A CHANGING CLIMATE FOR PEACE: NAVIGATING CONFLICT IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Practice paper
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The paper draws on learning from peace and climate change programming in the Bangsamoro in the Philippines, Karamoja in Uganda, and Kashmir (India/Pakistan) from 2022 to 2023, with additional insights from work conducted in the Pacific by Conciliation Resources and our partners. It also benefits from inputs from Conciliation Resources staff from across our different programmes, research, advisory and policy departments shared at workshops to validate our theory of change in June 2023. We would also like to particularly thank Kate Higgins for her guidance in consolidating Conciliation Resources’ understanding of the intersection between climate change and conflict, and Laura Roberts for publication and design coordination.

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Cover photo: Close to the Line of Control (LoC), this is part of a route for herders who travel to graze their animals. Climate change and the conflict both present challenges for herders using this route. Pakistan-administered Kashmir. © MD Mughal
SUMMARY OF PRIORITIES

Working across different levels, disciplines and organisations
Donor governments, multilateral and international organisations must financially incentivise more joined-up responses, including through coordination platforms and support to local civil society. International NGOs should build and sustain collaborative partnerships that are cross-sector and multi-level.

Revising policies to support prevention and mitigation of conflict affected by climate change
Policies that address climate change related conflict risks should look beyond ‘security’ focused responses and embed peacebuilding approaches and support. Climate finance mechanisms should work for conflict affected areas and should be able to reach local civil society.

Embedding intersectional analysis to underpin all climate and conflict peacebuilding programming
Governments and international NGOs should ensure integrated, localised, gendered conflict analysis underpins all climate change responses.

INTRODUCTION

The global climate crisis, and how humans respond to it, is changing how violent conflict systems behave, and is contributing to new systems emerging.¹ This practice paper presents Conciliation Resources’ understanding of the intersection between climate change, conflict and peace, based on the organisation’s experience of peace and climate change programming in the Bangsamoro in the Philippines, Karamoja in Uganda, and Kashmir (India/Pakistan). Over the course of this work, Conciliation Resources has sought to document how peacebuilding can tackle the unique challenges of climate change and conflict, with the aim of improving and adapting peace practice.

Examples of interventions from these three contexts illustrate how peacebuilders can support better coordination and collaboration among governments and communities, drawing on local knowledge and expertise of people on the frontline of climate change and conflict. Whilst the impacts of climate change and their relationship with conflict dynamics and actors vary significantly between contexts, so any responses or actions must be contextualised – we identify common principles to address these issues. Finally, it draws out common barriers that peacebuilding organisations need to overcome and proposes priorities for action.

Methodology

For each peace and climate change intervention in the Bangsamoro, Karamoja and Kashmir, we developed a ‘theory of change’ together with partners for how it would work and what it would achieve, and the associated climate and conflict ‘risks’. Programme design was based on gender, climate and conflict analysis workshops, acknowledging that gender is a key area often missing from analysis of climate change and conflict causes and drivers.² Comparative learning workshops reflected on previous Conciliation Resources experiences of peace programming to address the link between climate change and conflict in the Pacific,³ in order to explore common challenges and approaches. Context-specific analyses were then combined into a cross-contextual conceptual and learning framework and theory of change, to help identify common intersections of climate change, conflict and peace, including different conflict risks and suggestions for potential peacebuilding entry points.

¹. ‘Conflict system’ recognises that there are interconnected factors that may increase or decrease risks of conflict, even where physical violence may not be obviously present.
². More detail about the pilot gender, climate and conflict responsive analysis methodology and findings will be shared in a forthcoming report published later in 2023.
³. Conciliation Resources (2021). Climate Change and Conflict Risks in the Pacific
The three contexts explored in this paper were selected due to Conciliation Resources’ longstanding peacebuilding engagement in each, and because each shows very clear but very different examples of how climate change and conflict interact.

- **In the Bangsamoro**, Philippines, Conciliation Resources and our local partners have supported communities to contribute to the peace process as part of, and following, the 2014 agreement between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Flash floods and landslides, increasing as a consequence of climate change, contribute to widespread displacement and armed conflict between government and non-governmental forces as well as land and resource-based competition between indigenous and Moro communities. Rising sea levels endanger fishing communities’ livelihoods and food security more broadly, and increased droughts have decreased corn and rice production leading to water buffalo stealing, with risks of escalation.

- **In Karamoja**, Uganda, Conciliation Resources has worked with local partners on sustainable community solutions to cyclical and worsening violence, which is being exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. Droughts are increasing in frequency, duration and severity, and rainfall is becoming less predictable. This decreases communities’ access to drinking water, leading to floods, pests, diseases, soil erosion and depletion of grazing land for livestock. Tensions are contributing to increasing armed cattle-raiding and conflict between pastoralist communities and authorities.

- **In Kashmir**, India/Pakistan, Conciliation Resources has worked with communities and other stakeholders on both sides of the Line of Control (LoC) to ensure Kashmiri inclusion in peace processes, and sustain communities’ ability to support peace. Kashmir is affected by flash floods, water scarcity and land erosion, intensified by climate change and militarisation. These conditions at times result in inadvertent crossing, in particular by young men, of the highly-securitised LoC, in search of better pastures. This in turn contributes to sustaining ongoing territorial conflict between India and Pakistan, exacerbating alienation sentiments in local populations, and driving accusations of infiltration and terrorism.

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4. ‘Kashmir’ refers to the territories of erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir divided between India and Pakistan, which are further described as the Indian and Pakistan administered Kashmir in this paper. The terminology of referring to Kashmir and the local nomenclature for each of these territories is complex and contested between India and Pakistan. Terms used in the document are due to simplicity/illustrative reasons, without prejudice.
HOW CLIMATE CHANGE INTERACTS WITH PEACE AND CONFLICT

Climate change puts increasing pressure on already complex conflict systems and dynamics, and further exacerbates existing vulnerabilities

There is no global consensus on climate change, conflict and peace. Nonetheless, many governments and international bodies increasingly recognise links between climate change and insecurity, often starting with how climate change directly affects conflict drivers, globally and locally. Policy has somewhat focused on the security sphere – notwithstanding that global militaries themselves contribute significantly to carbon emissions and environmental degradation.

However, links between climate change and conflict are not inevitable. At a local level there are good examples of communities’ managing disputes over natural resources peacefully. Whilst climate change may put further pressure on traditional mechanisms where they exist, it is often not the only challenge they face, with governments and commercial actors (amongst others) adding further stresses.

In contrast, there is a more positive framing of this interaction in the growing practice of environmental peacebuilding, whereby natural resource and wider environmental management are factored as a component of conflict resolution and mitigation. The need to respond to climate change can create opportunities to build trust and collaboration, and enhance conflict prevention and mitigation. Whilst it is an oversimplification to see climate change and the environment as apolitical topics, environmental challenges can be shared problems that transcend social and political boundaries. Efforts to address them can encourage confidence building by addressing urgent needs of communities and providing a means to discuss other issues across divides.

Our understanding is underpinned by the premise that climate change is a multiplier of conflict and security risks and threats, increasing pressure on conflict systems by exacerbating existing vulnerabilities, inequality, exclusion and injustice. Climate change deepens and strengthens conflict drivers. The physical effects of climate change are exacerbating issues and risks, including land degradation, resource scarcity and disaster events. Responses to the effects of climate change, and initiatives to adapt to or mitigate them – such as migration, natural resource management, and changes in farming practices – can also exacerbate conflict, putting further strain on relationships between different groups of people, or between governance structures and communities.

Climate change can negatively impact horizontal tensions between people, groups, organisations and states, and vertical tensions between levels of authority – from households to governments and other levels of power. These horizontal and vertical tensions may increase, multiply and intertwine at various levels from individual households to national and international levels. Consequently, in a society dealing with the multiple impacts of climate change, a greater number of actors are likely to have stronger interests in conflict systems, and the capacity to influence them, positively or negatively. The effects of climate change have the potential to increase the fragmentation and diversity of conflict actors and their interests.

Intersection of climate change and conflict drivers: governance, livelihoods, and gender

Our understanding of the intersection of climate change and conflict drivers is developed from joint analysis between Conciliation Resources and local partners in the Bangsamoro, Karamoja and Kashmir. Analysis of drivers used the lenses of governance, livelihoods and gender and cultural identity (and their intersections) to understand how the impacts of climate change and the responses to it interact with conflict and peace, as presented in Figure 1 and the examples below. Opportunities to respond to drivers are explored further in Section 3.

5. The lack of global policy consensus is perhaps most visibly demonstrated by the 2021 failed vote in the UN Security Council “on the security implications of the adverse effects of climate change in relevant country or region-specific contexts on the Council’s agenda as well as recommendations on how climate-related security risks can be addressed”.
6. This includes recognition of the impact of climate change within the UK’s 2021 Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy and its 2023 refresh; the development of a draft EU joint communication on climate change, environmental degradation, security and defence; and the inclusion of a Peace Day at COP 28.
7. TNI (2022). Climate Collateral: How military spending accelerates climate breakdown
8. There are examples of this globally. In Karamoja, agreements have been negotiated by local people to share natural resources for livestock and humans, especially water and pastures. The cross-border Lokiriama Peace Accord, between the Matheniko people of Uganda and Turkana people of Kenya, has held since 1973.
9. Different aspects of environmental peacebuilding are discussed in the White Paper on the Future of Environmental Peacebuilding (2021) issued by the Ecosystem for Peace Community of Practice
FIGURE 1: COMMON ISSUES AT THE INTERSECTION OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICT

- **PHYSICAL IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND EXISTING CONFLICT SYSTEMS/DYNAMICS**

- **GOVERNANCE**
  - Weak data / early warning systems
  - Inequitable distribution of climate finance
  - Legal pluralism and ambiguity on land / resource use
  - Land-grabbing and resource extraction
  - Lack of coordination within and between governments (and with private entities and across borders)
  - Lack of common understanding between stakeholders
  - External and internal constraints e.g. corruption, pressure from extractive industries / powerful third countries etc.
  - International level "adaptation" discourse / agendas
  - "Green washing"

- **LIVELIHOODS**
  - Economic shocks / unpredictable income
  - Reduced living standards / food insecurity
  - Limited / damage / erosion of productive assets
  - Water scarcity / management
  - Conflict and gender-insensitive climate change responses
  - Limited government consultation with communities on issues / needs
  - Limited appreciation and use of indigenous climate adaptation knowledge / practice
  - Lack of respect for indigenous and minority rights
  - Challenge to traditions / customs of affected people

- **GENDER AND CULTURAL IDENTITY**
  - Loss of ancestral lands
  - Gender norms challenged
  - Gender norms reinforced
  - Gendered impacts on livelihoods
  - Diverse coping strategies
  - Outward migration or forced displacement

- **RISKS:**
  - Increased HORIZONTAL tensions between individuals, households, communities and governments
  - Increased VERTICAL tensions between individuals and authorities at local, sub-national and international level

- **OPPORTUNITY:**
  - The need to respond to climate change can also create opportunities to build trust, confidence and collaboration across various divides

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10. This diagram demonstrating the connections between issues is an illustration of this intersection, but is not fully exhaustive.
Governance challenges exacerbate the risks of climate change responses exacerbating conflict drivers.

Governmental actors are ultimately responsible for addressing climate change impacts and conflict, and inclusive governance should play an important role in responding effectively to both. However, our analysis showed weak or ineffective governance often exacerbates conflict risks related to climate change. A lack of common and consistent understanding of conflict and climate change issues between and within power holders (government stakeholders, commercial actors, multilateral institutions and international non-governmental organisations) prevents effective responses to challenges posed by climate change. This lack of common understanding includes limited recognition of the different and complex implications of climate change and how these are intertwined with conflict risks, and siloed approaches between different sectors. All this prevents a comprehensive and inclusive response.

This was further complicated between political boundaries. For communities who regularly cross state borders, such as pastoralists in Karamoja, the complexity of this challenge is increased, as they are subject to multiple different jurisdictions and existing policies fail to meet their needs. More widely, outside of these contexts, it was noted that where communities are subject to the effects of conflict between states, challenges in responding to the transnational impacts of climate change become more apparent.

Policy and programme responses to climate change may have inherent conflict risks. For example, policy around agriculture and land may fundamentally shape how the land can be used by different communities. The resource extraction needed for ‘green technology’ can have negative impacts on communities living in mining areas and often involves a complex mix of different governments, international corporations and private actors, which makes it harder for affected communities to influence policy or hold the responsible actors to account. These challenges are magnified in areas affected by or at risk of violent conflict, and can potentially strengthen conflict drivers, by driving exclusion and marginalisation.

Robust data on the impacts of climate change is not always available to decision-makers at the right level and at the right time, and is often not accessible to affected communities. This limits government abilities to protect those most affected by climate change effects or to anticipate and respond to threats before they occur – for example, through the establishment of early warning systems. It also prevents communities’ engagement with policymakers and the development of potential solutions. For instance, the Climate Change Commission in the Philippines consolidates all climate data within the country, but no counterpart institution exists in the Bangsamoro, so policymakers do not have access to relevant regional information. In addition to a lack of or access to data, relevant power-holders often lack a comprehensive and common understanding of existing conflict and gender dynamics (whether they are related to climate change effects or not). This risks responses which further exacerbate existing tensions and vulnerabilities, particularly when policy responses take a more security focused approach.

Livelihoods are affected by climate change and resultant coping mechanisms can increase conflict risks.

Damage to resources integral to productive livelihoods, including agriculture, fisheries and livestock, exacerbate vulnerabilities and inequalities in communities. This can result in a loss of income for some of the most economically marginalised people. The erosion of livelihoods can cause increased hardship and reduced living standards, even challenging the basic survival of communities through insufficient access to food or water, especially in the absence of alternatives or safety nets.

In Pakistan-administered Kashmir, the changing availability of water as a resource, either through scarcity caused by droughts or over-saturation caused by flooding, has impacted crops and agriculture. The reduced availability of land for grazing has pushed agricultural communities closer to the LoC, leaving them more vulnerable to potential cross-LoC shelling and fire, thereby affecting their physical security. This drives accusations of infiltration and terrorism, exacerbates self-determination sentiments in local populations and sustains ongoing territorial conflict between India and Pakistan.

In Karamoja in Uganda, community livelihoods have been negatively impacted by the effects of climate change on shifting rainfall patterns, rising temperatures and unpredictable drought. Land management issues such as land grabbing, conservation, resource extraction by private sector industries, and contradictions between national and customary law regarding land rights, are also prevalent in this region. Traditional pastoralist practices are undermined by government policies that prioritise sedentary agricultural livelihoods – policies which are supported by simplistic and distorted narratives that pastoralism increases insecurity.
Gender and cultural identity are often excluded from analysis on climate change and conflict.

Our approach to gender is intersectional, taking into account wider cultural identities and factors. Norms and identities, including those related to religion, customs, cultures and human rights, all play a role in shaping the power and ability of different people to withstand and adapt to climate change and conflict, and influencing their responses. We trialled a holistic approach to conflict analysis through a series of gender, climate and conflict analysis workshops in each context focused on the often-missing link between these issues. Our analysis showed coping strategies at the individual level but also in problematic masculine and securitised policy.

In the Bangsamoro, for example, droughts have made the land too arid to cultivate crops and made it more challenging for men to meet traditional norms and expectations around being providers. This has resulted in increased theft of livestock to allow men to uphold these norms through the generation of income. These gendered strategies can exacerbate conflict, and in some cases have a negative environmental impact.

Intersectional gender analysis highlights how climate change may affect people of diverse gender identities and sexual orientations in ways that are often not recognised, and how climate change can exacerbate marginalisation of some groups in society. In rural areas of the Bangsamoro there have been instances of blame being assigned to community members with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations for natural disasters and extreme weather events, with threats or acts of violence leading them to flee to other areas.

More broadly, climate change and responses to it may challenge the traditions, customs and lifestyles of affected people, such as indigenous groups in the Bangsamoro and pastoralist groups in Karamoja. Loss of ancestral land due to flooding and displacement caused by climate change, as well as other existential threats to traditional ways of life and identities, can represent a significant conflict risk. However, these risks often do not inform climate mitigation and adaptation policies.

11. Focused on analysing how gender interacts with other identities and systems of inequality – for example, based on sexual orientation, (dis)ability, age and race – to determine how different people experience conflict and the power and opportunities they have to shape peace. More on our approach to gender can be found in our Gender Strategy.
12. More detail about this pilot approach for integrating a climate-responsive lens into Conciliation Resources’ gendered conflict analysis methodology will be shared in an upcoming research report to be published later in 2023.
Local peacebuilding responses can enable sustainable, inclusive climate change mitigation and adaptation

Principles of participation and inclusion that are vital for addressing conflict are also needed to adapt and build resilience in the face of climate change. Implementation of local and national climate change-related policies needs the input of diverse groups if it is to meet the needs of different communities and prove effective in the long-term. A strong civil society with the relationships, skills and space to engage on these issues, alongside governance structures that encourage and enable the inclusion of community voices, is critical.

Local civil society groups – who played a peacebuilding role in each context – were highlighted within our analysis as key actors to facilitate participation in climate change responses, having both the trust with communities and links to engage local and national governance structures. Local civil society actors and communities are acutely aware of the physical impacts of climate change that affect them, and how responses to these can strengthen or weaken tensions and challenges they may face. They can enhance inclusion in climate change responses through their advocacy, thereby reducing the risks involved that might exacerbate conflict.

Incorporating a holistic peacebuilding response to climate change and conflict issues

Conciliation Resources has identified how peacebuilding organisations can intervene to tackle interactions between conflict systems and climate change, and to find opportunities for conflict transformation. This process has resulted in the development of a theory of change that goes beyond specific contexts, to maximise the relevance and effectiveness of peacebuilding strategy and programming in light of climate change pressures, by demonstrating how peacebuilding activities can lead to desired changes. This overarching theory of change is based on the principle that peacebuilding approaches and interventions will be most effective if they recognise and respond directly to these increased pressures and increasingly complex dynamics, and better include the different types of people that are most affected. Some key principles emerged:

• Peacebuilding responses need to intervene at multiple levels whenever possible.
• Peacebuilding should bring together different relevant knowledge and expertise, such as climate science, indigenous climate adaptation and conflict management knowledge, gender expertise, human rights experts and natural resource management.
• Peacebuilding should foster more meaningful collaboration between communities and governments.

Our theory of change features three complementary and interlinking ‘outcome areas’ with supporting activities (Figure 2). Examples of the types of outcomes that could be developed are given below.
FIGURE 2: THEORY OF CHANGE GRAPHIC

Impact

Climate change-related conflict risks are understood and addressed by governance systems, international actors and the policies/programmes they design/implement

Climate change response, adaptation and advocacy is understood by stakeholders (from community to political/international levels) as an opportunity for cooperation across divides

Communities in target locations are able to peacefully and inclusively manage climate-related conflict risks

GOVERNANCE / POLICY-LEVEL OUTCOMES

Improved coordination between governmental actors on climate change response policy and implementation

Policy/legislative/constitutional recognition of climate change impacts and their intersection with gendered conflict risks/drivers

Power holders (incl. govt representatives, policymakers and intl. actors) have an improved understanding of how climate change affects vulnerable communities, exacerbates gendered conflict drivers/risks, and can be mitigated using indigenous knowledge

COMMUNITY-LEVEL OUTCOMES

Improved anticipation and planning for climate-related conflict drivers by communities and governments

Examples of successful community cooperation to mitigate conflicts in the face of climate change challenges are created and documented

Increased opportunities for inclusive and meaningful dialogue/communication/advocacy (Govt, experts, CSOs, communities) on climate change impacts and response needs

Communities have improved data, tools, and mechanisms for the management of climate change-related conflict issues

Sharing and generation of indigenous knowledge and capacities to ensure all communities have a shared understanding of climate change patterns and mitigation strategies

Improved understanding of rights/duties in the face of climate change ('climate justice') and the need for advocacy (at local, national, and international levels)

Activities / Outputs

Engagement with local/national governments and development partners to promote:
- Improved intra/inter-governmental understanding and coordination in the area of climate change and related conflict risks
- Political will to address climate change-related conflict
- Climate action as a potential cooperation opportunity/confidence building measure
- Mainstreaming of gender and conflict-sensitive climate action in legislation/policy/planning/programmes

Facilitation of multi-level dialogue and communication on climate change issues/response needs:
- Support civil society actors (and/or local government) to link communities to policymakers
- Formation/strengthening of more relevant and inclusive peace committees and other dialogue spaces
- Development of strategies for communities to advocate for their climate change response needs

Community awareness raising, mobilisation and capacity strengthening:
- Raise awareness of climate change risks and rights (climate justice) at community level
- Identify and mobilise individuals to promote gender-responsive (or transformative) community-level climate adaptation/mitigation measures
- Provide skills and resources to communities for the management of climate change-related conflict risks/development of conflict-sensitive responses

Research and learning to inform programme adaptation and wider practice and policy

Participatory gender, climate and conflict analysis to inform programme design
Community-level outcomes (right / orange): Learning from and supporting communities that are most affected by climate change and its associated conflict risks

- Helping communities to understand the responsibility of powerful actors to shape effective responses, focusing on concepts of ‘climate justice’, ‘rights’ and ‘duties’.
- Supporting generation and sharing of indigenous knowledge and capacities to ensure all affected communities have a common understanding of climate change and response strategies.
- Developing external actors’ understanding of existing indigenous or local climate adaptation strategies, sustainable environmental/livelihood practices and conflict management mechanisms. These should be researched, documented, promoted, defended and adapted.
- Providing information and resources to local conflict / climate change response mechanisms, for example through early warning systems, mediation, resource sharing initiatives and trade, and challenging gender and social norms that increase the risk of violence. In many contexts, such mechanisms exist but their effectiveness is challenged and eroded by the escalating effects of climate change, lack of resources, and exclusion from larger-scale climate change policy and programme responses.

Governance/policy-level outcomes (left / purple): Seeking to improve understanding of and policy commitment to addressing the relationship between climate change and conflict

- Promoting a shared understanding amongst different government actors of the effects of climate change on different groups of people and related conflict risks and drivers.
- Advocating for awareness and recognition of climate-related conflict risks in legislation and policy.
- Improving coherence and coordination across policy areas of climate change, conflict and gender – with governments, development partners and international organisations.

INTERVENTION EXAMPLE: Indian-administered Kashmir

In the Kashmir Valley, youth networks are using ecological entrepreneurship as a training framework to equip young Kashmiri men and women with practical skills, cultural wisdoms and ancestral knowledge to launch initiatives geared at protecting the environment. This provides young people with peer and mentoring support, confidence building, and opportunities for intergenerational knowledge sharing, as well as alleviating some of the pressure caused by living in a highly militarised zone. These activities have two desired outcomes: to improve community-level engagement in climate change response; and to build and sustain capacities for youth engagement in communities, which is vital for peacebuilding efforts.

INTERVENTION EXAMPLE: Pakistan-administered Kashmir

In Azad Jammu and Kashmir, engagement with government stakeholders revealed a number of synergies between the priorities of civil society, communities and policymakers, and clear areas for common action on the environment. Civil society organisations strengthened their relationships with the Environmental Protection Agency, the State Disaster Management Authority and the Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, through sharing research and analysis. Greater engagement in local governance is critical for more inclusive policymaking and as groundwork for peacebuilding activities. In wider discussions, environmental cooperation as a confidence-building measure emerged as a key entry point to bridge divisions and transform relationships between India and Pakistan over Kashmir.
Outcomes spanning community and governance levels (centre / brown): Creating opportunities for local experience and governance/policymaking to interact with and inform each other

- Making macro-level climate data predicting weather patterns at the regional level accessible to communities to better inform ‘frontline’ climate adaptation and conflict management.

- Providing affected communities with advocacy platforms to deliver their self-defined messages concerning climate change and conflict (e.g. around ‘climate justice’).

- Giving governments and policymakers greater insight into the diverse effects and needs of climate-change affected communities, and exposing them to examples of indigenous knowledge and good practice in climate adaptation and conflict management – which may be replicated, scaled, or used to inform higher-level peace processes.

INTERVENTION EXAMPLE: The Bangsamoro, Philippines

Community dialogues allowed local government officials, Barangay representatives, agencies involved in emergency response following disasters, and community members to share their concerns on key issues affecting them, as well as existing adaptation strategies. Government representatives shared ongoing policy actions in this sphere, aiding accountability and creating an opportunity to advocate for the specific needs of marginalised communities, such as indigenous peoples, to be integrated into policy and legal frameworks. As a result, commitments were made by government actors to incorporate tribal customary law into the Bangsamoro constitution and penal code, as part of an inclusive transition to a peaceful autonomous region.
WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO MORE EFFECTIVE CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICT RESPONSES?

Silos and compartmentalisation of problems prevents more integrated solutions

Within governments, responsibilities for climate change-related security issues sit within different departments – from Foreign Ministries and Defence Departments, to Development and Environment agencies. Silos prevent a fully integrated approach that looks at conflict and climate change together, and undermine efforts to include peacebuilding support at different levels. Such disconnection makes it harder to fund joined-up interventions, with many internal incentives working against complex and multi-disciplinary multi-theme approaches. When responses to the impacts of extreme weather events focus on humanitarian assistance, they often do not address the conflict systems affected by climate change.

Spanning various disciplines, progress on peace in relation to climate change will often require the involvement of institutions wider than national governments and civil societies. For example, the Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan was negotiated by the World Bank. In Karamoja, mining companies are often owned by politically-influential overseas capital and actors. Organisations and individuals working for sustainable peace and climate responses will have to engage further and better with the array of international and multinational institutions and organisations, which invariably have their own agendas and interests.

This is particularly relevant in contexts where there is significant resource extraction, given the power imbalances and inequalities between communities, state governments and extractive industries, caused by the vast disparity in wealth. These power structures, particularly as they relate to the use of and access to land and resources, remain a barrier for a meaningful change in approach, given that these industries are intrinsically linked to negative impacts on the environment and peace.

Limited understanding of diverse needs can lead to conflict-insensitive climate change response

National governments, international and commercial actors seeking to respond to climate change can easily ‘do harm’ if there is limited understanding of the diverse needs of different people involved. This is compounded without inclusive consultation of stakeholders over decisions that will affect them, especially when a policy is developed in remote capitals. Weak governance systems and limited resources often mean that responses to climate change exclude local communities. In the Bangsamoro, our analysis highlighted that people from over 110,000 households in Mount Minandar that were impacted by Typhoon Nalgae were relocated from Sinsuats (Datu Odin Sinsuat Municipality) to land sacred to indigenous communities, causing tensions between them and the government.

 Whilst there is increased focus on and funding for climate change responses, this rarely reaches conflict-affected areas, especially those at the front line of climate-conflict issues. Limited local programming is often led by national governments or large humanitarian organisations. National governments are often not well-placed to ensure local-level inclusion in their use of funds, or to enable funds to flow down further to civil society organisations. Even multilateral organisations addressing humanitarian needs are often not as well-placed as local organisations to comprehensively engage civil society in their actions.

Norms and cultural backlash impact effectiveness of responses

Gendered norms underpinning many conflict resolution and policy frameworks drive competitive and adversarial approaches. These can work against inclusive approaches and cooperation, while gender-insensitive interventions will not transform root causes of conflict systems affected by climate change. Biases towards new and ‘innovative’ approaches among the international community tend to favour Global North or Western solutions – for example, those that prioritise technology. If applied inappropriately, these types of intervention can displace local knowledge and response mechanisms, rather than supplementing local expertise. This limits the efficacy and sustainability of responses.

13. A 2021 study showed that across projects funded by $14 billion USD of climate finance, funding per capita in non-fragile states was $161.70 USD, whereas in fragile and extremely fragile states it was $8.80 USD. See UNDP (2021). Climate Finance for Sustaining Peace: Making climate finance work for conflict-affected and fragile contexts.
Our analysis and interventions in the Bangsamoro, Karamoja and Kashmir highlighted common priority areas that need further investment and action. Governments, international bodies, INGOs and local civil society all have a role to play in taking these forward for more effective approaches to prevent and mitigate conflict in light of the climate crisis.

Working across different levels, disciplines and organisations

- **Create space for integrated approaches and collaboration.** Governments and international NGOs should support, develop and strengthen local civil society platforms that spearhead integrated, cross-sectoral responses to the climate crisis, and specifically climate change related conflict. Experience in cross-sectoral coordination and analysis from the ‘Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus’ can provide useful models for coordination, such as area-based approaches that have been piloted in several countries to overcome barriers.

- **Invest in local civil society organisations responding to climate risks.** International peacebuilding NGOs should seek to build and sustain collaborative partnerships with local civil society actors that are well-placed or are already responding to climate change related risks. Local civil society often has knowledge, relationships and resources to support conflict resolution and climate change mitigation. But collaboration between different sectors of civil society is difficult where there are physical, political and economic constraints on meeting.

- **Collaborate on policy making and delivery where climate change and conflict connect.** National and local authorities should work with civil society to design and implement appropriate policies that can tackle climate change and conflict. This requires meaningful trusting partnerships between state authorities and civil society, including funding, which can help build institutional capacity for civil society organisations, cross-cutting expertise and their ability to work adaptively, innovatively and collaboratively.

- **Seek and use civil society perspectives in analysis informing policy and programming.** National and local authorities and governments embassies and headquarters should integrate civil society perspectives, analyses and guidance into all stages of strategic planning and contextual analysis, including conflict analysis documents and climate National Adaptation Programmes (NAPs).

Revising policies to support prevention and mitigation of conflict affected by climate change

- **Look beyond securitised framings of climate change.** Governments should look beyond ‘climate security’ framings to develop peacebuilding approaches to climate change. This is crucial to prevent responses becoming overly securitised and dominated by traditional security actors, who have contributed significantly to carbon emissions and environmental degradation. These responses miss the potential of peacebuilding to positively change conflict drivers and ensure more sustainable climate responses. Governments must seek to ensure their approaches to climate security, integrate environmental peacebuilding, and involve development agencies as much as the defence sector.

- **Collaborate to re-orient extractive industries towards sustainability and peace.** Extractive industries are some of the most politically and environmentally corrosive in many countries experiencing conflict. Their economic value and often deep ties to conflict parties can result in mutually reinforcing harms to society. Such industries, if harnessed correctly, could offer immense economic benefits to society and radically accelerate reductions in carbon emissions and environmental damage. Governments must influence and work with extractive industries to encourage them to make a more positive impact on the environment and conflict dynamics. Meanwhile, civil society should be supported to monitor extractive industries and hold them accountable for practices that harm the environment and fuel conflict.

- **Promote conflict-sensitive climate finance that can reach community organisations.** Governments can earmark climate finance for use by INGOs and local civil society initiatives. Governments with leverage in international policy discussions on climate finance mechanisms should ensure conflict sensitivity and do no harm principles are mainstreamed in the planning and accountability of new and existing mechanisms, and that funds can reach civil society. Donor governments and institutions should ensure accountability for conflict sensitivity in climate programming, which will create a body of lessons and case studies that can be used to promote the integration of conflict and gender into climate change responses.
Embedding intersectional analysis to underpin all climate and conflict peacebuilding programming

- Organisations and governance actors must ensure their responses to conflict and climate change are informed by contextual analysis and expertise, identifying and addressing intersectional needs, barriers and values of communities confronting climate change and conflict. International NGOs should ensure there is expertise and learning among staff and partners on the links between climate change, conflict and gender in programme contexts. They can strengthen this by commissioning or conducting relevant training and research, recruiting conflict experts with climate experience or partnering with external specialists or climate change organisations.

- Prioritise meaningful participation in analysis as a starting point for developing joint peacebuilding responses to climate change. Conducting analysis to inform peacebuilding programmes is a good opportunity to collaborate across sectors and with important stakeholders in the area concerned to develop a shared understanding of the links between climate change and conflict. However, it’s important that participation isn’t merely tokenistic or extractive but sustained and informed by the needs and perspectives of the participants. As such, analysis should encourage reflection from all participants on what they can do respectively and jointly to address issues raised, not just to create an initial output, but repeatedly as the analysis is updated as a live output.

- Conflict analysis should be used to highlight the role of external actors in climate and conflict systems. This includes international NGOs and donors themselves, but also regional private actors involved in systems, such as extractive industries, which are often left out of conflict analysis due to a common lack of understanding among conflict experts of how they operate and how they can be influenced. At the same time, conflict analysts should engage institutions working on climate change mitigation and adaptation, who may inadvertently further exacerbate conflict drivers, particularly if they do not recognise their own role in conflict systems.
Conciliation Resources is an international organisation committed to stopping violent conflict and creating more peaceful societies. We work with people impacted by war and violence, bringing diverse voices together to make change that lasts.