

**A Climate of Conflict: The links between climate change, peace and war.
Dan Smith and Janani Vivekananda (2007) International Alert**

The fight against climate change is no longer about mitigating future impacts; it is about adapting to the consequences that are upon us today. This conclusion of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report has put climate change firmly on top of the international agenda.

The consequences of climate change vary across the world; from rising sea-levels and erratic storms to severe droughts and desertification. These physical consequences of climate change are inevitably accompanied by social, political and economic consequences. Communities are already experiencing insecure livelihoods, food shortages, resource competition, decreased trade, and mass-migration. Where exclusion, inequality and injustice are already entrenched, the consequences of climate change will be severe.

A total of 46 countries have been identified where the potent combination of socio-political instability and the ecological fallout of climate change present a high risk of violent conflict. For example, initially classified as Arab-African ethnic discord, the conflict in Darfur is also climate induced. Land disputes between farmers and herders, triggered by the impact of the 20 year Sahelian drought have been compounded by their economic and political marginalization and expressed along tribal lines.

However, it is misleading to think climate change alone can instigate violent disputes. It is against a background of numerous interrelated factors (poverty, poor governance, ethno-nationalist politics, environmental degradation and a legacy of previous armed conflict), that climate change will be a catalyst to conflict. A government that does not provide adequate protection (healthcare, education, human rights, democratic systems, effective security and accountable judiciary) will struggle to prevent the violence that accompanies climate change.

Consequently, it is important to recognize the synergy between climate change adaptation policy and peacebuilding activities. Conflict-sensitive climate change policies can actively promote peacebuilding, while climate-proof peacebuilding strategies can effectively contribute to climate change adaptation. Much like peacebuilding, adaptation to climate change must be inclusive and multi-dimensional. A society that can develop successful adaptation strategies to climate change is well equipped to avoid armed conflict, and vice versa.

Adaptation to climate change should contribute to, rather than threaten human security. It should build social resilience; this is the capacity to absorb stress and peacefully adjust to downturns. It should be locally grounded, combining hard science with local knowledge to provide practical solutions for people to peacefully change their way of life. With many governments unable or unwilling to respond to the 'double-headed threat' of climate change and conflict, a unified international response is required to integrate established principles of conflict sensitive development with climate change policy and practice.

This report provides twelve recommendations for addressing climate change in fragile states:

1. Move the issue of conflict and climate change higher up the international agenda
2. Research the indirect local consequences of climate change
3. Develop and spread research competence
4. Improve knowledge and generate policy through dialogue
5. Prioritise adaptation over mitigation in fragile states
6. Develop the right institutional context: good governance for climate change
7. Prepare to manage migration
8. Ensure National Adaptation Plans of Action are conflict-sensitive
9. Climate-proof peacebuilding and development
10. Engage the private sector
11. Link together international frameworks of action
12. Promote regional cooperation on adaptation