



ADDRESSING THE CLIMATE- CONFLICT NEXUS

Evidence, Insights, and Future Directions

OCTOBER 2023

While the relationship between climate and conflict is nuanced and context-specific, there is consensus that climate change is amplifying and compounding existing sources of economic, social, and political violence.¹ These challenges are most pronounced in fragile and conflict-affected areas already grappling with weak governance, high rates of poverty and income inequality, as well as current or historical violent conflict.² The intensification of climate change will further escalate conflict risks, exacerbating threats to peace and stability. Furthermore, many of the people facing protracted crises are also among those predicted to experience the greatest effects from climate change. Furthering this vicious cycle, conflict and fragility also make it more challenging to either mitigate or adapt to climate change.

¹ Mercy Corps. (2020). *Climate Change and Conflict: Lessons from Emerging Practise*. Edinburgh, UK: Mercy Corps

² Mach, K.J., Kraan, C.M., Adger, W.N. et al. (2019). *Climate as a risk factor for armed conflict*. *Nature* 571, p.194.

It is no longer sufficient to address climate change and conflict separately, as if they are somehow disconnected global challenges. The relationship between climate and conflict must be understood as a vicious cycle. As illustrated in Figure 1, the effects of climate change create profound shocks and stresses that can exacerbate conflict risks. For example, the inability of a struggling government to address the damages and inequities resulting from severe and frequent extreme weather can exacerbate already fraught state-societal relationships. At the same time, in contexts experiencing conflict and insecurity, fragility can undermine the ability of communities and states to adapt in the face of climate change. Addressing climate and conflict together presents a unique opportunity to interrupt the negative cycle, and safeguard climate adaptation and peace outcomes against future risk. Addressed together, the promotion of climate adaptation and the reduction of the drivers of fragility can enable better use of resources and can create a positive feedback loop of peace-positive climate action.

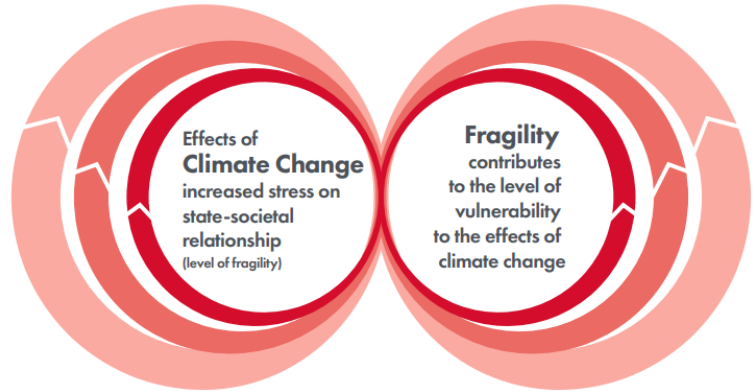


Figure 1: A vicious cycle - the relationship between climate change and fragility

Written from the perspective of an agency with active climate-conflict programs around the world, this paper aims to share our learning and make evidence-based recommendations on investments we see as necessary for driving this work forward, and how Mercy Corps is contributing to these focal areas. The following insights draw heavily from Mercy Corps’ experience and lessons learned from delivering programs in multi-risk environments. We share details on current efforts to advance the evidence base and develop new strategies to understand and address the increasing risks emerging from the intersection of climate change and conflict.

Climate Change & Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations

Nowhere are the challenges of climate change and conflict more evident than in the world’s most fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS).³ As an indirect driver of conflict, climate change acts as a threat or risk multiplier that amplifies existing sources of economic, social, and political risk via a complex interplay of intermediary variables.⁴ Research finds that in states with large populations, political exclusion and low levels of human development, nearly a third of conflicts from 1980-2016 were preceded by climate-related disasters.⁵ In these contexts, climate variability tends to compound the deep-seated -- and often interconnected -- factors driving fragility: low economic development, weak political institutions, a history of violent conflict.⁶ Widespread inequality and a lack of social safety nets further increases the vulnerability of marginalized groups, who are both the most likely to suffer from climate-affected risks and the least likely to have the resources to adapt.⁷ Climate stress can also lay bare the weakness of the state, which may have

³ Mach, K.J., Kraan, C.M., Adger, W.N. *et al.* (2019). *Climate as a risk factor for armed conflict*. *Nature* 571, p.194.

⁴ Ghani, T., and Robert Malley (2020). “Climate change doesn’t have to stoke conflict.” *Foreign Affairs*.

⁵ Ide, T., *et al.* (2020). Multi-method evidence for when and how climate-related disasters contribute to armed conflict risk. *Global Environmental Change*, 62, 102063.

⁶ Peters, K., Mayhew, L., Borodyna, O., Measures, H., Petrova, K., Nicoson, C., Nordqvist, P. and Peters, L.E.R. (2020) *Climate change, conflict and security scan: December 2018–March 2019*. London: Overseas Development Institute.

⁷ Sovacool *et al.* (2017). New frontiers and conceptual frameworks for energy justice, *Energy Policy*, 105, (C), 677-691.

limited capacity to mitigate environmental impacts on livelihoods or negotiate tensions over natural resource access.⁸ As a result, the intensification of climate change will further compound conflict risks in fragile states, threatening livelihoods⁹ and driving migration.¹⁰

These risks are unlikely to decelerate. By 2030, 2.2 billion people will live in fragile states, which will represent 26% of the total world population.¹¹ Of those, 359 million are projected to be living in extreme poverty, representing 63% of the world’s poor.¹² Yet, Mercy Corps’ own research suggests that across the 10 most fragile states, only \$223 million in climate adaptation finance was received in 2021 – less than 1% of total adaptation finance flows.

The challenges to accessing and utilizing climate adaptation finance in FCAS have been well documented: strategies driving climate funders’ low risk appetite and tolerance for working in FCAS; stringent requirements for funding access, project approval, and partnerships that limit planning and development of the program; inflexible operational protocols that hinder adaptive implementation and delivery; and data and travel restrictions that make it difficult to monitor project progress and measure outcomes. Action must now shift to identifying practical solutions and policy recommendations to overcome the fragility and climate finance barrier.

Our work on climate finance in fragile and conflict-affected settings, *Breaking the Cycle*, showcases innovative solutions and policy recommendations that climate funders could seek to adopt to improve their reach and impact in FCAS. We are continuing this work through ongoing roundtables and research.

Climate-Conflict Priority Areas

As Mercy Corps has made efforts to develop our own climate-conflict strategies, we have identified three priorities to guide us, and which we believe should be prioritized by those responding to the compounding shocks of conflict and climate change.

The following sections will unpack Mercy Corps efforts to: (a) formulate an analytical framework and assessment methodology to inform program design; and (b) develop and implement integrated, multi-sector strategies that address the nexus of climate and conflict challenges; and (c) grow the evidence base for “what works.”



ADDRESSING CLIMATE DRIVERS OF CONFLICT

Mercy Corps’ Approach

MAY 2019

Linking climate change and conflict

Natural resources, including water, land, and forests, have long been recognized as sources of contention, and sometimes even violence. Macro trends like population growth and climate change can exacerbate these issues, particularly in areas of scarcity. Population growth adds more pressure to a limited amount of resources, while climate change impacts resource availability and quality. In recent years, climate change has even been recognized as a threat multiplier, “aggravating tensions, such as poverty, environmental degradation, political instability, and social tensions.” Climate change does not directly cause conflict. Instead, its effects (e.g., rising temperatures, shifting rainfall patterns) can lead to environmental impacts (e.g., loss of grazing land for cattle), which can result in socioeconomic tensions (e.g., farmers and herders).

U.S. Department of Defense, “Quarterly Defense Review 2019,” March 2019.



Figure 2: In 2019 Mercy Corps produced a climate-conflict approach, which reflected our deep experience to-date.

8 Marchetta, Francesca. (2013). Migration and Nonfarm Activities as Income Diversification Strategies: The Case of Northern Ghana. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* / 34(1):1–21. doi: 10.1080/02255189.2013.755916; Heslin, Alison. 2020. “Riots and Resources: How Food Access Affects Collective Violence.” *Journal of Peace Research*. doi: 10.1177/0022343319898227.

⁹ Paavola 2008; Connolly-Boutin & Smit 2016; Panthi et al. 2016; Shah et al. 2020; cited in Mercy Corps. (2020). Climate Change Research Agenda. Washington, DC: Mercy Corps.

¹⁰ Barrios et al. 2006, 2010; Backhaus et al. 2015; Henderson et al. 2017; Delazeri et al. 2018; cited in Mercy Corps. (2020). Climate Change Research Agenda. Washington, DC: Mercy Corps.

¹¹ OECD (2020), *States of Fragility 2020*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/ba7c22e7-en>.

¹² Baier, Jasmin, Kristensen, Marina Buch, and Davidsen, Søren (2021). “[Poverty and Fragility: Where will the poor live in 2030?](#)” Brookings.

PRIORITY ONE

Analytical Frameworks and Assessment Methodologies

Climate-conflict interactions are highly context specific - therefore commonly used risk analysis processes aren't very effective. For example, a climate stress, such as a decrease in rainfall, can have opposite effects in different places or times. A drought may exacerbate migration in one case, while in another the drought may be so severe it erases the financial resources necessary for migration and effectively freezes displacement trends. In other words, even if a relationship exists between climate change and conflict, it does not manifest in a simple, linear way and is heavily influenced by multiple other factors. As a result, the mechanisms linking climate change and conflict risks must be analyzed in the specific contexts in which shocks and vulnerabilities play out, while also accounting for the broader socio-economic and political context to avoid reinforcing or creating new tensions.

This complexity necessitates a set of appropriate and robust analytical tools tailored to the needs of civil society, implementing organizations, donors, and policymakers. Ideally, such tools should provide a process for integrating both actual and projected analysis of climate and conflict risks. However, several studies, including our own, have indicated a gap in the necessary guidance to support such processes.¹³



**Climate Fragility:
Addressing Barriers to
Practice**
Assessment Landscape Review
December 2020



Seeking to gain additional insights into this potential challenge, Mercy Corps conducted a landscape review of climate security-focused assessment methodologies. The review encompassed more than 20 tools, scoring each according to a set of six variables¹⁴ identified through programming best practice and expert consultation. Our research found that there is no shortage of efforts at global, national, and local levels which aim to better understand climate-conflict dynamics. However, these methodologies stopped at a problem diagnosis and failed to provide the level of detail required by implementing agencies in designing program activities to transform climate-conflict dynamics. Furthermore, most of these failed to fit within the program development timeframe or budget or provide the level of detail required in designing program activities.

Figure 3: Mercy Corps' landscape assessment of climate-conflict tools for implementing agencies.

In the absence of tailored approaches, implementing organizations have sought to adapt existing tools. Most available assessment tools appeared to be specific to either the climate or conflict sectors. A climate vulnerability assessment may include the integration of conflict sensitivity questions, just as a conflict assessment may build in climate questions. These adaptations were, for the most part, best categorized as “do-no-harm” additions to existing methodologies, rather than examples of robust, cross-cutting analytical integration.

Mercy Corps is supporting the evolution of fit-for-purpose tools to better help policymakers and implementers address interconnected climate and conflict risks. In recognition of the need for analytical processes to articulate a deeper understanding of climate-conflict dynamics specifically, we developed a

¹³ Mercy Corps. (2020). *Climate Change and Conflict: Lessons from Emerging Practise*. Edinburgh, UK: Mercy Corps.

¹⁴ Tools were assessed according to the following variables: (i) *user friendly* (i.e., simple, cost-efficient, offering a clear roadmap for how information will be collected and analyzed); (ii) *examined interconnected climate and conflict systems and were sector neutral*; (iii) *provide tangible entry points* to target interventions, in part through the development of measurable theories of change; (iv) *incorporate climate and environmental change information*; (v) include “expert agreed” variables deemed highly relevant to conflict risk (i.e., low socioeconomic development, low state capacity, intergroup inequality, and a recent history of violent conflict); and (vi) *considerations of gender*.

Climate and Conflict Resilience Assessment. This methodology stands as a practitioner’s guide for conducting an integrated climate security assessment in conflict affected and fragile contexts where the impacts of climate change are already being experienced or are projected to occur. This tool goes a step further than a general conflict assessment in making visible the specific pathways linking climate and conflict and identifies leverage points for action. Using a 4-part assessment framework, this methodology is designed to provide a cost and time efficient tool for field-based practitioners and communities to draw-out both the context specific and broader systems dynamics through which climate change amplifies conflict. This 4-part model examines the dominant themes we have identified as influential to creating climate fragility outcomes:

- **Climate Shocks & Stresses:** Climate variability and climate change related shocks and stresses that can directly and indirectly raise the risk of conflict.
- **Macro Trends:** Fluctuations in key social, economic, and ecological dynamics like population growth and environmental degradation which can act as drivers of conflict and can be exacerbated by climate shocks and stresses.
- **Fragility Factors:** Factors which have been identified to increase the likelihood of conflict in a given context such as intergroup inequality, history of violence, state capacity, and socioeconomic development.
- **Compounded Shocks & Stresses:** The result of the factors, trends, shocks and stresses described above which directly and indirectly interact to elevate conflict risks, and sometimes result in violence.

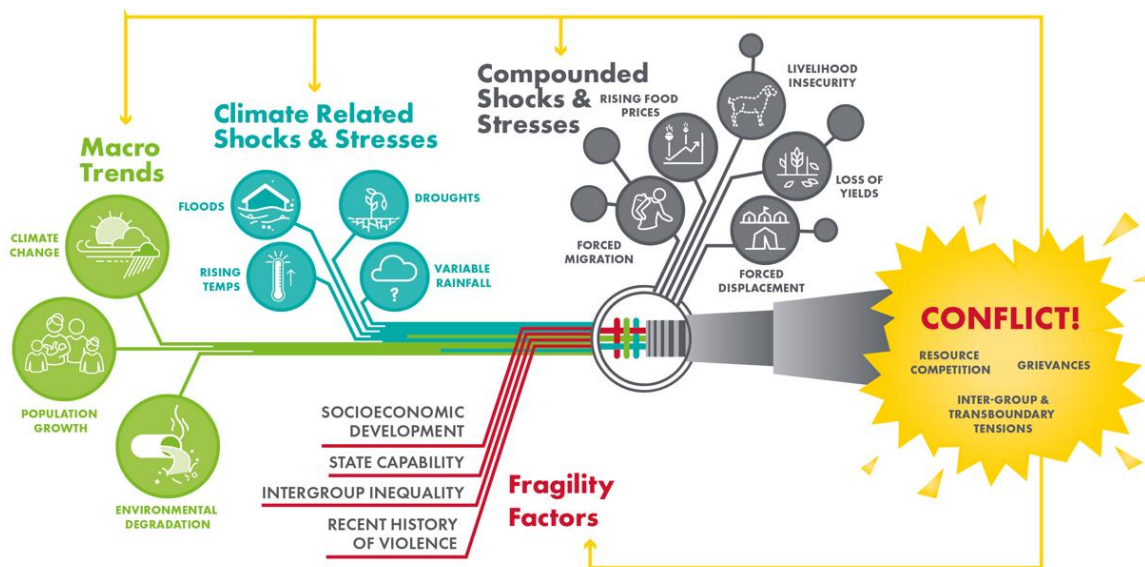


Figure 4: Mercy Corps’ Climate and Conflict Resilience Assessment Framework.

Designed to be practitioner-oriented, findings from this assessment process identify entry-points and approaches which can interrupt the cycle of fragility through:

- Support to the identification of contextualized pathways between climate change and conflict
- Support to program design to simultaneously address climate change and conflict drivers

- Informing policy and decision making and the design of integrated strategies with broad resilience or peace goals
- Support to climate sensitivity in peace and conflict efforts
- Support to peace-positive climate adaptation

PRIORITY TWO

Developing Robust Programing Strategies to Address Systemic Climate-Conflict Challenges

Our long-standing resilience work with its emphasis on systems analysis along with our newly piloted climate-conflict assessment methodology lays a foundation for our ability to confidently address climate change and conflict as a distinct focus crosscutting our climate, governance, and peace programming. Our programming approach for addressing the intersections between climate and conflict consists of three components:

1. Supporting good governance to strengthen social cohesion, peace, and climate resilience.

Conflict arises when weak sociopolitical, economic, and ecological systems break down. These breakdowns almost always result from poor governance: unaccountable or unresponsive institutions, inequitable access to services and resources, a lack of inclusive participation in decision-making processes, and low civil society capacity to address these challenges. At the same time, increasingly intense and more frequent climate-related shocks disproportionately impact poorer countries, where the risk of violent conflict is already immense. Climate shocks and stresses worsen conflict by heightening competition for increasingly scarce resources, exposing governance failures, and exacerbating inequities and marginalization. Mercy Corps' programming tackles institutional failures at their intersection with climate fragility to ensure governance systems are more responsive to and representative of local communities impacted by climate threats.

As part of the USAID-funded Livestock Market Systems program in Northern Kenya, Mercy Corps implemented Ward Development Planning (WDP) across five counties, all of which were severely affected by the recent drought. The WDP model is a participatory planning and development process that seeks to strengthen community capacities to assess their own needs, and to prioritize, plan, and implement their projects in conjunction with the local government. Recent research by Mercy Corps indicates that [the WDP model strengthened local capacity to de-escalate disputes over access to water resources](#), even in the midst of increased pressure on these resources during the drought.

Our ACTIVATE program in Iraq, supported by the US government, brought together activists and community leaders to collectively engage government representatives to implement policies that mitigate community tensions related to environmental and climate change issues, including water pollution, air pollution, and heat waves. Under this project, community members developed and launched the Environment Platform (EnvP), a mobile application being used by Iraqi citizens to report environmental concerns and violations and facilitate advocacy and information sharing with local authorities and the Environmental Police.

2. Strengthening community-level natural resource management institutions to manage competition and reduce conflict.

Climate change and environmental degradation are accelerating competition over shared natural resources. Supporting a range of livelihood activities and often holding a strong cultural significance, natural resource

competition is often existential and highly securitized for local communities. Real or perceived inequity around access to and control over diverse resources - agricultural lands, waterpoints, rangelands, forests, minerals resources and other extracted materials - exacerbates existing tensions within and between communities, threatening the breakout of violence. In response, Mercy Corps programming supports community-driven sustainable natural resource management (NRM) through multiple entry points, including (a) creating opportunities for inter-community engagement around natural resource issues of shared interest, (b) developing capacity and linkages among formal and non-formal institutions to facilitate and enforce inter-community agreements around sustainable NRM, and (c) facilitating market linkages for natural resource products and improved technologies that can sustainably enhance resource dependent livelihoods.

In the USAID-funded EKISIL program in the Karamoja sub-region of Uganda, Mercy Corps is convening communities to address conflict risks emanating from a complex mix of ecological and social challenges that are increasingly exacerbated by climate change. Access to water and grazing land is critical for the pastoral communities that lie along the border of Kenya and Uganda. However, these resources are increasingly scarce in part due to escalating drought and rising temperatures. The resulting imbalance of resources has applied additional stress on the government's inability to manage a history of resource-based conflict, driven by increasing agricultural production, poor natural resource management, and commercialization of land. To address these challenges Mercy Corps has worked closely with national and local officials, civil society stakeholders and communities to implement a mutually reinforcing portfolio of strategies including: the development of cross-border natural resource sharing agreements, endorsed by communities in support of water and pasture sharing, coordination of natural resource management strategies, with the necessary funding to support them, and strengthened governance capacity of local institutions through development of policies and processes to protect resources.

In Ethiopia, Mercy Corps has helped address a systemic cause of conflict around the world: the lack of land security. In many contexts, vulnerable populations lack secure access to critical natural resources and as a result are unable to invest in medium to long-term climate adaptation strategies. In these same cases, the increasing stress of climate change effects and the growing tensions resulting from the need for increasingly scarce resources contribute directly to rising conflict risks. In Afar, Oromia and Somali regions, Mercy Corps worked to revitalize, and build capacity of centuries old Rangeland Councils responsible for the management of roughly 4 million hectares of critical land resources for pastoralists. Resource mapping, environmental restoration activities, enhanced coordination, and establishment of dry seasons grazing reserves were a few of the critical activities undertaken by the councils early on. Further, women's participation in complimentary natural resource management committees and the growth of Village-level Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) groups, whose members are mostly women, played a significant role in increasing women's participation in decision making in their households. Building on these structures, Mercy Corps supported the Ministry of Peace to develop a pastoral development policy. This legislation, for the first time, recognized the land use rights of customary institutions, and clearly articulated customary land administration roles and responsibilities, notably for the establishment of grazing and farming lands and tourist attraction sites. This new legislation empowered Mercy Corps to work closely with USAID's LAND program to pilot communal land certification programs in the Oromia region.

3. Encouraging diverse, climate-smart livelihoods that reduce the intensity of competition over natural resources.

Climate change is disrupting traditional livelihoods, escalating food and water insecurity, and fueling competition over scarce resources. Extreme weather events and increasingly erratic weather patterns

challenge traditional agricultural calendars and contribute to declining crop yields; shifting patterns of rainfall and drought dry up pastures and grasslands supporting pastoralism causing livestock to lose weight and increase chance of disease and sickness; fishing communities are facing diminishing size of fish schools due to increased salinity in freshwater resources; pollution from wastewater runoff, and overfishing practices; land degradation and overharvesting depletes forests undercuts arboreal-supported livelihood activities. Confronted with livelihood insecurity as a result of climate shocks and stresses, it is common for individuals to resort to negative coping strategies. Moreover, the compounded effects of climate disasters on livelihood insecurity can result in a knock-on effect of potentially exacerbating or multiplying the conflicts among individuals and between communities. Livelihoods that are diversified and climate-smart are more resilient to long-term climate change and immediate climate shocks and stresses. Combining market systems development approaches with environmental conservation increases incomes, improves development outcomes, and builds conflict resiliency. Our programming fosters opportunities for climate-smart livelihoods and encourages sustainable and productive economic growth.

The SIDA-funded Ben-ni-Baara program in Mali supported a variety of different livelihood diversification interventions that collectively aimed to address the underlying drivers of land and resource-based conflict. These included training for pastoralists and agropastoralists on climate-resilient herding and farming practices, providing agricultural cooperatives with seeds to improve animal fodder production, and supporting access to finance for entrepreneurship activities.

In North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo, food security is hampered by two driving and interrelated constraints; restricted availability of food due to limited access to and productivity of land, and limited market functioning due to insecurity. In this context, the impacts of climate change, including changing rainfall patterns, have further increased tensions between groups, as long-held relationships and resource use patterns became strained under the changing landscape. In recognition of the compounding nature of these threats, Mercy Corps implemented an integrated, resilience-building and conflict-transformative program focusing on improving access to land and improved market functioning through peace-positive value chain development as a holistic strategy for building peace and improving food security. Climate change adaptation support, in the form of climate smart agricultural improvements, were included as a tool to further reduce land conflict issues by promoting the sustainability and productivity of available land. Despite a highly unstable program context, security and socio-economic conditions were improved in 120 villages and food security increased for an estimated 25,000 households. Further, participant households reported increased optimism after program interventions about the prospect for stability in their community in the future. Learning from this program also suggests an increased focus on integrated environmental aspects could have led to greater overall impact.

PRIORITY THREE

Growing the Evidence Base

Global awareness of climate change and its impacts on the world's most vulnerable communities has increased in recent decades. However, there are still critical gaps in our understanding of how best to mitigate these effects and support evidence-based, context-specific adaptation strategies. While there is widespread support for the idea that climate change increases the risk of conflict, the mechanisms by which these phenomena work lack empirical testing. How do we understand the complex interplay of food insecurity and general economic uncertainty and disruption; low socioeconomic development, low state capacity, and recent histories of violence; and elite exploitation of local grievances and tactical considerations by armed groups? Social and political contexts – ranging from land rights institutions to intergroup inequality – are also important parts of the nexus.

Moreover, with few exceptions, there is a dearth of local-level analyses that focus on the context-specific interplays of climate and conflict. There has also been very little research evaluating the ways in which external programs - such as peacebuilding, good governance, and natural resource management interventions, among others - mitigate the link between climate variability and conflict, if at all. If such interventions do in fact reduce climate-related intercommunal conflict, what are the precise mechanisms induced by these programs?

With our understanding of the dynamics between climate variability and conflict limited to theoretical grounds, policymakers, practitioners, and/or experts lack policy and programmatic prescriptions for what types of efforts actually reduce the risk of conflict. A better understanding of the pathways or mechanisms that link climate variability and conflict and evidence around effective approaches is needed to lead to more targeted and effective peacebuilding responses in climate vulnerable regions.

It is within this evidence gap that Mercy Corps is implementing a research agenda to fill knowledge gaps and support evidence-based, context-specific strategies. The core question underpinning this agenda is “*What works to reduce climate-related conflicts that also strengthens communities’ adaptation or resilience to climate shocks?*” In pursuit of this agenda, we have outlined indicative lines of inquiry under three research tracks:

The **evaluative research** track critiques the effectiveness of interventions to assess what works, and where, seeks to understand,

- What types of programs successfully mitigate the effect of climate variability on conflict and violence?;
- What are the pathways through which these programs reduce conflict risk in climate-vulnerable contexts?; and
- What types of conflict and violence, and for what groups (including women and youth) are these program approaches most effective in reducing?

Exploratory research aims to strengthen the foundational understanding of key concepts and principles, and the relationship among them by examining,

- What are the specific channels through which climate variability increases the likelihood of violent conflict, particularly intercommunal conflict? How does this vary by context?; and
- What are the long-term implications and likely future impacts of current trends in climate-driven conflict in the countries in which we work?

Lastly, to inform and influence donors and broader decision-makers, our agenda’s **policy research** track seeks to identify,

- How can climate change adaptation investments and national plans in fragile, conflict-affected contexts be more conflict sensitive / less conflict blind?;
- What are the funding gaps in terms of climate finance for FCAS states?; and
- What are institutional barriers and solutions to ensuring more climate adaptation financing is targeted at the most fragile contexts, and reaches the most climate vulnerable people and places within them?

Future Directions

This paper outlines three areas of improvement for addressing the factors of instability which increase the likelihood climate change can lead to conflict. These efforts must be accompanied by research to identify what is or is not effective. Importantly, opportunities for piloting and innovating new tools, partnerships, and interventions will be critical to break out of the limited programming options that currently exist. Equipped with

a revitalized approach, the international community will be poised to play a transformational role in addressing the climate-conflict nexus in fragile states.

Growing momentum in the development and foreign policy communities around the need to address the effects of climate change on the world's most vulnerable people presents an opportunity to refresh our thinking and approach to climate security. To date, practitioners have relied primarily on approaches that lack empirical evidence, that suffer from sectoral silos and that are limited in scale and scope. Mercy Corps' learning from our experiences working on this nexus indicates that bold new ideas are needed to meet the challenge presented by the effects of climate change on conflict, and vice versa.

Policy Recommendations

Innovative, well resourced, and evidenced-based efforts can interrupt the negative cycle of climate fragility. In addition, they would offer a more effective use of resources for today's climate and conflict challenges, as well as those projected as a result of intensifying climate change. Noting that adaptation to climate change will need to deliver on conflict prevention and resolution, and the peace contributing impacts of climate action, Mercy Corps recommends:

Increase funding from bilateral and multilateral donors and national governments for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected situations. Fragile contexts are missing out when it comes to support from the international community to build resilience to climate change, even when those funds are specifically mandated to support the most vulnerable to climate change.¹⁵ Bilateral donors should make all efforts to meet the existing commitment of providing at least \$100 billion in climate finance every year 2020-2025. This should include at least \$40 billion for adaptation finance. In addition, a new global public finance goal should be established specifically for adaptation, starting in 2025, when the US\$100 billion commitment will be succeeded. The all-encompassing US\$100 billion goal has failed to address the historic neglect of adaptation. A standalone public adaptation finance goal from 2025 will build confidence that adaptation finance will increase and become more predictable in the medium term. Lastly, climate finance should be allocated according to vulnerability and need, with specific targets to increase funding to fragile and conflict affected situations.

Ensure adaptation interventions are conflict-sensitive, build resilience, and are informed by good governance principles. As a bare minimum, conflict-sensitive guidance for climate projects in fragile contexts must be adopted. Adaptation projects lacking robust conflict sensitivity approaches risk exacerbating the conflict and contributing to the existing conflict dynamics. Beyond this, good governance principles are an invaluable element in the suite of approaches that must be marshaled to help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Governance is not just the work of governments; it is all the processes of interaction, decision-making, and management to maintain well-being and respond to collective challenges. Good governance and successful climate action are mutually-reinforcing. Donors and implementing partners must also take a resilience approach to climate programs. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, a resilience approach includes strengthening the capacity of institutions and communities to mitigate the drivers and effects of violence, alongside other risk factors like climate hazards and economic disruptions that exacerbate fragility.

¹⁵ Mercy Corps (2020) 'Too Critical to (Continue to) Ignore: The Need for Adaptation in Fragile States', Mercy Corps, Portland, OR. [Working Paper](#) [PowerPoint slides](#)

Ensure peace-positive climate adaptation funding reaches those who need it most, via effective, locally led processes. Evidence demonstrates the role that effective local governance can play in mitigating and responding to climate-influenced conflict drivers, and yet only 10 percent of climate adaptation funds reach communities outside of capitals. Effectively matching locally led solutions and governance infrastructure with the financing, technical assistance and know-how to address climate change and conflict is critical to promoting sustainable peace.

Civil society actors and donors must intentionally bring the peacebuilding community into conversations on climate finance and fragility. Responding to climate change and conflict as interconnected challenges will safeguard climate adaptation and peace outcomes against future risks. Peacebuilding is critical for addressing the root cause of conflict risks that can impact a country or community's vulnerability to climate change while conflict and poor social cohesion undermine effective climate action. The approaches and perspectives of the peacebuilding community must inform ongoing discussions on climate adaptation and finance in fragile contexts.

Multi-mandate organizations must facilitate collaboration across the humanitarian-development-peace-climate nexus in fragile contexts with the buy-in and support of donors. Donor agencies must recognize the intersectionalities within their work and partner together where possible to layer approaches. Multi-mandate organizations, coalitions and member-based organizations that already work across the nexus are well positioned to convene donor agencies at headquarters to generate buy-in and support for multi-sectoral programs and at the regional or country level to assess how climate hazards and conflict risks manifest and exacerbate one another and develop program solutions that address both challenges. While these organizations can drive genuine collaboration and reduction (if not outright removal of) humanitarian-development-peace-climate silos and break down internal and bureaucratic barriers to investment in FCS, this must be met with a similar willingness from donor institutions to fund nexus priorities and actively engage in breaking down these divides.

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About Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action — helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.



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