



Addressing Climate Change from the perspective of Local Peacebuilders: Priority Areas for Sustainable Peace

Climate change is a peace and security issue, and a priority area for GPPAC. A human security approach to peacebuilding needs to be integrated in efforts to prevent, address and mitigate the impacts of climate change across peace-development-humanitarian nexus at national, regional and international levels. Drawing upon the expertise of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), this document serves to present key priority areas for the GPPAC network and informs efforts to address climate-related risks and prevent conflict.¹

Priority area 1: Elevating the climate crisis across the peace-development-humanitarian nexus

Viewing climate change through a human security lens serves to break away from the narrow understanding of conflict as an upsurge in violence, and towards a recognition that it is a manifestation of tensions caused by a variety of underlying factors - including the insecurity generated by climate change. Climate change can exacerbate instability and function as a conflict multiplier, as well as undermine the resilience of communities to the impacts of climate-induced disasters. Accordingly, recognising the multidimensional relationship between climate and peace is crucial to developing effective and sustainable responses to the challenges posed to peacebuilding. This has long been recognised by GPPAC's members, who acknowledge that the future will bring increasingly frequent climate crises, posing heightened risks to peace and security.² This is evident in the collaboration between the United Nations (UN), civil society and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) that informed the Boe Declaration adopted in 2018. The Declaration broadens the definition of security in the Pacific to include both human and environmental security, providing an opportunity to strengthen a transformational and integrated approach to the climate-security nexus. This is a good practice that could be implemented in other contexts.

Recommendations:

- ❑ Inform relevant policy and practice across the peace-development-humanitarian nexus with climate-sensitive research analysis which highlights the key regional issues and the assistance required to carry out action;
- ❑ Develop and strengthen the channels, structures and resources in place to support cross-sector strategic engagement and collaboration to ensure a cohesive approach to challenges to peace;
- ❑ Encourage actors engaged in climate initiatives to monitor, evaluate, document and communicate their impact, experiences, lessons learned and best practices, in order to allow others to learn from them and to increase their visibility;

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² GPPAC Pacific, Climate Security: Achieving Inclusive Peace, Development and Humanitarian Nexus, Oct 2019



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- ❑ Encourage the donor community to prioritise prevention in the context of climate change as a peacebuilding approach rooted in human security;
- ❑ Produce peacebuilding tools and guidance to demonstrate how initiatives such as the Boe Declaration can be implemented at a national level to ensure climate policies and their implementation are sensitive to indigenous land ownership and spiritual connections to the land.

Priority area 2: Addressing environmental injustices resulting from the exploitation of natural resources

A human security approach to peacebuilding highlights the interconnection between the exploitation of natural resources and stability. Across the 15 GPPAC regions, we have seen that the broader impacts of climate change will perpetuate and exacerbate social unrest, as stresses on natural resources puts pressure on communities, undermines the capacity of national governance to uphold human security, and increases intrastate conflict. Additionally, human insecurity may be exacerbated as a result of issues concerning the distribution of these dwindling resources: this is apparent in South East Asia, where overfishing in the South China Sea has resulted in clashes between small and commercial fishers. These challenges are also a central concern of GPPAC's members in Eastern and Central Africa, a region in which countries heavily rely on natural resource bases as a primary source of livelihood. This is why, in Uganda, the Center for Conflict Resolution (CECORE) engages with young men and women in order to equip them with specific farming skills to prevent instances of conflict over natural resources. Similar initiatives need to be looked into in order to facilitate broader, multi-stakeholder conflict resolution and reconciliation processes on national and regional levels.

Recommendations:

- ❑ Support and strengthen inclusive, community-based governance structures for the management of natural resources which are accountable to all segments of populations, and work to address the needs of all peoples and communities;
- ❑ Engage in advocacy work to encourage laws which restrict the environmentally damaging practices of corporations;
- ❑ Promote the inclusion of local civil society actors within decision making processes and support local peacebuilders in facilitating the dialogue and coalition building between those polarised by conflict;
- ❑ Foster collaboration between communities for the sustainable management and rehabilitation of land, forest and water sources in order to strengthen ecosystem services and facilitate more peaceful intercommunity relations;
- ❑ Ensure that local organisations and communities are provided with more sustainable, coordinated, coherent and long-term funding, particularly given that adaptation to natural resource depletion is a long-term process based upon learned knowledge.



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Priority area 3: Supporting the meaningful participation of women and youth

Climate induced issues are context-specific by nature, disproportionately affecting women and youth by deepening gender inequality and exacerbating threats to safety and security. The meaningful participation of women and youth peacebuilders in decision making processes around climate issues is therefore crucial for the development of effective solutions. However, funding and access to decision making spaces remains limited for these key groups. Consequently, GPPAC members recognise that measures to prevent climate-induced conflict require both short and longer term structural approaches to inclusive dialogue in environmental decision making, implementation and evaluation processes. That is why GPPAC Central Asia has worked with young activists as part of the “Cameras in hand” GPPAC-FTI project, in order to create spaces for young activists to advocate the importance of protecting the environment for future generations on national, regional and international stages.³ This is an important tool in creating spaces for dialogue for those most affected by climate issues.

Recommendations:

- ❑ Advocate for the meaningful participation of women and youth in the design of climate crisis mitigation initiatives by guaranteeing access to decision-making spheres, enabling their experiences and analysis to better inform relevant policy and action in a context-specific manner;⁴
- ❑ Address the need for concrete strategies to increase accessible, flexible funding to facilitate inclusive, community-led and gender-and-youth-responsive interventions in climate crises;
- ❑ Support the implementation of locally-led and gender-responsive interventions in climate crisis responses from the early stages;
- ❑ Ensure climate change policy creation and implementation draws upon peacebuilders’ tools, connections and examples of best practice in order to facilitate multi stakeholder approaches.

Priority area 4: Providing inclusive resilience building action

Inclusive resilience building action is crucial to conflict prevention.⁵ This is particularly apparent in regions of the Global South such as South East Asia and the Pacific, which in recent years have faced more frequent weather-related disasters such as typhoons and cyclones, creating new pathways for social unrest. Natural disasters are also compounding human insecurity in regions in the Global North such as North America, as demonstrated by increasing occurrences of droughts and wildfires on the West Coast of the United States. Since the risks of climate-induced

³ GPPAC, Participatory Video in Peacebuilding: Lessons Learnt from Occupied Palestinian Territories and Kyrgyzstan, November 2019

⁴ GPPAC, Gender Policy: Ensuring Gender Transformative Action in the Work of GPPAC, May 2019

⁵ GPPAC Pacific, Understanding the Inclusive Peace-DevelopmentHumanitarian Nexus: Gender, Climate and Sustaining Peace in the Pacific, June 2020



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disasters and conflict are so closely integrated, so must be peacebuilding and climate resilience efforts. We need to re-envision peacebuilding action in conflict-affected and fragile states to include an inclusive, resilience focused climate security strategy which works to prevent the associated impacts on human security and peace. With these challenges in mind, peacebuilders in Eastern and Central Africa are working to strengthen the capacity of existing traditional mechanisms of community resilience in order to ensure that the changing climate does not further exacerbate food and water insecurity. This is a good practice that could be implemented throughout other regions.

Recommendations:

- ❑ Identify the groups most vulnerable to the climate crisis on the ground in order to make targeted and meaningful resilience building interventions;
- ❑ Scale up resilience capacity at the local level by strengthening the strategies for the engagement of local communities during climate induced crises;
- ❑ Promote, strengthen and support early warning mechanisms which integrate conflict prevention and climate change adaptation, to support decision makers at the local and national level in anticipating climate-related crises;
- ❑ Secure flexible funding available to community based organisations working at the local level to identify, prioritise, implement and monitor prevention and community resilience solutions;
- ❑ Provide emotional and psychological community support following natural crises and times of intense insecurity.

Priority area 5: Enhancing community capacity for preventative action

Human insecurity and conflict reduce the capacity of communities to meaningfully engage in prevention action. Across the 15 GPPAC regions, many people face a choice between sustaining their livelihoods and protecting the environment, putting greater stress upon already environmentally vulnerable communities. As such, whilst peacebuilders have a clear role to play in mitigating climate-induced conflict, they also play a vital part in the prevention of climate change by working with communities to reduce their environmental impact. This is why, throughout the Southern, Eastern and Central Africa regions, peacebuilders are engaging in civic education in order to provide the tools and guidance required for communities to engage in sustainable practices. For example, in Southern Africa, sustainable farming and mining practices are being encouraged, whilst in Eastern and Central Africa, peacebuilders are encouraging the use of environmentally friendly stoves. Dissemination of the knowledge and tools required for people to not have to choose between their livelihoods and the environment is crucial to enhancing the resilience of communities to climate change and the insecurity which it generates.



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Recommendations:

- ❑ Promote civic education to facilitate the dissemination of the tools and information required for people to engage in more sustainable practices without compromising their livelihoods;
- ❑ Advocate for policies to address sustainability capacity challenges within communities before environmental vulnerability grows larger by engaging with national governments to facilitate forward planning for such issues;
- ❑ Engage with local organisations, drawing upon their reach, knowledge and best practices in order to formulate multi-stakeholder climate change prevention approaches;
- ❑ Produce research on the key resource and knowledge gaps within communities with regards to environmentally friendly practices, and identify the national assistance needed to address these gaps.