ROADS TO PEACE?
The future of infrastructure in fragile and conflict-affected states

When: 9 & 10 February 2017
Where: UN City & DIIS, Copenhagen
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Access to well-functioning and sustainable infrastructure is both fundamental for economic development and essential to human wellbeing, as underlined by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Though far from a unanimous perspective, a general idea has been emerging over the last years that the investment in infrastructures, if the right context is ensured, can contribute directly to better living conditions and opportunities for people. Such an argument is of particular relevance in the context of conflict-affected countries.

Accordingly, the international community has invested substantially in infrastructure rehabilitation in fragile and conflict-affected states — absorbing, for instance, around 70 percent of all UNOPS infrastructure projects delivery. Donors and governments increasingly deploy infrastructure earlier in the peace process, to attain more urgent outcomes in those contexts — objectives of peaceful and inclusive societies now associated with SDG 16 (‘peace, justice and strong institutions’). Infrastructure now figures prominently in international stabilization programs, working on the assumption that infrastructure can help stabilize fragile and conflict-affected states, reduce conflict by extending state authority, increase local security, bring an influx of employment, and restore access to markets. But do infrastructure projects really deliver on these goals in areas affected by conflict?

Surely, physical infrastructure is necessary for socio-economic development, and it is often the most tangible impact of large-scale development interventions for vulnerable populations. However, we do not know what impact infrastructure has on sensitive political and conflict-related dynamics. Despite some supportive evidence, recent experiences have also shown infrastructure spending has had little or no lasting impact in some fragile and conflict-affected states; others have pointed to cases of adverse impacts of infrastructure on security, livelihoods and inclusive growth.

Moving towards the 2030 Agenda provides a space for all stakeholders — governments, civil society, regional and international organizations, development banks, financial institutions, and the private sector — for rethinking the fundamental role of infrastructures in fragile and conflict-affected states. SDG 9 — ‘industry, innovation, infrastructure’ — is explicitly dedicated to ‘resilient infrastructure’, but infrastructure underpins many other SDGs too. The formulation of the SDGs provides an opportunity to refocus development on goals and targets, which can effectively contribute to inclusive and sustainable development. In order to deliver on the Post-2015 Development Agenda in fragile and conflict-affected states, it is therefore an urgent priority to assess the track record of infrastructure in these contexts, and to formulate recommendations to make sure infrastructure spending delivers in these settings where their impact potentially matters the most.

PURPOSE

In order to inform the future of infrastructure spending to address fragility and conflict, DIIS and UNOPS will bring together key stakeholders in infrastructure projects in fragile and conflict-affected states — donors, practitioners and high-level decision makers — for a high-level workshop to learn from their shared experience, to build upon successes and understand the risks associated with this sector. The workshop outcomes will lead to a joint DIIS/UNOPS report aimed at informing future governance for delivery of the SDGs in fragile and conflict-affected states.

How?

- 2-day program — 9th and 10th February 2017
- Venue: UN City Copenhagen/DIIS
- Types of sessions: plenary keynotes, breakdown working sessions and roundtable discussions
- Active learning techniques will be used to ensure effective participation, free sharing of information and ideas, and an open debate
- Participation will be limited to 30 participants

Informed by a background paper, the workshop will identify key challenges based on past experiences with infrastructure in fragile and conflict-affected states, which will need to be addressed to increase the viability of achieving the SDGs in these key target countries. Specifically, the workshop will:

(1) Investigate assumptions, evidence, and best practices regarding the impact of infrastructure projects in fragile and conflict-affected states and conflict-affected territories in particular, and by reflecting on these questions;
(2) **Raise awareness** among stakeholders of the complexities and implications at stake; and finally,

(3) **Compile lessons learnt** and **set the agenda** for the future of infrastructure projects in fragile and conflict-affected states and conflict-affected territories in particular.

The participants will be invited to debate key challenges with references to specific infrastructure projects, from a Theory of Change perspective: their supposed impact in fragile and conflict-affected states, and experiences of their actual and real impact. General kick-off questions around the construction of infrastructure in fragile and conflict-affected states will include:

- What are the driving expectations and ideas?
- What works and what doesn’t?
- Why do infrastructure projects often fail to deliver in these contexts?

In a series of breakdown working sessions, participants will explore more detailed questions such as:

- **ASSUMPTIONS:** What are the different donors’ main guiding ideas about the impact of infrastructure efforts in contexts of conflict and fragility?

- **ASSUMPTIONS:** How are fragility and conflict variables taken into account in policy, decision-making, and implementation of infrastructure projects?

- **EXPERIENCES:** What are the main challenges encountered during implementation?

- **EXPERIENCES:** What were unexpected/unintended outcomes that should inform future projects?

- **LESSONS:** How do we measure impact and benefits of infrastructure on fragility and conflict?

- **LESSONS:** What are best practices and lessons learnt that can be applied across volatile environments?

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**Potential Participants**

- Government Representatives
- Multilateral and International Organizations
- Regional Organizations
- Multilateral Development Banks
- Private Sector
- Civil Society
- UN Organizations

**Output & impact**

Based on the workshop, UNOPS and DIIS will generate a report compiling insights, lessons learnt, and best practices to inform stakeholders and shape the future of infrastructure planning in fragile and conflict-affected states. This report will be presented in a **Public High-Level Conference** intended to raise awareness and set the agenda on infrastructure spending in fragile and conflict-affected states.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2 Throughout, we follow the OECD’s definition of ‘fragile and conflict-affected states’ as per its 2015 States of Fragility Report.


7 http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/infrastructure-industrialization/

8 https://www.iisd.org/blog/why-infrastructure-key-success-sdgs