Global prescription for healthy governance

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Inclusive and efficient governance is key to the achievement of peace, prosperity and sustainable development. It is a necessity for countries emerging from crisis and/or experiencing transition toward new political agreements. Understanding governance challenges in countries passing through transition is extremely required today.
The world is passing through a radical shift as more communities are moving toward fragility and vulnerability. Transitions for good governance and strong anti-corruption policies are a highly requested task that is not an easy on any nation. Thus, we ask why have very few countries in fragility context managed to achieve good governance and decrease systematic corruption, while reform is still a mere facade in others? How are we going to achieve peace and prosperity and escape corruption to enter a governance system founded on moral universalism?

Approximately, 1.8 billion people today live in fragile situations, but by 2030, this number is expected to reach 2.3 billion. The challenges that come with environments of fragility and violent conflict are overwhelming and multidimensional. The poorest and most vulnerable are most reliant on government services. Therefore, it is in these circumstances where functionality of the government is mostly needed, and simultaneously where it is often severely lacking.
Rebuilding Core Government Functions that are responsive, effective and legitimate, is vital for any country in transition. Despite the existence of significant evidence that supports the need for efficient governmental structures to make transitions away from fragility, grasping what is required to build institutional capacity within the core governmental apparatus is still largely overlooked. Quite clearly, there is little evidence on the connection between public expenditure, structural reforms and resilience. In view of the ongoing trends on pathways out for fragility, addressing this gap is becoming increasingly important.

On Nov. 8, 2019, a research on the connections between CGFs and transitions in fragility and conflict-affected situations was released, conducted by the United Nations Development Program together with Oxford Policy Management and supported by the government of Switzerland. The study, as a part of a multicountry research project, seeks to understand whether and how prioritizing CGF public spending will lead to more effective transitions toward peace in vulnerable and conflict-affected countries.
The study examines the perspectives of five countries and assesses the degree to which these transitions were supported by increased investment in CGFs. The countries, Colombia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sierra Leone and South Sudan were chosen as case studies based on their experience which varies in the form of transitioning and timeframe. The choice is also based on an appropriate geographical distribution of nations and the availability of data for the study to be carried out. The study aims to assess whether countries prioritizing CGFs have more efficient and reliable peacebuilding and state-building results, and whether they form a deeper comprehension of the ways that the prioritization of CGFs investments contribute to an effective transition toward peace.

According to what was identified by the U.N. and the World Bank in 2017, CGFs are defined as those functions that are "required to make and implement policy." They are categorized into six areas that are: recognizing the ability of the public sector to achieve common understanding of the national policies; increasing adequate levels of revenue; highlighting the prominence of successful government employment strategies and public administration capabilities in addressing the issue of rebuilding effectiveness; considering effective local governance as key in reconstituting legitimacy and rebuilding effectiveness, providing inclusive and equitable service nationwide, and creating a state presence in decentralized areas; and enhancing the security sector.
Each area is identified as of equal importance from a scientific, strategic and political perspective. They are all crucial in achieving three overarching and interconnected areas: reconstituting legitimacy, restoring security and productivity. The research also surveys which CGF is prioritized during transition and why. The examination of outcomes revealed that the security and defense sector tailed by local governance were key expenditure areas, while the public administration sector received the least spending.

The results underline the need for comprehensive and multidimensional reactions to the developmental priorities. It indicates that the hypothesis is valid when three key conditions are met.
First, when CGFs are prioritized by both governments and donors with national ownership for reform. Second, when CGFs are prioritized before the formal end of a conflict and tend to be planned over a sustained period of time. Third, when expenditure leads to substantial reform strategies that are fair and favor the entirety of society, which is probably the most difficult condition to reach. This raises important questions on how governments, policymakers, and donors can accomplish this balance in the sense of a noninclusive political settlement.
Since governance efficiency is difficult to trace, the question of what success looks like remains hard. One of the main indicators of achievement in this study is a decrease in the risk of deterioration into conflict.
Another indicator is the inclusiveness of other dimensions such as service delivery reflecting an urgency to further unpack this concept and tailor it to what it looks like in every country

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The study points out to a number of recommendations such as: realizing expenditure in a wider political economy; unpacking the incentive structure behind potential government reforms; and addressing long and short-term reforms; as well as designing transitions that are contextually relevant to each nation.
Fragility dynamics are defined by complexity making it difficult to create a single concept of successful transition. Restoring, rebuilding or establishing government functionality in transition setting must be evidence based to aid in understanding the characteristic of the transition.

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