



CLIMATE-FRAGILITY RESEARCH PAPER:

# LINKING ADAPTATION AND PEACEBUILDING

LESSONS LEARNED AND THE WAY FORWARD

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# Climate-Fragility Discussion Paper

## Linking Adaptation and Peacebuilding - Lessons Learned and the Way Forward

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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. It does so by synthesising scientific knowledge and expertise, by advising on entry points for building resilience to climate-security risks, and by helping to strengthen a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities of addressing climate-related security risks.

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## 1 KEY MESSAGES

- **Supporting sustainable livelihoods:** with 70% of the bottom quartile of countries most vulnerable to climate change also in the bottom quartile in terms of fragility, there is an increasing need to address conflict and climate risks at the same time.
- **Evidence from existing programs** shows that climate change adaptation interventions can contribute to peacebuilding, and peacebuilding can have significant adaptation benefits.
- There is no universal set of activities that simultaneously provides **climate change adaptation, peacebuilding, and development benefits**. However, evidence from existing programming and research points to the following general entry points for integrated peacebuilding and climate resilience programming:
  - **Improving natural resource access and management**
  - **Promoting climate-resilient and sustainable livelihoods**
  - **Peace-positive climate change adaptation**
- Strengthening **relationships and social cohesion**, addressing **exclusion and marginalisation** and working across all **governance levels** were found to be cross-cutting success factors for both climate change adaptation and peacebuilding outcomes.
- The ways in which **integrated climate change adaptation and peacebuilding programs** are designed and delivered count. To achieve the best peace and resilience results, programs should:
  - **Be based on a thorough understanding of climate-fragility risks**
  - **Have a theory of change that spells out the links between outcomes**
  - **Be implemented in a participatory and conflict-sensitive way**
  - **Measure results, learn and adapt**
  - **Have flexible and long-term financing**
- Current experiences highlight three ways forward for future programming:
  - **Think and act across scales and sectors**
  - **Invest in M&E and learning**
  - **Build a community of practice**

## 2 BACKGROUND

There is growing scientific consensus that climate change and conflict are linked and that climate change poses complex risks to building and sustaining peace. Emerging findings from development programming confirm this. A number of contextual factors such as livelihood and food security, natural resources governance, state legitimacy and effectiveness, migration, social cohesion and marginalisation are decisive in shaping these climate-fragility risks.

In conflict and fragility-affected countries, these risks can create negative feedback loops. Climate change increases conflict risks and makes peacebuilding more challenging - and the resulting fragility and conflict makes a society even more vulnerable to climate change.

Looking at the confluence of climate and conflict risks, recent evidence shows that a large portion of the population and/or extensive land areas in a majority of fragile states face high climate risks (USAID, 2018). Indeed, 70% of the bottom quartile of countries most vulnerable to climate change are also in the bottom quartile of the most fragile countries in the world. This underlines the increasing need to address climate change, fragility and conflict risks together. At the same time, planning and implementation of climate change adaptation programming is lagging far behind in conflict-affected and fragile states, and new modes of delivery are urgently needed (Tänzler et al., 2018).

Because climate change, disasters and conflicts are interlinked, our responses must reflect the multidimensionality and interconnected nature of risks. Yet there is still limited practice and evidence available on how to effectively link climate change adaptation and peacebuilding in order to build the resilience of states and communities to climate-fragility risks (USAID, 2019).

This discussion paper makes a first attempt at highlighting best practices and learnings from existing peacebuilding and climate change adaptation programs. It is based on evaluations of past projects and emerging lessons from ongoing projects, including USAID's and Mercy Corps' work in the Horn of Africa, the GIZ in the Philippines, the UK-funded "Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters" (BRACED), and the EC-funded UNEP climate change and security project in Sudan and Nepal. It also draws on a recent report by Mercy Corps summarising promising practices that development and humanitarian actors have been implementing to address climate-fragility risks at play in specific contexts. Based on this analysis, it makes some recommendations to advance future integrated programming in this field.

## 3 WHAT DO WE KNOW SO FAR?

Decision-makers are increasingly becoming aware that climate variability and change can exacerbate or create tensions and conflicts within and between communities, countries and regions. Research and experiences from programming reveal a variety of pathways through which climate change interacts with other drivers of conflict and fragility. Especially in contexts where communities are highly dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods and already exhibit a certain degree of fragility and conflict, climate change can act as a risk multiplier and obstacle to peace. It does this in a number of ways, such as creating food and livelihood insecurity; increasing competition over resources such as water and land; pushing people to migrate; and reinforcing patterns of marginalisation and exclusion. In certain cases, climate change can also contribute to creating an environment in which marginalised groups, especially unemployed youth, are more vulnerable to non-state armed and/or terrorist groups, thus threatening national, regional and even global stability (Nett and Rüttinger, 2016). At the same time, conflict also further undermines the resilience of local communities, leaving them more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and

creating the risk of a vicious circle of increasing vulnerability and fragility (Vivekananda et al., 2019).

Evidence from existing programs shows that climate change adaptation interventions can contribute to peacebuilding, and peacebuilding can have significant adaptation benefits (USAID, 2019). There are considerable synergies and co-benefits that could be realised across these two sectors. Communities that face the same climate risks can come together and cooperate in conflict- and fragility-affected contexts, which can help overcome deep-rooted tensions. In particular, climate change adaptation activities can get the buy-in of the communities and make immediate, tangible improvements to livelihood and food security. For example, a USAID-funded peacebuilding project in the Borana zone of Ethiopia implemented joint climate change adaptation activities (e.g. water ponds, bush thinning, soil bunds, etc.) to increase the sense of mutual understanding and solidarity among different ethnic groups that had previously been in conflict with each other (USAID, 2017).

At the same time, peacebuilding activities can contribute to reducing mistrust, thus reinforcing social cohesion and inclusive governance. Trust, social cohesion and inclusive governance have been shown to be key success factors in climate change adaptation and peacebuilding - they help create the enabling environment that is needed to build or reinforce resilience to climate and conflict risks. For example, Mercy Corps promoted dialogue and trust-building between pastoralist and agricultural communities in Southern Ethiopia to resolve natural resource-based drivers of conflict. The project resulted in land use agreements, joint activities to rehabilitate degraded resources, and the establishment of new market linkages, thus ultimately contributing also to building communities' resilience to the impacts of climate change (Mercy Corps, 2020). Meanwhile, in Sudan and Nepal UNEP is using a livelihoods approach that puts a specific focus on social cohesion and inclusive governance to link peacebuilding and climate change adaptation (UNEP, n.d.).

However, if the interlinkages between climate change and conflict are not sufficiently considered, these positive feedback loops can be lost, and interventions can have unintended negative consequences. If not done in a conflict-sensitive way, climate change adaptation programming risks perpetuating historic patterns of marginalisation, or even giving rise to new disputes. For example, in the absence of secure land tenure arrangements, reforestation projects in Haiti have further entrenched fragility for small farmers, who often have to compete for resources with loggers who supply wood and charcoal to urban centres (Johnson Williams, 2011). If they do not consider climate risks, peacebuilding programmes can result in the establishment of unsustainable resource sharing agreements, or the promotion of livelihood strategies that neglect climate change impacts and contribute to renewed conflict. Unfortunately, many of the peacebuilding and stabilisation programs in the Lake Chad region have not sufficiently taken climate risks into account, in many cases undermining the ability of people to cope with climate shocks (Vivekananda et al., 2019).

These examples highlight the importance of making peacebuilding interventions climate-sensitive and climate change adaptation projects conflict-sensitive. But to fully realise the significant co-benefits, integrated projects should go beyond climate- and conflict-sensitivity and simultaneously use climate change adaptation and peacebuilding approaches. This can help build community resilience towards a variety of shocks and stresses, including climate and conflict risks.

## 4 WHAT SHOULD INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING DO?

There is no universal set of activities that simultaneously provides climate change adaptation, peacebuilding, and development benefits. Each program needs to design the interventions and strategies that are most appropriate to tackle the climate-fragility risks at play in a specific context. However, evidence from existing programming and research points to some general entry points for integrated peacebuilding and climate resilience measures:

### ⇒ Improving natural resources access and management

The access, restoration and management of natural resources can serve as a quick entry point to achieve livelihood, adaptation and peacebuilding outcomes. Institutions and mechanisms that support the effective and equitable management of natural resources are key elements of successful peacebuilding and climate change adaptation. They are not only important when it comes to addressing risks directly, for example by enabling societies to more effectively respond to disasters, but can also contribute to increasing legitimacy and improving the often-damaged relationship between communities and the government. Institutionalising regular contact and collaboration between different groups can support trust building, build relationships between conflicting groups and improve social cohesion in the long run. Further institutionalisation can be achieved through natural resource-sharing agreements, improved dispute resolution and more inclusive governance of natural resources (USAID, 2017, 2018; Mercy Corps, 2015, 2019; Gijzenbergh, 2018).

### ⇒ Climate-resilient and sustainable livelihoods

Both adaptation and peacebuilding programmes often have livelihoods components (Mercy Corps, 2019; 2020). In order to achieve climate change adaptation and peacebuilding outcomes, livelihoods programmes have to be broad and long-term in nature. For example, demobilisation and reintegration programmes for ex-combatants often try to provide participants with alternative livelihoods. If these efforts concentrate on climate-resilient livelihoods, they can also help to adapt to a changing climate (Nett and Rüttinger, 2016; Vivekananda et al., 2019). If the aim is for livelihoods projects to have peacebuilding impacts, it is also important to make sure that they also address marginalisation and exclusion, rather than just providing more income and jobs (Mercy Corps, 2019). In terms of sustainability, projects should try not only to address short-term risks but also to focus on longer-term measures, including through the adoption of 'climate-smart' agricultural techniques, resource sharing and management strategies and disaster risk reduction (Mercy Corps, 2020). For example, Tearfund has been implementing a Self-Help Group programme in Ethiopia, focusing on savings and loans, to support community resilience to environmental shocks and stresses (Mercy Corps, 2020). Evidence from research and programmes also showed how important it is that these approaches be embedded within broader, multi-sectoral efforts that create the conditions for them to be sustainable and scalable.

### ⇒ Peace-positive climate change adaptation

Climate change adaptation measures can be used pro-actively to build peace. For example, UNEP is implementing disaster risk reduction measures to address marginalisation and improve the relationship between local communities and the government in Nepal. However, while these kind of peacebuilding co-benefits can sometimes arise by themselves, they normally need to be integrated explicitly and from the beginning (see chapter 5 for more information on which process elements are key to achieve such integration). Oftentimes adaptation measures focus mainly on the technical side while neglecting the social and political dimensions of their interventions. Including peacebuilding approaches can help to strengthen these dimensions. Participants in USAID's peacebuilding programs in the Horn of Africa found that, while climate change adaptation activities had important practical benefits (e.g. rehabilitated ponds could be used as water points), their most valuable outcome over time was the sense of mutual understanding they fostered among different groups working collaboratively (USAID, 2017, 2018, 2019).

In addition to these elements, there are also some cross-cutting elements that revealed themselves to be success factors for both climate change adaptation and peacebuilding outcomes:

⇒ **Strengthening social cohesion and relationships within and between groups**

Evidence from peacebuilding and climate change adaptation programs shows that interventions that focus on strengthening dialogue and collaboration can help increase social cohesion, build relationships between conflicting groups and improve the legitimacy of authorities. Moreover, when framed as responses to external threats to different groups and communities, climate change adaptation and natural resource management activities can be a strong incentive for interethnic dialogue and collaboration. In Ethiopia, for instance, different ethnic groups that had previously been in conflict agreed to collaborate on the rehabilitation, shared use and maintenance of communal ponds and degraded grazing areas. They were moved by the imperative to respond to climate change (USAID, 2017).

⇒ **Addressing exclusion and marginalisation**

Exclusion and marginalisation are often important drivers of conflict. Therefore, making governance structures and processes more inclusive can contribute to peace. However, there are climate-related effects too: experiences from Mercy Corps in the Horn of Africa demonstrated that making governance mechanisms more inclusive also improves communities' resilience to climate change impacts. For example, the experience of the youth and women's committees established by Mercy Corps in the Horn of Africa showed that these contributed to reshaping power relations within communities. This allowed for a fairer and more equal distribution of resources, which was key to enhancing resilience, in particular to the impacts of extreme weather events (Mercy Corps, 2019). While supporting the creation of new institutions can be a useful way to start redressing deep-rooted inequities, it is critical that interventions can call on adequate and continuous resources and capacities. Otherwise, they risk increasing disconnectedness, overlaps and exacerbating conflicts over resources, roles and responsibilities (USAID, 2017, 2018).

⇒ **Working across all governance levels**

Programmes that work with and try to strengthen the links between existing formal and informal structures have tended to be more successful. To address climate-fragility challenges in the cross-border areas of Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and local NGOs promoted the sharing of pastures and coordinated cross-border livestock movements, building on traditional resource sharing practices that were common between local and neighbouring groups. Their experience showed that both formal and informal institutions can provide communication channels and conflict resolution mechanisms to address shared environmental problems (Mercy Corps, 2020). Moreover, vertical integration from local communities to regional/provincial and national levels has been crucial for many programmes, as local level actors often lack the resources and capacities to sustain their activities and implement policies (USAID, 2017, 2018; Leavy et al., 2018; Gijzenbergh, 2018). Noting that local government units in Uganda were prevented from playing a constructive role due to funding gaps, Mercy Corps worked with the National Platform for Peacebuilding in the Office of the Prime Minister to include provisions to fill the funding gap in the draft National Peace Policy (USAID, 2017).



## 5 HOW TO DO INTEGRATED PROGRAMMING?

In addition to examining which activities are best suited to achieve both peacebuilding and climate change adaptation goals, our analysis of existing research and experiences showed that it is also important to look at how these activities are designed and delivered. Key findings from the programmes we reviewed are:

### ⇒ Conducting integrated analysis

Experiences across programs show the importance of proper analysis of the climate-conflict-fragility nexus. The links and dynamics between climate change, conflict and fragility are highly context-specific and play out differently depending on the local environment. A truly holistic analysis should consider the macro and micro dimension, balance the interests, needs and perspective of different groups, nations and individuals, and employ different data collection methods - including quantitative survey and qualitative interviews - as well as focussing group discussions to gather information from a variety of stakeholders. Updates are needed due to changing context dynamics during the project cycle and as a result of the project (USAID, 2017, 2018; Leavy et al., 2018; Tänzler et al., 2018; Vivekananda et al., 2019). Another key success factor is to include both climate change and conflict experts in these kinds of integrated assessments (Vivekananda et al., 2019; UNEP, 2019).

There are already a number of available **guidance materials and assessment tools** that can help to link climate change adaptation and peacebuilding.

- As part of an EU-funded climate change and security project, UNEP and adelphi developed [guidance materials](#) to assess climate-fragility risks and develop measures that link climate change adaptation, peacebuilding and sustainable livelihoods.
- As part of the EU's Initiative for Peacebuilding, adelphi has developed the [Water, Crisis and Climate Change Assessment Framework \(WACCAF\)](#) to analyse the local conflict potential of shared water resources in a changing climate.
- The German Federal Environment Agency's [Guidelines for conflict-sensitive adaptation to climate change](#) provide a framework and toolkit to mainstream conflict and peacebuilding into climate change adaptation programming.
- USAID's [Climate Change and Conflict Annex](#) to its Climate Resilient Development Framework, which includes a framework for analysis and general principles for climate change and peacebuilding programming.

### ⇒ Developing a theory of change

Assessments like this are important for identifying the assumptions guiding the interventions. These assumptions need to be made explicit in a theory of change in order to reflect the assumed links between climate change, fragility and conflict risks. For example, "IF communities and local government are aware of the links between conflict and climate change, and engage in processes that strengthen the peaceful management of communal resources, THEN capacities to cope with climate change will be strengthened" (USAID, 2018). Larger programs with projects in several locations developed a hierarchy of theories to contextualise them (Leavy et al., 2018). One best practice is to formulate a theory of change that links climate change adaption and peacebuilding outcomes based on the concept of sustainable livelihoods, social cohesion and legitimate, inclusive and effective governance (UNEP, 2019).

### ⇒ Implementing a participatory and conflict-sensitive approach

Participation increases transparency and sustainability of program design, and establishes stakeholders' ownership, trust and collaboration. Involving different governance levels, both formal and informal institutions, secures their support and ensures that the project is aligned with their priorities (USAID, 2019). It can also contribute to building trust and relationships between the government and communities, thus strengthening the social contract and the legitimacy of the

government. However, it takes time to follow a participatory approach thoroughly, and such an approach needs to be implemented in different steps of the project, from the assessment to the selection and design of interventions (USAID, 2017; Vivekananda et al., 2019). The same holds true for conflict sensitivity. The reviewed programs show the importance of maintaining a conflict-sensitive approach to designing, implementing and evaluating integrated interventions that attempt to build peace and resilience at the same time. This is because the interactions among them and with the context are multiple and complex, which increases the risk that the project can ‘do harm’ through unintended consequences (UNEP, 2019).

⇒ **Measuring results and be flexible for learning and adapting<sup>1</sup>**

A monitoring system needs to fulfil different information needs for different stakeholders. Quantitative and qualitative approaches are needed to capture activity, perception, impact and outcome level, unintended consequences, and short- and long-term results at different points in time. In particular, it is vital to ensure that both climate change adaptation and peacebuilding outcomes are being captured (UNEP, 2019). Therefore, a variety of data collection methods and participatory approaches need to be followed (UNEP, 2019). In order to avoid an overly complex monitoring system, an iterative process should be used in order to give stakeholders an opportunity to adapt and learn from experiences (Leavy et al., 2018; Wild and Ramalingam, 2018).

⇒ **Ensuring flexible and long term financing mechanisms**

In countries affected by conflict and fragility, situations can easily switch from being essentially stable to prevention, or from humanitarian response to recovery. This affects the progress of any project and makes it harder to achieve long-term climate change adaptation and peacebuilding outcomes (USAID, 2017). Interventions focusing on climate change adaptation or natural resources are often weather-dependent and need flexibility to adapt to reflect the changing circumstances on the ground (USAID, 2019). The availability of flexible and long-term financing is a key success factor to respond to changing circumstances, to achieve intended outcomes, to set the right incentives, to decrease uncertainty for the stakeholders and to strengthen coherence and sustainability across various governance levels (Leavy et al., 2018; USAID, 2019).

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<sup>1</sup> For a more comprehensive overview of the monitoring and evaluation of strategies, policies and projects that seek to increase resilience by linking climate change adaptation, peacebuilding, and sustainable livelihoods, see: UNEP (2019).

## 6 THE WAY FORWARD

There is evidence that integrated climate change adaptation and peacebuilding programming can achieve significant synergies and co-benefits in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. Current experiences in this field highlight three ways forward for future programming:

### ➤ **Think and act across scales and sectors**

Because the underlying drivers of conflict, such as poor governance, unequal power-sharing, or inequitable national policies on land use, are often found at multiple governance levels, the interventions to address them should be as well. For example, interventions that aim at introducing livelihoods diversification at the communal level should also consider how to embed these changes into municipal and national development plans. It is also important to remember that resilience outcomes are best achieved through interventions that address vulnerabilities, risks and capacities across different sectors. In many cases, non-climate solutions, such as those that seek to improve education and job opportunities for the youth or establish markets and trade systems, can be an equally effective way to enhance climate adaptation capacity.

### ➤ **Invest in M&E and learning**

It is important to measure the results of all projects, but it is particularly important that projects in new areas of work, such as integrated programming, have robust M&E systems that facilitate learning. This requires adequate and sustained investments into M&E. M&E systems should capture both climate change adaptation and peacebuilding outcomes, while remaining simple enough to be implemented in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. A special focus should be put on the social dimension in order to be able to capture how relationships and trust between stakeholders develop as a result of the project, as this is an area that a lot of projects are struggling with. While focussing on the social dimension is essential to enhance learning to adapt the current plan, it is also necessary to improve the design of the next project, and to allow comparison with other evaluations to generate broader knowledge on the cost efficiency and impact of interventions.

### ➤ **Build a community of practice**

To achieve both climate change adaptation and peacebuilding outcomes, it is important that silos between traditional development, humanitarian, peace and security, and climate change/environmental 'communities' are bridged. This requires bringing together practitioners and researchers with different disciplinary backgrounds and expertise, fostering collaboration and partnerships. In many cases, this will also require investing in building the capacities of practitioners and stakeholders to design and implement integrated climate change adaptation and peacebuilding approaches and programming, for example through trainings, as well as regular interactions and exchanges of lessons learned and best practices.

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