

A systemic analysis of the role that climate, natural resource and food systems play in conflict and peace is key to design and implement interventions addressing and preventing conflict. This document is one part of the 6- policy note outputs from the CGIAR Climate Security Webinar Series. These notes summarize the key messages made during the webinar panel discussion. Recordings of the webinar sessions can be found [here](#).

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Panellists and short summary

For this webinar, we will be joined by our distinguished panel, consisting of:

- **Mr. Robert Malley**, President and CEO, International Crisis Group
- **Dr. Claudia Sadoff**, Executive Management Team Convener and Managing Director, Research Delivery, and Impact of the CGIAR
- **Mr. Hans Olav Ibrekk**, Policy Director, Section for Energy, Ministry, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway
- **Mr. Frank Bousquet**, Senior Director, Fragility, Conflict and Violence, World Bank Group.

This final webinar is placed against the backdrop of an increasingly variable climate and fast-paced environmental degradation. It emphasises leveraging new, cross-cutting partnerships with the potential to provide the kind of cross-disciplinary research and policy insights required to tackle the intersectional impacts of climate change. We focus, therefore, on a key question:

How do we operationalise partnerships to address climate security issues merging research, analysis, and policy engagement?

The Rationale for this Webinar

Conflicts in the 21st century illustrate a paradigm shift. Often, violence, in its different iterations, is rooted in political, geostrategic, or ideological frameworks. However, this is changing. Conflicts increasingly denote a stealth complexity in which triggers and consequences are intricately linked to climate, environmental degradation, and the struggle to control a finite pool of natural resources.

Increasingly, scientific literature confirms that climate change triggers or aggravates security threats such as food insecurity, which are linked to different types of conflicts. Often, the poorest and most marginalised groups in society are overexposed to climate hazards and suffer the most from the impact of social, economic, and political insecurity. The climate crisis is a multifaceted reality and against this background, many pressing priorities compete against each other. The disruptive effect of climate change on food systems is particularly acute and constitutes a direct and tangible threat to livelihoods globally. Food is a basic human need, and climate irregularities place it at risk for millions of people, which translates into potential pathways to conflict and violence. One can conclude that in the large spectrum from conflict prevention to peacebuilding, disruption of food systems and the ensuing devastating consequences in food security register as a key element within any conflict analysis or policy.

This raises a fundamental question: Does current peace and conflict thinking integrate climate and food security viewpoints? From a systemic perspective, the intricate linkages between climate, food security and conflict call for a dynamic integration of diverse sources of knowledge to develop new strategies that address the root causes. The strained resilience of vulnerable populations, exposed to higher risks of disease, insecurity, hunger, and violence, requires new approaches to counter those trends. Additionally, beyond the humanitarian realm, the institutional security architecture overseeing climate dynamics, and the policies it generates should be adjusted to address the complexity of conflicts rooted in the lethal combination of environmental changes and faulty governance. This concerns not only the sustenance of social and economic stability but the imperative necessity to address inequality, as a conflict trigger, in all its multiple and intersectional forms.

In our previous webinars, we have explored the connections between climate variability, natural resource management, land/water/food systems research, and conflict complexity. Connected

and coordinated in the right way, key insights from these fields can inform conflict prevention and resolution strategies and peace-building activities. Also recognized was the need for a cross-disciplinary approach in addressing climate security issues rooted in climate variability. We explored innovative uses of big data and the proactive use of sustainable finance, and, using the case studies of Colombia and the Sahel region, examined how the pathways between climate and human/resource/economic security materialise in different contexts.

In this webinar, we focus on one key question:

How do we operationalise partnerships to address climate security issues merging research, analysis, and policy engagement?

The Complex Interactions of Climate, Conflict and Security

It is generally agreed upon that climate change acts as a threat multiplier for security issues. Mr. Malley identified how a 0.5 degrees Celsius atmospheric temperature increase leads to a 10-20% increase in risk of conflict, an effect played out through the complex interaction between climate, security, and conflict, whether it arises from resource scarcity, enhanced insecurities, or overwhelmed state institutions. Although this figure has been noted to be quite controversial among security actors, there is an undeniable connection between changes in temperature, rainfall, land, and conflict. The International Crisis Group has estimated that about 65% of conflicts occurring currently have a significant land dimension characterizing the nature of the conflict, and many other conflicts have a significant water dimension. Mr. Bousquet noted that, by 2030, projected climate impacts will push over 100 million people into poverty, the majority of which inhabit developing countries categorised as being in fragile, conflicted, and violent (FCV) conditions. Concurrently, Mr. Ibrekk noted that of the 10 largest ongoing UN peace operations, 8 are taking place in countries most affected by climate change.

Within the UN security council, there has been an emerging recommendation that climate change will significantly alter the security landscape. The region where this recommendation has been most relevant has been Africa, specifically West Africa and across the Sahel, where clear risks can be seen arising from the impacts of climate change. One of them, noted by our speakers, is the competition for scarce resources. In Northern Nigeria, where there has been increasing desertification and depletion of water resources, extensive conflict between herders

and farmers has erupted as these groups compete for important water points and arable land. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam has also caused much competition for water in a region already experiencing less rainfall. In other regions around the globe, such as in Central America, the complex interactions between conflict and a lack of livelihood options due to climate variability have contributed to migration streams going north, causing social upheaval, criminal activity, and violence.

Partnerships Will be Key in Resolving this Challenge

Efforts at mediation and peace negotiations have not gone far enough into incorporating a climate-sensitive lens. Yet it is important that diplomacy is both conflict- and climate-proof to be cognizant of both short- and long-term drivers of fragility. Mr. Ibrekk also highlighted how this challenge becomes an opportunity, with climate change offering pathways to *cooperation* as well as opposition. A coordinated and multidisciplinary approach, therefore, offers a promising and important opportunity for further research and facilitate institutional collaboration among researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. Conflict/security and climate variability research and policy clusters have traditionally operated in their respective silos, structured around their own hubs of expertise and practice. This siloed structure significantly impacts the relationship between research and policy, as the transfer speed from research to practicable implementation is measured in years, not days or months.

Changing these structures is a top priority. We must accelerate the operationalisation of knowledge, ensuring that breakthroughs reach the places and institutions where new insights can quickly make a tangible difference. This includes the entire conflict community, including UN agencies and bodies, multilaterals, and the entire 4D spectrum (diplomacy, development, defence, disaster).



“ In these settings, it is clear we need to partner with those who don't look like yourselves. Partnership is especially important at different levels, closer to the proximity of the poorest communities and the most marginalized. ”

**Frank Bousquet,
Fragility, Conflict and Violence, World Bank Group**

On this topic, however, Mr. Ibrekk stressed that one of the reasons why there has not been adequate progressive action taken within the Security Council is due to a lack of actionable recommendations on climate issues. A preliminary assessment specifically revealed that many policy products currently lack continuity and consistency, analytical structure, credible and reliable data, categorisation, and indicators. They also lack conceptual credibility and a shared understanding of the terminology within climate-related security risks. What is needed, therefore, is actionable information to feed into current conflict resolution channels, which can inform deliberative and policy clusters.



“ On the question of whether policy-science framework in place is appropriate. The short answer is no. The capacity to analyze climate and security risk lies behind the changing risk landscape. We need a comprehensive approach. It is important to underscore that risks are highly context-specific. A country's or communities' resilience and coping capacity will determine impact of climate change on peace and security. ”

**Hans Olav Ibrekk, Section for Energy, Ministry of
Foreign Affairs, Norway**

This points to the crucial importance of delivering quality research products across the climate-conflict spectrum. Here, Dr. Sadoff emphasised that it is particularly important that actors understand co-benefits and recognise the role of food systems in contributing to security and

stability. Food insecurity, hunger, drought, famine are significant drivers that can overwhelm the capacity of an existing fragile or weak state. Increasing the coping capacity of farmers to current and future climate risks can thus alleviate this stressor, through for instance the assistance to create more sustainable and resilient agricultural systems, such as seeds that are drought and flood-tolerant, or safety nets in the form of crop insurance to help farmers get back on their feet quicker. Equally important is the fact that, from an economic perspective, the agricultural sector is an employment-rich space. According to Dr. Sadoff, the growth factor arising from investment in the agricultural sector is 4 times more effective than in other sectors. Moreover, investments in CGIAR research generate returns of 10 times the amount invested, as shown in a recent research paper¹.



“**Food, land and water systems are not only inseparable within themselves, but they lie deeply intertwined with climate, biodiversity, poverty and equity. We see food security, social stability, peace and security is as all very mutually reinforcing. A lack of food, a lack of a stable and secure food source is deeply destabilizing in any community.**”

Claudia Sadoff
Research Delivery and Impact, CGIAR

Organizations such as the ICG, who have traditionally taken deep dives into conflicts through examining dynamics at local and micro-scales, have increasingly begun to develop an understanding of climate risks, particularly in how climate risks affect economic drivers of conflict. It is noted, however, that for effective collaboration among climate and food systems scientists to occur, processes need to be shortened to allow for politics and conflict dynamics to be incorporated into the analysis.

¹ CGIAR. 2020. *CGIAR Research Pays Off: New Report Finds 10 Times Return on Investment*.



“Integration and working together is important. When climate change projects are made, they tend to be over many many years. Shortening this timeline, localising it, so we know when and where the fluctuations will occur, then we can marry it with the local politics.”

Robert Malley
International Crisis Group

Mr. Malley noted that in the meantime, as it takes time to develop these research agendas, the focus should lie with governance. Although resource scarcity can be seen to have led to conflict in, for example, Mali or Northern Nigeria, good governance mechanisms with strong accountability and transparency can help mediate these grievances, reduce competition over resources, and prevent violent conflict from erupting. Examples of successful diplomacy have emerged from cases in Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan. Governance must therefore be maintained as a key focus at the core of the conversation surrounding climate and conflict.

Ways Forward

What Can the CGIAR Contribute?

The CGIAR Focus Climate Security is charting a thematic connection between different areas of research and practice linking food systems to security and conflict, while placing them under a common banner. The objective is to uncover and maximise synergies focusing not only on eliciting integrated research but to complement it with the most effective supporting role in policy development and advocacy. As part of this new area of engagement, several ideas have been rolled out, all connected with the objective of establishing a solid area of practice clearly responding to a timely and strategic need.

Policy 4 Peace

When examining the interface between science and policymaking, it is important to ensure that the overall framework reflects the know-how of scientific partners, the priorities of practitioners, and crucially, the needs of those at risk. This implies the need for a more fluid and collaborative structure between those who have been working on the different topics related to climate change from the perspective of policy with the objective of preventing or responding to conflict. From CGIAR's perspective, our role is clearly embedded into SDG 16- "Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions"- and within this framework, we are natural allies with the entire range of actors focused on the same goal. We will not operate under the rationale that peace and institutions relevant to maintaining it will remain static within the best- or worst-case scenarios induced by climate change. On the contrary, environmental threats to food security translate into more threats to global security, with a direct link to the full spectrum of conflict and the resilience of human institutions. The key challenge CGIAR has and will continue to confront is recognising that our impact and mandate extends far beyond countering merely the symptomatic and descriptive consequences of food insecurity on physical components (food, yields, and environmental degradation), and in fact extends into the more strategic role that land/water/food systems have in the pursuit and maintenance of peace. This nexus is becoming ever more apparent in its strategic relevance to global security, and CGIAR is ready to embrace its importance.

CGIAR therefore aims to create and consolidate fluid channels between policymakers and life and social science interlocutors, so that they can work in a collaborative way. With research integration as a priority, policy development and support form the immediate next step. As the sum of its many components, this "inter-institutional *consortium*" will support policymakers who will rely on this network as a first choice for scientific and technical support. A good example of what this consortium could offer is possibly assuming a role as a formal institutional partner to the *United Nations Climate Mechanism*. This body could play the role of science partner/counterpart to the UN Climate Mechanism by streamlining the sharing of knowledge, transitioning the level of engagement from consultations to integrated collaboration. This model does not have to be restricted to multilateral institutions. It can be tasked to provide the same technical support to local, regional, or national institutions. Focusing on a rapid reaction

methodology, this policy development support component will rely on well-integrated climate and food systems knowledge that can be rapidly translated into policy or comparative analysis to assist security actors in developing a holistic picture of a problem and subsequently draft solution paths.

Evidence 4 Peace

In terms of **research**, the process integrates the climate/ natural resources management and food systems science with research counterparts in conflict and security issues. It will focus on ensuring that the *issue identification-research-to-policy* cycle is accelerated in a way that key research is initiated mindful of local, regional and global security priorities, and of the need to ensure that *life science* inputs find their way into conflict analysis, policy and decision-making within the window of opportunity and timeframes required by rapid changing events in the security realm.

As highlighted by Mr. Bousquet, the World Bank's strategy towards FCV countries has been heavily driven by partnerships, with an emphasis on engaging with partners on the ground to fully engage with and understand dynamics at the granular level. Understanding these dynamics requires an integrated approach, away from silo structures and towards a recognition of the complex relationships between different drivers and climate change. Along these lines, CGIAR research conceives of food, land, and water systems as not only inseparable within themselves, but as being deeply intertwined with climate, biodiversity, poverty, and equity. We see food security, social stability, peace, and security as mutually reinforcing. A recently conducted portfolio review demonstrated just how much overlap much of CGIAR's research and programming has with the climate security nexus, revealing the extent to which agricultural systems across the globe are being impacted by climate change and the effects this is having in pushing increasing numbers of people in already fragile contexts into poverty and insecurity. CGIAR has subsequently developed several ongoing projects which aim to map at a granular level, and in specific contexts, the pathways between climate change, food insecurity, and conflict. One of these is being undertaken in partnership with SIPRI and the WFP in an effort to understand the exact climate dynamics occurring in the Central American Dry Corridor and Ethiopia and to evaluate WFP programming in these regions through a climate-security lens. CGIAR is thus well poised to continue developing integrated and policy-relevant research and

analysis to inform Security Council debates and frame Norway's efforts in bringing climate security to the forefront of future peace and development agendas.

Programming 4 Peace

As the webinar participants correctly emphasised, efforts in tackling climate change and its repercussions for peace must make use of cross-disciplinary approaches and be constructed upon diverse partnerships at different levels. Aside from beginning to bridge climate and security silos through previously mentioned ongoing projects, CGIAR has a record of successful collaboration with several national governments specifically working on addressing the relationship between deforestation, climate change, and sustainable peace for areas emerging from conflict. CGIAR's programming under this rubric has ranged from projects directly promoting livelihoods and increasing resilience (through, for example, the development of flood and drought forecasting to inform national systems), to higher-level efforts to strengthen institutional capacity and develop an appropriate, climate-sensitive policy framework. Some specific examples of CGIAR's extensive and widespread programming can be found in Policy Notes 4 and 5.

Finance 4 Peace

As we discussed in our webinar dedicated to the topic, leveraging sustainable finance is crucial in establishing the conditions appropriate for peace. There still exists a crucial need for additional mechanisms and avenues to facilitate collaboration between public and private financing, as well as a need to focus financing on Least Developed Countries and Fragile & Conflict states. In line with our partnerships approach, the CGIAR aims to partner with private entities to both address the needs of the private sector and attract financing and assist with the identification and scaling of climate-smart agri-business models. Using our expertise, the CGIAR is able to identify investable opportunities, help develop the business capacity of investees, and develop effective impact monitoring tools and frameworks.

Teaching and Education

It is important to recognise that teaching the next generation is essential to ensure the viability of this initiative. Second, this approach will trigger the emergence of a new type of practitioners and researchers, who will be equally at ease in conflict/security and food security systems. This way, the desired integration does not happen only at the institutional level but will be complemented by the rise of a new generation of practitioners and researchers fully versed in cross-disciplinary frameworks. CGIAR has developed a partnership with Wageningen University and is proud to present the creation of a PhD programme in the field of climate security, to which we have recently accepted three female promising researchers. Our objective is to continue to develop partnerships that bridge the academic practitioner divide by developing evermore integrated programmes and frameworks.

More Partnerships and SDG 17: Partnership for the Goals

On **advocacy goals**, the CGIAR Climate Security is keen on working for the promotion of a coordinated message about the research and policy relevance of the contributions emerging from cross-disciplinary work. When talking about advocacy, clearly the objectives and partnerships will have to reflect diverse types of engagement. However, the need for a coordinated effort to tackle climate change/conflict-security issues totally justify a coordinated advocacy effort

Finally, the fields of conflict, food systems and climate science need to benefit from interdisciplinary discussions happening both at the high levels of policymaking as well as the most localised levels. Here, *dialogue* is to be understood differently from the idea of a dialogue in the context of conflict resolution. Indeed, here it refers more about institution building and interdisciplinary collaboration processes. A first and solid example of the type of dialogues that need to be established is our own CGIAR's webinar series on climate security, which seeks to align different narratives. We stand ready to work with all concerned parties to bring the change needed at the speed necessary.