

Social Cohesion in Situations of Fragility, Conflict and Violence: Evidence and Emerging Approaches

Agenda

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2. Defining social cohesion
3. Mechanisms and challenges

II. Measurement strategies

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I. Motivation, definition and framework



Motivation – Why propose this framework?



- Growing consensus on the importance of social cohesion and its role as a **driver of stability and resilience** to shocks. This is particularly true in **situations of fragility, conflict and violence (FCV)**, characterized by limited state capacity and urgent needs



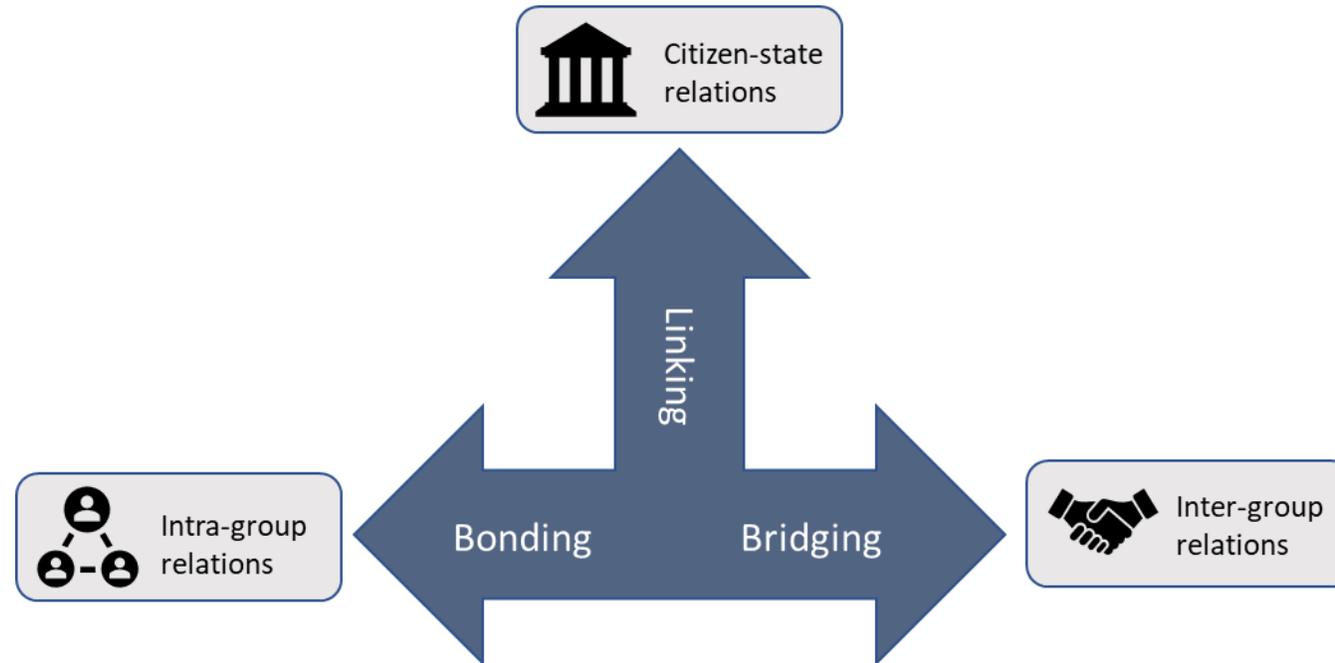
- **Challenge:**
 - Existing frameworks for conceptualizing FCV risks or threats to social cohesion focus on **society-wide dynamics** – example: the actors/structures/institutions framework in the 2018 UN-World Bank Pathways for Peace study
 - While such frameworks help identify critical dynamics, the literature on conflict suggests that more **localized, community-level dynamics are also important**
 - Interest in social cohesion has produced **diverse perspectives**, resulting in competing definitions, which can hinder operationalization



- Framing paper aims to offer a definition and framework that is:
 - (i) grounded in the rich **literature on social cohesion**,
 - (ii) aligned with the **institutional and operational priorities of the World Bank**; and
 - (iii) can support **sound measurement strategies at the project level**.

Defining social cohesion

Social cohesion is a sense of shared purpose and trust among members of a given group, trust by group members in government officials, and willingness of group members to engage and cooperate with each other to survive and prosper.
(adapted from Mercy Corps and WBG 2020)



Deepening the conceptualization

Defining communities

- Both “imagined” and “everyday” communities matter – a “web” of communities can inform trust, willingness to cooperate, attitudes towards of group
- Paper offers guidance for diagnostics to identify the types or “level” of community that are most relevant to FCV challenge and to operational concerns

Social cohesion is not an unambiguous “good”



Communities can be both cohesive and organized around inequitable hierarchies
Strong social ties can help armed insurgencies recruit and flourish (Staniland 2014)

Social cohesion: mechanisms and relevant challenges

Dimension		Issues:	Mechanisms to promote
Horizontal social cohesion	Relations among individuals within a given community (<i>bonding</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Unpredictable/contentious relations – and the associated unpredictability – adversely affect investment and economic development ❑ Lack of trust create environment favorable to elite capture & exclusion ❑ Affect the management of community resources ❑ Gender inequality, restrictive gender norms, exclusion of women and youth from opportunities ❑ Crime and insecurity (including domestic violence) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to collectively set priorities and contribute to public goods • Capacity for non-violent conflict resolution • Inclusion (particularly of youth, women, minorities) • Interpersonal trust • Acceptance of support to vulnerable households
Horizontal social cohesion	Relations between individuals across distinct communities (<i>bridging</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Ineffective management of shared resources (including land), exclusion of minorities/outgroups from these resources ❑ Gaps in access to services between groups or along identity lines ❑ Tensions/conflictual relations between host communities and displaced people ❑ Inter-community violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-violent, productive management of competition/feuds between communities • Prevention and mitigation of discrimination; trust; economic and social engagement across communities • Acceptance and integration of IDPs/refugees
Vertical social cohesion	<i>Relations</i> between citizens and people/structures in a position of power (<i>linking</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Proliferation or growth of “rivals” to state institutions (particularly rebel/criminal groups) ❑ Gaps and inequities in access to services ❑ Crime and insecurity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State presence and capacity to perform key functions (security, justice, basic services) • Equitable access to justice • Transparency and accountability • Broad and equitable citizen engagement • Consistent outreach

II. Measurement strategies



Measuring social cohesion: Data collection approaches

Goal: Provide resources and guidance for teams to design a measurement strategy that is suited to their project's theory of change and context (rather than a single template)

Tools for primary data collection

Quantitative methods

Perception based surveys and indices

Flexibility/adaptability
Challenge: determine whether they are a valid measure of underlying construct

Survey experiments

Provides anonymity for measure of sensitive issue – but difficult to implement/interpret

Behavioral games

Measure of willingness to cooperate/attitude towards outgroups – can be difficult to extrapolate

Tracking behaviors and experiences

Statistical power issues
Ethical issues

Randomized controlled trials

Method for addressing identification/attribution issue

Qualitative methods

Focus groups

Capture mechanisms more than effects
Challenges: group dynamics & representativeness

Key informant interviews

Also focused on mechanisms, Representativeness can be an even greater challenge

Participatory approaches

Observe cooperation/negotiation “in action”
Challenges: observer/observation biases

Memory workshops

Get at the genealogy of specific institutions, practices, grievances

Mapping of networks/actors

Overlapping sets of institutions/norms/actors that shape behaviors related to collective action

Measuring social cohesion: Leveraging existing data

Mobilizing existing data

Type	What they capture	Data Source
Perception based surveys	Globally conducted representative surveys that capture the perceptions of state institutions, local government, justice system, security forces, corruption, or access to services, as well as attitudes towards out-groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Barometers (Africa, Latin America, Asia, Arab regions) - SCORE Index (Provides indices on social cohesion and reconciliation)
Value surveys	Representative surveys on social capital, trust, organizational membership, perception of corruption, ethical and religious values, political participation and political culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - World Values Survey - Gallup Poll
Violent incidents and conflict monitoring	Data sources tracking incidents of violence, fatalities, and conflict in local areas, ownership of small arms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data - UCDP database on conflict events - National Observatories on conflict monitoring
Political Freedoms	Global and regional datasets on political freedoms, voice and accountability sourced from both surveys and experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Polity IV project - Varieties of democracy - Transparency Index - Freedom House ranking - Ibrahim Index of African governance

Identifying priorities along the “measurement continuum”



← What are the priority uses of the data to be analyzed/collected? →

Bonding

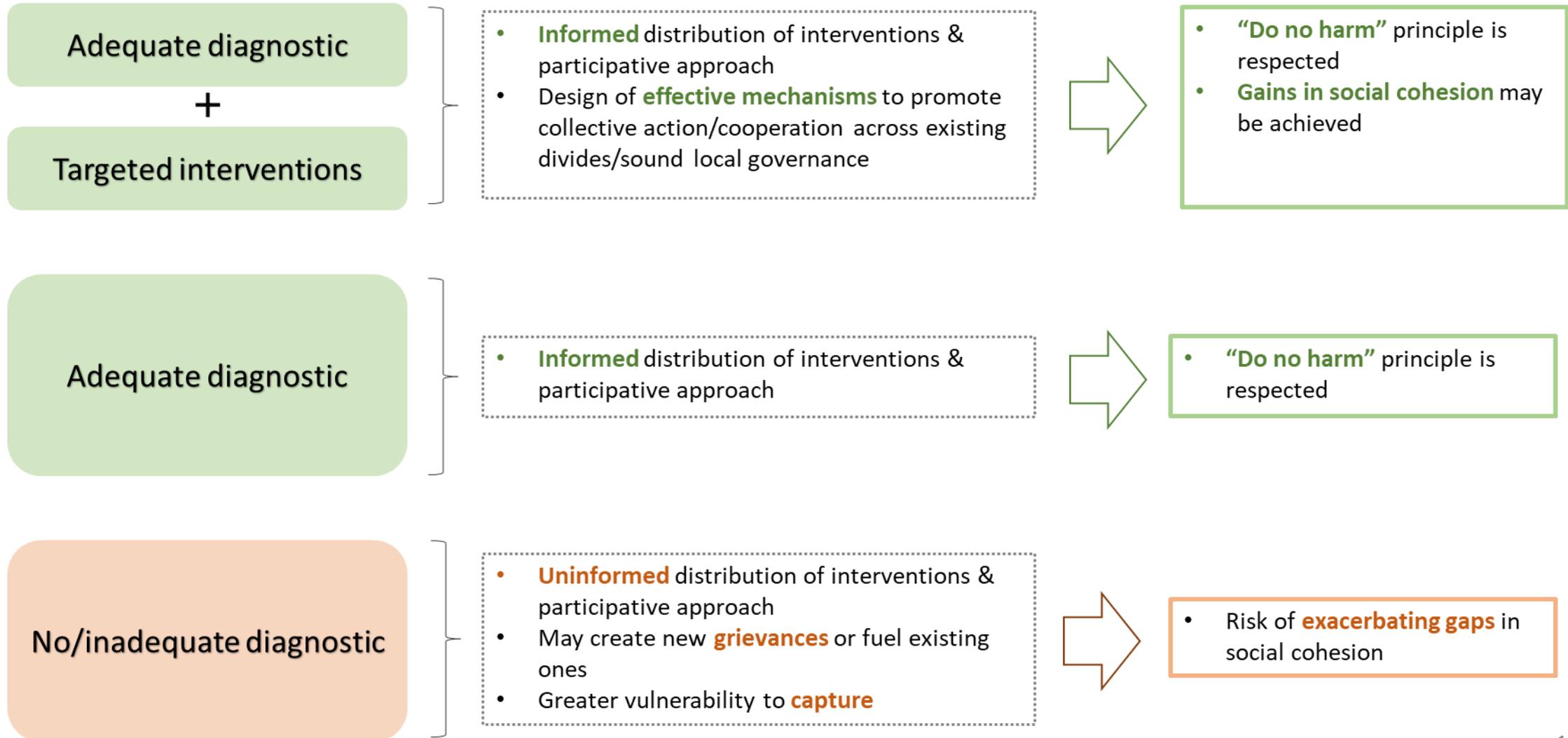
Bridging

Linking



What are the priority dimensions of social cohesion 1) targeted in an operation 2) to be considered in the analysis and evaluation?

Measurement strategies should be designed to detect both positive and adverse effects of interventions on social cohesion



III. Social cohesion & FCV risks



Insights from conflict literature

How do violent actors (insurgents, militias, criminal organizations, gangs) grow their influence?

Key lesson from the conflict process literature: **local governance is one of the key arena of competition between state and rival institutions** (Mampilly 2011, Arjona 2016)

Processes of escalation/perpetuation of conflict and violence

Leverage local grievances & insert themselves in local disputes

Appeal to broader communities & identities

Reciprocal exploitation/manipulation between local actors and violent rivals to the state (Kalyvas 2006)

Draw on existing networks (Staniland 2014)

Implications for prevention or mitigation

Clear benefits of strong local capacity for collective action and dispute resolution

Bridging/improving attitudes towards out-groups matter for prevention & sustainable transition

The greater the gaps in local governance, the greater the appeal of “rivals” to the state

Importance of identifying the right relays, allies and spokespersons in each community

Identifying mechanisms and contribution to the FCV strategies

Approaches centered on social cohesion:

- 1) Informed by adequate social cohesion **diagnostics**
- 2) Theory of change – explicitly aims to strengthen **specific dimensions** of social cohesion

	I. Preventing violent conflict & interpersonal violence	II. Remaining engaged during crises and conflicts	III. Helping countries transition out of fragility	IV. Mitigating the spillovers of FCV
Bonding	Inhibit violent escalation of local dispute & encroachment by violent actors	Facilitate service delivery through CDD in insecure areas	Address war related grievances Restore trust necessary to econ. development	Facilitate adaptation to a variety of spillovers (including public health and environmental)
Bridging	Counter efforts to leverage “broad” (often identity-based) cleavages	Abide by “doing no harm” principles	Repair relations across communities to foster sustainable peace	Informs design of operations supporting refugees/IDPs
Linking	More effective state presence limits opportunities for violent actors	Preserve essential local institutions	Quality of citizen-state relations/social contract is a determinant of resilient transition	Perceived legitimacy of local institutions informs local ability to adapt/respond to shocks

IV. Updating the evidence base



What works (or does not) to strengthen social cohesion?

Mapping the evidence

- Review of evidence to identify promising approaches for fostering cohesion through project interventions
- Number of new studies encouraging evidence that intentionally designed interventions can ameliorate specific dimensions of social cohesion (looking beyond collective action)
- Our priors should reflect this emerging evidence

Criteria for inclusion

- Speaks to at least one of the 3 dimensions (bonding/bridging/linking) AND to the determinants of FCV risks or resilience
- No exclusion based on methods, but clear differentiation between the type of evidence (RCT vs observational study vs case study etc....)

Using existing evidence reviews: 3ie's systematic review of interventions to promote social cohesion across communities

- Systematic review of the evidence on what works to improve **inter-group relationships** (*bridging*)
- Evidence from 24 studies, assessing 31 interventions (selected from 70 000+ records screened)

		Dimensions of social cohesion				
		Trust	Sense of belonging	Willingness to participate	Willingness to help	Acceptance of diversity
Types of interventions reviewed	School-based peace education	Inconsistent evidence of + effect			Inconsistent evidence of + effect	
	Collaborative contact			Significant positive effect	Inconsistent evidence of + effect	
	Intergroup dialogues	Indications of adverse effects				Indications of adverse effects
	Combination: peace workshops and livelihood	Significant positive effect	Inconsistent evidence of + effect	Inconsistent evidence of + effect		
	Media for peace	Significant positive effect			Inconsistent evidence of + effect	

Preliminary overview of the updated evidence base

Updating the evidence

- Reviewing and updating evidence base with approximately **25** recent studies, with more to be scoped
- **7** studies on bonding focused interventions ; **5** studies on bridging focused interventions, and **14** Studies on linking focused interventions

Some emerging insights on..

- ***emerging tools of measurement, innovative interventions specifically targeting social cohesion's dimensions within larger social programs , varied FCV contexts***
- Perspective taking curriculum implemented over a year in elementary schools in Turkey where 1 in 5 students are refugees; Using lab-in-field games to measure prosocial behaviours like trust, cooperation and reciprocity ; Alan, Baysan, Gumren, Kubliay (2020)
- Alternative Dispute Resolution training program on communities where violent property rights disputes are frequent and observing impacts over 8 years , including adverse impacts ; Hartman, Blair, Blattman (2021)
- Combinations of livelihood support and vocational training targeted towards at-risk youth in Kandahar, Afghanistan during wartime ; measuring support for government through endorsement experiments; Lyall, Zhou, Imai (2019)



Questions? Comments?

Thank you!