



GREEN TOOL BOX/PEACE AND SECURITY TOOL BOX: WORKING PAPER, 2017

The relationship between climate change and violent conflict

This is a Sida working document by senior advisor Johan Schaar, written as a background input to an assignment to Sida in the letter of appropriation 2017 on linkages between the conflict and environment/climate change perspectives.

Cover photo: Children catching the last surviving fish. This region in northern Cameroon usually has water all year around but is now hard hit by drought and activities from violent extremist groups. Photo: Erik Vågberg, 2017

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Summary

There is no direct and linear relationship between climate change and violent conflict, but under certain circumstances climate-related change can influence factors that lead to or exacerbate conflict. Reduced access to water and extreme weather events may e.g. negatively affect food security and undermine the livelihoods of vulnerable households and communities. Growing natural resource scarcity may then lead to local competition which becomes unmanageable in the absence of institutions for conflict resolution. Fragile states and communities with a history of conflict are the most vulnerable. Migration that is influenced by climate-related events is predominantly domestic, not international. There is no evidence of interstate conflicts where climate change is a direct or indirect cause. But climate-related effects will grow in magnitude with consequences in space and time that are difficult to predict. To reduce the risk of conflict, policies and strategies need to consider the importance of good governance, interaction between sectors and policy areas, as well as unintended negative effects of climate adaptation or emission reductions, including those that influence land, water and forest tenure.

The report finds that Sida has not yet systematically applied integrated environment, climate change and conflict analyses, although interventions of relevance for the relationship between climate-related change and conflict are implemented in several countries and regions. The report also finds that Swedish development cooperation is well placed to address complex and unpredictable local events in view of the decentralization and delegation of aid decision-making to embassies and flexible, long-term funding. It is concluded that Swedish aid should take a broad and general approach to building community resilience, based on gender equality and promotion of human rights, combined with specific support to secure tenure and resolution of conflicts around land, forest and water, including transboundary water resources, while promoting disaster risk reduction in fragile and conflictual contexts. The report finally notes how organizational structure, the way of working and financing can further promote aid that contributes to reducing the risk of climate-related conflict.

1. Introduction

Climate change is an issue of high priority for the Swedish Government, not least in development cooperation. In its policy framework for development cooperation and humanitarian assistance the Government states that

“climate change increases the risk of conflicts, poverty and hunger, undermines human rights and is a growing cause of forced migration.”

The issue of climate change as a security risk has lately been given increasing attention. At the end of March, 2017, the Security Council adopted resolution 2349 on the conflict in the Lake Chad region, which explicitly identifies climate change as a contributing factor to instability, a unique step for the Security Council. The resolution says that climate change effects are mediated through water scarcity, drought, desertification, land degradation and food insecurity, and emphasizes the need for risk assessment and management that take these factors into consideration.

In the letter of appropriation 2017 Sida was tasked to *Report on how the agency’s activities build on and are informed by an integrated conflict perspective and an integrated environment and climate perspective in development cooperation. The report should also include the mutual relationship between the perspectives. The agency should additionally analyse how this has influenced and changed its work.*

This report addresses the latter part of the assignment, i.e. the relationship between environment and climate change and conflict perspectives, which is understood as an analysis of how environment and climate change influence the risk of violent conflict, and conversely how conflicts influence opportunities for organized and deliberate management of environment and climate change and their effects. Based on this analysis Sida is tasked to present its experiences and conclusions, in other words how Sida can be expected to plan and implement development cooperation that takes what is known about the relationship between environment and climate change and violent conflict into account.

The report provides a brief account of the current state of knowledge, then presents relevant experiences at Sida and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and offers a set of conclusions.

The report primarily emphasizes climate change and their environmental effects, and not those environmental changes that are unrelated to climate change. This means, for example, that the important question of how extractive industries contribute to severe pollution, particularly where human rights are not respected, has not been addressed.

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2. State of knowledge

Will climate change lead to violent conflict? Will there be resource scarcity and unmanageable competition? Will coastal populations become climate refugees when they move away from the rising sea into new areas, triggering tension beyond control?

The perspective on these questions has evolved during the past ten years, from depicting simple, deterministic causal chains and catastrophic scenarios to a much more nuanced view from the realization that the risk of conflict is highly context dependent, where causality is multifactorial and complex¹. Earlier studies looking for statistical correlation between historic climate change and the eruption of conflict have been replaced by analyses of both quantitative and qualitative variables, where social, economic and political factors are considered. The effort is to understand complex and long-term sequences of events rather than short-term linear relationships. Questions are now asked *under what circumstances* climate change may increase the risk of armed conflict.

In addition, it is increasingly realized that the reverse relationship is much more certain: societies already in conflict are particularly exposed and ill equipped to meet the impacts of climate change.

At the instruction of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has carried out a major study on several aspects of the relationship between climate change and conflict risk; SIPRI has both analysed how some international organizations and donor agencies have managed these issues, and reviewed a large set of quantitative and qualitative studies from East Africa. SIPRI presented its analysis in a synthesis report² in October, 2016. The following largely builds on conclusions from SIPRI's analysis that have strong relevance for development cooperation.

All studies in this field are naturally retrospective in that they seek to understand the causes of past events to find models for what may happen in the future. The big challenge, also from a methodological perspective, is however that climate change impacts will become increasingly extensive, likely beyond our historic experience. Societies will be confronted with complex events and processes about which nothing can be known.

¹ By "complex" is meant systems and processes that are non-linear and unpredictable, and where it is difficult to determine causality and uncertain what a certain action may lead to. Complex systems may reach tipping points where gradual change in different variables leads to a sudden change in the system's properties.

² Molbjörk, M., Gustafsson, M.-T., Sonnsjö, H., van Baalen, S., Dellmuth, L.M. & Bremberg, N. 2016. Climate-related Security Risks. Towards an Integrated Approach. SIPRI.

Questions are now asked under what circumstances climate change may increase the risk of armed conflict.

3. The relationship between climate related change and security risks

Analyses of how climate change influences resources and societies usually point at certain areas as particularly significant: water, food security, sea level rise, migration and extreme weather events.

The availability of **water** for society and agriculture is becoming increasingly uncertain, particularly in tropical and arid and semi-arid regions. Reduced rainfall and increasing variation in its distribution in time and space already influence the productivity of agriculture and livestock. Overuse of aquifers and poorly maintained water distribution infrastructure create water stress in urban areas. Agreements regulating the use of transboundary water between nations assume stable flows and have no space or preparedness for managing unpredictable water volume variations over time.³

All aspects of **food security** are influenced by global climate change. Production goes down in areas of uncertain water availability, where the pressure from pathogens is changing or temperatures surpass crop tolerance. Price fluctuations influence the availability of food particularly for poor households where food represents a large portion of their budget, which leads to consumption of less nutritious foods. The food crisis in 2008 and the years after demonstrated how drought or floods in major grain producing countries, probably related to climate change, may have large impacts on local food prices and availability⁴. The crisis had long-term consequences for the most marginalized, particularly women, through negative coping mechanisms that people were forced to apply⁵. It also led to social unrest in many countries, particularly where authorities were unable to dampen its effects.

The effects of **sea level rise** are difficult to predict – humanity has not coped with anything similar in modern times. Many of the world's largest cities are located near coasts and will become affected, just as small island states in the Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean. Livelihoods, economy, trade, political representation and many other factors will be influenced and will demand long-term planning and preparedness, which should be possible given that the changes will happen relatively slowly. At the same time conditions for orderly decision-making processes is highly contextual, where adaptation capacity and governance will become critical.

In some exposed coastal regions citizens and local authorities have initiated programs for planned relocation to more elevated and protected sites⁶. Inuit communities in Alaska are already severely affected by sea level rise and warmer winters. So far efforts at planned relocation demonstrate major challenges⁷. There is no relevant legislation, it is unclear how relocation should

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3 Earl, A., Cascao, A.E., Hansson, S., Jägerskog, A., Shwain, A. & Öjendal, J. 2015; Transboundary Water Management and the Climate Change Debate, Earthscan.

4 Schaar, 2013. Weaving the Net. World Resources Institute

5 Scott-Villiers, P., Chisholm, N., Wanjiku Kelbert, Al., and Hossain, N. 2016; Precarious Lives: Food, Work and Care after the Global Food Crisis. Oxfam/IDS Report.

6 <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/when-resilience-means-leaving-your-home-and-making-new-one>

7 Bronen, B. & Pollock, D. 2017. Climate Change, Displacement and Community Relocation. Lessons from Alaska. Norwegian Refugee Council/Alaska Institute for Justice.

be financed, who should be compensated, where communities under threat should move, and when and by whom decisions should be made.

Extreme events. Climate change leads with certainty to more intense and in some cases more frequent extreme weather events, while becoming more unpredictable in time and space. This does not only mean storms, floods and droughts, but also to longer periods of extreme heat, the latter an increasingly recognized health hazard when combined with high humidity⁸. Extreme events disturb public services and economic activities and cause losses in terms of physical assets and dead and injured people. Most vulnerable are poor households who tend to live in the most hazardous environments.

Migration. The issue of people migrating as a result of climate change has been given much attention – the notion of ”climate refugees” indicates a direct causal relationship and events similar to the threats against human security that force people to flee during armed conflict or because of ethnic, political or religious persecution. ”Climate refugees” are sometimes described as a security threat against the countries where they seek refuge. Migration research points to a range of factors that influence people’s decision to migrate, where resource scarcity may be but not necessarily is a major cause⁹. In addition, there are several types of migration – seasonal or more permanent within a country, or international migration that is sometimes permanent but often circular, where the migrant frequently returns from the country of destination to the home country, for longer or shorter periods. Circular migration often involves persons who are integrated in two societies and economies.

People affected by sudden natural disasters – earthquakes, floods, storms – often migrate but only for a short period and then usually return home.

There is little indication that migrants have become security threats against the countries to which they move, on the contrary the migrants themselves often live a precarious existence when states try to prevent migration. They may be subjected to human rights violations during their arduous and risky journey and when they have arrived in their country of destination. In countries with pastoralists, central authorities often prevent their traditional movements within and across borders.

Mobility and migration are among humanity’s oldest and most fundamental adaptation strategies with many positive development effects. Several studies of the significance of migration for the development of individuals and societies conclude that migration should be embraced, facilitated and made more secure.¹⁰

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8 Khan, F., Malik, S., & Rehman, A. (2014). *Sheltering from a gathering storm: Temperature resilience in Pakistan*. Boulder, CO: ISET-International.

9 For a recent review from a development perspective see Andrén, U. 2016. Migration i utvecklingsarbetet – en fördjupning av några aspekter. Sida.

10 See e.g. Barnett & Webber, 2009. Accommodate Migration to Promote Adaptation to Climate Change. Commission on Climate Change and Development; and Adger, W. Neil, Juan M. Pulhin, Jon Barnett, Geoffrey D. Dabelko, Grete K., Hovelsrud, Marc Levy, Úrsula O. Spring, & Coleen H. Vogel. (2014) Human Security. In Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change; and Odipo, G., Odwe, G., Oulu, M., & Omollo, E. 2017; Migration as Adaptation to Environmental and Climate Change: The case of Kenya. IOM

4. Violent conflict

DIRECT AND INDIRECT RELATIONSHIPS

There seems to be a consensus in the research community that there is no *direct* relationship between climate change and the eruption of violent conflicts, particularly extensive inter- and intra-state conflicts. This is a conclusion also officially endorsed by the IPCC¹¹. Sequences of events leading to outbreaks of violence are always multifactorial and complex and it is usually not possible to identify single triggering factors.

The hypothesis that climate change-related drought during the years before 2011 was a major causing factor behind the civil war in Syria¹² has been given much attention, but is increasingly under question as simplistic and misleading. Instead, the Syria expert Francesca de Châtel argues¹³ that decades of dysfunctional agricultural policies, overuse of land and groundwater and a sudden removal of fuel subsidies and simultaneous dramatic increases in global food prices, led to disastrous consequences under a repressive regime which had stifled all debate on a more sustainable use of water resources.

After years of drought and in the absence of government social protection, destitute families abandoned their farms and moved to the cities where social unrest was already on the rise. De Châtel suggests that it is to play in the hands of a regime seeking scapegoats when arguing that it was the climate rather than years of oppression and misrule that led to the Syrian disaster. The long drought, which may have been a result of climate change, possibly became a contributing factor to the conflict but the political situation and oppression played major roles. Neighbouring countries exposed to the same drought did not experience internal conflict.

If simple relationships can be rejected at the macro level, many studies instead show that there may be *indirect* linkages between climate change and the risk of conflict. In other words, factors that play a role in increasing conflict risk may be reinforced by climate change. There are also examples showing how local conflicts around natural resources may be triggered or exacerbated by climate-related factors, particularly in economies that are highly dependent on natural resources. It is thus particularly important to understand how and under what circumstances these changes may lead to violent conflict. Such a context specific approach may give guidance as to what concrete actions contribute to reducing the risk of conflict.

Factors that play a role in increasing conflict risk may be reinforced by climate change.

¹¹ Adger et al, *ibid*.

¹² See e.g T. Friedman, 'The Scary Hidden Stressor', The New York Times, 2 March 2013; and C.E. Werrel and F. Femia (eds.), 2013. The Arab Spring and Climate Change, Center for American Progress, Stimson, The Center for Climate and Security

¹³ De Chatel, F. 2014 The Role of Drought and Climate Change in the Syrian Uprising: Untangling the Triggers of the Revolution

b) The East Africa example

As part of SIPRI's study a special analysis¹⁴ has been made of 44 studies published 1989–2015, using quantitative as well as qualitative methods¹⁵, on the relationship between climate-related change and local, violent conflicts in East Africa¹⁶ and Sudan. They show that conflicts around natural resources – land, pasture, water – are particularly frequent where livestock rearing pastoralists are involved. Sometimes these conflicts are exploited by external parties in their strategic search for power.

Based on their comprehensive analysis Van Baalen and Mobjörk identify five explanations for how climate-related changes may lead to violent conflict:

- i) deteriorating livelihoods, ii) increased migration, iii) changes in pastoralist mobility patterns, iv) tactical considerations among armed groups, and v) elite capture of local disaffection.

i) Deteriorating livelihoods

Several studies show that the risk of violence increases, particularly among farmers and pastoralists who depend directly on agro-ecosystems for their livelihoods, when drought, floods or land overuse and degradation lead to decreasing production and economic loss. This is usually explained as reduced opportunity costs of using violence to seize control over resources compared to traditional livelihoods. Sudden crises seem to lead to greater risks than slower events which allow adaptation. Long-term drought may however lead to a chronic situation where social relationships erode through negative coping mechanisms which entrench violent conflict.

ii) Increased migration

Resource scarcity in one area may lead to migration to more favourable areas within the same region, which often has been the case in East Africa. Tension and conflict could then arise when the sedentary population and migrants compete over land and water. In Darfur migration occurred to areas with biomass growth from other areas during 1982–2002, with simultaneous increase in outbreaks of violence between Arab and non-Arab groups. The relative difference in resource availability between areas was then not the only cause of conflict – the absence of common institutions and mechanisms for conflict resolution was of great significance.

The attention given to migration during recent years primarily concerns international migration across borders. That is the case e.g. with regard to the EU. The Swedish Government's new policy framework for development co-operation addresses migration from a development perspective but exclusively as international migration. Still, SIPRI as well as other studies¹⁷ show that migration linked to the risk of climate-related tensions is mainly local, within borders. The UN New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants of September 2016 only addresses internal migration when it comes to conflict IDPs. Development of policy and action plans to reduce the risk that climate-related change increases the risk of violent conflict must also give attention to local migration.

Sudden crises seem to lead to greater risks than slower events which allow adaptation.

¹⁴ Van Baalen & Mobjörk. 2016. A coming anarchy? Pathways from climate change to violent conflict in East Africa. Stockholm University

¹⁵ Quantitative methods are mainly statistical, using correlations or analysis of variance, while qualitative methods primarily build on specific case studies.

¹⁶ Burundi, The Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, The Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

¹⁷ See e.g. Nett & Rüttinger. 2016. Insurgency, Terrorism and Organised Crime in a Warming Climate. Analysing the Links Between Climate Change and Non-State Armed Groups. Adelphi.

iii) Changing mobility patterns among pastoralists

Closely related to ii) are the changing migration routes used by pastoralists when the productivity of traditional grazing areas becomes insufficient due to climate change. The cause of altered migration routes could also be that sedentary farmers or new landowners engage in climate adaptation which require larger areas or new crops so that the vegetation cycle no longer supports mobility across what traditionally were post-harvest fields or fallow land. Interventions promoting mutual adaptation between pastoralists and farmers will then become particularly important but must be based on analyses of the conditions in each local context.

iv) Tactical considerations among armed groups

Livestock theft in East Africa increases significantly during the rainy season or periods when the vegetation cover increases, probably because it is then easier to find protection and animals are in a better condition for being herded over long distances. This effect is an example of how climate-related change may influence conflict dynamics.

v) Elite exploitation of local grievances

The kind of conflicts around the control of natural resources described above are normally low-intensity and geographically limited. But they can be used and fuelled by local or national elites to conceal their own shortcomings or mobilize support from some ethnic groups against others, particularly as pastoralists and sedentary farmers are of different ethnicity. Particularly in Sudan and South Sudan such tensions have a direct relationship to regional or national conflicts.

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5. Four conclusions from SIPRI's analysis

On the basis of their extensive literature review and the special analysis of East Africa studies, Mobjörk et al draw four overriding conclusions which have great significance for development cooperation. They are presented here in a slightly modified form and with comments.

a) How societies are governed and adapt is critical for conflict risk

The same physical and biological climate-related phenomena have dramatically different impact depending on how societies are governed and able to adapt to stress. Context is decisive, whether it is about food security, extreme weather events or transboundary water management. This dependence on context is obviously also relevant when it comes to conflict resolution related to changes that may lead to tension around the control over natural resources. The importance of formal and informal institutions that can respond to new internal and external conditions cannot be overstated. Dramatic and extreme events disclose rather than produce societies' inner weaknesses and risks¹⁸.

b) Interaction between risks requires integrated action

Abnormal variation in the spatial and temporal distribution of rainfall affects the access, price and quality of food; storms enhance the effects of sea-level rise in coastal cities; increasing temperature and humidity add strain on those who do physical labour while morbidity and the risk of pandemics grow. The interaction of climate-related phenomena means that they cannot be managed as single issues by actors who function independently of each other.

The need for coherence and integration between different sectors and institutions, under consolidated and strategic leadership from a high level, to manage complex societal challenges is not new; the importance of this type of management to reduce risk and exposure to hazards is well recognized. But the growing intensity of climate change impacts makes the demand for coherent action even greater. Without coordination and leadership, the risk that adaptation in one area leads to maladaptation in another increases.

c) Climate risk transcend time and space

Some climate-related effects, such as sea-level rise, evolve during a long time. Sudden, extreme weather events play out during a short time but their poverty generating effects may become permanent, chronic and measurable over generations¹⁹.

¹⁸ "...climate change must not be seen as predominantly external in its cause, but rather exposes risks that are inherent in modern societies". Mobjörk et al, Box 2.1, s 4.

¹⁹ Hallegate, S., Vogt-Schilb, A., Bangalore, M. & Rozenberg, J. 2017. Unbreakable. Building the Resilience of the Poor in the Face of Natural Disasters. World Bank.

The importance of formal and informal institutions that can respond to new internal and external conditions cannot be overstated.

The growing intensity of climate change impacts makes the demand for coherent action even greater.

The direct effect of climate-related drought may be local but indirectly lead to increasing world market food prices which affect the poor globally, which was the case during the food crisis in 2008²⁰.

Those planning for the potential social consequences of climate change in general and conflict risk in particular, must consider that these effects may play out far away from and much later than the actual climate events.

d) Climate-related effects are unequal

Experience shows that excessive stress on societies in the form of sudden or gradual crisis events tends to reinforce already existing vulnerability, exposure and inequality. One should expect the same from climate-related events – their impact is not neutral and equal. Every strategy that aims to manage their consequences must distinguish between different social groups and strata and give specific attention to those already marginalized.

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²⁰ Schaar, *ibid.*

6. Indirect or unintended effects of climate policy

Local climate-related conflict risks must also include those that are the indirect result of measures to reduce carbon dioxide in the air and promote non-fossil sources of energy. The mechanism using economic incentives to increase forest biomass through reduced deforestation and forest degradation – REDD – raises the value of forest land, which in societies with insecure tenure may lead to eviction of people living off the forest but unable to claim their rights²¹, or that authorities and elites control the influx of new finance. The same type of effects can arise when the value of crops that can be converted to biofuel – such as maize and sugarcane – increases and farming land becomes a more valued resource.

Large hydropower projects have often led to forced displacement and local conflict where the rule of law is weak and the affected population unable to influence investment decisions and planning. The renaissance of hydropower as a source of renewable energy again increases the risk of local conflict where political representation is weak and the rights of those affected not respected.

Another example of indirect and unintended effects of climate policies is when adaptation interventions for some groups lead to increased risk for others – maladaptation. Adaptation investments to promote irrigated agriculture may e.g. cause pastoralists to lose grazing areas and traditional transhumance routes²², which may exacerbate already existing tensions.

All these examples point to the critical importance of how the right to use land is organized and regulated and how the risk of conflict can be managed. It also points to the importance of good governance, representative institutions and respect for human rights to prevent conflicts resulting from unintended effects of climate policy.

The critical importance of how the right to use land is organized and regulated.

²¹ Tänzler, D. 2013. Forests and Conflict: The Relevance of REDD+. Adelphi

²² Eriksen S, & Marin A. 2015. Sustainable adaptation under adverse development? Lessons from Ethiopia. In *Climate change adaptation and development: changing paradigms and practices*. Edited by T.H. Inderberg, S.H. Eriksen, K. O'Brien and L. Sygna, Routledge, s 178-199.

7. Fragile and conflict-affected societies are the most vulnerable

The study on East Africa by SIPRI is primarily aimed at investigating how climate change may lead to the risk of violent conflict. It also shows that societies that already have a history of conflict run a high risk of worsened conflict due to further climate-related stress.

A recent study²³ of phenomena that may increase the sensitivity to factors causing violent conflict, using data from Africa and Asia 1989 – 2014, shows that politically excluded and marginalized groups who depend on agriculture tend to use violence against authorities the longer and more frequently they are exposed to drought. Insecurity and violence in turn lead to a decrease in investments and increase in capital flight, and that public services decline resulting in ill-health. All these reduce the resilience and adaptive capacity of local populations.

The authors conclude that the negative effects of intensive violence on vulnerability to climate change probably is many times larger than the impact of climate shocks on the risk of conflict. This means that under certain circumstances climate-related events lead to an increased risk of conflict, but fragile states and societies are always vulnerable to climate-related events.

The relationship between climate change and the activity of armed groups in the Lake Chad region, Syria, Afghanistan and Guatemala has been analysed²⁴ as part of a German Ministry of Foreign Affairs-funded assignment. Like in other studies no direct relationship can be found but climate change contributes to rising insecurity in environments that are already unstable when they influence the distribution and access to natural resources. Food insecurity and undermined livelihoods in turn make it easier for armed groups to recruit new members. There are also examples of how armed groups use the control of natural resources, particularly water, as a weapon, or to finance their actions, particularly forest.

Global data show large co-variation between fragility and the number of injured and killed in natural disasters. During 2004-14 58% of such fatalities occurred in countries to be found among the top 30 on the Fragile States Index²⁵. Among these, 19 are among those least prepared to receive climate finance for adaptation²⁶. They include i a Somalia, Niger, Tchad, Liberia, Afghanistan, Sudan, Yemen, DR Congo and Haiti. This does not necessarily mean that these countries are more affected by drought or floods, which are typically climate-related extreme events. But conflict weakens the ability of authorities and civil society to build disaster preparedness and implement risk reduction measures. Ongoing conflict also means that local and central

Global data show large co-variation between fragility and the number of injured and killed in natural disasters.

23 Von Uexkull, N., Croicu, M., Fjelde, H. & Buhaug, H. 2016. Civil conflict sensitivity to growing-season drought. PNAS 113 (44), pp12391 – 12396.

24 Nett & Rüttinger. 2016. Insurgency, Terrorism and Organised Crime in a Warming Climate. Analysing the Links Between Climate Change and Non-State Armed Groups. Adelphi.

25 Peters & Budimir, 2016. When disasters and conflict collide. Facts and figures. ODI

26 Peters & Budimir; *ibid*.

authorities with little capacity will not prioritize protection against natural disasters²⁷.

There are consequently many countries that are simultaneously fragile and unstable, severely affected by natural disasters, exposed to climate change and with limited capacity to absorb external finance and investments. Efforts to give this group special recognition at the UN conference on disaster risk reduction in Sendai in 2015 were only partly successful since the issue touches the sensitive question of national sovereignty. The Sendai declaration states that countries facing

“...specific challenges, warrant particular attention in view of their higher vulnerability and risk levels, which often greatly exceed their capacity to respond.”

During the 2017 DRR global conference in Cancun a special session was devoted to the vulnerability of countries “in special situations”. Regrettably the vulnerability and weak capacity of fragile states was conspicuously absent during the discussion, which exclusively addressed small island states and land-locked countries.

The examples above, and the limited literature on the vulnerability of fragile states to disasters and climate risk, show that knowledge, policy and international processes are distinctly separated and grouped around the two areas climate change on the one hand and conflict on the other. The exposure of fragile states to climate change and other stresses is an issue that is given prominence in the Swedish Government’s policy framework for development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, but the national and international institutional silos still in place counter possibilities for a meaningful management of these new issues.

Knowledge, policy and international processes are distinctly separated and grouped around the two areas climate change on the one hand and conflict on the other.

²⁷ Harris, K., Keen, D. & Mitchell, T. 2013. When disasters and conflict collide. Improving links between disaster resilience and conflict prevention. ODI.

8. Lake Chad

The conflict near Lake Chad in Africa, with its origins in Northeastern Nigeria, where Boko Haram since several years fights central authorities and terrorizes the civilian population, has been given special attention because linkages have been made with effects of climate change, particularly since the conflict had crossed into Niger and Cameroun which border the lake. These were expressed in Security Council resolution 2349 in March, 2017.

Countries in the G-7 group have identified Lake Chad as a compelling case for deepening the understanding of climate change as a security threat. A special working group has been formed to identify elements for risk assessment, learning for policy development and partnerships. Lake Chad was the focus of a special session during the joint SIPRI/Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs conference on Peace and Development in Stockholm in April, 2017. It is also likely that the Planetary Security initiative²⁸ will give attention to Lake Chad.

The conflict in northeastern Nigeria has evolved from a complex combination of marginalization, corruption, an absence of investments in physical and social infrastructure, a lack of confidence in national and local authorities and a deeply conservative local strand of Islam. Livelihoods of the growing population are closely linked to the ecosystems of and around Lake Chad²⁹. During years of drought, increasing food insecurity and tension the Boko Haram movement has been able to recruit among young men with few livelihood options. The conflict has a strong local character but has had regional consequences.

Climate models are inconsistent whether rainfall in the region will increase or decrease³⁰. Hydrologists and the Lake Chad Basin Commission³¹ describe a lake exposed to drastic rainfall and inflow variations rather than a disappearing lake, despite the recent several years long drought.

Recent studies on Lake Chad show that the security issue cannot be separated from the lack of development investments and poor governance. Even if climate change forms part of the set of problems around the lake they can only be addressed through a broad developmental approach.

Recent studies on Lake Chad show that the security issue cannot be separated from the lack of development investments and poor governance. Even if climate change forms part of the set of problems around the lake they can only be addressed through a broad developmental approach.

²⁸ Clingendael. 2017. Water, climate and conflict: security risks on the increase? Briefing note.

²⁹ Okpara, Ut., Stringer, L.C. & Dougill, A.J. 2016. Lake drying and livelihood dynamics in Lake Chad: Unravelling the mechanisms, contexts and responses. *Ambio* 45: 781-795.

³⁰ Daron, J.D. 2014. Regional Climate Messages: West Africa. Scientific report from the CARIAd Adaptation at Scale in Semi-Arid Regions (ASSAR) Project, December 2014.

³¹ The Lake Chad Development and Climate Resilience Action Plan. 2016.

9. What are Sida's experiences?

a) Background

Reviewing current Swedish bilateral and regional development cooperation strategies as well as global strategies shows that Sida has not yet systematically taken on the relationship between climate change and the risk of violent conflict. Strategies adopted by the government usually include *parallel* rather than *integrated* references to the new environment, climate and conflict perspectives but do not explicitly connect them.

More clarity that climate change may fuel tension and conflict are however provided in the new Latin America strategies for Colombia and Bolivia.

Even if strategies are clearly situated in a political, social and economic context with a history, future temporal perspectives are most often absent, where scenarios for long-term developments would be presented including possible climate change impacts.

Nor have the resilience analyses carried out by Sida's Africa Department for some current strategies, using the OECD-DAC analytical model³² found any clear combination of perspectives in a unified approach, even if they point to possibilities for a more explicit integration of cross-cutting perspectives. In one case, Sudan, it is also found that the strategy offers the opportunity to address natural resource issues in a way that is relevant beyond the current strategy timeframe. The dynamic perspective of resilience analyses otherwise has potential value with regard to climate change effects. They pose questions about the capacity of societies to manage stress, particularly if difficult to predict, and what factors contribute to resilience and the ability to recover.

Sida's use of conflict and conflict sensitivity analyses have in the past primarily focused on conflict as a risk that could influence the implementation of strategies and interventions and where the priority was to manage and not inadvertently enhance risk. Increasingly, however, Sida's ambition is to reduce the risk of conflict and positively contribute to peacebuilding. It is then important to understand how local dynamics may lead to or exacerbate conflicts, not least around the use of natural resources, but also other indirect and external factors that could be climate related. Sida's new Peace and Conflict toolbox has that approach, but a more explicit integration or combination of climate and conflict analyses remains, particularly with regard to the unpredictability and long term nature of climate effects.

For guidance on linkages between climate change/environment and conflict and how integration could be made, Sida's Africa Department commissioned an analysis from Sida's helpdesk³³. Its operative suggestions have so far not led to more mainstreamed integration into strategy implementation.

³² OECD (2014) *Guidelines for resilience systems analysis*, OECD Publishing.

³³ Saferworld, 2016. The nexus between climate change/environment and conflict: Background paper.

Important to understand how local dynamics may lead to or exacerbate conflicts, not least around the use of natural resources.

Even if a systematic practice of designing interventions that concretely address climate-related conflict risks is still absent, programs supported in different countries are nevertheless highly relevant from this perspective. These include support post the peace agreement in the climate affected Colombia to promote economic integration and sustainable rehabilitation of IDPs returning to areas that have been controlled by FARC. In Somalia support is provided to counter the production and trade of charcoal which feeds the war economy, including making renewable sources of energy available. In the West Balkans, joint management is promoted of transboundary natural resources and waterways between states recently in conflict with each other.

In preparation for this assignment, a hypothesis has been that there are also interventions and programs of relevance from a climate and conflict perspective, even if that was not the intention when they were launched. There could be individual staff, particularly in embassies, who have the experience of direct action or intervention in connection with unforeseen and conflictual events with a climate-related background. Such experience could provide guidance for the future. One relevant example is presented below.

In the following, actions of special relevance for the relationship between climate change and conflict risk will be presented, against the background of conclusions from the literature review presented above. In all areas described, Sida has a degree of current and in depth experience. In addition, the case where Sida acted in direct response to a threatening conflict originating in competition over transboundary water resources will be presented. On this basis, a set of conclusions are presented on how considerations of the relationship between climate change and conflict risk can be integrated into Swedish development cooperation.

b) Low and no regrets interventions

Considering that conflict risks increase in unstable societies where people's livelihood opportunities are uncertain, while institutions for mediating services and support are weak or missing, there are a range of areas where it is always meaningful to invest in building resilience against sudden change and crises. These are often called low or no regrets, or robust, investments, i.e. areas that contribute to stability regardless of crisis scenario. They are often part of climate adaptation³⁴ but gain special relevance when new stresses contribute to deeper uncertainty and conflict.

Among these are investments in health, education and food security, including climate-smart agriculture and sustainable management of water resources, as well as renewable energy, infrastructure and market systems with financial services that facilitate diversified and less vulnerable livelihoods. Promoting human rights and gender equality is particularly important so that people have the space and ability to make – and act upon – informed decisions.

Partly new but central areas are social protection and disaster risk reduction which have gained in attention but mostly in countries that are usually considered stable. Sida has important experiences from i.a. Mozambique and the regional Africa Risk Capacity program in East Africa. Programs that combine the infrastructure of a social protection safety net with the capacity to scale up support to households in times of crises, such as the Productive Safety Net Program in Ethiopia, where Sida was once a donor, has special relevance.

Promoting human rights and gender equality is particularly important so that people have the space and ability to make – and act upon – informed decisions.

³⁴ See e.g. recommendations in Closing the Gaps, the report from the Swedish initiated Commission on Climate Change and Development, 2009. For a recent analysis see Hallegatte, S.; Bangalore, M.; Bonzanigo, L.; Fay, M.; Kane, T.; Narloch, U.; Rozenberg, J.; Treguer, D.; Vogt-Schilb, A. 2016. *Shock Waves : Managing the Impacts of Climate Change on Poverty*. Climate Change and Development; Washington, DC: World Bank.

There are certain types of investments where experience shows that they can have system-influencing impacts. Among these are investments in girls education and health, which can have profound effects on a society's development and ability to manage stress.

Sida's support to disaster risk reduction is primarily mediated through global programs such as the World Bank-based Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction and UNISDR.

Even if these interventions take place within complex social systems, where effects can be difficult to foresee in detail, there are certain types of investments where experience shows that they can have system-influencing impacts. Among these are investments in girls education and health, which can have profound effects on a society's development and ability to manage stress.

All the examples above are based on the existence of local institutions with the capacity and resources to identify needs and carry out the services needed. Many earlier and current adaptation relevant interventions supported by Sida include support to decentralized governance capacity building, such as IIED's Making Decentralization Work.

c) Specific interventions

The right to natural resources. The analysis above shows that the existence of local institutions for managing conflicts around natural resources are fundamental in reducing the risk that competition in times of scarcity leads to tension and ultimately to violent conflict. The examples from East Africa analysed by SIPRI, but also studies from the Lake Chad region³⁵, show that the absence of institutions and agreements for managing the use of land and water between groups that have not previously been in close contact, or when natural resources become commercialized and privatized, is one of the causing factors when climate change reduces access to resources which may lead to or worsen ongoing conflicts.

Local and central institutions regulating the right to use natural resources – agriculture, grazing land, forest, water etc. – but also national environmental authorities, are of great importance in this respect. For a long time Sida played an active international role in analysis, policy development and capacity building regarding the right to natural resources. The importance of secure rights for poverty reduction and development were manifested by Sida in a position paper 2007³⁶ and a comprehensive study in 2009³⁷. When the importance of biomass for sequestering and storing carbon dioxide gained economic value as a result of climate negotiations, confiscations of land increased in many countries where those using land and forest have a weak legal position. Sida was active also in the development of norms and principles for addressing these new problems. There are many examples of how projects to promote renewable energy have led to unintended negative consequences because of insufficient consultation with local communities³⁸.

Currently, Sida collaborates with a number of international organizations in this field. One intervention in particular is worth mentioning as being of interest from a climate and conflict perspective. *The Tenure Facility* is an international mechanism developed by the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) to mobilize financial and technical support to protect customary rights to land and forests. Its overriding purpose is to increase the area of well managed tropical forest through carefully documented and registered user rights.

³⁵ Such as Okpara, U.T., Stringer, L.C., Dougill, A.J. & Bila, M.D. 2015. Conflicts about water in Lake Chad:

Are environmental, vulnerability and security issues linked? *Progress in Development Studies* 15 (4), 308-325.

³⁶ Sida, 2007. *Natural Resource Tenure: A position paper for Sida.*

³⁷ Ghezac, N. ed, 2009. *Natural Resource Tenure – a crucial aspect of poverty reduction and human rights.* Sida Studies no 23.

³⁸ See t. ex. Bhattacharyya, S.C. 2012. Energy access programmes and sustainable development: A critical review and analysis. *Energy for Sustainable Development*, 16 (3), s. 260-27

Local and central institutions regulating the right to use natural resources – agriculture, grazing land, forest, water etc. – but also national environmental authorities, are of great importance in this respect.

During the incubation period of RRI's program in six countries³⁹ during 2014-16, models have been developed towards more extensive implementation. In one of the countries – Mali – formal and informal user rights norms overlap, creating uncertainty and confusion, particularly since the pressure on resources increases with a growing population, climate change and new stakeholders⁴⁰.

Traditional institutions have not been able to manage the new situation which has contributed to a growing number of local conflicts. Through a conflict sensitive approach The Tenure Facility has contributed to the establishment of new and more representative institutions for local conflict resolution, while national legislation⁴¹ has been developed based on experiences from the project. The result has been a major reduction in the number of conflicts around land and forests. The Tenure Facility is an example of a new type of interventions to support conflict resolution which will become increasingly important when climate change directly and indirectly leads to increased competition and tension related to the right to use natural resources.

Transboundary water resources. No violent interstate conflicts related to transboundary water have been documented, despite concerns about “water wars” developing along with population growth and increasing needs a few decades ago. Instead, it turned out that states found a common interest in jointly resolving water distribution issues. But in the era of climate change one cannot take for granted that this situation will remain. One study⁴² shows that interstate agreements related to joint river commissions usually assume steady and predictable water flows, without allowance for the kind of drastically increased variation in rainfall that can be expected in many catchment areas. The conclusion is that the more tense the relationship between participating states, the more rigid the agreements and the more difficult it will be to revise them. Declining access to water could lead to new interstate tensions that are difficult to resolve, particularly in regions that are already affected by conflict.⁴³

Just as with rights to natural resources, Sida has been very active in supporting the development of interstate transboundary water institutions and management plans. Support is still provided through regional programs in Africa (the Nile, Okavango, Pungwe, Zambezi, Volta, Niger), Asia (Mekong) and the Middle East (the Jordan river, Euphrate and Tigris). Even if some of these institutions have begun developing climate adaptation programs, hardly any initiatives have been taken to review existing agreements and plans from a climate perspective. In several cases the expansion of hydropower and dams are seen as a much more acute problem than future climate effects.

Declining access to water could lead to new interstate tensions that are difficult to resolve, particularly in regions that are already affected by conflict.

39 Cameroun, Liberia, Mali, Indonesia, Panama and Peru

40 Del Gatto, F. 2016. Piloting the Tenure Facility in Mali: Reflection and Learning with CNOP and HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation. The Tenure Facility.

41 <http://thetenurefacility.org/newsletter/news-malis-new-agricultural-land-law-paves-way-scaling-role-local-land-commissions-piloted-tenure-facility/>

42 Earl et al, 2015, see footnote 1.

43 Rüttinger et al. 2015. A New Climate for Peace. Taking Action on Climate and Fragility Risks. An independent report commissioned by G7.

d) The Volta River – a case study

At a time of declining rainfall in parts of West Africa in the early 2000s, Sweden and Sida acted swiftly during a threatening conflict between Ghana and Burkina Faso linked to increasingly scarce water resources. It is an interesting example of the kind of capacities needed from nations, donors and institutions to adequately address unforeseen climate related problems. This is the account⁴⁴ of the Sida staff member who came to play a direct role in the sequence of events:

“Burkina Faso suffers from a chronic shortage of water and has no major water-course. A consequence is that Burkina has evolved into a champion of building dams, mainly to collect rainwater. Most of the approximately 1,300 dams are “mid-size”, i.e. designed to provide 2–5 villages with water for their domestic needs and small scale vegetable production. There are also some larger dams to provide Ouagadougou with drinking water, electricity and irrigated farming.

In Ghana the large Akasombo dam is vital for the country. The dam is recharged mainly with water from the three Volta rivers which all originate in Burkina Faso and flow on their path to Akasombo.

One year (2002) the level of the Akasombo dam fell dramatically. Ghana immediately pointed at Burkina Faso and many thought that Burkina, through the many dams, cut the provision of water to Akasombo. The tone quickly became tense and there are reports that it even led to military mobilization.

The Global Water Partnership (GPW) came into the picture through its regional office in Ouagadougou which proposed that a study be made quickly to identify the cause of reduced water levels in Akasombo. The study was carried out and found that the dams in Burkina were not the cause of the problem but rather reduced rainfall.

A conclusion from the misunderstanding, political tension and sabre rattling was the need of a common mechanism or structure for data collection and other joint issues concerning the Volta Basin. The governments in Burkina and Ghana both supported the idea.

The request went to IUCN's⁴⁵ regional office which contacted myself and Sida. We prepared a decision and in 2004 an agreement was signed to support a project aimed at establishing joint systems between Burkina and Ghana to manage Volta-related issues.

The ambition was quickly expanded to include the establishment of a Volta Basin Authority (VBA) for the six countries bordering the Volta Basin. Since the governments in both Burkina and Ghana were pushing the VBA came into place in an exemplary and record quick process.

Since a few years, the VBA office is in Ouagadougou while its director is from Ghana. All six countries have ratified the agreement and all contribute financially to VBA's budget according to a formula related to their areal proportion of the basin (35% each for Ghana and Burkina, respectively).

Sida's support to the first Volta project – and since a few years to VBA – are channelled through IUCN's regional office and today forms part of the Environmental Governance Partnership project (PAGE)”.

⁴⁴ Göran Björkdahl, personal communication

⁴⁵ International Union for the Conservation of Nature

It is important to identify those factors that enabled the Swedish embassy in Dakar and Sida in Stockholm to react so quickly and adequately in a critical situation, which contributed to the creation of an institution to manage an issue of common significance to the region. At the time of the event Sida was launching a regional environmental program in West Africa, meaning that new resources were available while access and rights to natural resources were prioritized in the then fresh regional strategy. There was also experience of IUCN which was judged as a relevant and competent organization. The staff member in charge was familiar with the region and had active support from the director of the Water Unit, a part of Sida's then structure with thematic departments. In other words – there were flexible resources, thorough regional, contextual and thematic competence and clear leadership as well as short decision-making processes.

Conclusions

From the analysis above follow a number of conclusions that may guide concrete recommendations as far as Swedish development cooperation is concerned.

a) Climate change as a cause of conflict

Influence from climate change is primarily mediated through temperature increase, altered distribution and access to water, increased intensity and frequency of extreme natural events and sea-level rise. These in turn influence i a food production and food security. The changes occur within natural, social and economic systems which may generate complex and difficult to predict sequences of events. Climate change directly or indirectly influences access to natural resources which risks exacerbating existing differences and scarcities, possibly leading to increased competition and violent conflict.

The growing literature on the relationship between climate change and the risk of armed conflict is relatively unanimous – it is not possible to demonstrate a *direct* relationship and there are no examples of violent interstate conflicts with such a major cause. Research is however relatively clear when it comes to how climate change *indirectly* affects conflict risk through other factors. These conflicts seem primarily to be local but may sometimes become linked to and part of more large-scale conflicts. An important foundation is altered livelihood conditions, where absolute and relative resource scarcity seems to be important. The risks are particularly large in contexts with a history of conflict, where institutions that can manage and resolve conflicts are absent, e g because of new migration into the area, and where societies that directly depend on natural resources for their livelihoods live with small margins and little resilience

An even clearer relationship concerns the destructive impact of climate change and natural disasters on fragile states and societies in conflict. There is strong co-variation between natural disasters with severe humanitarian consequences, state fragility and lack of capacity to absorb investments and climate finance. Still, fragile states occupy little space in international processes and institutions dealing with disasters, environmental and climate issues.

New attention to climate change as a security threat risks leading to an exaggeration of its role as a causing factor of ongoing conflicts while complex underlying causality is simplified or ignored.

Analyses now being published are naturally retrospective. Climate change impacts will become increasingly stronger, manifested in complex systems during a very long time and lead to events, patterns and processes that are difficult to predict. Societal preparedness, as well as development cooperation, must have this as their point of departure.

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b) The experience of development cooperation

The experience of Swedish development cooperation in managing climate change is still developing, particularly as regards reducing the potential risk that it may lead to or exacerbate ongoing violent conflicts. Sida has nevertheless developed a sizable climate portfolio since 2009 and has during recent years invested more than 2,5 billion SEK annually in bilateral, regional and global programs officially reported as Swedish climate finance, for adaptation and mitigation.

Since the environment/climate and conflict perspectives were decided by the Government in 2015 they are explicit parts of regional and bilateral cooperation strategies, sometimes along with the task to manage the effects of climate change through adaptation. But they are more often referred to as parallel rather than linked perspectives. Most explicit in the latter regard are the current strategies in Latin America, particularly the strategy for Colombia.

In two areas, however, Sida has highly relevant experience as to the potential relationship between climate change and conflict. They concern 1) issues around the right to use natural resources, i.e. land, forest, and water, and the mechanisms for resolving conflicts related to natural resource access; and 2) interstate institutions for managing transboundary water resources.

Examples of bilateral and particularly multilateral support through global programs continues. One program which mobilizes finance for securing rights to natural resources has developed new forms for conflict resolution in the Sahel and is of special interest.

Specific interventions, such as those above, need to be combined with general programs to build resilience through i.e. health, education, renewable energy, financial services and social protection, on a foundation of good governance and promotion of human rights and gender equality. Here, certain types of interventions, e.g. for girls' health and education, may have systemic effects. In all these areas, which form part of robust adaptation programs, Sida has thorough experience.

c) Organization and ways of working

An organization tasked to manage planning, investments and decision-making in a situation of stronger climate impacts and increasingly uncertain contextual change must both be able to continuously monitor and interpret external events, and to change and make new decisions when required, particularly if the ambition is to prevent and reduce the risk of violent conflict.

Since climate change impacts natural, physical, social, economic, and political systems, information gathering and analyses cannot be limited to certain sectors. The ability to have a holistic perspective, across sector borders, and to identify new dynamic processes will have great importance.

A decentralized organization, close to events and with considerable autonomy in decision-making is equipped to make decisions and act using continuous and new information, which leads to a higher quality in aid implementation⁴⁶. Swedish embassies with delegated decision-making powers, acting within long-term and flexible strategies, continuously monitoring contexts and programs, so that interventions can be adjusted and adapted to new circumstances, will

Specific interventions need to be combined with general programs to build resilience through i.e. health, education, renewable energy, financial services and social protection, on a foundation of good governance and promotion of human rights and gender equality.

⁴⁶ Honig, D. (2016). *More Autonomy for Donor Organizations and Their Agents (Sometimes): Bringing Organizational Behavior and Management Theory to Foreign Aid Delivery*

become increasingly important to maintain relevant development cooperation in conflictual and complex environments.

Staff responsible for implementing aid in the era of climate change, where change itself is what characterizes the environment, need to apply an adaptive and iterative way of working, with the ability to learn as a fundamental condition⁴⁷. The complexity of the aid environment, and sometimes of programs, require that the assumptions of theories of change are continuously tested and questioned. Sometimes it is not possible to predict in any detail what a program may lead to, even if it has clearly stated objectives. Nor will it always be possible at the start of a program to define the indicators that will tell us that it is on track. It is not what constitutes the integral parts of a static momentary image that will be relevant, but rather what tells us that there is a process, a change of behaviour, or movement in a certain direction.

An adaptive and iterative way of working, focusing on learning in a complex and unpredictable environment, will benefit from monitoring and evaluation systems as close as possible to implementation⁴⁸, situated so that their results can be directly used and acted on. Growing experience shows that such systems do not have to compromise on independence and integrity but may well be combined with external evaluations.

d) Financing

Sida has come a long way as a donor in using framework agreements, core support and non-earmarked funding in order to give partner organizations flexibility and space to manoeuvre, in both humanitarian action and development. This is the approach actively promoted by Sweden in international policy development on aid effectiveness. For example, in the follow-up to the Global Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul in May 2016, Sweden together with the ICRC has assumed responsibility for promoting such measures among other donors.

It is obvious that climate change makes this approach increasingly important. Climate related impacts are local and contextual. To act in a relevant way when timing may be decisive it is imperative that the principles of decentralization and autonomy are accompanied by access to financial resources that can be used based on new information and understanding. Such a financing strategy requires that investments are made *in credible and competent actors rather than specific projects or programs*.

The question is whether the different international instruments for climate finance, which tend to be short term and project oriented, can be made to include the unstable contexts where conflict prevention measures will become increasingly important. In countries with a high degree of fragility, preparedness is low to absorb climate finance⁴⁹. Increased attention to places with a high risk of violent climate related developments will require the design of appropriate financial instruments.

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47 Valters, C., Cummings, C. & Nixon, H. 2016. Putting learning at the centre. Adaptive development programming in practice. ODI Report.

48 Quinn Patton, Michael. 2011. Developmental Evaluation. Applying Complexity Concepts to Enhance Innovation and Use. The Guilford Press.

49 Peters & Budimir, *ibid*.

e) Level of ambition

If Sweden has the ambition to become more active in the design and implementation of aid that counters the risk of climate related conflicts it will be important to decide on its level of ambition. This is a policy decision that can only be made by the Swedish Government. The most active, context-near and direct role is played by embassies with the knowledge, competence and ability to use diplomatic and financial means to directly influence and contribute to preventing violent conflicts. One example of such an active role was given with the Swedish action when competition for the water of the Volta River led to a crisis between two countries sharing the same water resource. The possibility to play such a role builds on the hypothesis that Sweden has a standing and enjoys the confidence to get invited, together with other international and regional actors, to contribute to preventing or resolving a threatening conflict.

A lower level of ambition may mean to primarily make it possible for regional, multilateral and international actors to play active roles, with the support of generous and non-earmarked Swedish financing, and relying less on bilateral action through embassies. In such a more distanced role Sweden may still contribute to policy development in international contexts but to a larger extent use expertise in Swedish and international organizations.

Sida works according to directives of the Swedish Parliament and Government to reduce poverty in the world, a task that requires cooperation and persistence. Through development cooperation, Sweden assists countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Each country is responsible for its own development. Sida provides resources and develops knowledge, skills and expertise. This increases the world's prosperity.



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