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Planetary Security
INITIATIVE

adelphi

MARCH 2018

Building resilience by linking climate change adaptation, peacebuilding and conflict prevention

This policy brief explores the way in which linking climate change adaptation and peacebuilding measures presents opportunities and challenges for conflict prevention. It argues that integrating these two sectors could play a major role in preventing the triggering and escalation of climate-related conflicts and in promoting peace. However, integrating climate change adaptation and peacebuilding remains a challenge for practitioners. This policy brief outlines the key issues that must be resolved in order to make progress towards a more holistic approach and greater resilience.

Climate change as a driver of conflict and a risk multiplier

Global climate change manifests itself in changing rainfall patterns, temperatures and sea levels. This can lead or contribute to: altered crop growth; land degradation; desertification; the inundation of low-lying land; and more frequent and severe storms, floods and droughts. These direct effects could also have indirect impacts, such as changes in food productivity and/or the incidence and spread of human diseases such as malaria.[1]

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1   Urmilla B., Bronkhorst S. and Salsa S. (2014). Climate change and conflict: conflict-sensitive adaption in Africa. In: Urmilla B., Bronkhorst S. and Salsa S. (eds.): Conflict-sensitive adaptation in Africa. Berlin: Berliner Wissenschaftsverlag.

Although climate change is a global phenomenon, its impacts vary according to local contexts. This may be for geographical reasons, as some regions are more immediately affected by a changing climate than others. However, socio-political factors also play a role, with many countries ill equipped and inadequately prepared to cope with or adapt to climate change impacts, due to lack of financial resources, technologies, knowledge or rule of law. Climate change therefore poses a far greater challenge to countries already experiencing protracted tensions, violence or political fragility – and in particular, for more marginalised and disadvantaged groups within these countries, such as farmers. In these countries, as in others, climate change may increase competition over either scarce or abundant resources, and therefore has the potential to push social

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Climate change resilience can be strengthened through:
- *Absorptive* capacity, or mechanisms for coping with shocks (e.g., early harvest to reduce food insecurity)
- *Adaptive* capacity, or the ability of a system to adjust, modify or change itself to mitigate future dangers (e.g., introducing drought-resistant seeds)
- *Transformative* capacity, or the ability to create a fundamentally new system that is not susceptible to climate change impacts (e.g., conflict-resolution mechanisms).

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stability beyond a 'tipping point'.[2] In other words, climate change could aggravate existing fragile situations and contribute to social upheaval or even violent conflict.

The link between climate and conflict is mediated by a range of political, institutional and societal factors.[3] However, if designed and implemented properly, adaptation measures could help to reduce tensions and catalyse processes that promote stability, if not peace. The ways in which adaptation measures are designed and implemented can therefore be a key determinant of climate change resilience. Also, when used in the context of peacebuilding and disaster management, the term 'resilience' can refer to a state or society's ability to absorb shocks, and to transform and channel radical change or challenges through the political process while maintaining political or social stability and preventing violence.

This policy brief seeks to shed light on the complex interrelations between resilience, adaptation and peace, and explores the opportunities and challenges of linking adaptation, peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

Links between adaptation and peace(building)

Climate change adaptation, peacebuilding and conflict prevention interrelate in three main ways:[4]

1. **Adaptation can serve as a peace builder, acting as a catalyst for dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution**. Strengthening a country's ability to adapt to climate change can increase the social resilience of vulnerable groups (e.g., by providing alternative sources of income) and put them in a better position to achieve peaceful conflict resolution and conflict transformation in other areas. Thus, adaptation measures can enable countries to better withstand a variety of social and economic pressures, while avoiding the destabilisation of their governing institutions and social structures. Participatory adaptation processes are particularly well suited to building resilient communities, as they give marginalised groups the opportunity to voice their concerns, thus promoting inclusion.

2. **If they encounter resistance, adaptation measures might, however, cause or contribute to friction and conflict**. Resistance would usually come from those who profit from the *status quo* or who are interested in diverting

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2   Bronkhorst, S. (2014). Adaptation must be conflict sensitive. Conflict-sensitive Adaptation: Use Human Rights to Build Social and Environmental Resilience. Brief 1. Indigenous Peoples of Africa Co-ordinating Committee and IUCN Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy.

3   See, for instance, WBGU (2007). Welt im Wandel: Sicherheitsrisiko Klimawandel. Berlin: Springer, Rüttinger, L., Stang, G., Smith D., Tänzler D. and Vivekananda J. et al. (2015). A New Climate for Peace – Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks. Berlin/London/ Washington/Paris: adelphi, International Alert, The Wilson Center, EUISS.

4   Tänzler, D., Mohns T. and Ziegenhagen K. (2013). Adaptation to climate change for peace and stability. Strengthening of approaches and instruments as well as promotion of processes to reduce the security risks posed by climate change in the context of climate change adaptation. Dessau-Roßlau: Umweltbundesamt.

adaptation-related funding for other purposes.[5] In some worst-case scenarios, adaptation measures might even be the direct cause of conflict. For instance, in Kasese in Uganda, efforts to provide communities with additional water taps repeatedly led to significant tensions at the beginning of this century. As the taps were installed only in a few locations, only the selected communities benefited – and this angered neighbouring communities without taps. With climate finance increasingly available for adaptation purposes, it will be important to find effective approaches to promote local ownership of allocation processes, to equitably distribute assistance among affected communities, and to reduce the risks of elite capture, corruption and organised crime.

3. Adaptation can be hindered by conflicts, be they sudden or long lasting. The chaos and destruction unleashed by conflict can interrupt adaptation programmes and projects, reverse development and adaptation gains, and destroy the resources and infrastructure created by adaptation measures. For example, in Mali in 2012, conflict put a stop to ongoing and planned adaptation activities being carried out by UNDP, as well as by other organisations.

In short, conflict-sensitive adaptation measures can help to avoid situations in which climate change heightens existing risks of destabilisation or violent conflict, especially during peacebuilding or consolidation processes.

What policy makers can do

Climate change is increasing the complexity of a range of global challenges, including fragility risks such as food insecurity, water stress and migration. If strategies fail to take into account the interdependent and systemic nature of these climate and fragility risks, they will fail or, in the worst cases, exacerbate the risks they try to address. In most cases it is not enough to intervene in one sector to prevent climate change impacts from increasing fragility, or prevent fragility from undermining climate resilience. By contrast, coordinated action across different sectors can result in synergies and mutual benefits and can strengthen complementarity, even if the goals and tools used in the sectors are different. This kind of integration, which strengthens the resilience of states and societies to climate and fragility risks, can be approached from two angles:

1. Climate change adaptation programmes can help countries to anticipate adverse effects of climate change and take action to prevent, minimise and adapt to potential impacts, including destabilisation and conflict.
2. Peacebuilding and conflict prevention programmes address the causes and effects of conflict by reducing tensions and tackling the root causes of conflict – including climate change – and creating an environment for sustainable peace, which would need to include climate change resilience.

There are several approaches in these two areas already being implemented which could help to systematically address the challenges ahead.[6] With regard to climate change adaptation, climate vulnerability assessments are key initial elements in national adaptation planning. The National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process, guided by international climate policy and the activities under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), aims to provide countries with a comprehensive understanding of how to increase resilience. These ongoing planning processes could be leveraged to build up capacity and therefore enhance adaptation planning at national and regional levels. Increasing climate finance is also essential for improving implementation. However, as adaptation measures affect power dynamics and people's livelihoods

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5   Tänzler, D.; Carius, A. and Maas, A. (2013). The Need for Conflict-Sensitive Adaptation to Climate Change. In: Dabelko, G., Herzer, L., Schuyler N., Parker, M. and Sticklor, R. (Eds.): Backdraft: The Conflict Potential of Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation. Environmental Change & Security Program Report 14:2. Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, pp. 5-12.

6   Rüttinger et al. (2015). [Footnote 3]

On conflict sensitivity
Conflict-sensitive approaches seek, at a minimum, to avoid causing harm (the 'do no harm' principle) and, at most, to contribute to peace on a broader societal level in conflict-prone areas.

Central to any conflict-sensitive approach is a *conflict analysis*, which aims to provide decision makers with a deeper understanding of (1) the conflict context and (2) the interaction between the intervention and the conflict situation. In light of this knowledge, decision makers might then (3) end or revise the intervention in accordance with their chosen conflict-sensitive approach (e.g., a minimalist 'do-no-harm' or a maximalist 'promote-peace' approach). It is then extremely important that decision makers continue to (4) monitor and evaluate the intervention throughout implementation and revise it as necessary.

and asset base, it is crucial to consider how an intervention might redistribute benefits or resources. In other words, it is necessary to ensure that an intervention is conflict sensitive and does not aggravate tensions between communities (see box below). However, there is limited guidance available on how to do this effectively.

In the realm of peacebuilding, climate change has not yet been adequately incorporated into fragility or peace and conflict assessments, although there have been calls to improve our understanding of the links between climate and fragility at the highest political levels.[7] At a more strategic level, there is a growing understanding of how peacebuilding and strengthening climate change resilience could complement each other. Initiatives such as the *New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States*, which takes a multi-stakeholder approach to building resilience, could be encouraged to more fully reflect the consequences of climate change. In addition, implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – in particular SDG16 on peace,

justice and strong institutions – could take into consideration the impacts of climate change. Multi-donor trust funds could help coordinate donors, harmonise aid, create country ownership, and mobilise resources. However, examples of using such funds to systematically address climate change-related risks are rare. At implementation level, climate-sensitive peacebuilding therefore appears still to be in the pilot phase.

Still a challenge: integrating climate change adaptation and peacebuilding

Why does it make sense to integrate adaptation and peacebuilding? Fragile and conflict-affected states and societies are more likely to suffer the negative effects of climate change. At the same time, climate change acts as a threat multiplier in places where governments are already struggling to provide basic services, where a substantial proportion of the population depends on the natural resource base for their livelihood, and where there are already tensions or conflicts. Adaptation measures therefore must take into account fragility and conflict risks, while peacebuilding and conflict prevention measures need to factor in climate risks. It therefore follows that fully integrating adaptation and peacebuilding measures and programmes could result in mutual benefits and could maximise synergies between the two fields.

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7   For example, as set out recently in the G7 Foreign Minister's Joint Communique in April 2016 http://www.japan.go.jp/g7/_userdata/common/data/000147440.pdf, and the US Presidential Memorandum on Climate Change and National Security, September 2016 https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/21/presidential-memorandum-climate-change-and-national-security.

It will be essential to develop integrated approaches throughout the key policy stages of assessment, planning, financing and implementation. However, a number of issues relating to the analysis, design or implementation phases make this a highly complex endeavour.

First, there is no common, widely accepted methodology for assessing the links between climate change, conflict and fragility. There are several peace and conflict methodologies and vulnerability assessment methodologies,[8] each with their own advantages and disadvantages. This lack of a developed methodology to assess the implications and impacts of interventions is an analytical problem as much as a 'real-world' problem. For example, the fragile states that form the g7+ association prepared country-specific fragility assessments without sufficiently taking into account potential climate change impacts. As we can expect climate change impacts to further increase fragility in the future, these assessments will remain incomplete. Fragility and climate impacts are highly context specific. It is hard – and highly problematic – to develop a one-size-fits-all assessment methodology. In addition, both peace and conflict assessments, as well as vulnerability assessments, face significant challenges when it comes to data availability and impact measuring.

Second, it is challenging to work in conflict- and fragility-affected contexts. Implementing agencies (e.g., a government, international development agency or non-governmental organisation) might have difficulty obtaining information in the first place. Information is highly politicised in a conflict-ridden context. Moreover, the implementing agency might itself become part of the conflict. External actors (e.g., donors or development agencies) need to be aware, for instance, that aid/support might be instrumentalised by local conflict groups[9] (e.g., win 'hearts and minds', build a certain state order) and that even an intention to intervene can trigger or fuel a violent conflict[10] (e.g., competition over aid resources, creation of an unsafe environment to secure continuous funding to insurgency-affected areas). Methodologically, data collection in conflict-prone contexts could be restricted by security concerns, it might be relatively costly and time consuming or, if carried out by external actors, it could be shaped by substantial power imbalances between researcher and respondents.

Third, the integration and translation of policy guidelines or implementation of policies in a conflict- and fragility-affected context can be an organisational challenge. Coordinating and integrating various actors and activities requires substantial resources (e.g., funding, networks, staff and knowledge). The challenge is even greater in countries affected by conflict and fragility, where there is often a lack of institutions and capacities. The lack of capacities is often mirrored on the side of development organisations and donors that do not provide sufficient resources to ensure conflict sensitivity.[11] In addition, frequent political

8   Bush, K. (2009). Aid for peace: A handbook for applying peace & conflict impact assessment (PCIA) to Peace III projects. INCORE, University of Ulster, and United Nations University. http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/pdfs/Handbook-Aid_for_Peace-2009_Dec.pdf.
Hoffman, M. (2003). PCIA methodology: Evolving art form or practical dead end? In Austin, A., Wils O. and Fischer M. (Eds.) Peace and conflict impact assessment: Critical views on theory and practice. Berlin: Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management. http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue1_hoffman.pdf.
CSC (2012). How to guide to conflict sensitivity. London: The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium. http://www.conflictsensitivity.org/sites/default/files/1/6602_HowToGuide_CSF_WEB_3.pdf.

9   Haider, H. (2014). Conflict Sensitivity: Topic Guide. Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

10   Fishstein, P. and Wilder, A. (2012). Winning hearts and minds? Examining the relationship between aid and security in Afghanistan. Somerville, MA: Tufts, Feinstein International Centre https://afg.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/WinningHearts-Final.pdf.

11   See, for example, Rüttinger et al. (2015). [Footnote 3] 104-107.

upheavals or turnover and complex political economies make political buy-in and support extremely difficult to achieve.

Finally, there are a number of institutional barriers to integrating climate change adaptation and peacebuilding. One is that there is no common language between the two communities of practice. While the root causes of vulnerability to conflict and to climate risks are often the same, there is little understanding of these shared goals by practitioners in each sector due to differences in the technical language or jargon used in each field. Another institutional barrier relates to a lack of incentives for integration at all levels: from human resources level – due to a lack of mandate in job descriptions – through to institutional level – due to the silo-ed and discrete budget lines or funding envelopes under which the climate change adaptation and peacebuilding communities work.

The way ahead

There are several recommendations on how to better integrate climate change adaptation and peacebuilding:[12]
–   Use insights from peace and conflict assessments to inform the process of climate change adaptation. This will ensure that adaptation programmes and projects go beyond a purely technical understanding of adaptation and move towards implementable real-world solutions that recognise the political nature of adaptation efforts.
–   Mainstream climate change adaptation in conflict-prone contexts by applying conflict-sensitive approaches using insights from existing activities and experience in conflict-prone areas.
–   Build robust governance structures at local, national and regional levels to address climate and fragility-related risks, and to foster transparent and accountable spending.

To implement these recommendations, decision makers do not need to start from scratch, as there are first-entry points to support integration of adaptation and peacebuilding which can be considered when designing and implementing interventions:[13]
–   German Development Cooperation has issued guidance for 'climate-proofing' development projects by mainstreaming climate into development programming. It provides a systematic way to reduce climate risk as well as increase the potential for adaptive capacity.[14]
–   The authors have developed a guide on conflict-sensitive adaptation on behalf of the German Ministry for the Environment and the Federal Environment Agency which could be used as starting point for further donor considerations.[15]
–   The USAID Peace Centers for Climate and Social Resilience in Ethiopia has started to use dialogues on climate-related resource challenges as a mechanism for addressing tensions among different pastoralist groups.
–   The Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) is one of the EU's key tools for preventing and responding to crises. It stresses the need to address climate change in fragile contexts as a means to prevent conflict, and it plans to spend €11 million on climate change and security from 2014 to 2017 to promote adaptation in fragile countries.

12 See, for example, Tänzler et al. (2013). [Footnote 4]

13 See for a more detailed analysis of the following examples and others, Rüttinger et al. (2015). [Footnote 3], 74-107.
14 See gtz (2010). Manual. Climate proofing tool (July 2010). Eschborn: Gesellschaft für technische Zusammenarbeit.
15 See Tänzler, D. and Scherer, N. (forthcoming). A guide to conflict-sensitive adaptation. (Draft version 1.0 as of November 2017).

About the Planetary Security Initiative

The Planetary Security Initiative aims to help increase awareness, to deepen knowledge, and to develop and promote policies and good practice guidance to help governments, the private sector and international institutions better secure peace and cooperation in times of climate change and global environmental challenges. The Initiative was launched by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2015 and is currently operated by a consortium of leading think tanks headed by the Clingendael Institute.

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