Maximizing the collective impact of the Global Fragility Act through systemic measurement of success

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The Global Fragility Act is built on the recognition that sustainable peace isn't achievable through a single point of entry, but requires coordinated effort across diplomatic, economic, and security domains. It is an attempt to drive that coordination within US government actors by establishing an overall global strategy for coordinating and strategizing stabilization, but acknowledges the need to accomplish these through country-specific plans and through local buy-in and partnerships. This means that there are several strategic challenges and tensions built into the structure of the GFA.

Measuring success inherits these tensions and challenges, because the measurement of success by definition encompasses questions of strategic goals and program effectiveness. Therefore, it is possible to establish some basic things that the measurement of the Global Fragility Strategy (GFS) and associated country strategies must accomplish in order to meet their goals. The measurement approach must:

- Manage the tension between measuring multidimensional drivers of conflict at the country level while assessing the success of narrow programs. The GFA, and the SAR before it, specifically recognizes the fact that sustainable stabilization requires effective work across the different domains of security, political development, and economic development. These different domains are not independent and can reinforce or undermine each other. At the same time, effective program management requires a clean identification of the goals of a specific project and its theory of change. It's difficult, if not impossible, to design an individual program to accomplish multiple impacts across the different domains stabilization requires. This means that the measurement of success at the country level requires an approach that allows for measurement and understanding of the comprehensive, inter-connected relationships between the different drivers of fragility or instability but also measuring success at the project level in a narrow and targeted fashion.
- Advance the GFS collectively as well as the country strategy. The GFA requires the development of a unified Global Fragility Strategy explicitly built around the multiple and diverse causes of fragility and violence, including specific objectives and plans to address these causes, and emphasizing the empowerment of local, national, and multilateral actors to

achieve the goals[1]. Individual country strategies must fit underneath this umbrella and feed back into the overall goals of the GFA of supporting stabilization and reducing fragility while "strengthen[ing] the capacity of the United States to be an effective leader of international efforts to prevent extremism and violent conflict.[2]" At the same time, while general trends in causes of conflict and fragility are identifiable, the specific demands of an individual country will be affected by their specific history of conflict and fragility and there is no universal solution applicable across all contexts. Defining and measuring success must therefore be done in a way which supports assessment of the overall GFS while also assessing success at the country level.

- Be developed with buy-in from principal stakeholders, ideally including the major implementing organizations but also embassy staff and local representatives from priority countries. The GFA is not the first attempt to improve coordination among different parts of stabilization, and there's a fairly large body of research suggesting that a persistent point of failure comes from challenges at the actual point of execution.[3] Recognizing this, both the GFA itself and external assessments highlight the need for buy-in from those people tasked with executing it[4]. If the people tasked with executing the GFS and country strategies see the measurement frameworks as appropriate and valuable, they are more likely to support them. Maximizing this support is best done by ensuring that the development of the indicators is a collaborative exercise, rather than one handed to the people tasked with executing the strategy.

Opportunities for using measurement to advance the goals of the GFA
The development and execution of an M&E plan is in itself a program activity connected to the larger goals of the GFA. Because of this, there are opportunities to connect the work done for measurement to other actors or data to support the overall goals of the GFA. The M&E strategy could:

- Advance the goals of the GFA of empowering local stakeholders, working with partner organizations, and addressing drivers of conflict through the measurement itself. The measurement of success is part of the country programming, not something which exists in isolation to it. How the measurement is done - who collects the data, who is spoken to in the process, and whether and how the results are reported publicly - all can interact with the goals of the country-level strategies. Decisions about measurement should be incorporated into the strategic design of country strategies, not considered a technical issue separate from the substantive goals. Working with local actors and partner organizations to develop and

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[1] Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Sec 504(a)(1-12)
[2] Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020, Sec 504(a)
[3] e.g. Susanna P. Campbell and Anja T. Kaspersen, "The UN's Reforms: Confronting Integration Barriers," International Peacekeeping 15, no. 4 (August 1, 2008): 470–85; Conor Keane and Steve Wood, "Bureaucratic Politics, Role Conflict, and the Internal Dynamics of US Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan," Armed Forces & Society 42, no. 1 (January 1, 2016): 99–118
[4] Elizabeth Hume, Jessica Baumgardner-Zuzik, Conor Seyle, Erik Keels, and Dianna Almanza, Getting From Here to There: Successful Implementation of the Global Fragility Act (2020). Broomfield, CO: One Earth Future

execute measurement can support the development of local capacity and deeper ties to USG actors.

● Connect to other data through alignment of indicators and data collection. The GFA has grown out of a larger discussion within organizations working on peacebuilding and stabilization that recognizes the connections between development, political stability, and security. In almost any country or region that would be identified as a priority, USG actors will not be the only actors either working on implementation of stabilization programming or measuring its impact. This means that for the topics that GFA programming will focus on, there will be other data sources available. If the indicators identified for measuring GFA success are deliberately chosen to be consistent with the indicators used by other multilateral or international organizations, this means that there's the possibility of accessing the data that are publicly available. This can include academic sources such as the Uppsala Conflict Data Program's data on violence[5] or the World Values Survey[6], national data sources such as national reports on the Sustainable Development Goals or reports from national statistical offices, and public or closed international organizational assessments such as the World Bank's governance indicators.[7] If the indicators are consistent with these other data sources, there is the possibility of using comparative data to generate a better understanding of the impacts of work under the GFA compared to other programs without the need for extensive baseline data collection.

Specific suggestions for achieving the above
The below represents a process that attempts to achieve all of the above multiple goals and pressures.

1. Develop a universal assessment framework that establishes specific content areas and indicators, as per the existing Foreign Assistance Standard Indicators. This framework should represent the substantive goals of the Global Fragility Strategy as a whole and be adopted as a cross-departmental assessment framework.
   a. This should reflect the understanding of the research literature and captured in the GFA that sustainable stability comes from a combination of political, institutional, development, and security elements.
   b. It should include both conceptual areas and specific indicators associated with each.
   c. The indicators should focus primarily on outcomes of programs (in terms of specific changes in demographic or structural conditions in the regions served), rather than counts of people engaged with by the programs or other assessments of activities.
   d. Wherever possible, the indicators should be connected to the existing data space by aligning indicators with other frameworks.
   e. The development of the framework should be done with engagement and buy-in from key US government partners tasked with implementing the GFA and with at least some engagement from representatives of potential priority countries.

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[5] Uppsala Conflict Data Program, Uppsala University, https://ucdp.uu.se/
[6] World Values Survey, World Values Survey Association, http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp
[7] Daniel Kaufmann and Aart Kray, Worldwide Governance Indicators, https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/

2. When developing individual country strategies, the goals and assessment frameworks should be developed with reference to and incorporating specific elements of the universal framework.
   a. These country strategies and assessment frameworks should be developed with close engagement with local actors as well as USG partners.
   b. They should be built on a subset, not the whole, universal assessment framework to allow the development of strategies that map most closely onto the drivers of conflict in that specific country
3. When developing individual program targets and foci under the overall country strategy, assessment frameworks should emphasize collection of both primary indicators, or those that the program is designed to impact, and secondary indicators - those that may be affected incidentally to achieving the primary goals.
4. Wherever possible use multiple methods and sources for data collection, relying on local staff, CSOs and academic institutions as part of the project to support local capacity and partnerships.

An example universal assessment framework
The operating theory of stabilization that my organization uses understands sustainable peace to arise from the interaction of multiple different pathways with the most important being legitimacy of the government including perceptions of fairness and inclusion, positive economic and human development including both effective access to social services and optimism for the future, norms which constrain the use of violence, and sufficient security institutions to prevent spoilers.[8] This analysis follows both the academic literature[9] and the assessment of other organizations including the World Bank and United Nations.[10]

The GFA reflects a similar understanding about the connections between political institutions, security, and development. Conceptually, based on the scope of work established under the GFA the universal assessment framework should capture the primary elements the GFA is intended to address including political institutions and the legitimacy of government, improved human security and economic development, reduced violence and improved security, and reduced drivers of conflict such as extremism and dehumanization.

The below represents one way to assess these, illustrating the relationship between an overall framework and specific domains and the use of external indicators. In identifying external data sources, it tends towards the Sustainable Development Goals because in principle such data will be released on an annual basis for all countries, making it a fairly reliable source of external data

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[8] One Earth Future. Architecture of Peace: OEF's Theories of War and Peace. Internal memorandum. (Broomfield, CO: One Earth Future 2020)
[9] David Cortright, Conor Seyle, and Kristen Wall. Governance for Peace: How Inclusive, Participatory and Accountable Institutions Promote Peace and Prosperity (Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
[10] United Nations and World Bank . Pathways for Peace : Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict. (Washington, DC: World Bank 2018).

(although actual data release has varied). As discussed above, it's important for the legitimacy of the process that the framework be developed with engagement by its users. As such, this is more a model for a framework than a proposed framework to be adopted, with the actual indicator framework to be developed with input from the implementing agencies.

Topic	Indicator	Reference/comparison
Political institutions		
Perceived legitimacy of government	Proportion of population who believe decision-making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group	SDG 16.7.2
Perceptions of corruption	Average response to the item "How widespread do you think bribe taking and corruption is in this country?"	World Values Survey item E196
Experiences of corruption	Proportion of persons who had at least one contact with a public official and who paid a bribe to a public official, or were asked for a bribe by those public officials, during the previous 12 months	SDG 16.5.1
Representation of relevant groups	Proportions of positions (by sex, age, persons with disabilities and population groups) in public institutions as applicable to the scope of the project compared to national distributions	SDG 16.7.1
Competent and trusted security services	Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms	SDG 16.3.1
Violence		
Intensity of battle deaths	Number of events and reported deaths due to battle, disaggregated by state/non-state perpetrator	Armed Conflict Location and Events Data (ACLED) Battles indicator

Intensity of explosive or remote violence	Number of events and reported deaths due to explosives, artillery, drone attacks, or other forms of remote violence, disaggregated by state/non-state perpetrator	Armed Conflict Location and Events Data (ACLED) Explosions/Remote violence indicator
Intensity of violence against civilians	Number of events and reported deaths from violence directed against civilians and perpetrated by organized armed actors, disaggregated by state/non-state perpetrator	Armed Conflict Location and Events Data (ACLED) Violence against civilians indicator
Criminal violence	Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age	SDG 16.1.1
Gender-based violence	Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age	SDG5.2.1
Perception of safety	Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live	SDG 16.1.4
Human security and inclusion		
Food security	Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)	SDG 2.1.2; FIES
Maternal mortality	Maternal mortality ratio	SDG 3.1.1
Infant and child mortality	Under-five mortality rate	SDG 3.2.1
Educational access	Proportion of children and young people: (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i)	SDG 4.1.1

	reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex	
Access to clean water and sanitation facilitites	Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services and sanitation services, including a hand-washing facility with soap and water	SDG 6.1.1, 6.2.1
Discrimination	Proportion of the population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed within the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law	SDG 10.3.1/16.B.1
Economic development		
Proportion of population in extreme poverty	Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)	SDG 1.1.1
Access to electricity	Proportion of population with access to electricity	SDG 7.1.1
Equitable employment	Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities	SDG 8.5.2
Savings	Proportion of adults (15 years and older) with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider	SDG8.10.2/Global Findex Database
Norms and attitudes supporting the risk of violence		
Accepting violence as a political tool	% of respondents agreeing with statement '"Using violence to pursue political goals is never justified'.	World Values Survey item E198
Dehumanization and/or intergroup threat	To be identified, no good standardized measures	