

# WEATHERING RISK

## PRACTICAL NOTE

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### Next steps towards an inclusive Climate, Peace and Security agenda

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## Context

Evidence from integrated climate security programming to date shows that climate action can bring opportunities for peace and serve as an entry point for peacebuilding interventions. In recognition of the need for integrated action, the Climate, Peace and Security (CPS) agenda has made great strides in recent years, evolving from a focus on understanding complex climate security risks towards acting to address them. Yet despite these advancements, marginalised groups – such as women, youth, people with disabilities, and Indigenous Peoples – are often left out of the conversation.

Exclusion is a key driver of climate vulnerability, insecurity and conflict; therefore, climate action for peace can only happen in conjunction with a focus on inclusion. Participatory approaches to designing climate and peace interventions can improve outcomes by integrating different types of expertise, knowledge and perspectives on the causes and impacts of problems, and supporting trust-building among stakeholders to aid in later implementation.

The international community is beginning to recognise that inclusion is a key element of the CPS agenda and can contribute to opening new opportunities for peace. The [New Agenda for Peace](#), presented by UN Secretary-General António Guterres in July 2023, highlights that climate policy “can offer avenues for effective peacebuilding and the inclusion of women, indigenous communities, the economically disadvantaged and youth.” Other examples of the growing call for inclusion in the CPS agenda include the UN Human Rights Council [Resolution 41/21](#) on “a disability-inclusive human rights-based approach to climate change,” and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) [Resolution 2250](#) on integrating youth participation in peacebuilding.

In this context, adelphi and the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC) organised an interactive workshop, bringing together diverse experts to discuss how a focus on inclusion can help bring new perspectives to the CPS agenda. The event aimed at informing discussions around inclusion and suggesting concrete solutions for fostering action to address climate security risks, especially in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. This practical note captures key takeaways from the workshop.

## Key takeaways

### Data, analysis and research

#### i. Integrated conflict analysis as the basis of interventions

A **robust, integrated conflict and climate risks analysis** should constitute the basis of any interventions for sustaining peace. Such analysis should:

- a. be **disaggregated**, based on data and information that reflect the vulnerabilities, needs, experiences and capacities of different groups. Further, it should consider differences *within* groups. For example, women cannot be merged into a single category, as their experiences will vary depending on other factors, such as their age, socio-economic status, etc. A woman in the role of head of household following the migration of male family members may face different challenges and have different opportunities than a woman in a male-headed household in the same community, as [experience in Mali](#) shows.

- b. **integrate different types of contextual knowledge** related to conflict dynamics and climate variations. Beyond collecting the essential information to understand conflict and climate impact (e.g. projected climate changes, dependence on climate-impacted livelihoods, state stability, history of conflict), it is important to also collect those related to cultural and social norms shaping conflict dynamics. Here, **sensitivity to the historical context** is key, as this shapes vulnerabilities to climate change and should therefore be accounted for in responses. For example, a history of rural marginalisation and a [weak social contract between political elites and rural communities in Haiti](#) shapes ongoing divisions in the country, as well as a lack of knowledge of and access to sustainable adaptive practices and technologies in rural areas.

At the global level, climate change is also linked to exclusion and inequality, and some regions and groups have been left out of developing the narratives around climate and security. As this impacts how nations and communities view the issue and react, it must be addressed to push forward climate action. Bringing a variety of actors together and listening to their experiences can help design and implement coordinated answers that better respond to the real needs of people on the ground who are affected by the confluence of climate and security or conflict risks.

## ii. Understanding inclusion

Fundamental to ensuring inclusion in programming and peace processes is first having a **clear conceptualisation** of it. Inclusion should be considered both as a **process**, with participatory, integrated analysis and programming, and as an **outcome**, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Across organisations and sectors, there are different understandings of the relationship between climate and security and how to conceptualise the CPS agenda; this influences how both the problem and the solutions are approached. The range of different understandings and terminology around CPS can make it challenging to identify which groups to consider. Focusing on vulnerabilities and exposure can begin to make this clear.

However, in thinking about inclusion, it is not enough to only consider vulnerabilities. The **long-term power structures that enable vulnerabilities** to emerge also need to be understood in order to move towards more transformative work. This includes examining gender norms and power dynamics between different individuals and groups in a given community or society, as well as pre-existing patterns of conflict and exclusion that may exist. In addition, practitioners should consider entry points to **address imbalances and ensure a more equitable framework** through concrete programmatic work and sustaining peace initiatives.

A **nuanced understanding of power dynamics** that considers how addressing grievances in one group may impact other groups is also needed. For example, one strategy employed by [farmers in Mali](#) to counteract declining agriculture yields is to apply chemical fertilisers and pesticides, which can subsequently leach into waterways and kill fish, harming the livelihoods of fishing communities. Bozo fishing community members also reported losing access to rivers as farming communities with preferential property rights and land ownership began fishing to diversify their livelihoods as a climate adaptation strategy. Similarly, [in Haiti](#), farmers have been reported leaving unproductive farmlands and moving to coastal areas for fishing. However, because of their use of inappropriate equipment or unsustainable techniques, this can trigger competition with existing fishing communities, in some cases even leading to real instances of conflict.

To date, when talking about inclusion, there has been a tendency to view affected communities as passive victims that are disproportionately affected by climate change and conflict, without necessarily having a major role in addressing it. Moving **beyond the victim narrative**, affected communities should be considered as agents of change. They often hold the knowledge on where entry points to tackling climate and environmental risks to security lie, how these efforts can be most efficiently implemented, and how to harness widespread engagement. For example, a review of two [water management projects in Yemen](#) showed that where women were included, they succeeded in facilitating the resolution of local water disputes despite major gender barriers, and demonstrated the potential of bottom-up peacebuilding around local natural resources.

Finally, the CPS agenda, and particularly its financing, has generally been skewed towards climate adaptation. However, focusing exclusively on adaptation means missing out on important conversations around a just transition and how climate interventions may impact energy access and affect different people and livelihood groups differently. There is therefore a need for the CPS agenda to **look beyond adaptation**, and explore also how climate mitigation can be leveraged for peace. Opening the discourse to connect CPS with mitigation could also create new funding opportunities, as there tends to be higher funding in mitigation than adaptation.

### iii. Including affected communities in research

In conflict-affected contexts, it can be challenging for researchers to **access affected communities**. In addition to security concerns, lack of infrastructure and natural disasters such as flooding can often impede access. Further, stationary communities are easier to access for interviews than pastoral ones, leading to (unintentional) bias in their favour. This bias is further institutionalised at the policy level; for instance, governments in the [Liptako Gourma](#) region of the Sahel have shown a preference for agriculture over pastoralism in land policies.

Researchers should address these challenges early on in the research design to ensure that a truly participatory approach underpins their work. This, in turn, is crucial to inform climate security programming and work on the ground. Involving researchers and facilitators from local communities in the research process is an important strategy to this end. Other potential solutions include interviewing refugees or internally displaced persons when it is not possible to reach affected areas directly, or facilitating the travel of members of affected communities to the researcher's location for interviews, though travel and logistical requirements should be considered.

## Mainstreaming inclusion into programming and interventions for sustaining peace

### i. Getting the right people in the room

To advance inclusion in the CPS agenda, participatory programming and interventions are needed, focusing on getting the right people in the room. To that end, it is important to **avoid tokenistic engagement**. This means that it is not enough to reach a quota of participants of different groups. Organisers must critically consider whether groups are able to fully participate throughout the climate-related risks analysis as well as the intervention lifecycle, from design to implementation and, critically, follow-up. It is important that women, youth, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities, etc. are involved because of their expertise, not simply because they are a member of a 'marginalised' group. Related to this point, CPS programming should include the provision of training and capacity building to equip affected



communities with the knowledge and tools they need to understand climate security risks and put in place their own responses to them. These activities should be participatory and include local facilitators in the teams.

**Finding who the influencers and right voices are** and at which governance level to engage is central to effective, participatory engagement. To set the right level of ambition, practitioners should consider what change is desired and who needs to be involved to make it happen. If a change in legislation is sought, for example, then engaging at the national level with lawmakers is needed. For behavioural or norms change, working with religious leaders may be necessary. For example, a [survey in Uganda](#) revealed that over 40% of pastoralists exclusively used Indigenous forecasts when accessing climate information, with nearly all the remainder using a combination of Indigenous and scientific forecasts, and only one respondent reporting using exclusively scientific forecasts. Indigenous Peoples, for example Indigenous rain makers, were therefore identified as key voices to include in interventions aimed at improving farmers' access to climate and weather information in these communities. Across all levels, knowledge must be integrated into programming in an inclusive way, tapping into local knowledge and expertise from communities, in addition to science.

**Finding the right implementing partners** from the start of the programming process is also key. When involving local civil society organisations and NGOs, for example, there is often a bias towards the more visible and established ones, as they are easier to find and more able to comply with quality assurance and other standards set by donors. In contrast, organisations with less resources and visibility are often left behind despite the good work they may be doing in and with communities. Therefore, part of the integrated analysis that is required to inform programming should include stakeholder mapping to understand who is already working on the ground.

Finally, it is important to consider a **broad array of marginalised groups**. The Women, Peace and Security and Youth, Peace and Security agendas have gained traction and awareness in recent years, making women and the youth two comparatively well represented groups in inclusion discussions. However, other marginalised groups, such as the elderly and people with disabilities, are rarely included in climate security discussions. Human rights and environmental defenders and members of the LGBTQIA+ community have been vocal on environmental, climate and security issues as well, yet are also not properly considered in CPS programming.

## ii. Co-production with local communities

Co-production with local communities contributes to more **locally-anchored responses**. Important to this end are:

- a. **information sharing with local communities**, including providing them with critical data such as early warning data and climate projections. For example, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development has long worked on early warning, with the [Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum](#) bringing together climate scientists and governmental actors from the region along with civil society and media for broader dissemination. Integrated dashboards and repositories are additional examples of approaches that can be taken to this end, such as the [Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform](#), which allows the exchange of local and Indigenous knowledge to facilitate best practices in climate action.

- b. **seeking to learn** from local communities. Consultation processes are vital to the success of programming in the CPS space, but they should be approached with humility; they should not be simply about providing information to communities, but rather listening to what they know. It is important to ensure the engagement is meaningful and not simply a box ticking exercise, remaining aware of consultation fatigue and the experience of some communities being frequently ‘talked to’ but not further involved in the process. In a Peacebuilding Fund-supported [climate security project in the Pacific Islands](#), regular consultation with local communities and, importantly, ensuring local structures had a meaningful role in deciding the location and scope of pilot projects, were key to foster community acceptance of the project.

It is also crucial to address the systematic lack of valuation of Indigenous knowledge. In the UN system, it is common to consult and pay an engineer or an economist for their expertise, but not a local community member or Indigenous representative for their local and Indigenous knowledge. The lack of value placed on Indigenous knowledge means it is being lost, as younger generations have little incentive to carry it further.

### iii. Strategic approach

To be successful, any programme or process that wishes to build climate resilience and peace requires a **long-term approach**, centred around building relationships with relevant local communities and civil society organisations. Practitioners should **avoid projectisation** and consider broader socio-economic, political and cultural dynamics and differentiated needs when intervening in a specific context.

Programming must also be **localised**. Practitioners need to adapt how they work and engage with stakeholders to the local reality, overcoming their own cultural and organisational perspectives. This can be done by **connecting existing grievances with peacebuilding interventions** and diversifying programmatic responses based on specific needs. Factors causing grievances in society, such as deteriorated livelihoods and social discrimination, should be identified to serve as entry points for peacebuilding solutions. For example, two [Peacebuilding Fund-supported projects in Mauritania](#) are working to incorporate refugees and internally displaced persons in decision making structures around natural resources and local economic activities, recognising that lack of access to natural resources and livelihood opportunities was a source of tension. [In Haiti](#), typical reasons for young people to join gangs include ensuring they can earn some money, protection, and a sense of belonging and social respect. This means that responses to gang recruitment must start by addressing the issues of poverty, lack of accessible livelihoods, and social exclusion.

There is also a need to **broaden the range of interventions and intended outcomes**. For example, when looking at livelihoods programmes, many interventions tend to have a narrow focus on farmers. Instead, programming should consider other livelihood groups such as pastoralists and fisherfolk. A broad range of outcomes should also be sought. Changing legislation is an important outcome, but intervening to change cultural and behavioural attitudes can also help achieve peace and climate resilience goals.

## Action areas for different stakeholder groups

To make concrete steps towards a more inclusive CPS agenda, based on the analysis above, it is recommended that:

### The UN system

- Builds on calls for inclusion in CPS, including UNHRC Res 41/21 and UNSC Res 2250, with improved metrics for assessing inclusion, looking beyond quotas.
- Ensures that CPS advisors and experts included in the mandates of peace missions and other UN operations in conflict-affected and vulnerable contexts are given additional training on inclusion, focusing on climate, peace and security. Mandatory trainings on gender mainstreaming and trainings on the Leave No One Behind approach should also be encouraged.
- Integrates Indigenous and local knowledge in programming and climate-related risks analysis. This should include working with local level structures and identifying the right local level partners, prioritising listening to Indigenous and local experts and compensating them for their time and expertise.

### Climate, peace and security practitioners

- Address linkages between mitigation, CPS and inclusion, and consider how the energy transition affects different groups and their livelihoods differently.
- Following the principle of “do no harm”, take into account the environmental impacts of peacebuilding interventions, as well as the social and cultural impacts of climate interventions.
- Explore ways in which humanitarian assistance in response to natural disasters can be used as an entry point to incorporate related agendas such as food security and health to further build climate resilience in affected communities.

### Funding organisations

- Adopt a more risk-tolerant approach to climate finance in fragile contexts, potentially operating with a small grants or tranche system approach in high risk areas, in line with the approach of the Peacebuilding Fund.
- Avoid enforcing existing power dynamics in funding projects by seeking to reach marginalised groups.
- Adapt reporting requirements, so that lack of access to an area for reporting does not automatically prevent a project from being funded there.

## Next steps

To continue advancing this discussion and shaping the narrative of inclusion in CPS, these recommendations have to be brought forward to different climate and peace-relevant fora. For example, the upcoming Loss and Damage Fund and Health, Relief, Recovery and Peace events at COP28 are an opportunity to integrate funding and programming recommendations to ensure that climate finance is reaching those who need it and is not exacerbating existing power dynamics in receiving countries.

**We encourage all climate, peace and security researchers, practitioners and policymakers to mainstream inclusion throughout all their areas of work, and across key CPS fora, as a long-term and evolving practice.**

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