CSO Guide and FAQ

Understanding the World Bank Group FCV Strategy 2026-2030

What is this strategy?

The World Bank Group's Fragility, Conflict and Violence Strategy 2026-2030 explains how the World Bank plans to work in fragile, conflict-affected, and violence-affected contexts over the next five years.

It tells us how the World Bank Group will classify countries, anticipate conflict risks, decide where to scale financing up or down, work with governments or third parties, mobilize private capital, support jobs, and monitor its own performance.

1. What is the main argument of the strategy?

The strategy argues that fragility, conflict, and violence are now central to development outcomes. The Bank says that FCV is no longer limited to low-income or low-capacity countries. It now includes civil wars, interstate conflicts, coups, political instability, organized criminal violence, subnational insecurity, displacement, climate shocks, debt distress, and regional spillovers.

The Bank's response is to focus its FCV engagement around a jobs and wealth-creation agenda. Its basic claim is that jobs can raise incomes, restore dignity, reduce frustration among youth, strengthen resilience, and contribute indirectly to peace and stability.

CSO reading

This is a powerful but risky framing. Jobs matter, but jobs alone do not resolve conflict, authoritarianism, displacement, corruption, land dispossession, unpaid care burdens, destroyed public services, or elite capture. CSOs should welcome the attention to livelihoods while challenging any assumption that private-sector-led job creation is automatically peacebuilding.

2. What are the four big shifts in the strategy?

The strategy is built around four shifts:

First, *anticipate better.* The Bank wants to move beyond a backward-looking FCV list and use more dynamic risk monitoring to identify emerging risks earlier.

Second, *adopt a differentiated approach*. The Bank will not engage in every FCV country in the same way. It will calibrate programs and financing based on the type of FCV context and the potential for lasting development impact.

Third, *deliver as One World Bank Group on jobs*. The Bank, IFC (International Finance Corporation), and MIGA (Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency) will coordinate more closely around jobs, MSMEs, private sector development, infrastructure, and investment.

Fourth, *enhance knowledge, operational tools, partnerships, and staffing.* The Bank will update diagnostics, use Risk and Resilience Assessments more systematically, strengthen Third-Party Implementation, revise guidance on de facto governments, improve staff incentives, and develop new playbooks.

CSO reading

These shifts change who gets financing, who implements projects, who defines risk, who decides whether a country has "reform commitment," and who is considered a legitimate recovery actor.

3. What does "FCV" mean in this strategy?

FCV means fragility, conflict, and violence. The strategy treats FCV as a spectrum, not one category. It includes active war, political violence, institutional breakdown, displacement, local insecurity, cross-border spillovers, social tensions, and risks of conflict onset.

The strategy also recognizes that FCV overlaps with climate change, debt distress, pandemics, weak institutions, organized crime, and geopolitical shifts.

CSO reading

This broader definition is useful because it captures countries that are not formally "at war" but remain fragile, such as Lebanon. However, the broader the category becomes, the more important transparency becomes. CSOs should ask: Who decides whether a country is "at risk"? What evidence is used? Are local communities and CSOs consulted? Are risks such as civic repression, corruption, land grabs, and discrimination included?

4. What is changing in the World Bank's FCV classification?

The old FCV list relied heavily on past conflict deaths and CPIA scores. The Bank says this was too backward-looking and weak for prevention.

The new approach divides countries into several categories:

Countries in acute crisis: places where the Bank cannot work through government systems, often because of intense conflict, lack of territorial control, or absence of institutional representation.

Countries in transition: places emerging from prolonged crisis or conflict, where recovery, reconstruction, and re-engagement may be opening.

Conflict-affected countries: places with functioning governments where conflict or insecurity is widespread enough to harm national development.

Countries at risk: countries that appear stable but are vulnerable to instability or conflict onset in the near to medium term.

Stable countries: countries not considered at risk in the near to medium term.

CSO reading

This is one of the most important parts of the strategy. Classification is not just labeling. It affects financing, project design, risk management, Board reporting, and whether the Bank uses government systems or third-party implementation.

CSOs should demand clarity on: Who decides the category? Is the methodology public? Can civil society challenge the classification?

5. What does "anticipate better" mean?

It means the Bank wants to identify FCV risks earlier and adjust programs before crises fully materialize. It will use public conflict forecasting tools, subnational monitoring, trend analysis by staff, country team assessments, partner inputs, and an internal Enterprise Risk Committee.

The Bank says it does not want to “forecast conflict” mechanically. It wants to incentivize country teams to surface risks and adjust programs in real time.

Technical term: Enterprise Risk Committee

The Enterprise Risk Committee is an internal World Bank Group body that reviews risks across countries and portfolios. In this strategy, it becomes important because it will review FCV risk classification, help identify high-risk countries, and push country teams to adapt programs.

CSO critique

The strategy says some risk processes will be confidential. That may make sense for sensitive political contexts, but it creates an accountability problem. If risk analysis is internal, CSOs may not know whether the Bank is ignoring warning signs, underestimating repression, or relying too heavily on government narratives.

CSOs should ask the Bank to publish non-sensitive summaries of FCV risk analysis and explain how local evidence, especially from women’s groups, displaced communities, municipalities, unions, informal workers, and affected communities, is included.

6. What is the “differentiated approach”?

The differentiated approach means the Bank will adjust the size, type, and focus of support depending on the FCV context and the “potential for lasting development impact.”

This is a major shift away from simply increasing financing wherever needs are high. The Bank says it wants to be more selective and allocate resources where they can have the most durable impact.

Technical term: potential for lasting development impact

This means the Bank’s assessment of whether its support can produce durable results. In normal conflict-affected or at-risk countries, it depends heavily on government commitment to reforms that address fragility drivers and support jobs. In acute crisis settings, where the Bank cannot work through government, it depends on whether sustainable local delivery platforms exist. In transition settings, it depends on whether there is a window of opportunity, government commitment, partner support, and implementation capacity.

CSO critique

This term sounds technical, but it is deeply political. If the Bank decides a government lacks reform commitment, financing may be reduced or redirected. But people should not be punished because elites block reform.

CSOs should ask: Who defines “lasting impact”? Does “government commitment” include consultation with citizens? Can CSO evidence challenge official reform narratives? Will the Bank consider civic space, corruption, human rights, gender justice, and redistribution as part of lasting impact?

7. What are “trajectory-shifting actions”?

Trajectory-shifting actions are reforms or investments that the Bank believes can change a country’s FCV trajectory. Examples in the strategy include macro-fiscal reforms, decentralization, governance of mineral revenues, expanding services to underserved areas, land tenure reforms, climate resilience, and business-enabling reforms.

CSO reading

This is one of the strongest advocacy entry points. CSOs should argue that trajectory-shifting actions must not be limited to investment climate reforms or macro-fiscal discipline. They should include:

- restoring universal public services;
- rebuilding accountable local institutions;
- protecting housing, land, and property rights;
- preventing elite capture in procurement;
- Ensuring universal social protection and care infrastructure;
- protecting civic space;
- including women, refugees, IDPs, informal workers, disabled people, and marginalized groups;
- ensuring decent work, not just any job creation.

8. What does the strategy say about financing?

The Bank says financing can be calibrated up, down, or kept stable depending on the potential for lasting development impact.

For IDA countries, this may involve the IDA performance-based allocation, thematic windows, and the FCV Envelope. For IBRD countries, it can affect lending levels and exposure. For IFC and MIGA, it affects private sector investments.

Technical term: FCV Envelope

The FCV Envelope is a special IDA financing mechanism that can provide additional resources to eligible fragile and conflict-affected countries.

CSO critique

Financing calibration is where the strategy becomes concrete. CSOs should monitor whether “selectivity” becomes a way to reduce financing in high-need countries or to shift support toward projects that are easier to implement but less transformative. CSOs should ask: Is financing being scaled up for public services or mainly for investor-facing projects? Are cuts justified publicly? Are affected communities consulted before financing is reduced or redirected? Are financing decisions tied to actual social outcomes or only government reform signals?

9. What is the jobs agenda?

The jobs agenda is the center of the strategy. The Bank’s framework has three pillars:

First, building foundations such as infrastructure, health, education, skills, logistics, payment systems, and public institutions.

Second, supporting business-enabling reforms such as simplified registration, digital payments, competition, financial regulation, and market entry.

Third, expanding financing and capabilities for firms, especially MSMEs, through microfinance, SME finance, guarantees, incubators, value chains, digitalization, and advisory services.

CSO critique

The strategy recognizes that many micro-enterprises in FCV settings are survival enterprises, not future high-growth firms. This is important. But the Bank still places heavy emphasis on market development, private capital, financial intermediation, and investor confidence.

CSOs should insist on a distinction between:

Livelihood protection: helping people survive and stabilize income.
Decent work: jobs with fair pay, safety, rights, and non-discrimination.
Private sector development: improving markets, firms, and investment.
Financialization of survival: pushing poor households and micro-enterprises into debt, fees, and risk without real protection.

10. Is the strategy saying the private sector will solve FCV?

Not exactly, but it gives the private sector a central role. The strategy says the private sector is the only actor that can create jobs at scale sustainably. It also recognizes that private sector actors in FCV contexts may be intertwined with conflict dynamics.

IFC and MIGA are expected to play a larger role through investments, advisory support, blended finance, guarantees, de-risking, and support to domestic private sector development.

CSO critique

This is one of the biggest areas for scrutiny. In conflict and post-conflict settings, the private sector is not automatically neutral. Contractors, banks, landowners, importers, construction firms, politically connected firms, and investors may be embedded in wartime economies or elite networks.

CSOs should ask: Which firms benefit? Who owns them? Are they politically connected? Are procurement processes public? Are labor standards enforced? Are services affordable? Are affected communities consulted before private infrastructure projects begin? Are guarantees protecting investors while communities absorb social and environmental risks?

13. What does the strategy say about reconstruction and recovery?

The strategy says the Bank will develop guidance and a Recovery and Reconstruction Playbook for countries in transition. It also says that in transition moments, the Bank may move quickly and at scale, from restoring basic services to longer-term reconstruction and jobs-enabling private sector investments.

CSO critique

This is very relevant for Syria and Lebanon. Reconstruction is about who returns, who owns land, who receives services, who gets contracts, who carries debt, and whose political authority is normalized.

CSOs should push the Bank to treat reconstruction as a political economy process, not a neutral technical exercise. Reconstruction should be judged by public access, rights, redistribution, accountability, and inclusion, not only by speed, disbursement, kilometers of pipes, megawatts, or investment mobilized.

14. What is Third-Party Implementation?

Third-Party Implementation, or TPI, is when the Bank cannot work directly through government and instead uses another entity to implement a project. This can include UN agencies or other public international organizations. The strategy says the Bank wants to explore mechanisms to work with a wider range of third-party implementers, including international and local NGOs.

CSO reading

This is a major CSO opportunity. TPI can allow assistance to continue in acute crisis settings. But it can also create expensive, top-down delivery chains where local organizations become subcontractors without voice.

CSO demands

CSOs should call for:

- transparent criteria for selecting TPIs;
- publication of administrative costs and overheads;
- fair access for local CSOs;
- simplified due diligence for credible local actors;

- protection against political retaliation;
- community feedback mechanisms;
- independent monitoring;
- transition plans that build public and local capacity instead of creating permanent parallel systems.

15. How does the strategy deal with governance?

Governance appears throughout the strategy, especially as a condition for job creation. The Bank emphasizes macro-fiscal management, public financial management, service delivery, decentralization, regulatory systems, rule of law, procurement, anti-corruption, and institutional strengthening.

CSO critique

Governance should not be reduced to technical capacity. In FCV settings, governance is also about power, so who controls resources, who is excluded, who can speak, who gets contracts, who accesses services, and who is protected by law.

CSOs should push for governance diagnostics that include elite capture, sectarian allocation, security interference, civic repression, gender exclusion, land dispossession, and the political economy of procurement.

16. What does the strategy say about civil society?

The strategy recognizes CSOs as partners that can promote accountability and transparency, inform project design and implementation, and monitor impact on the ground. It also mentions youth networks, women-led organizations, faith-based groups, humanitarian actors, and local stakeholders.

CSO critique

The strategy recognizes CSOs, but mostly as partners for implementation, monitoring, feedback, or service delivery. It does not strongly guarantee CSO power in defining country priorities, classifying risk, deciding trajectory-shifting actions, or shaping financing choices.

17. How does the strategy address gender?

The strategy says gender will be embedded across FCV work. It links this to the 2024 World Bank Gender Strategy and the Women, Peace and Security agenda. It highlights sexual and gender-based violence, human capital, women's economic opportunities, women's leadership, and gender analysis in Risk and Resilience Assessments.

CSO critique

This is useful but incomplete. Gender should not only mean women's labor force participation or women entrepreneurs. In FCV settings, conflict redistributes unpaid care work, household debt, displacement responsibilities, food insecurity, disability care, and survival labor. Gender analysis should include unpaid care, public services, social protection, reproductive health, violence, mobility, legal identity, housing rights, and labor market segmentation.

For Lebanon and Syria, CSOs should ask whether recovery projects reduce or deepen unpaid care burdens. A hospital, water project, school, or cash transfer should be evaluated partly by whether it reduces the daily survival labor carried by women and marginalized households.

18. How does the strategy address climate?

The strategy says climate and FCV are mutually reinforcing. Climate shocks can deepen fragility, and FCV weakens institutions needed for climate action. The Bank wants climate risks included in FCV diagnostics and FCV risks included in climate diagnostics.

CSO critique

Climate adaptation in FCV contexts can easily become technocratic. CSOs should ask:
Who owns climate infrastructure?
Who pays for adaptation?
Are farmers, displaced people, informal settlements, and women consulted?
Do climate projects affect land, water, or local livelihoods?
Are climate funds accessible to local actors?
Do projects reduce inequality or create new grievances?

19. What does the strategy say about forced displacement?

The strategy treats forced displacement as a development challenge, not only a humanitarian issue. It emphasizes self-reliance for refugees and IDPs, inclusion in national service systems, jobs, human capital, private sector solutions, and support to host communities.

CSO critique

Self-reliance is important, but it can become a way to normalize reduced aid or shift responsibility onto displaced people. CSOs should insist that self-reliance does not replace legal protection, rights, documentation, freedom of movement, access to services, safe housing, and non-discrimination.

In Lebanon, this is especially important because refugee livelihoods are shaped by legal restrictions, labor segmentation, residency barriers, and political hostility. In Syria, displacement is inseparable from housing, land, property rights, return conditions, documentation, local authority, and security risks.

20. What are the sector initiatives CSOs should monitor?

The strategy links FCV to several major corporate and sectoral initiatives:

Energy / Mission 300: expanding electricity access, including off-grid and renewable solutions.
Agriculture / AgriConnect: moving farmers up value chains and supporting agribusiness.
Water Forward: water security, sanitation, drought/flood resilience, and water compacts.
Digital and broadband: connectivity, digital ID, digital payments, registries, AI, and privacy.
Education and skills: early childhood, learning, vocational skills, job placement, psychosocial support.
Health services: quality affordable health services, NGO-contracted delivery, results-based financing, digital health.
Social protection / SP500: cash transfers, employment support, e-wallets, social registries, shock-responsive systems.
Metals and minerals: private capital, transparency, revenue governance,

benefit-sharing, artisanal mining.
Forced displacement: self-reliance, jobs, services, host communities.
Organized criminal violence: treated as a contextual risk to jobs and institutions.
Security sector: security data in diagnostics, especially public expenditure reviews.

CSO reading

Each sector has different red flags. Energy projects raise tariff and affordability questions. Agribusiness raises land, farmer debt, and value-chain capture questions. Digital projects raise surveillance and exclusion risks. Health projects raise access, fees, and contracting questions. Social protection raises targeting, exclusion, data privacy, and adequacy questions. Minerals raise corruption, environmental harm, and elite capture risks.

21. What does this mean for Syria?

The strategy does not give a full Syria framework, but its categories are highly relevant.

Syria could be approached through several FCV lenses depending on the Bank's classification and legal assessment: acute crisis, transition, conflict-affected setting, or some combination across areas. The strategy's references to OP7.30, third-party implementation, transition windows, reconstruction, water infrastructure, private sector readiness, and local delivery platforms are directly relevant.

The clearest Syria-specific reference is in the water annex, where the Bank notes that an emergency project is being prepared to restore vital water and wastewater infrastructure, balance immediate service improvements with long-term development, strengthen government implementation capacity, and potentially restore safe water and improved sanitation for 5 million people.

CSO priorities for Syria

CSOs should ask:

Who defines Syria's "transition" or "window of opportunity"?
Does re-engagement strengthen public welfare or consolidate centralized authority?
How will OP7.30 be applied?
Will local CSOs, municipalities, displaced Syrians, refugees, women's groups, and affected communities shape priorities?
How will projects avoid legitimizing abusive actors?

How will procurement avoid regime-linked or conflict-linked businesses?
How will water, electricity, health, and housing projects address geographic exclusion?
Are housing, land, and property rights included in reconstruction diagnostics?
Will financing deepen debt or create future cost-recovery burdens?
Will private-sector recovery benefit local livelihoods or mainly investors, contractors, and politically connected firms?

Syria advocacy line

The key CSO argument should be: recovery in Syria must not be reduced to infrastructure repair, investor re-entry, and government implementation capacity. It must be assessed through rights, displacement, land and property, public services, procurement transparency, local accountability, and the distribution of recovery benefits.

22. What does this mean for Lebanon?

Lebanon is not discussed as a full case in the strategy, but the framework is highly relevant because Lebanon combines economic collapse, debt distress, weak institutions, displacement, regional conflict spillovers, damaged infrastructure, service breakdown, banking-sector crisis, and deep social inequality.

Lebanon appears in the social protection annex as an example of community-based social services and local development investments. More broadly, the strategy’s attention to countries “at risk,” private sector recovery, social protection, public financial management, jobs, climate, and forced displacement all apply strongly to Lebanon.

CSO priorities for Lebanon

CSOs should ask:

Will the Bank treat Lebanon only as a macro-fiscal and private-sector recovery case, or as a fragile social contract crisis?
How will reconstruction after conflict interact with unresolved banking losses and debt restructuring?
Will recovery financing be grants, loans, guarantees, or private investment?
Who pays through taxes, tariffs, fees, inflation, or subsidy removal?
Are social protection systems adequate, universal enough, and accessible?
Are refugees and host communities included without fueling social tension?
Are public services being rebuilt as public systems or fragmented market-based

services?
Are municipalities and local organizations included before priorities are set?
Are care burdens, household debt, and informal survival networks recognized?
Will private sector support reach informal workers and small producers, or mainly formal firms?

Lebanon advocacy line

The key CSO argument should be: Lebanon's recovery cannot be separated from who bears the cost of financial collapse, how public services are rebuilt, whether social protection reduces household survival burdens, and whether reconstruction is captured by political and financial elites.

23. What is missing from the strategy?

The strategy is operationally sophisticated, but several gaps matter for CSOs.

First, civic space is underdeveloped. The strategy mentions CSOs but does not strongly address repression, shrinking civic space, or risks to local organizations that criticize authorities.

Second, human rights are not central enough. The language is mostly about jobs, resilience, risk, institutions, and delivery.

Third, political economy is present but softened. The strategy mentions corruption, elite capture, and patronage, but it does not fully confront how war economies, authoritarian networks, banks, contractors, security actors, and political elites shape recovery.

Fourth, social reproduction is mostly missing. The strategy does not sufficiently address unpaid care work, household survival labor, food preparation, informal shelter support, community kitchens, disability care, and the everyday labor that keeps societies alive during crisis.

Fifth, debt and macroeconomic constraints are not central enough. Debt distress is mentioned as a global stress, but the strategy does not deeply analyze how IMF programs, debt sustainability frameworks, banking reform, subsidy reform, and fiscal consolidation shape recovery space.

Sixth, participation is too weak. CSOs appear as partners and monitors, but not as co-decision-makers in classification, trajectory-shifting actions, financing calibration, or reconstruction priorities.

23. What should CSOs monitor in every World Bank FCV country?

CSOs should monitor eight arenas.

1. Classification
How is the country categorized? Acute crisis, transition, conflict-affected, at risk, or stable? What evidence is used?

2. Diagnostics
Is there an RRA, CPF, SCD, CPSD, CCDR, jobs report, or reconstruction assessment? Does it include local evidence?

3. Financing
Are resources loans, grants, guarantees, trust funds, private investment, or blended finance? Who carries repayment or fiscal risk?

4. Government commitment
How does the Bank define reform commitment? Does it include anti-corruption, civic space, rights, inclusion, and public service access?

5. Jobs
Are jobs decent, safe, inclusive, and rights-respecting? Or are projects simply expanding informal, low-paid, risky livelihoods?

6. Private sector
Which firms, banks, contractors, investors, or intermediaries benefit? Are they politically connected? Are procurement documents public?

7. Delivery model
Is implementation through government, UN agencies, NGOs, local platforms, private firms, or financial intermediaries? Who is accountable?

8. Social outcomes
Do projects reduce poverty, exclusion, care burdens, displacement harms, service gaps, and inequality? Or do they only report outputs?

24. What documents should CSOs ask for?

CSOs should request or monitor:

- Country Partnership Frameworks;

- Risk and Resilience Assessments;
- project appraisal documents;
- environmental and social documents;
- procurement plans;
- stakeholder engagement plans;
- grievance mechanism reports;
- implementation status reports;
- development policy financing documents;
- FCV Envelope eligibility notes or annual reviews where available;
- social protection strategies;
- reconstruction needs assessments;
- trust fund documents;
- IFC investment disclosures;
- MIGA guarantee disclosures;
- country climate diagnostics;
- digital ID or social registry data protection assessments.