

BACKGROUND PAPER

Opportunities: Developing a people-centered approach to climate security in Somalia

ABOUT THE EVENT

The Challenges Annual Forum 2021 (#CAF21Berlin) will take place from 1–3 December and discuss how peace operations could more effectively address climate and environmental security risks and opportunities. The co-hosting partner for this year's hybrid event is the German Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF).

Challenges Forum is a global partnership that uses its convening power to generate innovative ideas and promote results for more effective peace operations.

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How can climate security opportunities be used to engage with local partners and build peace?

People-centred approaches place people at the centre, focusing on their aspirations, needs and specific contexts and tailoring interventions accordingly. Tobias von Lossow et al, (2021),¹ highlights the centrality of people and communities in better understanding the climate-security Nexus and how changes in climate patterns can result in security risks.

In Somalia, engaging local communities and partners to build peace is central to the climate security approach. According to the SIPRI fact sheet on Somalia, “Somalia is highly susceptible to the effects of climate change and extreme weather. Without anticipatory preventive approaches, these factors are likely to exacerbate existing vulnerabilities and reduce people’s livelihood options, which in turn may have negative impacts on stability and security in Somalia. More frequent and intense droughts and floods undermine food security and worsen livelihood conditions in Somalia, adversely affecting marginalised groups, fuelling grievances, increasing competition over scarce resources and exacerbating existing community tensions and vulnerabilities.”²

“The climate security approach also provides an opportunity of striking a delicate balance between natural and human factors.”

Climate security provides implicit and explicit peacebuilding opportunities for strengthening good governance, reconciliation, conflict-sensitive and inclusive growth, improving social cohesion, and equitable distribution of natural resources. A starting point for harnessing climate security opportunities is to create a conducive environment that convenes and systematically engages local authorities and community institutions to secure local actors’ acceptance, adherence and inclusive ownership of peace and climate change adaptation interventions.

The climate-security Nexus should be a central part of the local stabilisation planning for all peacebuilding and development programming, given its importance and impact on vulnerable communities and the understanding of the links between climate and conflict, and competition over natural resources. The example of Somalia can highlight the importance of this approach. At the same time, broader grassroots participation should be part of any adaptation and stabilisation efforts because community resilience and stability are central to delivering a successful peace and stabilisation strategies.³

The climate security approach also provides an opportunity of striking a delicate balance between natural and human factors. This requires transparency and participation of local actors, because of their knowledge of the local environment. Therefore, a people-centred approach to climate security opportunities builds long-term measures of transparency and strengthens a local’s sense of ownership and legitimacy. This, in turn, fosters social cohesion and trust needed to implement peacebuilding interventions.

Climate security should be a comprehensive strategy driven by governments, communities, peacekeeping, development and humanitarian agencies for community engagement at various stages of the peace-building cycle.

1. Tobias von Lossow, T., Schrijver, A., van der Kroon, M., van Schaik, L., & Meester, J. (2021). Towards a Better Understanding of Climate Security Practices. Clingendael Institute. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep32151>

2. <https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/210203%20FINAL%20Fact%20Sheet%20Somalia%20Skisser%20LR11.pdf>

3. Juncos, A. E., & Joseph, J. (2020). Resilient peace: Exploring the theory and practice of resilience in peacebuilding interventions. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 14(3), 289-302. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2020.1745445>

What are entry points?

While research is evolving, recent studies on climate and peace have contributed to a growing list of entry points focusing on strengthening inclusive state-society relations as well as on managing climate and conflict risks through a people-centred approach, as argued by de Coning et al. (2015)⁴ and MO Mohamoud et al. (2017). These include the following entry points⁵ for international actors, peace operations and bilateral donors:

- 1) Promote acceptance and inclusive ownership of local and national authorities to highlight the strategic importance of the climate security policy approach.
- 2) Create space for all national stakeholders to contribute to climate change adaptation to build peace.
- 3) A participatory context analysis takes climate and security as a principal referent to identify the factors that drive and sustain climate change adaptation and conflict within communities in times of stress, including local conflict management and reconciliation processes.
- 4) A context analysis on the quality of state-society relations, governing elites, power relations, and vested interests.
- 5) Climate security interventions should be aligned with resilience, economic recovery and quick impact projects of overall peace operations to enhance ownership, sustainable peace and prevention of conflict relapse.
- 6) People-centred approaches to climate security should be a system-wide endeavour to enhance the capacity of local actors to contribute to better state-society relations, particularly in affected populations.

- 7) Improve strategic communication, and the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of community engagement activities.
- 8) Climate security is gendered, and it is imperative that a gender lens is applied systematically.
- 9) Establish civil society engagement, which includes providing space for religious, traditional and academic leaders, women, men and youth to provide input and feedback on the peace and conflict analysis outlined above. Contribute to the mission's self-evaluation of its programmes and initiatives.

One important entry point is to bring in a more participatory and inclusive peacebuilding process from a gender and youth perspective. Addressing the impacts of climate change on women and men, boys and girls, as well as having inclusive peacebuilding and development/humanitarian programmes that are led and delivered by women and youth, is central to a successful delivery.

The research institute SIPRI has set out four pathways that link "Climate Change and Conflict" in this [policy paper](#):

- (a) Livelihoods
- (b) Migration and mobility
- (c) Armed group tactics
- (d) Elite exploitation

These pathways are key entry points for the climate security approach in Somalia. Centring them on people is key to their success in peacebuilding.

4. de Coning, Cedric, John Karlsrud, and Paul Troost. 2015. Towards More People-Centric Peace Operations: From 'Extension of State Authority to 'Strengthening Inclusive State-Society Relations.' *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* 4 (1): 1-13.

5. MO Mohamoud, et al. 2017. The Baseline Survey on the State of IDPS Resilience in the Benadir Region, Somalia

Are there already practical examples?

In Somalia, the UN mission (UNSOM) established the position of Climate Security Advisor in 2020 responsible for implementing the environmental mandate of the mission (Security Council Resolution 2592). The Advisor’s main tasks are to mainstream Environmental Peacebuilding and Peacekeeping approaches and to identify and manage climate related risks which can negatively impact the implementation of the mission mandate. The Advisor reports to the UN Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) who also serves

as Resident Coordinator in Somalia. While still at a very early stage, the work of the Climate Security Advisor in Somalia, with the support of NGOs and the wider UN, has proven increasingly important in bringing together humanitarian, development and peace approaches around water management and improving flood and drought resilience to break the worsening cycle of climate impacts, displacement and conflict.

UNSOM’s approach is built on the following pillars:

Inclusive Peace and Security	Nexus Response to Climate Change	Building the System
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive politics and Environmental Mediation • Climate Risk Management • Rule of law Environment capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinated Nexus approach to Flooding and drought • Local led Adaptation through Nature Based Solutions • Anticipatory action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and Technical Support to Federal and Member Governments • Reducing the UN’s footprint in Somalia • Supporting the UN Cooperation Framework through joint programs.

Firstly, an example of a people-centred approach is seen in the handling of the annual flooding and drought cycle in the Juba and Shabelle basins in Somalia. Here, the Advisor has started to bring together communities that are leading the adaptation to the flooding impacts together with humanitarian and development agencies. Focusing on breakage points in the river, and driving this from a community-led approach, the support is focused on the most vulnerable people. Humanitarian (sandbags and lifesaving interventions), development (nature-based approaches to bank stabilisation and sand dams) and peace (stabilisation) actors, such as UNDP and IOM, are working together towards a comprehensive solution to the flooding issue with a people-centred approach at the core.

The other example is UNSOM’s inclusive approach in the Mataban District in Somalia, where local communities have been in conflict for the past 10 years. Natural resource competition over grazing land and water access is an underlying cause of the conflict. Bringing women and youth’s voices together with UNSOM is a way of testing a community-led environmental mediation process. With people at its centre, this process looks at nature-based solutions to grazing lands and water provision within the framework of a traditional mediation approach, using the effects of climate change as a catalyst for dialogue and peace between both communities.

What could that mean for UN Peace Operations and Special Political Missions?

Although implementing climate security approaches is relatively new to UNSOM, we are hopeful that a people-centred climate security approach will lead to a more integrated, environmentally sustainable and, therefore, more stable peace agreement and stable political and security contexts.

Focusing on community resilience through an inclusive participation of all stakeholders – not just elites and ruling groups – concentrating on environmental protection and ecosystem regeneration, will lead to an overall more stable environment for peace and security.

It is likely that climate change effects, including increasing temperatures and adverse weather events, will lead to growing competition over natural resources. This, in turn, is likely to increase tensions and challenge social cohesion, especially in fragile states. Combatting this through an inclusive, people-centred, climate security approach will lead to operations and missions that are able to address future changes in climate and associated security challenges. A people-centred climate security approach can help tackle these issues.

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