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How does political context and instability shape education systems and reforms? Some evidence from the Development Progress project

The ability of states and societies to manage instability and conflict depends, in part, on their deep political institutions and norms – understood here as their political settlement. These characteristics also play an important role in shaping the incentives and priorities that different actors have regarding education and education systems, as well as the ways that they contest them. These characteristics may therefore be important in helping us understand how conflicts over the role of education emerge, the ways in which these conflicts are managed by society and how political instability can create opening for education reform.

This presentation examines these issues, drawing on eight education-focused country case studies produced by the Overseas Development Institute's Development Progress project. These examined cases of progress in expanding enrolment and improving learning outcomes – identifying the political, economic and technical drivers responsible. The presentation will illustrate how different political dynamics, and the instability associated with changing political context, can shape education systems, the impacts of reforms and the role that education plays for different actors.