

Development Cooperation, Climate Change and Conflict

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Climate change is rarely the sole cause of conflict, but it can intensify and multiply existing conflicts. How should development cooperation deal with this?

*Signe Marie Cold-Ravnkilde, smr@diis.dk
Mikkel Funder, mfu@diis.dk*

WHY SUPPORT CLIMATE-RELATED CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION?

Development cooperation cannot entirely eliminate the risk of climate change aggravating climate-related conflict. But it can help address some of the root causes, and support frameworks for managing and resolving them before they escalate into violence. Addressing climate-related conflict prevention and resolution in development cooperation will:

- reduce the impact of conflict in terms of increasing poverty and marginalisation. Conflict prevention and resolution can help minimise conflict as a risk factor for the poor, and thereby improve the options and resources for livelihood improvement.
- contribute to macro-economic development. Preventing and resolving conflicts can help provide more stable environments for production and investment.
- contribute to good governance and institutional development. Institutional frameworks can help sustain and develop spaces for risk-free expression of interests and grievances, and thereby contribute to open and democratic governance.
- enhance the results of development interventions. Conflict prevention and resolution can help ensure that the outcomes of interventions across the full range of sectors are more effective and sustainable.
- ensure that development cooperation does not in itself contribute to conflict. Conflict-sensitive programmes can ensure that development interventions do not lead to increased tensions and conflicts of interest.

OVERALL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Structural conflict prevention:**
Help prevent conflicts from arising in the first place by addressing the root causes of the conflicts to which climate change may contribute. Such structural conflict prevention is crucial for long-term effect. This includes addressing land and water scarcity, and ensuring equitable access rights to and governance of land and water resources.
- **Institutional frameworks for conflict resolution:**
Support, strengthen and innovate both customary and new institutional mechanisms for conflict resolution at all levels. Relevant experiences and approaches already exist, but need more attention in relation to climate change and natural resource governance.
- **Conflict proof policies and programmes:**
National policies and development interventions in, for example, agriculture, infrastructure development and natural resource management may, in themselves, worsen the impacts of climate change on conflicts. Greater attention to 'conflict proofing' policies and programmes can help avoid this.



DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

Particular crisis situations such as droughts, floods or armed conflict may warrant special funding for short-term conflict management and resolution. However, in general the emphasis should be on supporting enabling environments for addressing climate-related conflicts, and ensuring that development interventions in themselves do not contribute to conflict. There are three key entry points for development cooperation in this respect: support to structural conflict prevention, support to institutional frameworks for managing and resolving conflicts, and 'conflict proofing' of policies and programmes.

Structural conflict prevention

Preventing conflicts from arising in the first place is the most effective and sustainable means of addressing any conflict. As emphasised in the OECD-DAC general principles for conflict-sensitive development, this requires so-called 'structural conflict prevention measures', which address the basic sources of conflict. The following elements are of particular relevance to natural resources and require increased attention if the conflict-multiplier effects of climate change are to be prevented.

Enhancing governance mechanisms in land and water.

Representative and transparent government institutions are key in preventing climate-related conflicts, as they control and regulate access to natural resources, and prioritise development efforts. Support to this area is not new, but much remains to be done and a concerted effort in this field is an important element in minimizing the conflict multiplier effects of climate change. Issues that require particular attention include:

- 1) innovation of equitable decision-making mechanisms in multi-stakeholder settings with complex/overlapping resource use;
- 2) addressing the constraints that block de facto devolution of natural resource control;
- 3) enhancing and clarifying the role of local government institutions in natural resource governance;
- 4) strengthening viable and pro-poor customary decision-making mechanisms; and
- 5) replicating and scaling up "best-fit" practices drawn from the multitude of existing models for joint- and community-based natural resource management.

Addressing property rights and tenure security. Access and use rights to land and water are key issues in most situations where climate change has contributed to natural resource conflicts. Addressing these issues is therefore a challenging but crucial aspect of preventing climate-related conflicts, and includes:

- 1) support to national reforms and frameworks that provide transparent and equal opportunities for access to and ownership of natural resources;
- 2) regulating and ensuring transparency in large-scale land deals to avoid 'land-grabbing';
- 3) strengthening sustainable and pro-poor customary rights systems for collective resource sharing in multiple user contexts (e.g. common property arrangements and reciprocal arrangements between farmers and herders).

Improving food security and expanding livelihood options.

Sustainable livelihoods and food security is a key factor in the resilience of communities to external shocks and reduces the risk of conflicts and social grievances. Possible support includes:

- 1) enhancing opportunities, policy frameworks and investments in agriculture with emphasis on small-scale producers at national and local levels;
- 2) development of opportunities for livelihood diversification, including new sources of income and off-farm employment;
- 3) enhancing adaptation practices and disaster preparedness in agriculture and natural resource use to prevent climate change from adding to existing risks and insecurities.

Increasing and sustaining the supply of land and water resources.

Ensuring sustainable availability of natural resources can help reduce the risk of resource scarcity contributing to conflict. This includes:

- 1) regulation of resource use, conservation practices and restoration of degraded land;
- 2) infrastructure and technology development to enhance provision of, for e.g., rural water supplies; and
- 3) development of alternatives to existing natural resources such as wood and wild foods. Regulatory efforts should recognise that resource degradation may as often be caused by international and national stakeholders as by local ones.

Institutional frameworks for managing and resolving conflicts

Existing conflicts require management and resolution. A wide range of approaches to conflict management and resolution exist, but these are often applied in particular crisis situations. Development cooperation should help consolidate and innovate more permanent frameworks for managing and resolving the conflicts to which climate change may contribute.

Supporting national frameworks for climate-related conflict management and resolution. This includes:

- 1) development or enhancement of national strategies for conflict resolution, including attention to land, water and climate change issues;
- 2) integrating conflict resolution measures in national climate change plans, e.g. National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) and disaster preparedness plans;
- 3) developing or strengthening national organisational mechanisms for conflict resolution, including e.g. cross-sectoral fora and platforms for multi-stakeholder interaction;
- 4) capacity development and awareness raising in government and security agencies on conflict management and resolution related to natural resources.

Enhancing capacity for conflict management and resolution in local institutions. Often conflict management and resolution related to land, water and other natural resources is most effective if carried out by local institutions. Supporting local institutional frameworks can complement decentralisation processes underway in many countries. This includes:

- 1) support to district level frameworks for conflict management and resolution;
- 2) forging better links between district authorities and customary conflict resolution institutions;
- 3) strengthening customary conflict resolution mechanisms including enhancing abilities to address new or larger scale issues brought on by climate change.

Improving access to formal and informal dispute resolution and justice systems. Formal legal systems are often difficult to access for rural populations and the poor in particular, and while customary conflict resolution mechanisms can be highly effective, they may be biased against some groups such as the poorest or women. Enhancing access to disagreement and dispute resolution systems can help to prevent conflicts escalating and intensifying. Support includes:

- 1) enhancing the capacity of local courts in land and water dispute resolution, and the training of lawyers in environmental justice issues;
- 2) supporting flexible and low-cost platforms and methods for mediation and negotiated rule making;
- 3) providing alternative spaces for unbiased third-party arbitration;
- 4) innovating mechanisms to monitor and enforce agreements and rules on land and water allocation to prevent violation by powerful stakeholders;
- 5) enhancing opportunities for voicing grievances.



Addressing transboundary resource management challenges. Transboundary water conflicts between nation states are rare and a significant number of transboundary agreements exist over jointly shared water bodies. Nevertheless, progress in developing wider regional governance mechanisms is frequently hampered by opposing national interests. Climate change may create new challenges, such as increased flooding and/or water scarcity as a result of droughts, or increased migration across borders. Experience from transboundary water cooperation and so-called Peaceparks suggests that transboundary collaboration on conflict management and resolution can be enhanced through support to:

- 1) ensuring that policy dialogues in multilateral natural resource organisations (e.g. river basin organisations) are linked to regional political and/or economic bodies;
- 2) applying 'multitrack' approaches on several levels at once with different stakeholders;
- 3) incorporating/building on existing bilateral agreements to foster trust and collaborative projects between countries;
- 4) establishing mechanisms for local cross-border cooperation and conflict management/resolution;
- 5) building capacity for regional cooperation and conflict resolution, e.g. by training legal experts and innovating economic compensation models;
- 6) information sharing as an initial platform for collaboration; and
- 7) supporting in-country efforts to increase internal water use efficiency and water policies.



Conflict proofing policies and programmes

Strengthening policies and planning in land use, natural resource management and economic development. A frequent cause of conflicts in land and water has been the implementation of economic and land use policies that are not harmonised with local land use practices or efforts in other sectors, or which marginalise particular production systems. Development cooperation can support:

- 1) identification and harmonisation of different development goals, sector goals and land use practices in and across policies and plans; and
- 2) ensuring that policies and plans do not unduly marginalise particular regions, production systems or stakeholders. Examples include harmonisation of national agricultural development plans with pastoral strategies; and also ensuring that water and energy needs for urban development priorities do not drain the water supplies of rural areas.

Application and facilitation of climate-related conflict analysis. A number of methods for conflict analysis and strategic conflict assessment have been successfully applied

in emergency relief and development interventions. These methods can be used in relation to climate change, land-use planning and natural resource management. This can include joint conflict analysis involving multiple stakeholders from different sectors and at different levels. Such methods can be incorporated into programme design procedures where appropriate, and will thereby also contribute the overall quality of risk assessment, climate change screening and donor harmonisation in programme development.

Linking to conflict management and resolution mechanisms in programme design and implementation. Development cooperation programmes in natural resource management and climate change frequently introduce new approaches that, although sound and well intentioned, may set off conflicts in themselves. Programme designs should therefore include measures for resolving potential conflicts that may follow from the interventions. This can be done by engaging existing conflict resolution institutions in the preparation and implementation of programmes related to e.g. agriculture, natural resource management, infrastructure and climate change, and/or by including support to innovation/adaptation of conflict resolution methods as an integrated part of such programmes.

FURTHER READING

This policy paper draws on the findings of *DIIS Report 2012:04*, 'Addressing climate change and conflict in development cooperation: experiences from natural resources management', commissioned by the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The report is available for download on the DIIS website at www.diis.dk

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