

CLIMATE CHANGE, PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINING PEACE

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Building peace is never straightforward but there is an increasing awareness that the challenge will become exponentially more difficult in countries where climate change is amplifying social and political instability.¹ Eight of the ten countries hosting the most multilateral peace operations personnel in 2018 are located in areas highly exposed to climate change (see table 1).² Nonetheless, international efforts to build and maintain peace are not yet taking these emerging challenges systematically into account. This is concerning because the interactions between climate change and violent conflict prolong the latter, inhibit

peacebuilding and increase the human costs of war.³

Climate-related changes compound social, economic and political challenges, especially in regions in which agriculture is an important source of livelihoods.⁴ This results in climate-related security risks, which also means an increased likelihood of violent conflict.⁵ However, the impacts are temporally and spatially diverse, because different social, political and economic contexts and processes are exacerbated by different climate-related changes. The same is true of peacebuilding. Social, political and

¹ USAID, *The Intersection of Global Fragility and Climate Risks* (USAID: Washington, DC, 2018); and Peters, K., Mayhew, L., Slim, H., van Aalst, M. and Arrighi, J., *Double Vulnerability: The Humanitarian Implications of Intersecting Climate and Conflict Risk*, Working Paper 550 (International Committee of the Red Cross, Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre and Overseas Development Institute: London, 2019).

² In terms of international personnel, as of 31 Dec. 2018. Smit, T. and van der Lijn, J. 'Peace operations and conflict management', *SIPRI Yearbook 2019: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2019).

³ Ruttinger, L. et al., *A New Climate for Peace: Taking Action on Climate Fragility Risks* (Adelphi, International Alert, Wilson Center and EUISS2: Berlin, 2015); and Krampe, F., 'Water for peace? Post-conflict water resource management in Kosovo', *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 52, no. 2 (2016) pp. 147–65.

⁴ Busby, J. and von Uexkull, N., 'Climate shocks and humanitarian crises: Which countries are most at risk?', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 97, no. 6 (Nov./Dec. 2018).

⁵ van Baalen, S. and Mobjörk, M., 'Climate change and violent conflict in East Africa: Integrating qualitative and quantitative research to probe the mechanisms', *International Studies Review*, vol. 43, no. 4 (Dec. 2017), pp. 547–575.

SUMMARY

● Eight of the ten countries hosting the most multilateral peace operations personnel in 2018 are located in areas highly exposed to climate change. As such, climate change is not just an issue of human security—it is transforming the entire security landscape.

Nonetheless, international efforts to build and maintain peace are not yet taking these emerging challenges systematically into account.

This policy brief illustrates how climate change impacts the efficacy of peacebuilding, specifically the aim (a) to provide peace and security; (b) to strengthen governance and justice; and (c) to ensure social and economic development.

To better prepare for and adequately respond to what are increasingly complex peacebuilding contexts, peacebuilding efforts must become more climate-sensitive. Especially there is a need to (a) properly assess climate-related security risks; (b) increase cross-agency knowledge exchange and learning; and (c) maximize synergies and realize climate action as opportunities to build sustainable peace.

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Table 1. Top 10 countries with the most multilateral peace operations personnel and their exposure to climate change

Rank	Country	Total personnel	ND-Gain Exposure		
			Exposure score	Exposure country rank	Relative level of exposure
1	Somalia	21 732	0.526	171	Most exposed
2	DRC	18 046	0.494	149	Most exposed
3	South Sudan	17 691	0.542 ^a	177 ^a	Most exposed
4	Afghanistan	17 191	0.481	134	More exposed
5	Mali	16 129	0.525	170	Most exposed
6	CAR	14 460	0.495	151	Most exposed
7	Lebanon	10 556	0.332	21	Least exposed
8	Sudan (Darfur)	8 971	0.542 ^a	177 ^a	Most exposed
9	Abyei ^b	4 722	0.542 ^a	177 ^a	Most exposed
10	Kosovo	4 127	0.363 ^c	41	Least exposed

CAR = Central African Republic; DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Notes: ‘Multilateral’ in this context refers to both United Nations and non-United Nations peace operations. ND-Gain exposure ‘is the degree to which a system is exposed to significant climate change from a biophysical perspective. It is a component of vulnerability independent of socioeconomic context. Exposure indicators are projected impacts for the coming decades and are therefore invariant overtime in ND-GAIN.’ Based on a country’s ranking in ND-Gain Exposure, countries were grouped into four categories relative to all 192 countries. ‘Most exposed’ = Country ranking >144; ‘More exposed’ = Country ranking 97–144; ‘Less exposed’ = Country ranking 49–96; ‘Least exposed’ = Country ranking <48.

^a Data for South Sudan, Sudan (Darfur) and Abyei is from Sudan’s dataset.

^b Abyei has been counted separately due to the unresolved status of Abyei region and considerable size of the peace operation.

^c Data for Kosovo is from Serbia’s dataset (Macedonia 0.315 [13]; Albania 0.408 [71]).

Sources: Notre Dame Global Adaption Initiative, ‘ND-GAIN Country Index’ <www.gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/rankings/> and SIPRI Multilateral Peace Operations Database <www.sipri.org/databases/pko>.

economic contexts shape both the conditions for and the sequencing of peacebuilding activities and determine the pathways for sustaining peace. After decades of top-down peacebuilding efforts, policy actors now realize that peacebuilding offers better pathways to peace when it is bottom-up, inclusive and able to address the grievances that gave rise

to the conflict and those that result from war.⁶

Drawing together insights from several past and ongoing research efforts, this policy brief offers insights on how climate-related security risks affect peacebuilding and makes recommendations to help future peacebuilding efforts become more climate-sensitive.

⁶ United Nations and World Bank, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* (World Bank: Washington, DC, 2018).



CLIMATE-RELATED SECURITY RISKS TO BUILDING PEACE

Climate change affects peacebuilding in a number of ways. The compound character of climate change is a strong exogenous factor that reshapes the local context for building peace and is likely to amplify local grievances and marginalization. At the same time, the impacts of climate change inhibit economic development in the many conflict-affected countries in which the majority of the population depends on agriculture for its livelihood. Extreme weather events in particular weaken already fragile institutions that are unable to respond to the impacts of either slow- or rapid-onset disasters. The impacts of climate change therefore actively erode the capacity of states to prevent conflict.

To illustrate more specifically how climate change can affect the efficacy of peacebuilding, this policy brief examines three major aims of peace operations: (a) to provide peace and security; (b) to strengthen governance and justice; and (c) to ensure social and economic development. The policy brief draws on the cases of Somalia and Afghanistan—two countries which have experienced increasingly warm temperatures (see figures 1 and 2).

Peace and security

The work of peace operations to build and sustain peace is becoming increasingly difficult because climate change is directly affecting the dynamics of ongoing conflicts and increasing the likelihood of violent conflict.⁷ This interaction

has been seen in recent years, for example, in Somalia, but can also be found across the broader Sahel region and in other states such as Afghanistan.

Somali society's double exposure to decades of violent conflict and recurring droughts and floods has generated over 2.6 million internally displaced persons (IDPs).⁸ Increasingly, climate-related impacts are driving displacement through land degradation linked to the greater frequency of droughts and floods. In April 2018, for instance, flash floods in Somalia affected more than 695 000 people, displacing nearly 215 000.⁹ A prolonged drought had already affected 6.7 million people and 'displaced 926 000 people between November 2016 and September 2017'.¹⁰ Many IDPs moved to major urban centres such as Mogadishu, to live in improvised camps that have become hotspots for human trafficking and child exploitation, and recruitment ground for Al-Shabaab, Somalia's dominant insurgent group.¹¹ These impoverished circumstances counteract the efforts of the United Nations and the African Union to reduce the threat posed

Climate change is directly affecting the dynamics of ongoing conflicts and increasing the likelihood of violent conflict

⁸ Middleton, R. et al., *Somalia: Climate-related Security Risk Assessment* (Expert Working Group on Climate-related Security Risks: Stockholm, 2018).

⁹ World Health Organization, 'More than half a million Somalis affected by floods and heavy rainfall', 8 May 2018.

¹⁰ Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), World Bank (WB), United Nations (UN) and European Union (EU), *Somalia Drought Impact & Needs Assessment*, vol. 1, *Synthesis Report* (FGS, WB, UN and EU, 2018).

¹¹ Middleton et al. (note 8).

⁷ van Baalen and Mobjörk (note 5).

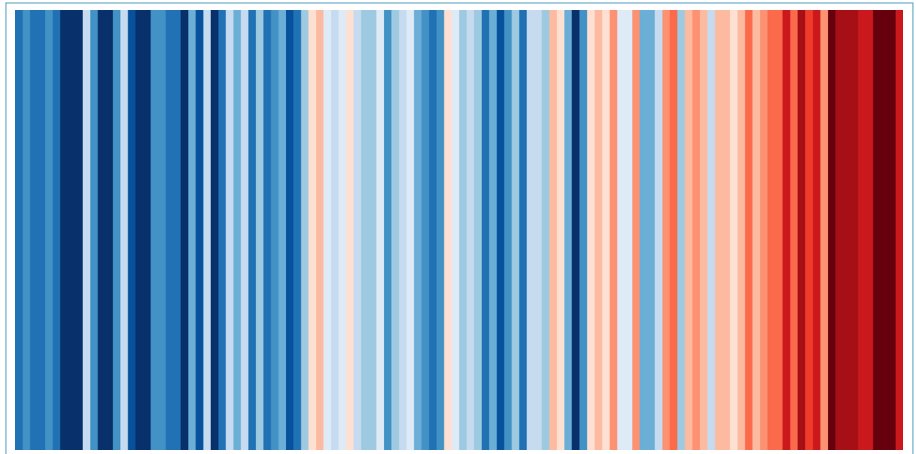


Figure 1. Visualization of annual average temperatures for Somalia from 1901 until 2018

Notes: This ‘warming stripe’ graphic is a visual representation of the change in temperature as measured in Somalia over the past 100+ years. Each stripe represents the temperature in Somalia averaged over a year. The average temperature from 1971 until 2000 is set as the boundary between blue and red colours, and the colour scale varies from +/- 2.6 standard deviations of the annual average temperatures from 1901 until 2000.

Source: Hawkins, E., ‘#ShowYourStripes’, National Centre for Atmospheric Science, University of Reading, 2018, <<https://showyourstripes.info>>.

The exposure of many countries to both climate change and conflict is the greatest driver of poverty, unemployment and hunger

by Al-Shabaab in Somalia.¹² The increased displacement of people and a lack of livelihood opportunities provide beneficial conditions for Al-Shabaab to recruit among the young, the unemployed and the displaced.¹³

Similarly, the increased frequency of herder–farmer conflicts in both East and West Africa causes social stress and tensions at the community level.

This feeds into broader societal grievances, which have been the root causes of many of the conflicts in the region. In complex, multilayered conflicts, such as those in Afghanistan, Mali, Somalia and Darfur, more frequent communal conflicts linked to ethnic and

clan-based identities are demanding increased attention and resources from peacebuilding actors to try to prevent this violence from spilling over to the national level.

Governance and justice systems

In addition to increasing the likelihood of violence, climate change challenges the governance assistance and support dimensions of multilateral peacebuilding efforts. For instance, in north-western Afghanistan drought affected a large proportion of the local population in 2018 in areas that are predominantly dependent on agriculture. The drought left the region with low water levels even in the early summer. This lack of water was compounded by the completion of the Salma dam, which affected water flows and access to water by local communities. Issues surrounding water allocation arose

¹² United Nations Security Council Resolution 2461, 27 Mar. 2019.

¹³ Middleton et al. (note 8).

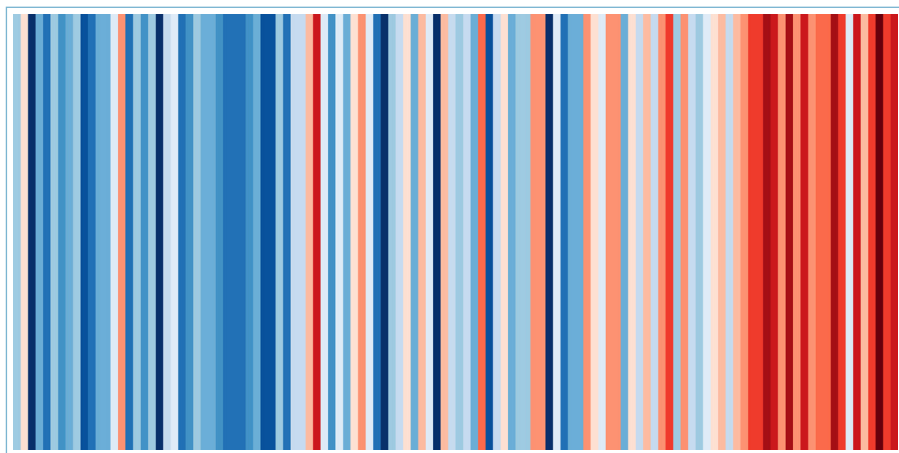


Figure 2. Visualization of annual average temperatures for Afghanistan from 1901 until 2018

Notes: This ‘warming stripe’ graphic is a visual representation of the change in temperature as measured in Afghanistan over the past 100+ years. Each stripe represents the temperature in Afghanistan averaged over a year. The average temperature from 1971 until 2000 is set as the boundary between blue and red colours, and the colour scale varies from +/- 2.6 standard deviations of the annual average temperatures from 1901 until 2000.

Source: Hawkins, E., ‘#ShowYourStripes’, National Centre for Atmospheric Science, University of Reading, 2018, <<https://showyourstripes.info>>.

between neighbouring villages, which resulted in low-level violence. The initial findings from SIPRI’s work on Afghanistan indicate that the lack of water and the ensuing violence had negative effects on the legitimacy of local state institutions and of the UN peace operation, which failed to mitigate/mediate the conflict.

Similarly negative effects on the legitimacy of emerging governance structures are visible in Somalia. The influx of IDPs to the city of Baidoa in south-western Somalia, amid climate change-related land degradation, led to an erosion of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM)-facilitated local power-sharing agreement. This agreement was implementing a careful mediation and a proportional allocation of political representation along ethnic/clan lines. The influx of displaced persons changed the demographic

and clan/ethnic composition of the city. Initial findings from SIPRI’s work show that these demographic changes called the legitimacy of the power-sharing agreement into question and set back UN efforts to support the building of governance institutions and broader state-building in Somalia.

Social and economic development

Grievances linked to social and economic disenfranchisement are increasingly being identified as the root causes of many conflicts.¹⁴ Peacebuilding typically involves a focus on promoting social and economic development, as this work reduces vulnerabilities, increases resilience and helps to manage societal grievances. By extension, this increases the capacity of societies to prevent violent conflict.

¹⁴ United Nations and World Bank (note 6).

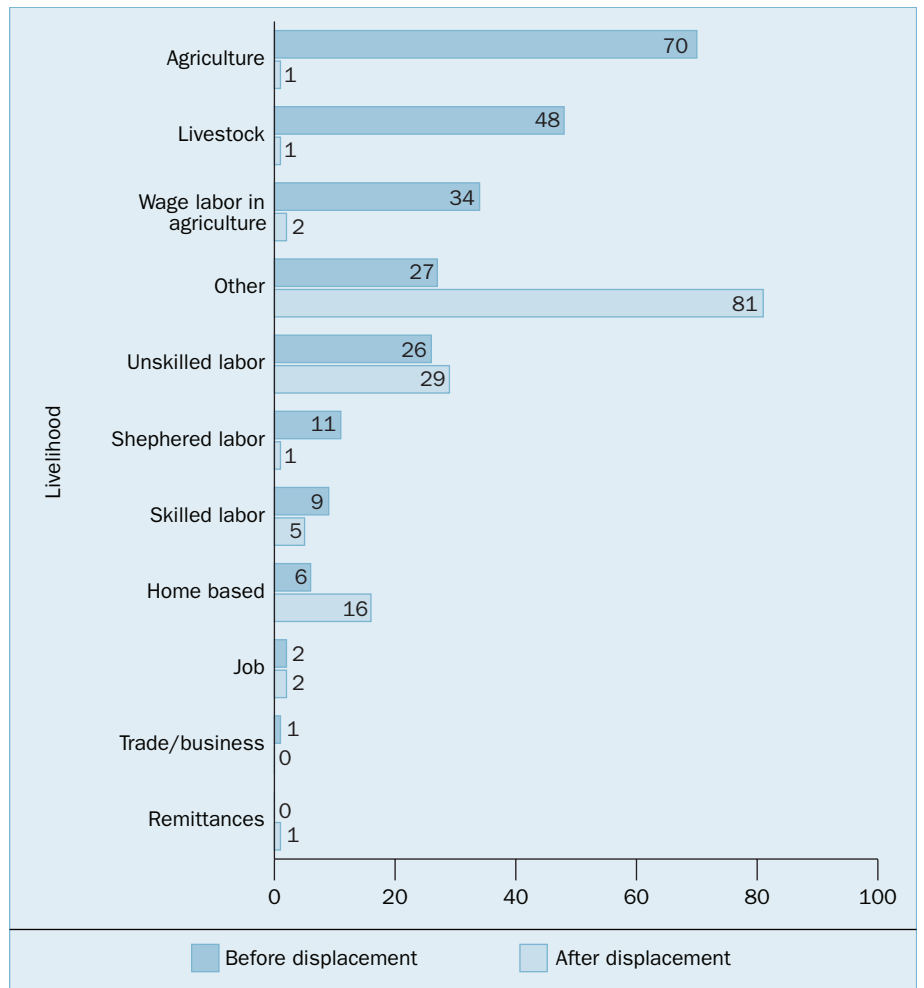


Figure 3. Change of livelihood before and after displacement in Afghanistan

Notes: While in their areas of origin 70 per cent had been dedicated to agriculture—followed by livestock (48 per cent) and agriculture-related wage labor (34 per cent)—following displacement the proportion of respondents dedicated to agriculture fell to around 1 per cent.

Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, ‘Afghanistan Drought Impact & Needs Assessment - Part I: Internally Displaced People in Badghis, Ghor and Hirat Provinces’, 10 Aug. 2018.

Women and children are among the most vulnerable segments of society. The exposure of many countries to both climate change and conflict is the greatest driver of poverty, unemployment and hunger. This increases the need for immediate humanitarian assistance, as is currently being demonstrated in Yemen, and has long-term implications for development efforts that seek to reduce the risk of a

relapse into conflict and to facilitate sustainable peace and development.

According to Toby Lanzer, the Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the 2018 drought in north-western Afghanistan left 13.5 million people on the brink of famine. The resulting displacement deprived over 96 000 people of their land and caused tremendous livelihood challenges. According to



the Afghanistan Drought Impact and Needs Assessment (DINA), over 70 per cent of people in the region were dependent on agriculture-related livelihoods before the drought and displacement. After displacement, this figure fell to just 1 per cent (see figure 3).¹⁵ Similarly, the Somalia DINA on the 2016–17 drought stresses that ‘addressing the accumulated caseload of [the] displaced will be a central challenge both to drought recovery and to the long-term stability and development of Somalia’.¹⁶ The increasing frequency of droughts and floods in many conflict-affected countries is challenging the development efforts of many peacebuilding actors. In turn this seriously undermines the long-term vision required to achieve a sustainable peace.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Multilateral peacebuilding efforts are underprepared for the fact that climate change is already affecting key elements of their mandates. To better prepare for and adequately respond to what are increasingly complex peacebuilding contexts, peacebuilding efforts must become more climate-sensitive. Three aspects will be particularly important in this regard:

1. Properly assess climate-related security risks.

Given the increasingly complex impacts of climate change on the prospects for peace, peacebuilding actors need to know more not only about the background to a particular conflict, but also of the climate-related issues in the contexts in which they are operating. This is not an add-on to core knowledge about conflict and peacebuilding, but an essential part. This will involve assessing: (a) the risks climate change poses for peacekeeping, peacebuilding and conflict prevention activities; (b) the risks that climate adaptation projects pose to the prospects for peace; and (c) the risks that arise from climate-insensitive peacebuilding and development interventions. Further, this requires the development of training programmes before deployment that will inform personnel of how climate-related security risks affect their work.

2. Increase cross-agency knowledge exchange and learning.

The multifaceted impact of climate change on social, economic and political processes has implications for all peacebuilding actors. To generate greater coordination and better information on the ground, enhanced exchanges of knowledge will be needed between various agencies. A systematic collection of ‘lessons learned’ and best practices in peace operations should be put in place to increase cross-agency dialogue and encourage the development of joint responses and staff training. This should also lead to specific recommendations on revising and adjusting existing funding streams that inhibit collaboration and can foster competition.

¹⁵ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), *Afghanistan Drought Impact & Needs Assessment*, part I, *Internally Displaced People in Badghis, Ghor and Hirat Provinces* (UNOCHA, Aug. 2018).

¹⁶ Government of Somalia (note 10).

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3. Maximize synergies.

Peacebuilding today is often caught in a dilemma between the need for immediate response to the threat of impending violence and to meet the need for long-term development. The increasing frequency of droughts and floods in many peacebuilding contexts has added an additional dimension to this dilemma.

Peacebuilding actors need to identify better ways to navigate between these competing demands using integrated response strategies. Instead of being guided purely by possible risks, peacebuilding actors should proactively identify climate action as an opportunity to build sustainable peace.¹⁷ Projects that aim for both climate action and development can help to bring about both short-term adaptation and long-term resilience. A key aim of such projects should be to recast the role of women and youth as agents of positive change, rather

than victims of climate impacts, deserves special attention. They will also contribute to peacebuilding by engaging with communities, strengthening the state's ability to provide services and enabling climate-sensitive development. Such approaches, moreover, will aid conflict prevention as they mitigate local grievances and reduce marginalization, which are becoming increasingly prevalent root causes of conflict.

In sum, climate change is not just an issue of human security; it is transforming the security landscape. To be able to deliver on their key mandate to provide *peace and security*, strengthen *governance and justice systems* and ensure broader *social and economic development*, peacebuilding efforts need to become more climate-sensitive. The multifaceted impacts of climate change require that peacebuilding actors, specifically the UN, must be 'fit for purpose'.

¹⁷ Krampe (note 3); and Krampe, F., 'Towards sustainable peace: A new research agenda for post-conflict natural resource management', *Global Environmental Politics*, vol. 17, no. 4 (Nov. 2017), pp.1–8.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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