



Climate finance and peace—tackling the climate and humanitarian crisis

2021's Conference of Parties, the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP26), is crucially important as governments—for the first time since the Paris Agreement—are expected to agree on concrete commitments and greater ambitions to limit global warming to 1.5°C. COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma stated that delivery of US\$100 billion in climate finance is going to be the key to whether the goals of COP26 succeed or fail. At the same time, people worldwide have started acknowledging the impacts of the climate crisis on peace and security—otherwise called the climate security nexus.^{1,2} The concern then becomes where and how objectives and investments in adaptation and peacebuilding can be aligned, and how trade-offs between climate finance, peace, and security can be minimised or avoided.

An overlay of adaptation potential and the Global Peace Index (appendix pp 1–7) shows that most of the low-income countries in tropical areas experience a combination of peacebuilding and adaptation challenges, and, only in very few countries, one or the other priority dominates clearly (figure). In other words, most of the low-income countries in tropical areas are exposed and vulnerable to climate

change, and these countries are also prone to fragility due to insecurity and conflict. Globally, 355 million households (about 1.3 billion people) are exposed to climate hazards and are, thus, in need of climate change adaptation; 40% of those (142 million households, or 527 million people) are in conflict-prone and fragile-prone areas. Furthermore, the number of households exposed to climate hazards is about six times greater in conflict-prone areas compared with more peaceful areas. The greatest opportunities to align adaptation and peacebuilding objectives and finance exist in Syria, Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Philippines, Myanmar, and India. These countries have Global Peace Index values ranging from 2.4 to 3.4, and the number of climate-exposed households are in the range of 2.1 million to 11.4 million, with the exception of India, which has 79 million climate-exposed households. Besides these countries, Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, Niger, Zimbabwe, and Chad also show substantial opportunities to address both climate adaptation and peacebuilding, with Global Peace Index values above 2.4, but these countries have a lower number of potential

See Online for appendix

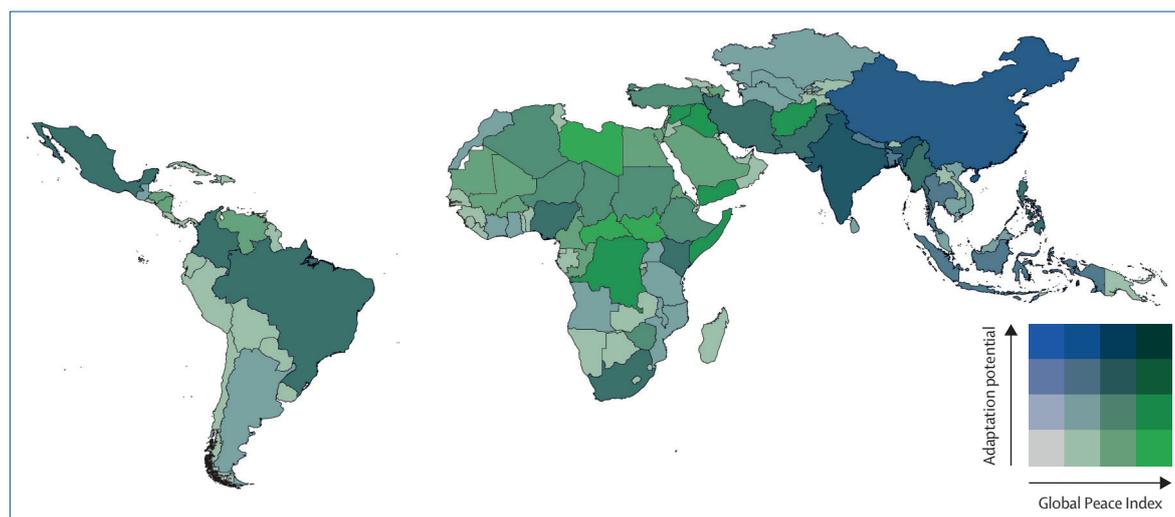


Figure: Overlay of adaptation potential and the Global Peace Index

Adaptation potential assumes investments in agricultural adaptation are prioritised in areas where rural households are exposed to climate hazards. Global Peace Index measures the relative position of countries' peacefulness (a lower index indicates higher peacefulness). Grey indicates low adaptation potential and low index. Shades of green show increasing index values (light to dark green, over the x-axis of the colour scale); shades of blue show increasing adaptation potential (light to dark blue, over the y-axis of the colour scale). The top-right corner of the colour scale shows the combination of high adaptation potential and high index.

beneficiaries, ranging from 1 million to 2 million households per country (appendix pp 2–6).

Despite opportunities for action, climate finance has yet to be leveraged in a way that maximises synergies between climate adaptation and peace and produces the optimum co-benefits. Currently, adaptation investments insufficiently target countries at substantial risk of climate-driven instability and conflict. Notably, only two out of the top ten global recipients of adaptation finance—Niger and Ethiopia—are highly exposed to climate hazards and marked by low levels of peacefulness. The Green Climate Fund, the main climate funder to developing countries, has recently taken measures to address this imbalance and has approved four new projects to implement climate action in fragile states. This measure brings the total number of Green Climate Fund adaptation projects in fragile and conflict-affected contexts to 12 out of 63 projects globally.³ Although a growing focus is being given to fragile and crisis settings, climate funding still supports siloed responses and solutions that are not conflict-sensitive and context-sensitive.⁴ Conflict prevention and peacebuilding objectives are rarely featured in adaptation programming and, currently, very few projects promote integrated approaches to climate and conflict risks.⁵

If designed and implemented without consideration for conflict situations, adaptation strategies can inadvertently reinforce existing conflict dynamics or create new ones.⁶ Adaptation measures that do not consider conflict situations can indirectly increase conflict potential by affecting economic performances, undermining political stability, or fostering social inequalities and grievances.⁷ For instance, the Salma Dam project in Afghanistan has intensified group marginalisation and resource competition in the Zinda Jan district by restricting access to the shared water supply.⁸ These adaptation strategies ultimately result in negative feedback that precludes development and sustainable peace under a changing climate. Adaptation can therefore increase the risk and severity of conflict, and related socioeconomic costs can hinder adaptation efforts.

However, a conflict-sensitive approach to adaptation might avoid an outbreak or a relapse of conflict and even facilitate building and sustaining peace, especially at the local level.⁹ The project by the Food

and Agriculture Organization of the UN in Abyei, South Sudan, is an example of a conflict-sensitive approach to adaptation. The provision of community-based animal health services to both the Dinka Ngok and the Misseriya communities increased dialogue and trust between these conflicting ethnic groups, thereby reducing resource-related conflicts and facilitating peace.¹⁰ Thus, to prevent harmful impacts of adaptation, climate finance and adaptation programming should at a minimum apply the principle of do no harm, which includes promoting resilience and livelihood-based solutions without creating further tensions and conflicts.

Public finance actors, such as the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environmental Facility, and the Adaptation Fund, can and should directly contribute to peace and stability and address drivers of conflict, reinforce peace drivers, and where possible contribute to sustaining peace. At a minimum, conflict prevention and peacebuilding objectives must be included in the environmental and social safeguards. A more proactive peacebuilding approach would be to increase funds to tackle national and transboundary natural resource management issues that are at the root cause of conflict, while, for example, also delivering technologies that increase water use-efficiency at the local level. It is also crucial to ease entry barriers for fragile and conflict-affected countries, which are often automatically excluded from most common climate funds due to the scarcity of historical data to support their applications. At policy level, guidelines are needed to align adaptation and peacebuilding efforts from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change National Communications, and National Adaptation Plans. CGIAR and other academic institutions must actively support finance actors to mainstream climate security analysis and programming guidelines into daily operations.

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