



# ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE CRISIS IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT- AFFECTED SETTINGS

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Photo Raymond Rutting

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# INTRODUCING THE CLIMATE PEACE SECURITY NEXUS

Climate change is now widely recognised as a ‘threat multiplier’ for international peace and security. The field that analyses the impacts of the climate crisis on peace and security, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS), is often referred to as the Climate Peace Security Nexus. Why does this field matter? The Climate Peace Security Nexus matters because there is indisputable evidence on the interrelation between climate change, peace and security. Climate change disproportionately impacts vulnerable and marginalised population groups, especially children, youth, women and the forcibly displaced. Climate stress is proven to double the risk of violent conflict outbreak. At the same time, manifestations of fragility and insecurity influence the root causes of climate change and hamper climate adaptation and mitigation. There is now evidence that the negative impacts of climate change are rolling back on, and further jeopardising, development gains. The text box below reflects the linkages between climate, peace and security.

## HOW CLIMATE CHANGE ACCELERATES CONFLICT AND INSECURITY

- The impact of climate change affects the availability of natural resources (e.g. land, water) which contributes to natural resource conflicts. Lack of natural resources resulting from alterations in the climate and vegetation coverage are rendering traditional livelihoods unfeasible which in turn induces both internal and external migration. These impacts on traditional livelihoods are affecting traditional gender roles differently – for instance, where rural women can still sell their labour force to cook and clean for other urban households, the farming and livestock-rearing skills of rural men are less transferable to urban settings.
- The impacts of climate change undermine livelihoods, pushing communities to adopt harmful coping mechanisms which further weaken their ability to recover from shocks, can degrade the environment and social cohesion (e.g. farmer-herder conflicts around water, pasture/croplands/deforestation).
- Extreme weather events challenge the effectiveness and legitimacy of governments and undermine trust and security (as was shown by the challenges in addressing the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic). This is particularly true for the least developed countries which have less technical and financial means to absorb shocks and support economic recovery.
- Poorly designed and gender-blind climate policies and interventions may have harmful consequences which undermine peace and security. These processes are often not inclusive, while adaptation/mitigation plans need inclusive decision-making processes to ensure sustainable solutions.
- Climate change poses a significant threat to global health by intensifying the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, exacerbating the spread of infectious diseases, and compromising access to essential health services. This impacts women and men differently, especially in regards to maternal health care.

## HOW CONFLICT AND INSECURITY INFLUENCE ROOT CAUSES OF CLIMATE CHANGE

- Parties in an armed conflict, as well as those impacted by armed conflicts, e.g. internally displaced communities, can harm the environment.
- Armies (and peacekeeping forces) are large emitters of CO<sub>2</sub> gases which harm the environment.
- Fragile and Conflict Affected States are amongst the world’s poorest economies. Their governments already suffer from a lack of financial resources and weak governance systems that negatively impact the social contract. The added pressure generated by climate change further exacerbates these tensions and the legitimacy of their governments who are unable to meet their citizen’s needs.
- Insecurity limits opportunities to invest in viable, gender transformative climate-resilient alternatives.

## THE INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN CLIMATE, CONFLICT, AND SECURITY

The interlinkages between climate, conflict, and security, are also reflected in the strong overlap between the countries most susceptible to climate risks and the most fragile and conflict-affected countries, as shown in the map below. As illustrated in the map, many countries with high fragility rates also have high climate exposure rates. The IMF states that 'three times as many people in fragile and conflict-affected states are affected every year by extreme weather events than in other countries'. Climate change, conflict and displacement intersect in a global crisis. More than 110 million people are displaced because of conflict, violence, and the effects of climate change and environmental disasters. Many of them live in places that suffer a 'double burden' of climate vulnerability and conflict, as 70% of countries most vulnerable to climate change are also the most fragile. And these numbers are only expected to rise. By 2050, climate change could displace more than 216 million people within their own countries' borders. Women bear the brunt of the climate crisis. For example, according to UN Women, women are 14 times more likely to die during a disaster than men, and up to 80% of people displaced by climate change are women.

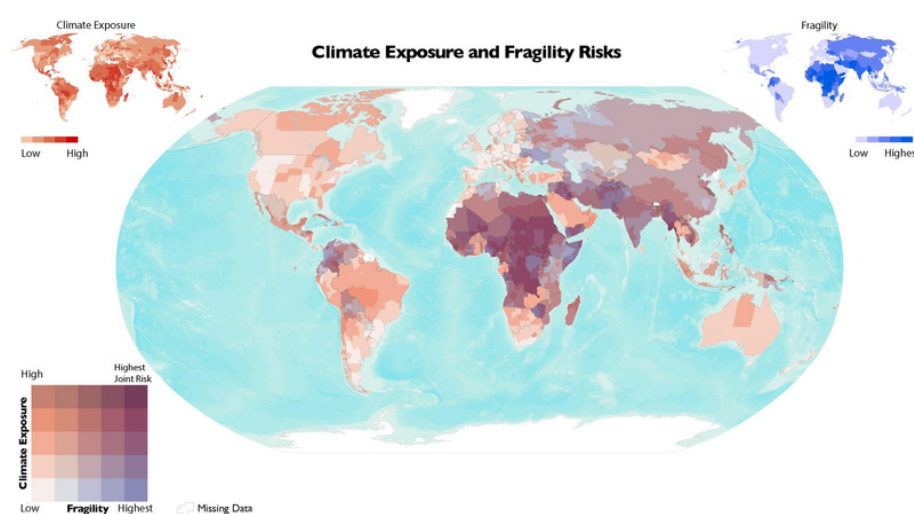


Figure 1. Distribution of Climate Exposure (top left), Fragility (top right), and Compound Fragility-Climate Risks (center).

Climate exposure data sources: Global Precipitation Climatology Centre; UNEP/GRID-Europe; Viewfinder Panoramas.

Source: [USAID: Report on the double burden of climate exposure and state fragility](#) | [PreventionWeb](#)

As Cordaid, an international development and emergency relief organisation, we operate in these fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS). The multi-dimensional crises (cost of living/inflation, pandemic, climate change, conflict) impacting FCAS, are jeopardising progress made towards the SDGs. These crises also make it more challenging for actors like Cordaid to help affected communities become less reliant on humanitarian assistance. The risks impact our ability to operate effectively, lead to increased needs and undermine the effectiveness of programmes seeking to address the root causes of poverty and conflict. Due to the breakdown of multilateralism and erosion of the rights-based international order, there is a disproportionate and unfair burden placed on aid actors such as Cordaid. This is the burden to navigate the complexity of FCAS' environments and shoulder the risks of addressing the root causes of fragility through institutional, technical and financial tools that are ill suited to the task. In this context, it becomes an impossible balancing act to both adhere to donor norms, principles and financial regulations while being context, gender, conflict and climate sensitive.

***“ The international community and governments widely fail to adequately resource and take conflict-sensitive approaches in climate change programming, and climate-sensitive approaches to sustaining peace.***

Recognising the interlinkages between climate and conflict is therefore essential. Failure to do so, will increase environmental degradation and undermine peace and security. For example, it will increase the risk of unplanned, irregular human migration that will generate further human rights violations and humanitarian needs at an unprecedented scale. As Cordaid, with over 100 years of experience and working on development, humanitarian, and peacebuilding programming, such a nexus approach is not new to us. However, we operate in a world where institutional silos hamper true integration, where – despite the recognition of climate as a threat multiplier – there is still a lack of awareness of the linkages and pathways towards addressing these. The international community and governments widely fail to adequately resource and take conflict-sensitive (and gender transformative) approaches in climate change programming, and climate-sensitive approaches to sustaining peace. Considering the acceleration of negative climate change impacts, the increase in violent conflicts and their combined effect on forced displacements and humanitarian needs, we can no longer afford to separate conflict interventions from climate interventions.

# TRANSLATING OUR CLIMATE, PEACE AND SECURITY DEMANDS INTO ACTION

## DEMANDS

# 1

We demand firmer international action to mainstream and strengthen integrated, locally-led and nationally-owned financing mechanisms. Our programmes, approaches (including 'Do No Harm') and our financial and institutional structures need to support and reflect HDP-Climate nexus approaches. ODA financing needs to be more integrated (gender, climate, conflict), flexible, risk tolerant, unearmarked and longer term and tied to coherent political strategies. Only then is it possible to play an effective role in leveraging and incentivising inclusive and locally-driven political solutions to the root causes of protracted crises.

## ACTIONS

### Nexus and Climate- and Conflict-Sensitive Programming

The countries worst affected by climate change are not responsible for most greenhouse gas emissions, and also constitute the world's least developed and fragile states. Therefore, it is morally and ethically incumbent on developed and stable economies to allocate sufficient ODA, loss and damage funding, and IFI loans and grants to address the root causes of fragility. At the same time, it is urgent for them to develop more adequate and integrated, risk tolerant and accessible financing mechanisms for local and international actors to comprehensively address the poly-crises the world is faced with. In the most fragile and climate-change susceptible countries, all programming (humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding) should adopt both climate and a conflict lenses. Thus, we need conflict-sensitive and peace-responsive approaches to climate change, but also climate and natural-resource-sensitive approaches when addressing manifestations of fragility and humanitarian initiatives. Governments, private sector and international actors need to ensure that their policies and practices do not have negative consequences on climate change or peace and security. We call on governments, companies and international actors operating in fragile and conflict-affected states to commit to existing voluntary principles, policy frameworks and legal frameworks but urgently seek to develop new ones to address regulatory and financing gaps as well as pursuing synergies and co-benefits for the climate, and peace and security.

# 2

We demand firmer international action to recognise and include local (civil society) actors, especially those actors on the ground whose human security is adversely impacted and who hold key indigenous knowledge that can help mitigate some of the negative impacts of climate change. Embarking on a gender transformative approach herein is crucial; without involving all groups (women, men, young women and young men) solutions are not sustainable.

### Recognising and Supporting the Role of Local Actors

An inclusive approach to tackle the poly-crises that recognises all key local actors in their diversity must be adopted, including women, men, young women and young men, vulnerable communities and marginalised groups (IDPs, refugees, etc.). Exclusive governance and peace processes have proven to lack the resilience for fairly distributing economic wealth and effectively mitigating the impact of climate change and conflicts on civilian populations. Lessons must also be drawn from internationally-driven and co-opted domestic political and dialogue processes. Their failures have proven to be even greater obstacles to bridging the trust and solidarity deficits which stifle the space and collective imagination needed to devise sustainable political solutions to these poly-crises. Excluding women, youth, disabled, minority ethnic or religious groups, or even internally displaced or refugee populations from dialogue, peace and governance processes continue to hinder good governance, weaken states and threaten peace. Their recognition as key stakeholders, and their inclusion in these processes is necessary to tackle climate change. Thus, an inclusive community-based, government led, and gender transformative approach is needed to ensure development and climate adaptation plans guide all externally funded humanitarian, development, and peace work in states most affected by climate change, fragility and conflict.

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# 3

We demand donors, governments, and the private sector adopt consistent laws and policies to address the linkages between climate change, and peace and security, especially in conflict-affected and fragile countries. We call upon states and other relevant stakeholders to recommit to the international rights-based order and urgently reinforce legislation, policies and allocate adequate financial means and other necessary resourcing to optimally address climate, peace and security interlinkage.

## ACTIONS

### Ensuring Adequate Resourcing for Climate Peace Security and Prioritisation of Fragile Countries

In conflict-affected and fragile countries, the impacts of climate change are more harmful because of compounding risks and insufficient capacity to manage these risks. This asks for three things:

- The prioritisation of most vulnerable and most impacted countries. This includes that laws and policy commitments are translated into tangible actions fit for these contexts.
- Organisations to adjust their internal structures, systems, channels, and governance. The structures and governance should enable awareness raising, true integration and unearmarked funding channelled to integration, rather than siloed thematic areas.
- Adequate resourcing and support for local actors.

Finally, our demand for prioritisation of fragile and conflict-affected countries and adequate resourcing also needs to be materialised in the context of the operationalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund, which should give preferential support to those countries coping with compound effects of climate change, conflict and insecurity.

*If we fail, we will exacerbate climate and conflict risks. If we succeed, we can create synergies and greater impact.*

## PEACE@COP28

Both Cordaid and CSPPS have endorsed the [Peace@COP28 statement](#) calling for accelerating climate action in communities affected by conflict and consider the successful implementation of the Paris Agreement to only be possible with a conflict-sensitive and peace-responsive approach. At COP28, policy makers must put peace, conflict prevention and conflict sensitivity on the agenda.



Natural resource scarcity contributes to insecurity in Ethiopia.

## EXAMPLES OF OUR WORK

### CONFLICT-SENSITIVE APPROACHES TO CLIMATE PROGRAMMING

Ethiopia



Photo Cordaid

In Amhara region, Ethiopia, Cordaid was preparing to implement a livelihood project, when a conflict broke out between two communities sharing the same water resource. A regional actor had developed an embankment for furrow irrigation in a water reservoir shared by different communities. This was done without consulting the communities dependent on the reservoir's water, which – due to climate change – was already becoming scarcer. Cordaid was asked to mediate in the conflict. At the same time, the lack of livelihoods and natural resources had led to yet another conflict between one of the communities engaged in the first conflict, and another community, over the resources. This conflict significantly hampered the implementation of the original project, as it had led Cordaid's envisioned project beneficiaries to flee the area.

This case shows how a (seemingly positive) climate adaptation intervention had an impact on peace and security. It also shows how fragile security is in the context of climate change, where climate change pushes communities to maladaptive practices.

For Cordaid, experiences like these have led us to adapt more integrated and conflict-sensitive approaches to climate and livelihood programming. After some adjustments to the initial project, we were able to address both conflict and climate change in a transformative manner.

### FOCUS ON CLIMATE SECURITY IN LOCAL POLICIES

Yemen

Cordaid addresses in Lahj governate, in collaboration with Nahda Makers Organisation (NMO) and their local partners and communities, unintended consequences including competition over water access, and livelihood conflicts stemming from solar panel distribution by development actors. A tailored, natural resource-sensitive, as well as conflict-sensitive approach advocated by Cordaid and adopted by the local partner (NMO), featuring drip irrigation systems with preventive mechanisms, not only ensured the sustainability of scarce water sources but also significantly contributed to resolving natural resource conflicts. This transformative model, augmenting the partial existing focus on climate security by local authorities and local partners, not only safeguards livelihoods but also fortifies social cohesion, making a compelling case for a change in thinking in local development policy that explicitly includes climate security. This inclusive approach acknowledges the diverse needs and perspectives of all individuals involved, ensuring that the diverse needs and perspectives of all individuals involved are benefitted, and ensuring that the advantages of sustainable practices are accessible to all genders within the targeted communities.



Photo Cordaid

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND SOURCES:

1. [Adelphi Research & Consulting for Sustainability & Climate](#):

- [The nature of conflict and peace. The links between environment, security and peace and their importance for the United Nations](#). Gland: WWF International; Berlin: adelphi consult GmbH, 2022.

- [Synthesis: Climate Security in 3D](#). Berlin: adelphi research gGmbH, 2021

2. [Environmental Peacebuilding Association](#)

3. [IMF \(International Monetary Fund\)](#):

- [Climate Challenges in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States, Staff Climate Note No 2023/001](#)

4. [OECD \(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development\)](#):

- [States of Fragility](#): <https://www3.compareyourcountry.org/states-of-fragility>

5. [SIPRI \(Stockholm International Peace Research Institute\)](#)

6. [UNDP \(United Nations Development Programme\)](#):

- [Building a safer world through climate security](#): <https://stories.undp.org/building-a-safer-world-through-climate-security?source=share-UNDP>

- [What is climate security and why is it important?](#) <https://climatepromise.undp.org/news-and-stories/what-climate-security-and-why-it-important>

- [Women are hit hardest in disasters, so why are responses too often gender-blind?](#) <https://www.undp.org/blog/women-are-hit-hardest-disasters-so-why-are-responses-too-often-gender-blind>

7. [UNEP \(United Nations Environment Programme\)](#)

8. [United in Science 2023, Sustainable development edition, WMO, 2023](#)

9. [USAID: Report on the double burden of climate exposure and state fragility](#) | [PreventionWeb](#)

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People seeking safer grounds after the Nile River banks burst in Bor, South Sudan.

# ADVOCATING FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE



Cordaid's climate justice advocacy takes place in Dutch and global alliances. The 'International Climate Coalition' targets Dutch government officials and Dutch parliamentarians and feeds them with evidence-based advocacy messages on topics like Loss and Damage, climate funding and carbon markets. Cordaid brings in specific expertise on the link between climate and food security, and climate and health. The Dutch Food4All coalition influences the food security and trade policies of the Dutch government, including the Climate Food Nexus. Internationally, Cordaid's key networks for climate advocacy are CIDSE, Caritas Internationalis and the ACT-Alliance all of which will be present during the COP28 conference.



The Civil Society Platform for Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (CSPPS) is a global network of civil society organisations, experts and academics supporting peacebuilding efforts in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Hosted and coordinated by Cordaid, CSPPS aims to amplify and strengthen the voice and agency of local civil society in fragile settings. Members across the Platform increasingly experience the effects of climate change. The most vulnerable populations are impacted and within peacebuilding and conflict prevention work, the interlinkages with climate change are increasingly seen and addressed. CSPPS continuously investigates into ways the climate crisis can be seen playing out within the triple-nexus, as we see this in the countries, we work in. For more information, please see our publication the Triple-Nexus and Climate Change in Conflict-affected Settings: Experiences, Lessons Learned and Best Practices.



Via FairClimateFund, a subsidiary of Cordaid we join the global campaign 'A Fair Race to Net-Zero,' making sure that transition to a net zero carbon economy does not overlook the people that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.



Ethiopians flee drought.

Photo: Cordaid

## ABOUT CORDAID

Cordaid is a value-based international development and emergency relief organisation, based in the Netherlands with offices in 14 countries. We work in and on fragility and support communities in their efforts to improve health care, education, food security, and justice. Where disaster strikes, we offer humanitarian assistance.

Cordaid is deeply rooted in the Dutch society with more than 250.000 private donors. The Christian values of human dignity, justice, compassion and care for the planet guide us in our work. Cordaid is a founding member of Caritas, CIDSE and ACT Alliance.

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