ILO Publications

Source	Description	Link
UNESCO & UNICEF – Education Sector Analyses	Country reviews and narrative analysis of education system vulnerabilities, reforms, and equity gaps.	UNESCO UIS / UNICEF Education
Aid Worker Security Database (AWSD)	Narratives and case analyses of risks to humanitarian and development personnel.	AWSD
INSO – Briefings & Conflict Data	Operational risk analysis for NGOs in high-risk fragile contexts.	INSO
Arab Barometer / Afrobarometer / Caucasus Barometer	Public opinion surveys and reports on governance, trust, and social cohesion at regional level.	Arab Barometer / Afrobarometer / Caucasus Barometer
International Alert, Saferworld, Conciliation Resources, Impact Initiatives, Mercy corps crisis analysis team	Local conflict and peacebuilding research, with community-level perspectives on fragility.	International Alert / Saferworld / Conciliation Resources/ Impact Initiatives / Mercy Corps crisis analysis
ETF – Torino Process Country Reports	Stakeholder-driven qualitative reviews of education and skills systems in partner countries.	ETF Torino Process

ACRONYMS

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Events Data
EC	European Commission
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
FCAC	Fragility and Conflict Affected Contexts
FSI	Fragile States Index
HCD	Human Capital Development
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IFI	International Finance Institutions
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INSO	International NGO Safety Organisation
KIESE	Key Indicators for Education, Skills, and Employment
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Program
SPI	System Performance Indices
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations

UNHCR

United Nations High Commission for Refugees

VET

Vocational Education and Training

REFERENCES