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# Climate Fragility: Addressing Barriers to Practice

## Assessment Landscape Review

December 2020



# Executive Summary

Leading into this study, in development and policy circles there seemed to be broad agreement across three significant factors.<sup>1</sup> First, that climate change poses real risks to peace and development goals globally. Second, while dialogue and discussions at the global level have advanced, on-the-ground programming has been relatively limited. Third, assessments required to inform strategies and programs have not evolved significantly. This landscape report takes stock of and evaluates existing climate security assessment tools, to further understand the barriers to action in addressing existing and future climate fragility risks in fragile and conflict affected contexts.

Evaluating over 20 tools, Mercy Corps found that a very limited pool of tools scored highly against a set of 6 variables identified through programming best practice, and expert consultation. Though there were some stand-out cases, fewer of the existing tools were developed with field-based practitioners in mind, and therefore have barriers to replication including cost and timescale.

Based on this review, as well as building from evidence in our report *Climate Change and Conflict, Lessons from Emerging Practice*, Mercy Corps puts forward a set of recommendations, which, if acted upon, could expand the evidence base and pilot effective solutions to climate fragility in communities that are already facing the devastating impacts of climate change.

## Recommendations:

**Increase the space for innovation and piloting new approaches:** Donors should be encouraged to scale up funding of pilot programs with proxy success indicators, until a larger evidence base is built or causal impact chains are more clearly defined.

**Support inclusive technical discussions on the evolving understanding of climate security:** efforts should be made to bring experts from around the globe, notably from countries facing the brunt of the impacts of climate change, into regular forums to share best practices and allow for cross-context collaboration.

**Ensure meaningful integration of gender in assessments and approaches to address climate security:** respond to the unique experiences of traditionally marginalized groups to create opportunities for women and youth as decision makers and economic actors, to build broader sustainable peace.

**Promote context specific assessments used to inform national, regional efforts:** Solutions to address the non-traditional risk of climate change must balance tailored localized solutions with national or broader climate change efforts and peace dialogues to support meaningful change.

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<sup>1</sup> On March 11, 2020 Mercy Corps held a Conflict and Climate conference at the Overseas Development Institute in London, UK. Actors from NGOs, research institutions and think tanks as well as government representatives convened to review best practices in field-level programming to address the nexus between climate change and conflict. Findings from that session, including a detailed review of these three factors, as well as a review of case studies can be found in *Mercy Corps Climate Change and Conflict: Lessons from Emerging Practice*.

# Section 1: The Climate Security Challenge

**Terminology:** Mercy Corps uses the following three terms to ensure its work speaks to as broad an audience as possible. Often they are used interchangeably.

Climate and Conflict	The result of the interaction between the effects of climate change (ex. rising temperatures, shifting rainfall patterns), macro level trends (ex. population growth), environmental impacts, and socio-economic tensions and fragility.
Climate Security	
Climate Fragility	

## Purpose of this study

As an implementing agency, Mercy Corps uniquely understands the value of assessments and evidence gathering for the design of effective programming and interventions. At present, the limited-number of practitioner focused and replicable assessment methodologies contributes to the limited action taking place to address climate fragility. Assessments do not shoulder all the burden for stagnation in programming, but it is certainly a significant factor.

As such, the purpose of this study is to better understand available assessment guidance on climate security dynamics to inform the development of future analytical tools, processes and guidance. In particular, this review prioritizes analytical processes and guidance that can directly inform field-level program implementing agencies, like Mercy Corps and other NGOs, in the development of program strategies and activities which will directly address climate security dynamics.

*Practitioner organizations like Mercy Corps use assessments during the program design phase to gather a broad range of information about local needs that either confirms the suitability of the initial project idea or points to adjustments that should be made.*

*Assessments can vary in scope depending on what information is already on hand, the amount of time available for gathering information, and the availability of resources for conducting assessment activities.*

## Background

Climate change is widely recognized for its current and future risks to human security with far-reaching impact chains affecting social, political, economic and environmental systems. These impacts, visible today, are well documented across Central Africa and the Horn, with a growing body of evidence coming from the Middle East and the Americas. Similarly, through the use of modelling technology and available climate science data, projections for tomorrow's risks are becoming more commonplace.<sup>2</sup>

While the discourse of climate security continues to grow,<sup>3</sup> on the ground action and evidence building has not kept pace with the changing risk landscape. For practitioner organizations, operational constraints such as short program time scales and risk-averse donor mandates mean it is difficult to take action. More broadly, the complicated conceptual framing of climate security has also kept the pool of actors working in this field limited.

<sup>2</sup> Institute for Economics and Peace: Ecological Threat Register, Strauss Centre CCAPS Climate Security Vulnerability Model, among others.

<sup>3</sup> The pool of engaged stakeholders working to address climate and conflict across NGOs, research institutions and policy circles continues to grow. The theme is gaining traction and has been a featured topic across both conflict and climate adaptation conferences in 2019 and 2020. The rising importance of the theme is noticeable among UN institutions, as tracked by the [Climate Security Expert Network](#).



There is also, however, a smaller consensus of stakeholders which accepts the nebulous nature of the complex relationship between climate and conflict and support action based on connections evidenced so far.<sup>4</sup> While the specific causality and direction of impact chains may not be explicitly clear, sufficient pathways and linkages are recognized, forming a basis for action.

With a small, yet growing acceptance of some uncertainty, organizations working with communities in fragile and conflict affected contexts have seen a slow increase in support for action to begin to understand the complex trends linking climate and conflict. This support has primarily been in the form of initial donor interest in unpacking and understanding the climate security nexus and its link to on the ground realities in fragile and conflict affected states.

## State of programming

Non-government organizations started highlighting the problematic interplay between climate change and conflict as early as 2015.<sup>5</sup> While more and more actors have been increasingly interested in exploring climate and conflict,<sup>6</sup> programmatic interventions and evidence building have not kept pace with theory or discourse.

As indicated in Mercy Corps' *Climate Change and Conflict, Lessons from Emerging Practise* report, environmental peacebuilding approaches, which currently have limited rigorous evidence on efficacy in addressing climate and conflict, account for most of the current programmatic efforts in this space. Further investments by practitioner organizations and donors alike are needed to demonstrate the impact of environmental peace building approaches on climate and conflict.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, the majority of current programming seeking to address climate and conflict is targeted at the community scale, neglecting integration of national or regional climate adaptation or peace building initiatives.<sup>8</sup>

Among NGOs and researchers, a nascent consensus is growing which recognizes programmatic efforts focusing on addressing systems level variables that contribute to climate change and conflict could produce more transformational change.<sup>9</sup> Currently, there are limited examples of existing or past programs focused on this broader scale. Given that climate security risks exist in a broader ecosystem of shocks and stresses, insights so far suggest that broad scale and multi-dimensional interventions present the most promising approaches to addressing climate security.<sup>10</sup>



### **Environmental Peacebuilding**

*Environmental peacebuilding integrates natural resource management in conflict prevention, mitigation, resolution, and recovery to build resilience in communities affected by conflict.*

*Environmental Peacebuilding Association.*

<sup>4</sup> Mercy Corps. Climate and Conflict: Lessons for Emerging Practise. April 2020 & Jene, Lisa and Beza Tesfaye (2020). Addressing the Climate-Conflict Nexus in Fragile States: Understanding the Role of Governance. Mercy Corps.

<sup>5</sup> International Institute for Sustainable Development. Promoting Climate-Resilience Peacebuilding in Fragile States. March 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Mercy Corps had case study submissions from over 14 research and practitioner organizations as part of a landscape review of programming which sought to address climate and conflict.

<sup>7</sup> Overseas Development Institute. Climate Change, conflict and fragility: An evidence review and recommendations for research and action. K Peters et al. June 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Mercy Corps. Climate and Conflict: Lessons for Emerging Practise. April 2020

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Development Program. *Supporting climate security*. 2020

## Section 2: Methods

Mercy Corps conducted this landscape review of climate security focused assessment methodologies over a period of 5 months using mixed methods including primary and secondary literature review and expert consultations. Environment and Peace and Conflict technical experts at Mercy Corps conducted this review from a sector neutral perspective.<sup>11</sup>

This review is not exhaustive, but the tools reviewed are the most adapted, or designed specifically for the climate conflict nexus. Also, the Mercy Corps team looked for tools most applicable at the field level for practitioner organizations. The research included:

- Review of climate conflict literature: stock taking of most recent findings on climate and conflict linkages, as well as identified gaps, barriers and opportunities for practical action.
- Identification and consolidation of assessment methodologies: online research and consultations to compile upwards of 20 existing and tested methodologies. Brief review and classification of products.
- Key information consultations: consultations with key stakeholders and experts at Mercy Corps and externally to discuss barriers to practical action and key elements for consideration in assessment processes.
- Development of principle variables/components considered across assessments and validated as critical through consultations.
- Deep-dive review of assessment tools in general, and against the above variables.

## Section 3: Climate Fragility Frameworks

To help frame the relationship between conflict and climate, many stakeholders have designed conceptual pathways or frameworks to illustrate current or predicted avenues through which climate change will impact conflict. These pathways are not irrefutable, but they do provide structure around a complex and interconnected set of challenges.

These pathways can inform the way that practitioner organizations are able to understand the connection between climate and conflict, by suggesting lines of inquiry to unpack the complex phenomenon. Understanding the proposed pathways allows for the framing of assessment methodologies, to ensure cause and effect relationships between various systems are being considered.

What is telling about the variety and differences between distinct institutional approaches is the sheer complexity in untangling the relationship between the immediate effects of climate change, macroeconomic trends, environmental impacts, and socio-economic tensions. However, it is also clear that there is broad consistency in structure across these frameworks. These commonalities include consideration of governance variables, wellbeing and safety, violence, and a changing relationship between humans and their environment, including resource use.

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<sup>11</sup> In April 2020, Mercy Corps found that diverse motivations, approaches and language was hampering action in addressing climate fragility. A sector neutral approach would entail actors from traditionally distinct disciplines coming together, including policy, academic, security, peacebuilding and climate experts to share relevant expertise, and integrate best practise from distinct fields to find new solutions.

Below is a sample of institutional approaches for linking climate and fragility:

1. **The International Institute for Sustainable Studies**: Views the interaction between two key sets of variables, climate change and existing conflict drivers, (such as political and economic instability, wealth disparities, poverty, weak governance, human right abuses, and historical grievances), as exacerbating existing conflicts or triggering new ones.<sup>12</sup>
2. **United States Agency for International Development**: Proposes three common instances in which climate change and conflict connect: direct resource competition, increased grievances over relative deprivation and complex crises and human insecurity.<sup>13</sup> Further, in 2020 USAID included the following common mechanisms through which climate, socioeconomic and political stressors and drivers of conflict interact: reduced livelihood security, reinforced patterns of marginalization and exclusion, increased migratory movements and fuelling terrorism and armed groups.<sup>14</sup>
3. **Mercy Corps**: Views four key pathways through which the effects of climate change can exacerbate tensions in fragile settings: 1) Extreme Weather, Disasters & Displacement 2) Natural Resource Based Livelihood Insecurity 3) Food Insecurity and Price Volatility 4) Changing Transboundary Water Flows.<sup>15</sup>
4. **The United Nations Environment Program and Adelphi**: Puts forward three lenses to understand and address climate fragility risks: sustainable livelihoods, peace building (social cohesion and inclusive and effective governance) and climate change adaptation.
5. **The United Nations Climate Security Mechanism**: Suggests three risk dimensions for consideration: climate stressors or shocks, exposure, and vulnerability or coping capacity, and the interaction between these three.

## Section 4: Key Findings

This review uncovered only a small handful of assessments which could be considered specifically climate security in focus. Our research found that there is no shortage of evaluations at global, national and local levels which aim to better understand climate-conflict dynamics. However, these efforts would be better classified as research, aimed at better understanding pathways between climate change effects and impacts on security. Furthermore, while these efforts do provide a useful starting point for program interventions, they fail to provide the level of detail required by implementing agencies in designing program activities. Finally, and most importantly for this study, few of these efforts provide guidance beyond a methodology section that enable replication.

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<sup>12</sup> IISD. Promoting Climate Resilient Peacebuilding in Fragile States. March 2015.

<sup>13</sup> USAID. Climate Change and Conflict an Annex to the USAID Climate Resilient Development Framework. February 2015.

<sup>14</sup> USAID. Pathways to Peace: Addressing Conflict and Strengthening Stability in a Changing Climate. 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Mercy Corps. Conflict and Climate Approach. June 2019.

This study also found that organizations, typically NGOs, have made efforts to adapt sector specific tools to incorporate climate security concerns. In some cases we found climate vulnerability assessment methodologies that include the integration of conflict sensitivity focused questions. These adaptations would probably be best categorized as “do-no-harm” additions, as opposed to robust analytical integration. In other cases, conflict assessments were adapted to include the consideration of climate or environment information. However these processes struggled to connect the added climate considerations to the conflict risks being evaluated.

Additionally, this review found plenty of data visualization tools, frameworks, thought pieces, policy briefs and other guidance products which lay out factors which authors advocate as necessary in understanding climate security dynamics. These are highly useful and informative for a range of actors, and many have helped make considerable advancement in our collective understanding of the challenge. However, these are not, nor do they intend to be, a substitute for an assessment process.

## Tool Review by Variable

The remainder of this section will unpack the tools, analysing them across a range of identified variables to evaluate their effectiveness in developing context specific interventions and activities required by implementing agencies. Over 20 tools were reviewed, with a sub-set of roughly 5 tools raising to the top for replicability, typically those specifically designed for assessing climate security. Where climate security assessment tools lack integration of one of the below variables, where feasible, sector specific tools which have been adapted to include consideration of climate security will be highlighted for their best practice in including the variable. The inclusion of these variables illustrate best practise to guide the evolution of including key variables into climate security specific assessments.

The following variables were identified through a scan of programming best practices, best practise in assessment methodologies, and based on the above mentioned conflict climate pathways: user friendliness, the examination of interconnected systems & sector neutrality, identification of tangible entry points, includes climate science data, includes consideration of key governance and social variables which experts agree are strong proxies for future violence, and there is inclusion of gender and differential vulnerability.

### i. User Friendly

Easy to use and accessible analytical tools are essential for both cross context applicability, and practitioner uptake. Within the humanitarian and development community, use of existing quantitative and qualitative tools and approaches to support decision making on climate and conflict issues is limited.<sup>16</sup> To be user-friendly, an assessment methodology must be simple, cost-efficient, and demonstrate a clear roadmap for how information will be collected and analysed. This includes the ability of a tool to be translated into local languages and accessible by general practitioners who may not possess a deep sector expertise.

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<sup>16</sup> Overseas Development Institute. Climate Change, conflict and fragility: An evidence review and recommendations for research and action. K Peters et al. June 2020.

Approaches must also be established in a way to help communities to critically reflect on concepts of climate change. For example, in some contexts, the discussion of human-induced climate change will need to be untangled from religion and illustrated through trend analysis and tangible examples.<sup>17</sup>

- At present, user-friendly and cost effective assessment tools to unpack climate security are limited. Among the tools reviewed, Adelphi and UNEP’s **Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks: Guidance Note & Toolbox Linking Peacebuilding, Climate Change Adaptation and Sustainable Livelihoods**, is best designed for its end user. This guidance note lays out initial research on climate fragility linkages and how to employ the toolkit moving forward. It takes the user through a two-step process of assessing climate-fragility risks (by identifying climate-fragility risks and then assessing resilience to such risks) followed by translating those assessments into policies, strategies and action (by identifying entry points, developing resilience-building interventions and programming, and checking the robustness of those interventions). The combination of the Guidance Note, illustrating the connections between climate and conflict through plain accessible language, and the Toolbox, which outlines assessment processes and detailed tools, is strong. Further, the tool provides detailed recommendations to translate findings into actionable policy and programs, helping practitioners bridge the gap between information and action

## ii. Examines Interconnected Systems & Sector Neutrality

Despite burgeoning agreement among NGOs, researchers and policy makers on a set of ‘common pathways’ in which climate change factors and conflict may play out, the web which links them is deeply tangled. According to the Overseas Development Institute’s report **Climate Change, Conflict and Fragility**, causal chains of impacts are complex and defy simple conclusions.<sup>18</sup> These linkages therefore, must be understood in the broader ecosystem of shocks and vulnerabilities in which they occur. A systems approach, which requires

### Systems Approaches

*The processes of understanding how different things (e.g., people, institutions, infrastructure, societal norms, ecosystems) influence one another within a whole. An approach to problem solving that treats a problem as part of an overall, interconnected structure.*

*We can use a system approach by picking a clear entry point—a shock—and then mapping out the drivers and effects of this shock.*

understanding systems dynamics at different scales and geographies, presents a promising framework to illustrate a cross-cutting narrative to identify entry points for action. Recent investments have resulted in analytical deep dive assessment methodologies which seek to unpack this complexity and illustrate cascading impact chains between climate change insecurity and other drivers of fragility.

- Mercy Corps’ own **Strategic Resilience Assessment Approach (STRESS)**, is a methodology that helps practitioners apply resilience systems thinking in distinct humanitarian or development contexts. STRESS provides field-teams practical guidance through new ways of: 1) analysing

<sup>17</sup> In many contexts where Mercy Corps’ works, religion plays a powerful role in day to day life. In key-informant interviews with field-based staff, community consultations highlighted the intertwined belief of climate change as an act/the will of God; which could hinder what action certain communities perceive they can, or are willing to take. Mercy Corps. Sept 2020.

<sup>18</sup> Overseas Development Institute. Climate Change, conflict and fragility: An evidence review and recommendations for research and action. K Peters et al. June 2020.



the places they work to understand how the complex, interconnected drivers of instability threaten progress; and 2) designing strategies and interventions that reflect these insights and support communities in achieving long-term well-being outcomes and transformational change. The process plays out in 4 steps: Scope, Inform, Analyse, and Strategize.

STRESS is a foundational process for integrating resilience thinking into practitioners' work to not only analyse unique context to understand how complex, interconnected drivers of instability threaten development goals, but also how these drivers impact groups differently; and what specific resilience abilities and resources these groups need to learn, cope, adapt and transform in the face of growing risk.

While systems approaches were considered in several assessments adapted from sector specific tools; IUCN's *A Guiding Toolkit for Increasing Climate Change Resilience*, for example, many of these examples lacked meaningful systems integration across the entire assessment process. In other instances, modelling tools such as the Strauss' Centre's *Africa Climate Security Vulnerability Model* considered the interaction of different systems to develop final composite risks. These models, however have limited utility for designing programs at field-level.

### iii. Provides Tangible Entry Points

In USAID's *Pathways to Peace: Addressing Conflict and Strengthening Stability in a Changing Climate*,<sup>19</sup> the agency identifies the need for analytical processes that can help identify target interventions, in part through the development of measurable theories of change. This is a well-known challenge for agencies that design and implement development and humanitarian programs. However, developing a practical theory of change for climate security programming is even more challenging. Given the infancy of the climate security field and the limited set of practical program examples, the need for guidance that identifies tangible entry points is elevated. The fundamental problem of a lack of clear definition of the term "climate security," persists, and certainly what it means in terms of actual programming. Further, there are currently very few examples of 'success' to point to for lessons.

There is no universal solution to identify tangible entry points.<sup>20</sup> However, this study did identify some general tools which can guide teams:

- Adelphi's *Climate Fragility Concept Note* specifically calls out the need to identify entry points and provides a range of prompting questions related to climate change adaptation, governance, peacebuilding. In addition, it provides examples of analytical tools which could help identify additional entry points.
- CARE's *Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (CVCA)* and others like it have provided practitioner briefs which go into detail on how to translate assessment findings into community action plans.

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<sup>19</sup> USAID. *Pathways to Peace: Addressing Conflict and Strengthening Stability in a Changing Climate*. January 2020.

<sup>20</sup> Window of opportunity in a context to implement a specific strategy or activity. This could be around a specific set of actors, a social norm, a political event etc.

## iv. Climate & Environmental Change Information

The inclusion of climate change data and information should be considered a minimum standard for assessments seeking to better understand how climate change can lead to increased conflict risks. However, as ODI pointed out as part of a larger climate security evidence scan, many assessments do not incorporate a robust examination of climate change data. Despite some standout examples, our review confirms this finding. In some cases, the examination of climate factors are limited to the prevalence of acute shocks, ignoring longer-term trends. In addition, the bulk of assessments consider climate and conflict in siloes, missing a more complex understanding of the dynamics between climate change and conflict.

Still, there are some bright spots from which practitioners can build:

- In the United Nations' Climate Security Mechanism's *Climate Security Mechanism Toolbox*, high level guidance is provided to understand climate vulnerability, through understanding the shocks, exposure as well as vulnerability and coping capacity in a given context. In addition it emphasizes the need to understand linkages, feedback loops and tipping points that occur between climate change effects and social, ecological and economic variables. Notably, the Toolbox also provides a list of recommended data sources organized by the research questions and factors the guidance outlines.
- In Adelphi & UNEP's *Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks: Guidance Note & Toolbox* more specific guidance and tools are provided. This guidance provides specific questions that practitioners should explore through their analysis that require linking of climate and environmental info to the drivers of conflict such as price spikes, migration, and economic inequality. It also presents a range of technical and non-technical tools which teams can use to explore climate fragility dynamics using climate data.

While not climate security in focus, climate vulnerability assessment processes provide a wealth of useful information on gaining access to and analysing climate and environmental data. Examples include UNEP's *Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment*, and CARE's *Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment*. Many of these tools have been designed for local or community scale analytical processes, and thus can be useful in unpacking how complex climate security dynamics manifest themselves on the ground.

## v. 'Expert Agreed' Variables

As explored above, and highlighted in Mercy Corps' *Climate Conflict Approach*, the relationship between climate change, socioeconomic and political variables, and insecurity is complex. Experts agree however, that conflict drivers are much more influential for conflict risk, as compared to climate variability and change.<sup>21</sup> While climate variability will likely exacerbate trends, examining variables associated with conflict may be the best proxies for evaluating future risk. Understanding these drivers may therefore provide insights for entry points and areas for investments to reduce the risk of climate change induced conflict.

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<sup>21</sup> Across experience to date. K. Mach et al. 2019. Climate variability and/or change is low on the ranked list of the most influential conflict drivers across experiences to date, and the experts rank it as the most uncertain in its influence. The experts agree that additional climate change will amplify conflict risk, along with the associated uncertainties.

Four drivers in particular, were ranked by a group of 11 climate and conflict experts, as particularly influential for conflict risk to date: (i) Low socioeconomic development (ii) Low state capability (iii) Intergroup inequality (iv) Recent history of violent conflict<sup>22</sup>.

- Of the tools reviewed for this report, only the Strauss' Centre's ***Africa Climate Security Vulnerability Model*** made explicit reference to, and consideration for similar governance and conflict drivers of insecurity. These sources of vulnerability are described as "baskets" in their modelling approach, as they contain multiple indicators. The model factors "six indicators in the 'governance and political violence' basket to measure government responsiveness, government response capacity, openness to external assistance, political stability, and presence of violence." While innovative, sub-national specificity is limited, which hampers the ability of practitioner organization to design and develop site specific and nuanced interventions.

## vi. Considerations of Gender

Climate-related security risks create and compound shocks which can impact women, men, boys and girls differently. Prevailing gender norms and power structures further dictate and potentially limit the ability of various groups to manage and recover.<sup>23</sup> To effectively address climate security risks, understanding differential vulnerability must be at the core of any approach. Understanding how and why groups are affected by shocks and stresses differently because of certain factors (age, gender, ethnicity, displacement status, wealth, mobility or geography), will elevate entry points to address climate security for the most vulnerable. Further, it can also shed light on how to address prevailing, harmful norms and structures, to bring traditionally marginalized groups into decision-making positions to collectively address climate security threats for all.

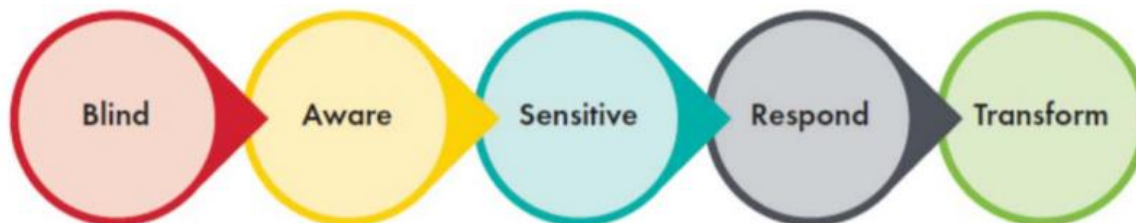
While several toolkits and guiding methodologies make reference to the inclusion of differential vulnerability and in particular, the role of women in addressing climate security, meaningful integration is limited, and remains siloed to the domain of agencies with an explicit focus on Women, Peace and Security.

- Adelphi's ***Addressing Climate-Fragility Risks Guidance Note*** provides reference to differential vulnerability through the Human and Social dimensions of resilience measurement, as well as under the Conflict Sensitivity checklist. However, there is a risk of these approaches falling short of the true use of a gender transformative lens. This risk is increased if the tool is not implemented by a technical gender expert.

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<sup>22</sup> K. Mach & al. Climate as a risk factor for armed conflict. Nature. 2019.

<sup>23</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, UN Women, UNDP and UNDP/PA/PSO. Gender, Climate & Security. Sustaining inclusive peace on the front lines of climate change. June 2020.



**Gender transformative programming** aims to shift structures that entrench inequality. It addresses the root causes of gender inequality and promotes the value of women and girls, aiming to improve their social position. *Mercy Corps Gender Approach. 2017.*

A scan of the best overall climate security assessment methodologies demonstrates a lack of meaningful integration to consider the ways in which different groups may be affected by shocks. To date, the most focused evidence for gender in climate security is the United Nations inter agency report ***Gender, Climate and Security***, however, this report does not include recommendations for analytical processes that can guide field work.

While the pool of climate security specific approaches and tools remains limited, there are examples of gender integrated into sector adapted analytical frameworks from which learning can be drawn:

- CARE’s ***Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis 2.0***, presents gender as one of the key issues for analysis in the climate vulnerability analysis. In the handbook, they provide key points to consider, secondary research sources and suggestions for participatory research methods (ex. daily clock, household decision making pile sorting). The tool also suggests a good practice framework and sample questions for gender analysis eight core areas of inquiry.

## Section 5: Recommendations for Future Assessments

The following recommendations are informed by the findings described above, as well as our previous landscape assessment, ***Climate Change and Conflict, Lessons from Emerging Practise***. As such, they go beyond specific recommendations on the development of climate security assessments methodologies, covering targeting and application of their results.

### Develop processes which are sector neutral in nature, to advance a broader spectrum of strategies.

As noted earlier, the current spectrum of strategies applied to addressing climate security dynamics is narrow. In part, this is due to the fact that assessment methodologies and guidance for development actors has seemed limited evolution. It’s well understood, and agreed, that climate change is one of many contributing drivers that can result in heightened risks of conflict. Strategies to address these complex dynamics, must then avoid single sector solutions.

### Support pilots of localized climate security assessments that illustrate complex relationships, focusing outside of Africa.

There are an abundance of high-level regional and national level assessments which have identified climate security hot spots or broad threats, the bulk of which focus on the African continent. Some of

these go further to provide high level indicators or explanations for the selection of certain geographies.

While useful for select audiences, these types of analyses and tools fail to provide the necessary information required by development actors tasked with designing interventions together with communities, and implementing them. These actors need a more fundamental and localized understanding of the complexity of drivers contributing to heightened climate security risks in order to identify actionable entry points. Further, greater geographic coverage would help expand the global climate security communities understanding of the complex dynamics at play, which is necessary for more effective policy making, funding strategies and program development.

## **Promote context specific assessments used to inform national, regional efforts**

Climate security threats transcend borders and community limits. Solutions to address this non-traditional risk must balance tailored localized solutions with national or broader climate change efforts and peace dialogues to support meaningful change. Whether supporting economic diversification activities to support strained livelihoods or cross-border collaboration between conflicting communities, ‘down-stream and upstream’ impacts must be considered. Programs which promote in-depth interventions at multiple scales should be prioritized. National Adaptation Plans present an opportunity to guide investments in climate adaptation which bridge local and national/regional planning. As such, they play a potentially important role in routing critical resources needed to fund the programming which can reach scale through substantial, multi-year investments. Doing so requires specific intention to involve official state actors from the inception of the assessment, and sustained engagement post assessment to ensure lessons are disseminated, understood and incorporated into relevant policy.

## **Ensure meaningful integration of gender in assessments and approaches to address climate security.**

The real impacts of climate change are already exacerbating social and economic exclusion, and the ongoing socio-economic shifts to adapt to these impacts, often dictated by gender norms, risks leaving women and vulnerable groups, include youth, behind. Tailored and intentional integration however, not only serves to better understand and respond to the unique experiences of traditionally marginalized groups, but it could harness the moment of adaptation to create opportunities for women and youth as decision makers and economic actors, to build broader sustainable peace.

# **Broad Recommendations for Addressing Conflict Security**

Several of the operational road blocks which hamper the prioritization of systems approaches are documented.<sup>24</sup> Addressing the following two barriers can support ensuring that program evidence can keep pace with discourse and policy discussions:

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<sup>24</sup> Adelphi. 10 Insights on Climate Impacts and Peace: A summary of what we know. 2020.



## **Increase the space for innovation and piloting new approaches**

Addressing a changing risk landscape in fragile and conflict affected contexts is not a straightforward task with easily translatable success. However, the impacts of leaving climate change and climate security threats unaddressed have been well documented, and at a minimum risk undoing decades of work in improving stability. Discussions should evolve on how to, and with whom to frame concepts of 'success' and 'successful programming' promoting action and experiential learning. Donors should therefore be encouraged to scale up funding of pilot programs with proxy success indicators, until a larger evidence base is built or causal impact chains are more clearly defined.

## **Support inclusive technical discussions on the evolving understanding of climate security**

As discourse evolves and the evidence base broadens, experts should exchange to take stock of learning and build consensus around solutions. Intentional efforts should be made to bring experts from around the globe, notably from countries facing the brunt of the impacts of climate change, into regular forums to share best practices and allow for cross-context collaboration.

# Next Steps for Mercy Corps

Mercy Corps continues to prioritize developing strategies and practical solutions with communities in fragile and conflict affected contexts to address real and future risks associated with climate insecurity. In the coming year, Mercy Corps will continue to focus on building evidence on both the links between climate and conflict, as well as piloting programming to address the nexus.

With funding from the New America foundation, Mercy Corps will develop an evidenced based climate security assessment methodology tailored to practitioner organizations to fill the gaps demonstrated by this landscape review. This tool will aim to support field level practitioners within and external to Mercy Corps to untangle climate security linkages and design effective responses.

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## ABOUT MERCY CORPS

Mercy Corps is a leading global organization powered by the belief that a better world is possible. In disaster, in hardship, in more than 40 countries around the world, we partner to put bold solutions into action — helping people triumph over adversity and build stronger communities from within. Now, and for the future.



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