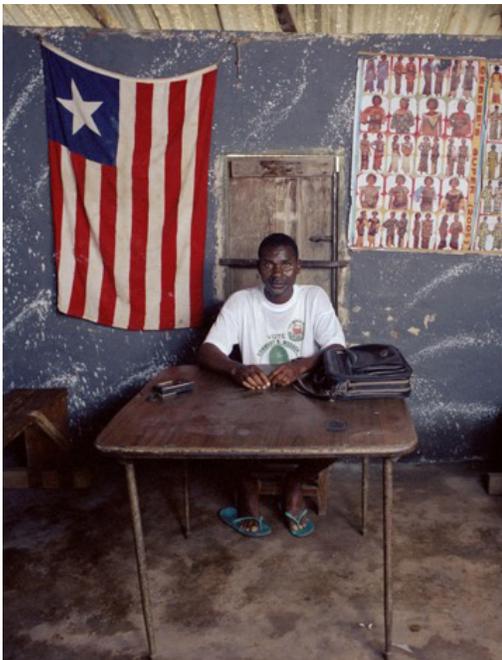


## Reform from a Distance

### Strengthening Fragile State Institutions with E-Learning

R. Justin | DeShazor



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Amy Oakes  
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Co-directors

# Reform from a Distance

## Strengthening Fragile State Institutions with E-Learning

APRIL 2015

R. Justin DeShazor

## Reform from a Distance

### Strengthening Fragile State Institutions with E-Learning

*The underdeveloped institutional capacity of fragile states limits their long-term ability to exert effective administrative authority throughout their territory. If fragile states fail to strengthen this capacity, they will be unable to meet the basic needs of citizens, prevent extremist and criminal organizations from filling power vacuums, or facilitate sustainable economic development. To enhance their institutional capacity and reduce the risk of state failure, Washington should incentivize U.S. universities to create a comprehensive e-learning curriculum for civil servants in financial management, project management, and strategic planning.*

### **Introduction**

Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, there was a paradigm shift in how the United States viewed fragile states—governments that have difficulty administering their own territory and providing basic services as a result of conflict or ineffective institutions.<sup>1</sup> Traditionally, Washington approached the task of strengthening fragile states as primarily a humanitarian mission designed to assist populations vulnerable to political and social violence, economic deprivation, and corruption. However, the realization that fragile and failed states pose a threat to U.S. security and interests has necessitated greater involvement.<sup>2</sup> Although shifts in funding and strategy have not always mirrored rhetoric, there has been a tentative consensus among U.S. policymakers that strengthening the institutional capabilities of fragile states prevents the spread of terrorist, insurgent, and criminal networks, and encourages economic growth.<sup>3</sup>

Because social services are a highly-visible expression of government efficacy, they are essential for maintaining popular legitimacy and reducing the risk of civil strife. The weak civil administrations of fragile states often lack the capability and requisite human capital to carry out core state functions and provide services. These deficiencies threaten state legitimacy and prevent states from building public trust.

The United States' traditional capacity-strengthening efforts have been concentrated in a few post-conflict states, particularly Iraq and Afghanistan, and tend to wane over the long term. As a result, the United States' desire for economic, humanitarian, and strategic progress in fragile states is frequently undermined by institutional mismanagement, inefficiency, and apathy.<sup>4</sup> Because competent civil administrations are necessary for sustainable development and state legitimacy, achieving and consolidating this progress requires a long-term investment in the institutional capabilities of fragile states.

In order to strengthen the long-term capacities of fragile state institutions, so that they are equipped to manage limited resources and build popular legitimacy, Washington should provide financial incentives to U.S. universities to develop a comprehensive e-learning curriculum for

civil servants in fragile states. By leveraging the strengths of the United States' best universities and the scalability of an e-learning model, Washington can enhance the human capital in fragile states at low marginal cost and without stationing U.S. personnel in country. In conjunction with traditional capacity-strengthening programs, developmental investment, and humanitarian assistance, this e-learning approach will enhance the resilience of fragile states and reduce the risk of destabilizing social violence and state failure.

## Weak Public Institutions and Fragile States

*Within states, the nexus of weak governance and widespread grievance allows extremism to take root, violent non-state actors to rise up, and conflict to overtake state structures.*

– U.S. National Security Strategy, 2015<sup>5</sup>

Strong institutional capabilities—particularly with regards to financial reporting, operations management, strategic planning, and budgetary development—help prevent popular discontent and violent instability in fragile states.<sup>6</sup> By planning and implementing healthcare, education, infrastructure, and other social services, a successful civil service demonstrates the ability of governments to provide tangible benefits to their citizens. These benefits, and the resulting belief that the state is acting in the interest of its citizens, represent a critical pillar of regime legitimacy. If fragile state institutions lack the capacity or will to provide these public goods and services, the resulting vulnerabilities can delegitimize governments in several ways.<sup>7</sup>

- *Spiraling humanitarian crises.* In the absence of a capable civil service, unexpected humanitarian crises may strain limited state resources and disproportionately impact vulnerable social groups.<sup>8</sup> Much like the institutional missteps that delayed cholera vaccination during Haiti's 2012 epidemic, administrative inefficiencies may complicate international relief efforts.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, limited institutional capacity diminishes the ability of states to cope with the demands of population growth, extreme weather events, and refugee influxes—all of which are sources of instability. As with the conflict in Darfur, described by Nobel Peace laureate Wangari Maathai as “a struggle over controlling an environment that can no longer support all of the people who must live on it,” government agents unable to assist affected citizens can exacerbate scarcity-driven conflicts.<sup>10</sup>
- *Endemic economic underdevelopment.* Ineffective public institutions have difficulty promoting broad-based economic activity through social welfare spending, infrastructure projects, and effective regulation.<sup>11</sup> In many fragile states, public institutions create inefficient procedural hurdles that prevent citizens from opening businesses or buying land. For example, the Institute for Liberty and Democracy found that it takes Egyptians an average of 189 working days and \$1,550 to complete the 86 steps required to acquire a business permit. Though wealthy individuals often use their social connections or finances to speed up this process, poorer citizens are unable to do so and are forced to pursue risky extralegal enterprises.<sup>12</sup> The resulting anemic economic growth and economic disenfranchisement of poor citizens harms the legitimacy of the state and

increases demands for destabilizing regime changes, such as those seen during the Arab Spring, which was caused in part by widespread economic grievances.<sup>13</sup>

- *Lack of public trust.* A lack of popular faith in the ability of governments to manage and provide public resources undermines state legitimacy. Under such circumstances, social cohesion is reduced and potentially undesirable actors, such as “strongmen” and extremist groups, are able to win popular support at the expense of the current regime.<sup>14</sup> For example, by filling the welfare gap left by the notoriously weak Lebanese state, Hezbollah has been able to leverage its reputation as a capable service provider to expand its base of support beyond the Shiite community, maintain a highly-effective militia, and become a dominant political actor.<sup>15</sup> Poor management of government resources may be particularly harmful if one social group suffers disproportionately and believes that government services are directed elsewhere.<sup>16</sup>

## **The Consequences of Instability in Fragile States on U.S. Security**

*[Al Qaeda recruits] operate freely in the disaffected communities and disconnected corners of our interconnected world—the impoverished, weak, and ungoverned states that have become the most fertile breeding grounds for transnational threats like terror and pandemic disease and the smuggling of deadly weapons.*

– President Barack Obama<sup>17</sup>

*America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones.*

– President George W. Bush<sup>18</sup>

Without the social stability facilitated by capable governance, fragile states are more vulnerable to economic downturns, humanitarian crises, and insurgent or extremist activity. As a result, fragile states, such as Myanmar, Zimbabwe, and Yemen, regularly descend into civil violence and are unable to create a secure environment for citizens.<sup>19</sup> Such violence further limits the capacity of government to exert administrative authority throughout its territory and provide public goods. This instability poses a clear threat to U.S. economic, strategic, and security interests by stifling economic growth and encouraging extremist, terrorist, and criminal activities.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, internal instability may have wider regional impacts due to ethnic, religious, or political linkages, enabling unrest to spread and threaten broader U.S. interests.

- *Safe havens for terrorist and extremist organizations.* Without comprehensive administrative control and a reliable security infrastructure, fragile states afford terrorist organizations safe havens and operational bases. Close proximity to local populations, particularly those with social grievances, facilitates recruitment and the acquisition of combat and logistical material.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, the potential development of parallel institutions, particularly taxation infrastructure and illicit enterprises, may afford extremist and terrorist organizations deeper and more reliable financial resources.<sup>22</sup> In 2012, after reestablishing itself in Afghanistan from its safe havens in Pakistan, the Taliban raised an estimated \$400 million. It taxed economic activity in areas under its

control, extorting money from narcotics producers and providing “protection” to aid contractors.<sup>23</sup>

- *Emergence of transnational criminal networks.* Criminal organizations are able to engage in a variety of illicit enterprises in fragile states unhindered, such as the \$435 billion global narcotics trade, the transportation of illicit arms, or the conflict mineral trade.<sup>24</sup> These activities are particularly difficult to combat in states with porous borders and large urban populations. The propagation of these resources jeopardizes public health, corrupts public officials, and facilitates violent conflict.<sup>25</sup> As seen with the FARC in Colombia, the Taliban in Afghanistan, and ethnic nationalists in Myanmar, criminal organizations also form mutually beneficial partnerships with terrorist or insurgent forces.<sup>26</sup>
- *Spread of violent instability.* Fragile states, particularly post-conflict states, have limited capacity to prevent violent extremists, arms, and illicit drugs from crossing their borders. As a result, previously localized social strife may cause regional instability. In this manner, the Syrian Civil War unleashed sectarian violence, radicalized repressed citizens, and empowered extremist organizations, facilitating the rise of ISIS. The violence from this conflict then spread to neighboring Iraq, where ISIS wrested control of strategic areas from the Iraqi government in an attempt to create a quasi-state.<sup>27</sup>

## Challenges to Civil Administration in Fragile States

*While the Afghan National Army will battle your nation's foes, the battle for Afghanistan will be won by righteous law enforcement, a functioning judiciary, and an unambiguous commitment to the rule of law.*

– U.S. General John Allen<sup>28</sup>

Civil administrations in fragile states are often unable to implement effective policy due to endemic corruption, fiscal difficulties, a lack of legitimacy, and severe shortages of human capital. These issues reduce the resources available to provide social services, impede reform efforts, and cause popular disillusionment with fragile state governments. Because public institutions are necessary for preventing or mitigating destabilizing social conflict, it is in the United States’ interest to consider these challenges when crafting foreign policy.

- *Acute corruption.* Corruption, or “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain,” inhibits institutional efficacy, economic growth, and government legitimacy in fragile states.<sup>29</sup> By capturing revenue streams and diverting government funds away from legitimate enterprises, corruption reduces the capacity of civil administrations to affect positive change. Even more concerning, corruption may become entrenched within the structural processes of governance, leading to kleptocratic systems with little interest in civil administration, much like those found in Yanukovych-era Ukraine and pre-Arab Spring Tunisia.<sup>30</sup> Because the norms of an institution are readily passed on, the resulting apathy is difficult to alter.<sup>31</sup>

- *Fiscal difficulties.* Due to a legacy of corruption, economic underdevelopment, and ineffective administrative and taxation infrastructure, fragile states often suffer from fiscal difficulties. As a result, fragile state governments have difficulty hiring and paying skilled workers, procuring equipment, and providing the basic health, education, and security required to maintain popular legitimacy.<sup>32</sup> Such fiscal crises are particularly acute in post-conflict states because their economic foundations and human capital are often degraded by emigration, loss of life, the destruction of productive infrastructure, and a lack of foreign investment.<sup>33</sup> For example, Afghanistan collected less than one percent of its GDP in revenue in 2000, limiting the state's annual budget to \$27 million, or roughly \$1 per person. As a result, many ministries ceased to function because they lacked the resources for even rudimentary tasks.<sup>34</sup>
- *Local rejection of national authority.* Fragile states, particularly those with a history of government excess or social violence, face difficulties projecting effective authority throughout their territory. Fragile states often contend with local groups that reject state interference or demand near-complete autonomy. Consequently, public institutions in these states struggle to provide services that build social cohesion.<sup>35</sup> Though efforts to provide social services often suffer from other issues, chiefly corruption and a lack of local input, public perceptions of government action as an “imposition” hamper efforts.<sup>36</sup> Such attitudes have plagued Myanmar's recent attempts to secure a ceasefire with ethnic groups and promote development in peripheral regions—both policies that are high priorities of Thein Sein's government.<sup>37</sup>
- *Lack of administrative human capital.* The capabilities of civil administrations in fragile states are often limited by a combination of emigration by skilled workers, insufficient training and education for civil servants, poor institutional incentives for skills development, and wartime instability in post-conflict states. Therefore, many fragile state institutions lack the institutional human capital to provide critical services to citizens, craft reasonable and effective budgets, and develop strategic plans.<sup>38</sup> In Pakistan, these deficiencies have crippled the activities of the National AIDS Control Program (NACP) since its 2011 devolution to the provincial level. As a result of federal financial mismanagement and a lack of organizational capacity, Pakistan's primary AIDS-fighting body has been unable to organize awareness campaigns, provide services to high-risk groups, or monitor the early spread of the disease.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, when human capital is lacking, the sustainability of fragile state institutions is hampered by a lack of experienced staff who could transmit departmental best practices, public responsibility as an institutional norm, and critical skills to future civil service cadres.<sup>40</sup> Low levels of human capital also make public institutions especially vulnerable to crises. For example, Haiti's 2010 earthquake killed an estimated 18 percent of its civil service and destroyed all but one of its 29 government ministry buildings. Since Haiti's institutional capacity was already weak, the loss of experienced civil servants hindered reconstruction efforts and could limit administrative capabilities over the long term.<sup>41</sup>

## Current U.S. Policies to Strengthen Civil Administration Capabilities

*Until recently, capacity building has not been a primary objective of USAID projects. And what has occurred has been more ad hoc and ‘spotty’ rather than systematic and strategic.*

– Assessment of the Impact of USAID Funded Technical Assistance-Capacity Building, 2007<sup>42</sup>

The United States currently devotes 18 percent of its official development assistance to technical capacity-strengthening projects; however, these efforts have been heavily concentrated in a few countries, namely Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq.<sup>43</sup> For example, the United States partnered with other donors to help strengthen the ability of 22,000 Afghan community development councils to plan, manage, and monitor local development projects.<sup>44</sup> In spite of these efforts, the United States’ long-term commitment to capacity-strengthening and governance programs is questionable, with U.S. foreign assistance frequently shifting to emerging hotspots rather than solidifying gains.

- *Current programs are overly concentrated.* States with a recent U.S. military intervention or humanitarian crisis tend to receive the most development and capacity-related foreign assistance.<sup>45</sup> The Center for Global Development concluded in 2007 that non-HIV/AIDS foreign assistance to the 49 most fragile states, excluding Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq, amounted to only \$1.1 billion out of the \$24 billion foreign aid request.<sup>46</sup> Given that Iraq and Afghanistan were the largest recipients of bilateral aid overall—and that the State Department and USAID are currently spending \$1.25 billion on Afghan capacity-strengthening programs alone—it is apparent that the United States’ aid posture in fragile states is often reactive and crisis-driven rather than proactive.<sup>47</sup>
- *Long-term U.S. commitment to capacity strengthening is uncertain.* Even in the small subset of fragile states that have attracted funding for capacity-strengthening programs, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States’ long-term commitment is uncertain. For instance, Washington’s total aid disbursements in Iraq have declined from \$837.7 million in 2009 to \$133.9 million in 2014, and its democracy and governance-related assistance to Iraq has declined from \$372.7 million to \$81.6 million over the same time period.<sup>48</sup> This decrease is indicative of a broader trend, particularly among governance-related projects, of assistance pipelines drying up as the foreign policy priorities of the U.S. government change.

Without a long-term commitment to capacity strengthening, the United States will continue to face difficulties preventing popular discontent and civil violence in fragile states. Therefore, Washington should craft policies designed to strengthen the administrative capabilities of fragile states over the long term, rather than respond reactively to crises. By doing so, the United States can enhance fragile state legitimacy and reduce the risk of devastating state failure, especially as new technologies enable information to be shared cheaply and effectively through online platforms.

## **E-Learning: Bolstering Public Institutions to Strengthen States**

*It's absolutely the case that when I sit here, whether I'm talking to the transitional Liberian leadership or whether I'm talking with people about Haiti... I mean it's just capacity, capacity, capacity, and it's the same issues time and time again.*

– Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice<sup>49</sup>

*We have to be democratic about choices and education. Education shouldn't be limited to institutions. It should be open to all.*

– Professor Hossam Haick, Israel Institute of Technology<sup>50</sup>

E-learning has generated excitement among education professionals seeking to expand global access to high-quality skills training and university-level courses. The same tools may be used to strengthen government institutions in fragile states. At a fraction of the cost of brick-and-mortar institutions or traditional capacity-strengthening programs, e-learning is an inexpensive and politically-expedient means to train civil servants in fragile states remotely through an online platform. Targeted skills could include best practices in financial reporting, operations management, strategic planning, and budgetary development. With access to world-class capability-development courses through an e-learning platform, civil servants will gain the requisite skills to manage public funds, facilitate economic development, and build public trust more effectively. By enhancing human capital through such an e-learning program, civil servants will make better use of fiscal resources, enhancing state legitimacy. Additionally, a focus on proper and accurate financial reporting, which would empower honest officials to track financial flows, may reduce the ability of corrupt officials to siphon public funds.

### *Producing and Evaluating an E-Learning Curriculum*

To strengthen the capabilities of fragile state civil servants, the United States should incentivize U.S. universities to develop a comprehensive e-learning curriculum that targets financial management, project management, and strategic planning. The selected U.S. universities should also partner with local universities in target countries in order to tailor the curriculum to local contexts. Further, public institutions in target countries should incentivize program participation, as well as adopt a rigorous monitoring and evaluation mechanism. The deployment of this e-learning curriculum would not replace traditional capacity-strengthening programs, but rather work in conjunction with them.

- *How can the United States incentivize universities to develop an e-learning curriculum?*

The United States could provide a variety of financial incentives to U.S. universities to develop a comprehensive e-learning curriculum for civil servants in fragile states. First, the United States could provide grant funding for the program, as it currently does in a variety of national security, development, and education-related spheres.<sup>51</sup> Once a pool of funding has been allocated for this purpose, the United States could begin accepting grant proposals for developing individual courses within this broader curriculum, or, alternatively, for producing the curriculum in its entirety. Funding would then be

distributed to the university or universities with the strongest and most economical proposals, perhaps making use of each school's academic comparative advantage.

Second, if there is significant interest within developed countries for a similar e-learning program for their own civil servants, the United States could consider granting these universities the ability to license and sell their curriculum and educational materials outside of targeted states. Such licensing would provide an additional long-term financial incentive to produce and maintain quality e-learning products.

- *How should the e-learning curriculum be tailored to individual states?*

To provide local context for this program, as well as acquire a physical presence in-country, the United States should provide additional financial resources to facilitate partnerships between U.S. universities and educational institutions in fragile states. These partnerships, which would include financial incentives for both the American and local universities, would enable participating U.S. universities to gain an understanding of critical customs and institutional inefficiencies, as well as language assistance. Large-scale country-specific curriculum modifications may not be necessary, but some degree of local knowledge would improve the quality of the e-learning product. Additionally, local partners could provide civil servants with further technical and educational assistance as they complete the e-learning module. Preliminary evidence suggests that this hybrid model meets the needs of the average student better than those without a physical complement, while also providing a potential mechanism for meaningful teacher-student and peer interaction.<sup>52</sup>

- *How can civil servant participation be incentivized?*

Public institutions in target countries should create incentives that encourage program participation.<sup>53</sup> Although completion rates for e-learning programs tend to be higher for professional skill-development courses than courses targeted at the general public, overall completion rates remain low. There are several strategies to encourage course completion.<sup>54</sup> While mandated completion is one approach, it may be more effective for these governments to offer financial incentives or preference in promotion decisions. To ease the financial strain on the target country, the United States could offer to fund all or part of these incentives. Online and offline civil servant peer networks could be facilitated to promote cooperation, communication, and course completion. Additionally, the U.S. universities producing the e-learning curriculum could offer certificates for course completion, leveraging the strength and prestige of their brand name.

- *How should progress be evaluated?*

To evaluate the skills of students and detect areas of the e-learning curriculum where students are lagging, a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanism is required. To facilitate monitoring and evaluation, core learning objectives, key metrics for student evaluation, and data gathering and reporting, mechanisms should be developed as the program is implemented.<sup>55</sup> Though "soft" skill attainment and institutional impact are

difficult to measure, pre and post-tests on core competencies and student end-of-course feedback would provide useful data.

Furthermore, partnerships with local educational institutions and government agencies could facilitate evaluation. Local educational institutions could provide a physical location for in-person student evaluations and examinations, thus creating safeguards against cheating. Workplace evaluation of core skills, such as financial reporting, could also help to determine effectiveness.<sup>56</sup>

### *Advantages of an E-Learning Framework*

Though this e-learning program for civil servants should not replace traditional capacity-strengthening and development programs, it possesses several cost and implementation advantages. Because these programs do not require the United States to maintain a physical presence in-country, personnel costs and criticisms of U.S. political interference will be low. Additionally, the United States and its partner institutions can scale-up this program to additional civil servants at a low marginal cost.

- *Minimal on-the-ground implementation.* Because e-learning programs do not require face-to-face interaction between educational professionals and students, capacity-strengthening programs and their implementing agents are less vulnerable to deteriorating security situations. These programs may then target areas where they will have the greatest impact with fewer concerns for the safety of personnel, particularly foreign nationals. Exemplifying this worry, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction has stated that ten USAID projects with a cumulative value of \$899 million are at risk of cancellation due to an unstable security situation.<sup>57</sup> Reducing the need for in-country staff, each of whom carries significant personnel, security, and logistical expenses, would also serve as a cost-controlling measure.
- *Expandable at low cost.* Although e-learning curriculums have two to three times more development costs than classroom-based courses, they can be maintained and expanded at a low marginal cost.<sup>58</sup> For instance, the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School estimates that its Operations Management course, one of its 14 e-learning programs, had one-time faculty-related and video-production costs of \$70,000. However, the maintenance costs per offering for this 250,000 student course were approximately \$7,000, including \$2,000 for a teaching assistant and \$5,000 for technology and support.<sup>59</sup> While language barriers and cultural sensitivities would delay expanding an established e-learning curriculum designed for foreign civil servants, such an initiative could be extended at low cost once these issues are overcome.
- *Limits perceptions of undue U.S. political influence.* By incentivizing prominent U.S. universities to create an e-learning curriculum, particularly in partnership with respected local universities in targeted countries, Washington can maintain distance from the program's implementation. Potential negative perceptions of U.S. involvement should be taken seriously and mitigated, especially considering the political overtones of public

institution capacity-strengthening and the 2012 and 2013 expulsions of USAID from Russia and Bolivia, allegedly due to meddling in internal affairs.<sup>60</sup> If the United States were to create and implement a public institution-strengthening e-learning program independent from universities, the program would be open to such criticism.

### *Cost Projections*

Traditionally, e-learning programs have high start-up costs if content producers do not partner with an existing distributor, but the costs of enrolling additional students and maintaining courses tend to be exceptionally low. As a result, tens or hundreds of thousands of students frequently take part in e-learning courses at little-to-no personal cost for content. Though the individual costs of accessing computer infrastructure and suitably fast internet should also be taken into account, the audience for this e-learning program tends to reside in urban areas, where internet availability is highest and constantly expanding. Furthermore, this e-learning program for civil servants could be facilitated by in-office access to internet, with time set aside for skills development.

- *E-learning module cost projections.* For most e-learning programs, production costs are paid for by the schools creating course content, the distributor, and third parties. Costs vary widely depending on the quality of the services offered and whether design and consulting services are used. At the lower end of the cost spectrum, the University of Edinburgh's six online courses each cost \$45,000 to develop, followed by \$70,000 per course at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. Both of these schools pursued partnerships with the e-learning distributor Coursera.<sup>61</sup> At the upper end of the cost spectrum, Udacity and EdX, the latter run jointly by MIT and Harvard, budget between \$200,000 and \$250,000 for each course developed. Partnerships with established distributors, such as Coursera or EdX, enable content developers to avoid paying for expensive start-up infrastructure.<sup>62</sup>
- *Expected end-user bandwidth and computer infrastructure requirements.* Depending on the video and interactive functionalities specified for this e-learning curriculum during development, real-time use over the internet could require connection speeds between 70KB per second and 500KB per second.<sup>63</sup> Internet penetration and speed vary between and within countries. However, internet access that meets these specifications is often available, or is rapidly becoming available, within the urban areas where many of the targeted national, regional, and local-level civil servants reside. For instance, in both Mexico and the Philippines, an internet connection transmitting 6000KB per second can be purchased for between \$25 and \$40 per month.<sup>64</sup> Even in Pakistan, which held its first 3G and 4G telecom spectrum auction in 2014, a 1000KB per second internet connection with unlimited data access can be acquired for \$15 per month.<sup>65</sup>

Additionally, the computer infrastructure requirements of most e-learning platforms are low enough to be within range of many in developing countries. Since 31 percent of all households in developing countries are connected to the internet and most computers made within the last decade can run major e-learning platforms, personal capacity for

using e-learning platforms is high. As a result, upwards of one-third of participants in popular e-learning programs already come from the developing world.<sup>66</sup>

## Conclusion

Public institutions are responsible for providing social services and implementing effective developmental policies. However, the capabilities of civil servants in fragile states are often limited by insufficient training and education for civil servants, emigration of educated workers, post-conflict instability, and poor institutional incentives for skill development. Without sufficient capacity to perform critical tasks, governments in fragile states lose legitimacy and have difficulty maintaining social stability. As a result, these governments are more vulnerable to extremist activity, economic downturns, and humanitarian crises, and may also face popular discontent that descends into civil violence. By further limiting the capacity of governments to combat extremist and criminal networks, patrol their borders, and promote sustainable economic development, this governance-related instability threatens the interests of the United States.

By incentivizing U.S. universities to create a comprehensive e-learning curriculum for national, regional, and local civil servants in fragile states, the United States can strengthen the financial reporting, operations management, strategic planning, and budgetary development capabilities of civil servants. Because these skills have a visible impact on the ability of civil servants to manage public funds, facilitate economic development, and build public trust, such a program would significantly increase the legitimacy and resilience of governments in fragile states. And because Washington would not directly implement this program, but rather incentivize prominent U.S. universities to develop the curriculum, the program would avoid the political criticisms that have plagued traditional capacity-strengthening programs. Furthermore, e-learning programs do not require costly and potentially unsafe on-the-ground implementation and can be expanded to additional students remotely at an extremely low marginal cost. Therefore, an e-learning curriculum for fragile state civil servants represents an inexpensive and politically expedient means to strengthen the stability and legitimacy of fragile states, thus reducing potential threats to U.S. interests.

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<sup>3</sup> Stewart Patrick and Kaysie Brown. *Fragile States and US Foreign Assistance: Show Me the Money*: Center for Global Development (2006), 1-2. [http://www.cgdev.org/files/9373\\_file\\_WP96\\_final.pdf](http://www.cgdev.org/files/9373_file_WP96_final.pdf); "State Department Spokeswoman: Call for using Jobs to Combat Terror 'too Nuanced' for Critics." Fox News, accessed March 12, 2015, <http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2015/02/18/state-department-spokeswoman-call-for-using-jobs-to-combat-terror-too-nuanced/>.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Miller. "Finish the Job: How the War in Afghanistan can be Won." *Foreign Affairs* (January 2011).

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Siegle. "Stabilising Fragile States." Africa Center for Strategic Studies, accessed February 17, 2014, [http://africacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Stabilizing\\_Fragile\\_States\\_Global\\_Dialogue.pdf](http://africacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Stabilizing_Fragile_States_Global_Dialogue.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> Didrik Schanche. "Scarce Resources, Ethnic Strife Fuel Darfur Conflict." National Public Radio, accessed March 12, 2015, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=6425093>.

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