

## IFIT Inclusive Transitions Framework: Overview

**Time and again, countries that have experienced repression and armed conflict have an opportunity to transition to a better future. Yet, only a minority succeed. The challenges may appear obvious, but the path forward is rarely so.**

This publication outlines a new conceptual and operational framework aimed at improving transition outcomes by zeroing in on inclusiveness as a guiding principle and taking a practicable approach to overcoming challenges and obstacles. It is geared to transitions and the years of adjustment that follow in fragile and conflict-affected states (hereafter simply 'fragile states') marked by violent and divisive practices; the absence of a widely accepted social covenant or social contract; and a deeply fragmented political identity.

For such countries, a transition creates the opportunity for a paradigm shift. In the best cases, it can make possible that which would have been previously unimaginable. However, as the history of many countries shows, few transitions meet expectations. Many Latin American states overcame military dictatorships but still experience very high levels of violence and inequality. The transitions in many former Soviet states produced authoritarianism and massive expropriations of state property. Many African states collapsed into anarchic civil war in the 1990s trying to transition away from despotism. Many post-authoritarian Asian countries have experienced positive economic growth but remain plagued by corruption. And, most prominently today, many states in the Arab region struggle to create stable and accountable governments – and curb open armed conflict – despite widespread demands for change.

While transitions have faced many common challenges, some are of greater intensity now than in the past. Ethnic, religious, regional, clan, caste, class, or ideological divisions more frequently prevent the formation of stable regimes that are widely viewed as legitimate. Weak governments that cannot act capably and equitably more often encourage groups to fight for power on zero-sum terms, producing vicious cycles of conflict that are hard to end. And economies are suffering more in the process, worsening the lives of the very people whose high hopes often ignited the transition in the first place.

This publication draws on past experience and an accumulated common sense to offer a new way forward. It emphasises that transitions are the rare but critical junctures in history during which – against the odds – fragile states can transform their social and political dynamics by pursuing a new national path marked by more inclusive and cohesive practices; the adoption of an enduring social covenant and social contract where either is absent or broken; and the construction of a more inclusive, overarching political identity and reality. Over time, these can contribute to more responsive and accountable governance; economic policies which generate shared growth and widespread benefits; security and legal systems that work more equally for everyone; and a social and cultural ethic that unites diverse populations and reduces discrimination and longstanding grievances.

The publication advocates inclusiveness as the most important priority for transitions because, however difficult in practice, it is the only realistic way for fragile states to break with cycles of conflict and repression. Recommending its use as a compass to prioritise and judge policies and actions in the political, economic, administrative, legal, security, and socio-cultural spheres, the publication offers practical ideas for inclusive-oriented leaders to strengthen cohesion, integration, and the sense of common nationhood (national *demos*) that can help their countries to overcome the tensions and divisions that a transition inevitably brings to the fore. As such, it builds on the aspirations of the New Deal for En-

agement in Fragile States and the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals, both of which emphasise inclusiveness as crucial to promoting stability and development.

The failure of many fragile states in transition to uproot exclusionary practices and end conflict can be explained by a number of factors: (1) bad starting conditions (such as weak or captured institutions, divisive socio-political dynamics, and lethargic economic foundations); (2) deliberate efforts, whether internal or external, to sabotage change; and (3) flawed decision-making. The framework presented in this publication aims to ameliorate the first of these, offer analysis to combat the second, and equip inclusive-oriented political, social and business leaders – and their local supporters and international partners – to overcome the third. Consistent with the range of starting conditions and the shifting nature of priorities in any transition, the publication is not written as a “how-to guide” but instead as a framework to be drawn upon and applied differently in different times and places.

*Part I* explains the main challenges that fragile states face in transitions, presents the inclusiveness principle, and examines the key pillars on which it depends. It emphasises the creation of an inclusive dynamic as both the necessary and most desirable priority.

*Part II* provides tools to assess the local conditions for pursuing inclusiveness and how they are likely to evolve as time goes on. It is designed to help national and international actors to adeptly focus on key threats, obstacles, and opportunities, making their actions more likely to be effective.

*Part III* is about policy choices and practice. It highlights priority areas of action that will need attention in the early stages of a transition in order to help get a country onto a more inclusive track. Ten areas are examined, with essential questions, strategic options, and examples of good and bad practice laid out.

Reorienting a country after extensive repression or conflict is inevitably a long and arduous process – especially if one has to face concurrent threats of violence, exclusionary behaviour, administrative chaos, predatory actors, and drops in investment, as is the case in many fragile states. Inclusive-oriented transition leaders, therefore, must be realistic about what can be accomplished and when. They have to overcome deep fears and extreme odds in some cases. But assisted by this framework and its ideas and tools, inclusive-oriented leaders will be better prepared and more likely to succeed.

As Spain, Chile, South Africa, and Tunisia show, it is possible, even in deeply divided societies, to create the conditions for a more inclusive state and society. Determined political, social and business leaders that are genuinely willing and able to forge relationships and agreements with their adversaries can achieve much during a transition to enable inclusiveness to take root as a national good of enduring benefit to all citizens. Every alternative is more likely than not to perpetuate the vicious cycle of exclusion and conflict that holds back fragile states.