



CLIMATE-FRAGILITY RISK FACTSHEET

ETHIOPIA

*Ethiopia is a key security player in the Horn of Africa: while the country can act as an important catalyst for peace, it can also be a significant source of instability if conflict risks are not managed proactively. Climate variability and change are likely to reduce **agricultural yields** and **employment opportunities** and increase **resource scarcity and competition**. Combined with existing **inequalities** and the skewed distribution of resources, these negative developments can exacerbate existing tensions and threaten the livelihood security of the many Ethiopians who still largely depend on agriculture to make a living.*

3 CLIMATE FRAGILITY RISKS

In Ethiopia, there are three main risks that link climate change to insecurity and conflict:

1 Risk 1: Discontent over food and livelihood insecurity could undermine state authority

Because Ethiopia has a predominantly **rain-fed agricultural system**, the country's food security is highly sensitive to climate risks. Drier years are generally associated with lower food production. This has a particularly negative impact on the **poorest and most marginalised communities**, which have less capacities and resources to recover from such events. **Increases in food prices** and ensuing discontent - including among the emerging better-off and better-educated urban middle-class - can contribute to **protests** that challenge state authorities and diminish their capacity and legitimacy.

2 Risk 2: Forced migration could exacerbate existing tensions

Migration is an important coping mechanism for climate-affected communities, but it can exacerbate existing tensions and trigger conflict if not managed comprehensively. The **migration of pastoralists to cropping areas and other pastures and of farmers to pastoral areas** as a result of climate-induced land and pasture degradation can lead to conflicts between farmers and pastoral communities. Fragility and conflict risks can also be exacerbated as a result of **migrant agricultural labourers** seeking employment opportunities in other rural areas that, due to climate change impacts, are no longer able to provide temporary labour. Another leading cause of fragility is **rural-urban migration**, which is driven in part by the lack of agricultural employment opportunities: the already-high unemployment rates and limited provision of basic services in urban areas can fuel discontent and protests among job-seeking migrants. This can exacerbate the atmosphere of dissatisfaction between ethnic groups.

3 Risk 3: Livelihood insecurity could strengthen non-state armed groups (NSAGs)

NSAGs in Ethiopia draw strength from both state instability and livelihood insecurity. Droughts are a particular threat because they undermine herders' and farmers' ability to sell livestock as a coping mechanism, making the prospect of joining ethnic militias and terrorist groups more attractive, especially for unemployed youths. In other words, as unemployment and food prices increase, ethnic militias and other NSAGs are likely to attract more recruits, and society is likely to become more fragile, allowing those groups to operate safely. An increase in livelihood insecurity can also **reignite competition between groups for control of and access to resources** and increase the state of fragility fuelling the growth of NSAGs. Indeed, **NSAGs outside of Ethiopia can also leverage these situations** to further their goals.

CLIMATE CONTEXT

The climate of Ethiopia is tropical in the south-eastern and north-eastern lowland regions with relatively cooler temperatures in the central highland regions.

Future climate projections for Ethiopia include:



Increasing annual mean temperatures



Increased precipitation variability



Increased uncertainty and intensity of extreme weather patterns

Between 1960 and 2006, Ethiopia's mean annual temperature increased by 1.3 °C, an average of 0.28 °C per decade.

The 2018/19-drought has left 15 million people across the Horn of Africa without access to food and water.



Agriculture plays an important role in both food security and employment, and the negative impact of increasing temperature and changing rainfall patterns will be felt throughout the sector, leading to livelihood insecurity and rising food prices.

4 ENTRY POINTS TO ADDRESS RISKS

So far, the Ethiopian government has primarily examined climate vulnerability through the lens of economic development. It has **paid little attention, however, to the climate-security angle**, or to incorporating these efforts into more strategic security considerations. Four entry points can help address this gap:

- 1 **Implement conflict-sensitive climate change adaptation solutions** by taking into account existing tensions between ethnic groups and regions and considering social, ethnic and political dynamics. For example, specific efforts must be taken to ensure that adaptation solutions in the agricultural sector do not create inequalities and exacerbate grievances between farmers and pastoralists or feed into existing tensions.
- 2 **Scale up opportunities for peacebuilding to support climate resilience.** Evidence shows that small-scale peacebuilding processes such as the promotion of dialogue and mediation between pastoralist groups in southern Ethiopia have facilitated cooperation and enabled these groups to better cope with harsh drought conditions. Expanding such efforts by international donors and partners, in collaboration with government and civil society stakeholders, could reduce the need for large-scale humanitarian relief during periods of extreme weather events.
- 3 **Integrate climate change into strategic planning for mitigating conflict risk.** The resulting insights should then be used to inform development programming with a view to strengthening resilience - e.g. by facilitating livelihood diversification and strengthening conflict management mechanisms.
- 4 **Promote regional-scale climate security cooperation** by bringing together governments, bilateral and international development partners, and civil society to discuss concerns and to design and implement climate-sensitive conflict management and peacebuilding programmes. Regional organisations such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) can be used as a platform for bringing these concerns to the table and facilitate the design and implementation of programs.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTS

- Ethiopia's population was estimated to number 105 million by the World Bank, making it one of the most populous nations in Africa. 12 million Ethiopians are pastoralists.
- The agricultural sector continues to employ a large portion of the labour force, estimated at 66% in 2018.
- Ethiopia has registered strong and broad-based economic growth in the last decade, averaging GDP growth of 10.3% per year.

POLITICS & SECURITY

Since the early 1990s, Ethiopia has seen a **decentralisation** of power through the creation of ethnic-based states. This, however, was not enough to overcome issues related to ethnic-based **competition over natural resources, land ownership and foreign agricultural investments**. Thus security remains a challenge for Ethiopia, with continued reports of ethnic violence, displacements and the growth of militias across the country.

FURTHER READING

- Yishak, Milen (2019). Climate-Fragility Risk Brief: Ethiopia (full version).
- World Food Program (2014). Climate risk and food security in Ethiopia: Analysis of climate impacts on food security and livelihoods

LEGAL NOTICE

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The **Climate Security Expert Network**, which comprises some 30 international experts, supports the **Group of Friends on Climate and Security** and the **Climate Security Mechanism of the UN** system by synthesising scientific knowledge and expertise, advising on entry points for building resilience to climate-security risks, and helping to strengthen a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities of addressing climate-related security risks.

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