



IFPRI HYBRID POLICY SEMINAR

Engines of Growth in Fragile Contexts

Launching the IFPRI-UNU-WIDER research partnership

June 10, 2026 | 9:00am - 11:00am EDT

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CGIAR

**FOOD FRONTIERS
AND SECURITY**

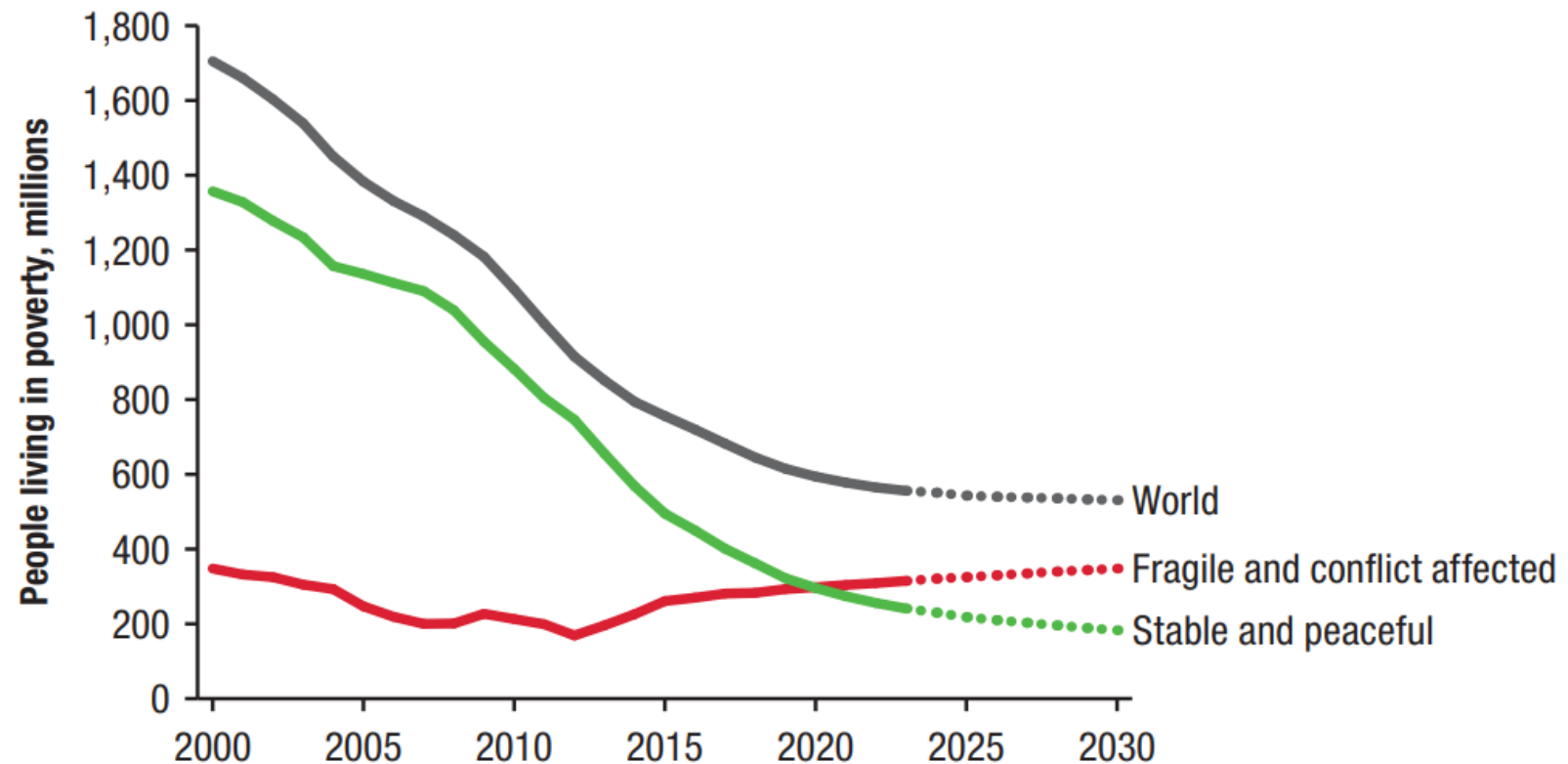
Engines of Growth in Fragile Contexts: A New Framework and Partnership Between IFPRI and UNU-WIDER

Katrina Kosec | Senior Research Fellow, IFPRI
IFPRI HQ – Washington, D.C. | June 10, 2026



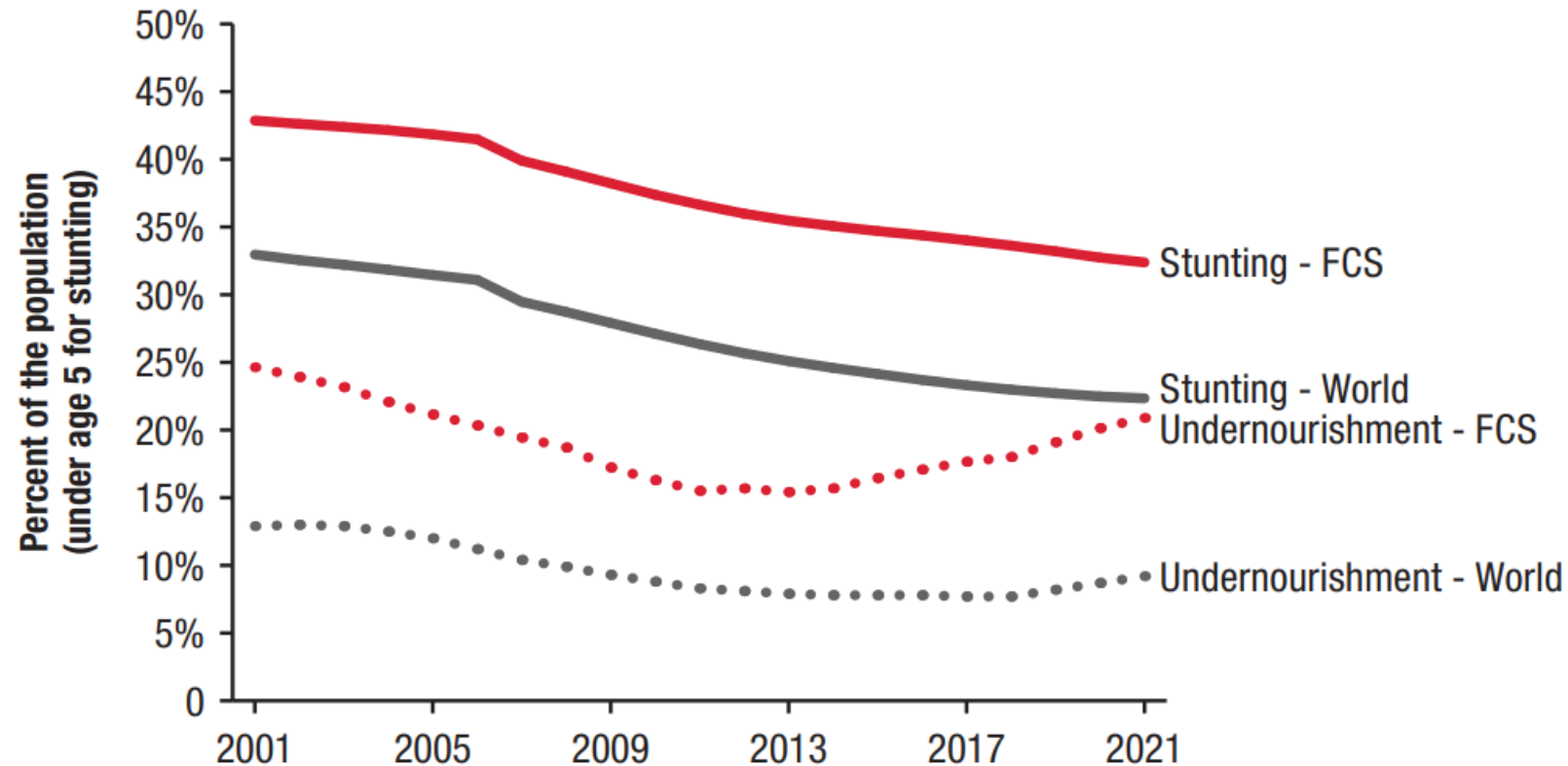
The Challenge: Growing Concentration of Poverty & Fragility

- ~2 billion people live in contexts of high or extreme fragility – 25% of world's population, but 72% of the extreme poor (OECD 2025)
- Global poverty continues to decline, but poverty in fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCS) is increasing
- Traditional focus: humanitarian response
- **Question:** We see some **islands of resilience** in FCS; what allows some local economies to remain economically dynamic despite fragility?



Coalescence of Hunger with Fragility and Conflict

- Undernourishment and stunting, two important indicators of hunger, are also concentrated in FCS
- In FCS, the rates of undernourishment and stunting in children under 5 are on average ~10 percentage points higher than the global average
- Undernourishment is growing worldwide, but much faster in FCS—exposing a growing gap
- **Question:** These metrics vary widely across FCS – what explain success stories?



FROM FRAGILITY TO GROWTH

Evidence strengthens the engines that drive inclusive and resilient development.

CHALLENGES IN FCS

- 1 LOW EMPLOYMENT**
Few job opportunities and weak, insecure, or unsustainable livelihoods
- 2 POOR LEARNING**
School disruptions, fewer educational investments, and fewer skills training opportunities
- 3 LOW TRUST**
Weak institutions, social divisions, and limited collective action
- 4 DISPLACEMENT & INSECURITY**
People forced from their homes and communities



EVIDENCE-INFORMED POLICIES & PROGRAMS

Rigorous research. Local insights.
Better decisions. **Real impact.**

STRENGTHENING THE ENGINES OF GROWTH

1 JOBS & LIVELIHOODS

Productive employment, resilient livelihoods, and economic opportunity

2 HUMAN CAPITAL & SKILLS

Better learning, health, and skills for a more capable population

3 TRUST & COLLECTIVE ACTION

Stronger institutions, social cohesion, and accountable governance



IFPRI & UNU-WIDER PARTNERSHIP

Generating evidence on what works—
to inform policy, improve programs, and transform lives

DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

- 1 GREATER LABOR PRODUCTIVITY**
More productive and resilient economies
- 2 IMPROVED LIVELIHOODS & INCOME**
Stronger, more sustainable livelihoods that lift households out of poverty
- 3 IMPROVED WELLBEING**
Better health, education, and quality of life for individuals and families
- 4 PEACE & SOCIAL COHESION**
Stronger trust, inclusion, and harmony within communities
- 5 WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT**
Greater agency, voice, and freedom from intimate partner violence for women

What Makes This Partnership Different?

- **Past FCS research often asks:**

- How does fragility affect development?
- How can we reduce conflict and instability?
- How can humanitarian assistance respond to crisis?

- **This partnership asks:**

- Why do some communities remain economically dynamic despite fragility?
- What specific actions work to strengthen key engines of growth?
- How do livelihoods, human capital, and trust interact and reinforce one another?
- When do local multiplier effects take hold, and what can promote this?



Research Strategy

- **Diagnose binding constraints:** Identify the key barriers limiting local economic growth in fragile settings—such as weak markets, low trust, or high leakage—and assess which most constrain economic multipliers
- **Compare across fragile contexts:** Study countries experiencing different phases of fragility (active conflict, recovery, and chronic fragility) to understand how engines of growth operate under varying conditions
- **Generate actionable evidence:** Partner with governments, NGOs, and international organizations to rigorously evaluate interventions that strengthen livelihoods, markets, human capital, social protection, and social cohesion



Jobs and Livelihoods



JOBS & LIVELIHOODS

Productive employment, resilient livelihoods, and economic opportunity

Ethiopia:
Graduation programs reduce the impacts of drought on vulnerable households



Somalia: Graduation programs help displaced households accumulate assets and exit extreme poverty



Nigeria: Anticipatory cash enables households to prepare before floods strike



Sudan: Entrepreneurs adapt through digital platforms, local sourcing, innovation, and social networks



Human Capital and Skills



HUMAN CAPITAL & SKILLS

Better learning, health,
and skills for a more
capable population

Yemen: Adding fortified milk to school feeding improves cognition, learning, food security, & wellbeing



Ethiopia (Tigray): Mental health affects households' ability to recover and rebuild livelihoods; integrating mental health support into livelihoods programming can help



Trust and Collective Action



TRUST & COLLECTIVE ACTION

Stronger institutions, social cohesion, and accountable governance

Ethiopia:
Participatory targeting increases legitimacy and responsiveness



Sahel (Burkina Faso and Niger): Community resource management can strengthen cooperation across groups



Nigeria: Supporting women's leadership and advocacy skills increases their voice and economic engagement





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