

Advancing Stabilization and Resilience in Fragile Settings

February 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Rising Fragility** – By 2030, 2.2 billion people will live in fragile settings, facing conflict, displacement, and systemic inequalities, demanding coordinated, multi-sectoral interventions.
- **Revolving Crises Require Adaptive Programming** – EF recognizes that crises are complex and overlapping, requiring stabilization efforts that address both immediate challenges and long-term resilience. EF address needs as identified by beneficiaries through consultation processes, formal collaboration with local and national authorities, and robust evaluation and capitalization frameworks.
- **Targeted & Impactful Stabilization** – EF implements flexible, locally driven programs that strengthen institutions, support communities, and enhance stability in fragile environments.
- **Multisectorial approaches** – EF tackle a variety of socio-economic challenges while considering the broader dynamics of affected areas, from access to health care and social protection to economic recovery and vocational training. These are complemented by critical support in areas like social cohesion or peacebuilding, which are key to the holistic development of these communities.
- **Integrated HDP Nexus** – EF's approach links stabilization with humanitarian aid, governance, economic recovery, and peacebuilding to create sustainable and lasting impact.
- **Empowering local actors** – Building partnerships with National institutions, strengthening local authorities and civil society organizations (CSOs) is central to EF approach, as it ensures that interventions are rooted in local realities and capable of enduring beyond the project cycle.
- **Community & Gender Focus** – EF empowers local actors, civil society, and governance structures while ensuring that stabilization efforts are inclusive and gender-responsive. By integrating gender considerations into all programs, EF ensures that stabilization and resilience-building efforts are inclusive and equitable, enabling all members of society to contribute to recovery and peacebuilding.

Introduction

In a global landscape where crises are increasingly interconnected, prolonged, and multifaceted, traditional approaches to stabilization, which often view conflict, humanitarian aid, and development as a linear process, are insufficient. Expertise France (EF) operates with the understanding that fragility is not static—it evolves, overlaps, and requires innovative, adaptable interventions. By addressing immediate needs while fostering resilience, we bridge the gap between emergency responses and long-term development to empower communities in fragile settings.

Fragile countries were home to an estimated 1.8 billion people in 2021, approximately 23% of the world's population. By 2030 this population is expected to increase to 2.2 billion (26% of the world's population – OECD). Violent conflicts, forced displacement, and systemic inequalities compound challenges, creating a need for approaches that not only address symptoms but also build the capacity of communities to withstand and recover from adversity.

EF brings unique value by integrating localized, multi-sectorial, and forward-looking strategies. These approaches prioritize resilience—the ability of individuals, communities and institutions to adapt, recover, and thrive despite shocks and stresses—ensuring that our programs deliver lasting impact.

01

Understanding Stabilization and Resilience

Stabilization at EF is rooted in recognizing the complexity and unpredictability of modern crises. We do not perceive crises as linear events with distinct phases of conflict, recovery, and development. Instead, we understand that crises are increasingly prolonged, multifaceted, and overlapping. This reality requires a **flexible, adaptive and multisectorial approach** that addresses immediate needs while simultaneously tackling the structural vulnerabilities that perpetuate fragility.

For EF, **resilience** is not a byproduct of sectoral approaches—it is a goal in itself. Resilience shapes how we design and implement programs, enabling individuals, communities, and institutions to adapt, Precover, and transform in the face of adversity. This ensures our interventions go beyond reactive responses to empower local actors and address the root causes of fragility.

Our approach integrates **localized and participatory methods**, tailoring programs to the needs of the communities we serve. By linking humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding interventions, EF bridges immediate relief with sustainable development. A critical dimension of this work is **addressing gender dynamics**, recognizing that crises affect women, men, girls, and boys differently. By integrating gender considerations into all programs, EF ensures that stabilization and resilience-building efforts are inclusive and equitable, enabling all members of society to contribute to recovery and peacebuilding.

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02

Expertise France's approach to Stabilization

EF's Stabilization and Resilience Unit operates with agility and adaptability, enabling **timely and multisectorial responses to complex crises** across the **Middle East, Turkey, and East Africa**. Supported by key donors, including the EU DG INTPA/DG NEAR/FPI, the French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, AFD, and Danida, **the Unit designs short to medium-term programs lasting 12–36 months** to address the unique dynamics of fragile settings. The Unit has the capacity to manage multi-donor funding to increase the scope and breadth of its programs.

In **Lebanon**, the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) under the **Shabaké program** mobilized over 20 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to address emergencies such as the Ein el Helwe clashes and the September 2024 Israeli bombings in Lebanon. Within three weeks, \$500,000 was allocated to critical interventions. The RRM's adaptability allowed it to expand following the Beirut blast, addressing new priorities while strengthening local CSOs' crisis response capacities.

The Unit strength lies in its ability to tackle challenges across multiple sectors simultaneously, in specific geographic approach. We support local

communities by implementing activities that address a variety of socio-economic challenges while considering the broader dynamics of the affected area. Our interventions span multiple domains, from access to health care and social protection to economic recovery and vocational training. These are complemented by critical support in areas like social cohesion or peacebuilding, which are key to the **holistic development of these communities**.

In **Syria**, the **SABIR project** embodies EF's multi-sectorial approach. It integrates rehabilitation with governance and livelihood strengthening through community-based committees that guide needs assessments and project implementation. In **Ethiopia**, EF combines hospital rehabilitation with protection measures, such as gender-based violence (GBV) prevention through one-stop centers and mobile protection teams. These initiatives address immediate needs and systemic vulnerabilities, creating pathways to resilience. In **Yemen**, livelihood projects for women's fishery groups enhance economic independence and challenge restrictive gender norms.

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Addressing fragility through the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus approach

EF's operationalization of the HDP Nexus is deeply rooted in its understanding of resilience as a driving goal. For us, the HDP Nexus is not just about linking humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts; it's about recognizing that these elements are inseparable in fragile contexts. **Stabilization, as we see it, must address the immediate consequences of crises while simultaneously building the capacities and systems needed for long-term peace and development.**



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In **Lebanon**, the **Shabaké program** exemplifies this integration by combining rapid response mechanisms with structural interventions. Vulnerability reduction initiatives, such as support for livelihoods and entrepreneurship, are linked with governance strengthening for public institutions like Primary Health Care Centers and Social Development Centers. Dialogue between CSOs and local authorities is facilitated to ensure that interventions promote inclusive governance and conflict sensitivity.

In **Turkey**, vocational training programs for Syrian refugees align short-term humanitarian needs with longer-term development goals. By working closely with the Ministry of Education, these initiatives build the capacities of local institutions to deliver sustainable services while fostering refugees' integration into local economies.

In **Ethiopia**, initial programming focused on rehabilitating hospitals in conflict-affected areas but evolved to address broader systemic challenges, such as GBV prevention and economic reintegration for survivors. These programs reflect EF's commitment to resilience-building at all levels.

The large scope of Expertise France programming as an operator also paves the way for Nexus programming, combining stabilization and long term structural programming focused on governance and structural reforms. Reform of security sector is being gradually integrated, making our programming more holistic. This is made possible by Expertise France network of experts that the Agency can efficiently mobilise, and its internal structure built around sectorial technical departments.

04

Grounded in local needs and complex realities

EF recognizes that no two crises are alike. EF thus seeks to address needs as identified by beneficiaries through consultation processes, formal collaboration with local and national authorities, and robust evaluation and capitalization frameworks. **Community-based approaches are central to all our interventions:** our programs are co-designed with local communities to ensure that interventions are relevant, effective, and sustainable. In **Syria**, the **SABIR project** engages community-based committees in every stage of programming, from needs assessments to activity design and monitoring. This participatory approach builds trust, strengthens local governance, and ensures that projects address the priorities of the communities they serve.

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In **Ethiopia**, measures to prevent GBV and support survivors are developed in consultation with local stakeholders to ensure cultural appropriateness and alignment with community needs. In **Yemen**, livelihood initiatives for women's fishery groups address both immediate economic vulnerabilities and systemic barriers to gender equity, **reflecting EF's commitment to holistic, context-sensitive programming**

05

Strengthening local authorities and civil society

For EF, **stabilization cannot be achieved without empowering local actors**. Building partnerships with National institutions, strengthening local authorities and civil society organizations (CSOs) is central to our approach, as it ensures that interventions are rooted in local realities and capable of enduring beyond the project cycle.

The Unit has a strong track-record in building capacities of local CSOs in fragile contexts, which is implemented through specific partnership methodologies and participatory capacity needs assessments. This approach also empowers local organizations to operate and become actors of public dialogue.



In **Lebanon**, the **Shabaké program** enhances CSOs' capacities, enabling them to lead localized stabilization efforts and engage effectively with international donors. This fosters ownership, accountability, and long-term impact. In **Syria**, EF collaborates with civil society to advocate for gender equality, climate action, and cultural preservation, ensuring that interventions align with community priorities. In **Ethiopia**, partnerships with Ministry of Health and local health authorities ensure the sustainability of rehabilitated hospitals and the integration of health services into broader governance frameworks. By strengthening these actors, EF bridges immediate recovery efforts with systemic capacity-building, laying the groundwork for resilient and inclusive institutions.

06

Gender and Stabilization

EF places gender at the heart of its stabilization and resilience-building efforts, recognizing that meaningful recovery cannot occur without addressing gender-based disparities and vulnerabilities. Women and girls often face heightened risks during crises, including displacement, violence, and exclusion from decision-making processes. At the same time, they are vital agents of change and resilience within their communities. **Expertise France has engaged in the "Women, peace and security" agenda** through a joint technical department approach that allows embracing a large scope of action.

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-> In **Ethiopia**, EF's **GBV programs** not only support survivors with critical services such as psychosocial counseling and healthcare but also work to transform harmful norms by engaging families, community leaders, and local authorities. By promoting women's participation in economic and social recovery, these programs foster inclusive stabilization and sustainable peace.

-> In **Yemen**, livelihood initiatives for women's fishery groups enhance economic independence while challenging gender norms that limit women's roles in local economies.

-> Similarly, in **Syria**, EF's programs empower women to participate in governance and community decision-making, ensuring that their perspectives shape recovery efforts.

These approaches illustrate how **gender equality is not only a goal but also a means of achieving more resilient and cohesive societies**.

07

Mainstreaming «do no harm» and conflict sensitivity

EF integrates “Do No Harm” and conflict sensitivity principles across its interventions to promote social cohesion and avoid exacerbating tensions. These principles guide every stage of programming and implementation, ensuring actions are inclusive and equitable and relevant to context evolution.

In **Lebanon**, arts and cultural initiatives foster dialogue and mutual understanding among diverse groups, rebuilding trust in fractured communities. In **Ethiopia**, GBV programs engage community leaders to design culturally appropriate interventions, supporting survivors while addressing systemic drivers of violence. Similarly, in **Syria**, the **SABIR project** relies on community-based committees to ensure interventions reflect local priorities and avoid creating divisions. By embedding these principles, **EF ensures that stabilization efforts not only address immediate needs but also contribute to long-term peace and inclusion.**