NOVEMBER 2023

RESEARCH REPORT

Climate Adaptation in No-Man's Land

Bridging the Conflict-Climate Gap

Ashley Jackson, Florian Weigand, Leigh Mayhew & Pascal Bongard

Centre on Armed Groups
Research. Dialogue. Advice.

GENEVA GRADUATE INSTITUTE
CENTRE ON CONFLICT, DEVELOPMENT & PEACEBUILDING

ODI

Contents

Above: Woman collecting water in the parched wetlands of the Central Marshes of southern Iraq, 2018 (Credit: Shutterstock/John Wreford)

Cover photo: A family tries to cross a river in Bokolmayo, Somalia during a dangerous flash flood in 2018 (Credit: Shutterstock/Stanley Dullea)

About the authors

Ashley Jackson is a Co-Director of the Centre on Armed Groups.
jackson@armedgroupscentre.org

Leigh Mayhew is a Research Officer within ODI's Global Risks and Resilience programme, and a fellow at The Centre on Armed Groups.
l.mayhew@odi.org.uk

Florian Weigand is a Co-Director of the Centre on Armed Groups.
weigand@armedgroupscentre.org

Pascal Bongard is a Co-Director of the Centre on Armed Groups.
bongard@armedgroupscentre.org

Acknowledgements

With gratitude and acknowledgement for thoughtful comments from Professor Keith Krause, Director of the Centre on Conflict Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP) at the Geneva Graduate Institute, Nazanine Moshiri at the International Crisis Group, Mauricio Vazquez at ODI and researchers at Folke Bernadotte Academy's 2023 Annual Research Day.

About the Centre

The Centre on Armed Groups supports efforts to reduce violence and end armed conflict. We do this through conducting forward-looking research, creating safe spaces for dialogue, and providing advice. The Centre is independent organization registered in Geneva, Switzerland.

Contact: info@armedgroupscentre.org
Website: www.armedgroupscentre.org

About ODI

ODI is a leading global affairs think tank. We inspire people to act on injustice and inequality. We focus on research, convening and influencing, to generate ideas that matter for people and planet.

Website: www.odi.org.uk

About the Centre on Conflict, Development & Peacebuilding (CCDP)

Established in 2008, the CCDP is the Geneva Graduate Institute's focal point for research on conflict, peacebuilding, and the relationships between security and development. Its research focuses on the factors and actors implicated in the production and reproduction of violence, as well as policies and practices to reduce insecurity and enhance peacebuilding at the international, state and local levels.

Website: www.graduateinstitute.ch/ccdp

Abbreviations and Terminology

FARC	Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IHL	international humanitarian law
KNU	Karen National Union
PKK	Kurdistan Workers Party
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
PERAC	Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflict
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature

Executive Summary

Ahead of COP28, this joint paper from the Centre on Armed Groups and ODI examines the failure the address climate adaptation in conflict areas and areas beyond state control. The current climate adaptation paradigm focuses overwhelmingly on states, neglecting conflict areas, which are among the worst impacted by climate change and the least prepared to adapt. The paper explores what is driving the conflict-climate gap, and examines the opportunities and challenges for climate adaptation in conflict-affected and non-state controlled-areas. It concludes by outlining a multi-pronged approach to developing ways of working on climate adaptation in these settings.

Bridging the gap

The conflict-climate gap results from a lack of appropriate funding and programming modalities for climate adaptation in conflict zones and areas beyond state control. While there is increasingly rhetorical and policy attention to the need for climate adaptation programming in conflict areas, this has not (yet) been matched by meaningful change. Part of the problem is that we know little about what kind of climate programming will be feasible and effective in these settings. The report provides a rapid overview of what the literature tells us, as well as the current gaps in knowledge.

Climate adaptation in conflict areas and areas beyond state control

Engaging with communities and civil society

Bridging the gap means going beyond national governments, and directly engaging with conflict-affected communities and non-state armed groups. Customary leaders (such as elders), civil society and other local leaders can serve as essential conduits, making the often-daunting task of working in these areas more feasible. These actors can play an important role is ensuring adaptation measures have community support and that they are accepted by all. They may also act as intermediaries with armed groups, providing a buffer for those implementing climate programmes. There are, however, various challenges and risks, which must be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis. But there are a plethora of models and approaches from other sectors that can be adapted and tested.

Engaging with non-state armed groups

Armed groups constitute an expansive category of diverse actors with different interests, capacities, and levels of internal and external control. But we know from humanitarian and peacebuilding work that engaging with armed actors and de facto authorities is often a prerequisite to working in conflict areas. There is strong reason to believe that, with certain armed groups, doing so can yield progress on climate adaptation. It may also support peacebuilding and human rights advocacy efforts. Again, there is no one size fits all approach; risks and appropriate forms of engagement vary by context.

Ways forward

The report outlines five pathways forward:

- **Normative pathways,** aimed at expanding international norms and legal frameworks to address the specificities of conflict
- **Policy pathways** that build on progress to date to ensure strategies and frameworks address conflict sensitivity and ways of working in these areas
- **Funding pathways**, including increasing bilateral and other forms of aid tailored to conflict settings
- **Programmatic pathways** focused on learning across sectors, and working with local partners and communities
- **Research pathways** to inform policy and practice, including on understanding armed group attitudes, and evaluating adaptation modalities and approaches

Introduction

Conflict areas and areas under non-state armed group control are among the hardest hit by climate impacts. Of the 25 countries identified as most vulnerable to climate change and least prepared to adapt to its impacts, 15 are conflict-affected.[1] Yet they are largely neglected by efforts to tackle climate change and its adverse impacts. The reasons for this are rooted in current programmatic and financing approaches. Much like development financing, climate adaptation financing is predominantly focused on the national level, working directly with governments.[2] This overlooks areas where state authority may be contested or absent. Consequently far fewer financial resources are devoted to climate adaptation in conflict areas overall: countries affected by both climate change and conflict receive an average of just one third of the amount of climate financing (per capita) as countries that suffer from climate change but are free of conflict.[3]

Many analysts and experts have noted the urgent need for a paradigm shift, focusing more attention on climate adaptation in conflict areas and areas beyond state control.[4] Indeed, there are some promising signs of increased political will to address the conflict-climate gap.[5] Multilateral Climate Funds, those created under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), are increasingly incorporating conflict sensitivity into their strategies and operational guidelines.[6] The World Bank reform process also promises to increase the organisation's focus on global public goods such as climate and conflict. Yet these institutions remain restricted in their mandates to work with states. [7]

Where state authority is absent or contested, bridging the gap requires going beyond national governments, and directly engaging with conflict-affected communities and non-state armed groups, . The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) estimates that 195 million people live in territories governed by armed groups.[8] Working with these communities and engaging armed groups on climate adaptation would have profound impacts. The problem is that there is limited documentation of practitioner experience in these areas, and little understanding of how environmental governance works in areas beyond state control. This means we know little about what approaches might work best and how to tailor them to context.

This paper explores the prospects for engaging conflict-affected communities and armed groups in climate efforts. It begins by examining the ethical, practical, and long-term considerations for such engagement and discusses the challenges and risks. It then explores what we know (and what we don't) about the attitudes of these groups towards climate change. It concludes by mapping out potential pathways for engagement. By providing a more nuanced understanding of this under-explored area, the paper seeks to offer valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and academics engaged in climate adaptation initiatives.

"Bridging the conflict-climate gap requires going beyond national governments, and directly engaging with conflict-affected communities and non-state armed groups"

Background

This section explores how climate and conflict issues have been viewed from policy, programmatic and research perspectives. It seeks to highlight exsiting knowledge, key gaps, and erroneous assumptions.

But before delving into conflict and climate issues, it is important to clarify terminology. This paper primarily discusses climate adaptation. Climate adaptation is the process of making adjustments in natural or human systems in response to the impacts of climate change. By contrast, climate mitigation aims to reduce the magnitude or rate of long-term climate change.

Policy and programming

With regard to policy and programmes, much of the focus has been on national governments. National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) have been created to engage states, create policy and fund programmes.[9] Unfortunately, there is no parallel or supplementary process to engage non-state armed groups or populations living under their control.

Recent normative developments have also focused on states. For example, the legal principles on the Protection of the Environment in Relation to Armed Conflict (PERAC) has emerged to guard against environmental degradation during and after conflict, yet its focus is geared towards states. Risk aversion, lack of funding, and other factors have limited the presence of climate actors in areas of limited statehood, which has meant that there is insufficient attention to the issues on the ground.[10]

That said, humanitarian organisations increasingly acknowledge the complex links between conflict, climate change, and adaptation. For example, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) notes that 40% of civil wars over the past 60 years have links to natural resource competition,[11] while ICRC published a call to strengthen climate action in conflict settings by supporting communities to adapt ahead of COP27 in 2022.[12] Yet it is often unclear how this analysis influences humanitarian policy and programmes on the ground.

Research

From a research perspective, comparatively more attention has been paid to the relationship between climate and conflict. There is a solid body of literature exploring the links between climate and conflict, including work on resource scarcity, environmental degradation, and drivers of conflict, and a large literature on climate change as a driver of violence and instability.[13] Yet more recent work has challenged prevailing assumptions that climate change drives conflict, arguing for a more nuanced analysis.[14] Some researchers have instead posited that climate change is a risk multiplier, potentially (but not always) amplifying certain tensions and pre-existing drivers of conflict.[15]

Other recent research looks at an inverse correlation, or how peacebuilding can play a role in both mitigating environmental damage and reducing violence.[16] This work is based on the assumption that shared ecological and climate challenges can lead to cooperation between different groups and actors, including states and armed groups.

In summary, we are just beginning to understand the complex relationship between conflict and climate. One major gap pertains to armed group attitudes toward climate adaptation and resilience efforts in areas of limited statehood or beyond state control. Traditionally, the role of armed groups in relation to environmental issues has been predominantly viewed through a negative lens. Armed groups are often implicated in environmentally destructive practices such as exploiting natural resources, poisoning water sources, burning oil wells, and other ecologically damaging actions, which suggests they are

opposed to environmental protection.

Yet some armed groups are taking advantage of climatic impacts, stepping in to provide environmental justice or other solutions for communities lacking access to state or other formal systems of support. Armed groups have complex motives in this regard. Being seen as responsive to climate issues may bolster their legitimacy, and regulating access to natural resources may allow them to profit and further consolidate economic control. Moreover, they may seek to degrade and exploit resources for profit or military gain at the same time as they proclaim to protect them.

Below: A camp for people displaced by drought in Herat, Afghanistan in 2019 (Credit: Shutterstock/Solmaz Daryani)

The argument for engaging armed groups on climate

While engagement with armed groups is often contentious and difficult, there are numerous arguments for engaging with them on climate adaptation. One foundational consideration is upholding the fundamental human right to a safe and sustainable environment. For the millions living under the control of such groups, climate adaptation measures can directly improve the quality of life, addressing issues like food and water insecurity and therefore meet a basic ethical obligation.

The global nature of climate change also implies a collective responsibility to address its impacts beyond just states and areas under non-state control. Limiting climate adaptation measures only to regions under state control could be considered morally negligent, given that climate impacts are indiscriminate.

Moreover, from a purely practical perspective, excluding these areas from climate adaptation efforts results in incomplete and, therefore, less effective solutions. These groups control significant territories - often rich in natural resources - and their participation can be critical in implementing wide-scale climate actions. In some instances, their cooperation could result in more effective resource management.

There is also an argument that doing so may support peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Engaging with armed groups on climate adaptation could serve as an entry point for broader diplomatic and peace efforts. Successful collaboration on climate issues could build mutual trust, leading to constructive dialogue on more contentious issues. It can enable trust-building with armed groups at times of limited political interest or when political differences prevail.

Dilemmas and challenges

All of that said, engaging with armed groups is fraught with safety, ethical and practical dilemmas. Is it, for example, ethical to engage with armed groups or provide aid when it might confer legitimacy or positive recognition? Will it be manipulated or diverted by armed actors? What might be the negative impacts on women and girls, or other vulnerable groups?

Moreover, some donor states and international bodies may be reluctant to take steps that might be seen as 'legitimising' these groups. It can also pose legal challenges. For instance, certain laws in the United States and the European Union prohibit material support to groups designated as terrorist organisations. While there are carve outs for humanitarian aid, climate-focused aid may not be protected.

Many armed groups may lack the technical capacity to comprehend the ecological complexities involved in adaptation, potentially leading to project failure or poor outcomes. Some groups' decentralised structure can create logistical and coordination challenges. This is especially true if different factions within the group have diverging views on climate change or external engagement. Investment in long-term climate adaptation strategies may be at risk if an armed group loses control of a territory (e.g., infrastructure may be damaged by fighting or intentionally destroyed by combatants in the battle for control). Finally, while armed groups might participate in short-term climate projects (e.g., rehabilitating water sources, planting trees), their overall goals might not align with sustainable environmental stewardship, thus undermining long-term adaptation and conservation efforts.

Armed group attitudes toward climate adaptation

It is important to emphasise that armed groups constitute an expansive category of diverse actors with different interests, capacities, and levels of internal and external control. Generalisations and generalisable theories are not terribly useful, and can obscure important contextual nuances. It is nevertheless worth surveying what we know - and what we don't - about armed groups and climate-related issues. This section also draws lesson on working in contested or non-state areas, and the implications for climate adaptation.

Existing knowledge

Much of what we know about armed group behaviour and governance of resources tends to exist in the literature on armed groups (rather than on climate specifically). The most relevant parts of this literature focus on shadow or parallel governance practices.[17] The work of rebel governance scholars show that, in many cases, armed groups are state-like actors that govern territories and populations.[18] Some armed groups provide justice in their own courts, collect taxes, and decide on educational policies. Armed groups around the world, from the Islamic State group to the Karen National Union (KNU) in Myanmar to al Shabab in Somalia, have various established institutions, structures, and rules to govern the territory they control and the populations within them.

Of particular interest are the kinds of tools and tactics armed groups use to encourage environmental protection and broader behaviour change. Some of these are strikingly similar to states; one example is taxation, which some armed groups use to exercise control, project authority, develop institutions, and even build legitimacy.[19] It also helps reinforce and prohibit certain behaviours or social policies, much like governmental taxes. Rebel justice systems (e.g., decisions on land or resource disputes) often seek to reinforce control of the population and embarrass and undermine the state. By providing justice, some groups find support from war-weary populations.[20] There is also a burgeoning field of study looking at how criminal groups govern and regulate civilian behaviour.[21] All of this suggests a capacity to govern and take action on climate issues, at least among some armed groups.

We also know that armed groups engage with civilians and foreign organisations in various ways, which suggests some possibility for engagement on issues like climate adaptation. Scholars are increasingly examining how civilians use different forms of leverage to influence armed groups' behaviour, and policies.[22] In particular, customary authorities, such as community leaders, elders, businesspeople and religious authorities, often mediate with armed groups on behalf of their communities or external actors (e.g., humanitarian agencies).[23] In Afghanistan, for example, customary authorities sought to negotiate with the Taliban insurgency to alter its behaviour.[24] Recent work explores how Somali clan elders assumed a key diplomatic role without unified state authority, brokering truces and acting as interlocutors between the Federal government and Al-Shabaab.[25] Similarly, elites in Côte d'Ivoire with strong clientelist networks have successfully exerted pressure on armed groups.[26] In theory, such customary authorities could play a vital role in advocating for better climate-resilient practices in areas beyond state control.

Lessons can be adapted from humanitarians, peacebuilders, and community-based organisations. For example, engaging with armed groups is standard practice for humanitarian organisations to ensure safe access to areas beyond state control. A wide array of scholars and practitioners have documented how engagement

with armed groups can enhance compliance with human rights and international humanitarian law, both through qualitative study and datasets documenting different aspects of armed group practice that can be linked to various factors.[27] Certain forms of external engagement have been shown to positively contribute to improving the protection of civilians, humanitarian access, and peacebuilding.[28]

What is known about armed group willingness to support climate adaptation is anecdotal and it varies. Some armed groups recognize the need to protect the environment or address the negative impacts of climate in areas they influence or control.[29] For instance, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) created institutions for controlling land use and enforcing limits to cultivation. Similarly the KNU in Myanmar operates its own departments focusing on land, forestry, and wildlife conservation and even collaborates with global organisations like the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF).[30] Some groups, including the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and the National Liberation Army of Colombia, have incorporated environmental protection clauses into their internal codes of conduct. Various Islamist groups cite Islamic law and teachings to justify environmental protection, although the efficacy of these guidelines remains poorly understood. Meanwhile, some actively punish environmental degradation. Al Shabaab fines individuals $1,500 for cutting down trees, to make deforestation too costly to pursue.[31] That said, it is important to emphasise that armed group motives are typically complex and often politically or militarily influenced. For example, tree cover shields Al Shabaab fighters from detection and airstrikes, and the KNU may be interested in performative legitimacy and cultivating a state-like appearance more so than environmental protection per se.

At the same time, armed groups also destroy environmental resources, obstruct adaptation, and take other measures - intentionally or inadvertently - that exacerbate climate impact. A recent paper surveying twenty armed groups operating in Afghanistan, Colombia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Mali, Myanmar, Somalia, and Syria found a mostly negative track record in terms of their environmental impact and a mixed (but less negative) track record on environmental protection.[32] Another issue is that almost no work to date has explicitly looked at the gendered dimensions of armed group behaviour vis-a-vis the environment, and there is a risk that such practices may have negative impacts in this regard.

Key takeaways

If we can take anything from these anecdotal examples and the limited research that exists, it is that careful contextual and comparative analysis is required. We know that a range of factors influence armed group behaviour and policy on various environmental issues.[33] We don't know which precise factors might affect their attitudes toward climate, but further research and analysis would help provide answers.

Below: Floods caused by monsoon rains submerge a house on Mindoro Island, Philippines (Credit: Wirestock Creators/Shutterstock)

Ways forward

This paper has so far outlined many of the problems and conflict-blindspots in current thinking and approaches. This section outlines potential ways forward, focusing on pathways to facilitate climate adaptation in conflict-affected areas and areas of limited state influence.

Normative pathways

Protecting the environment during armed conflicts is a complex issue involving multiple international laws and norms, including international humanitarian law (IHL), human rights law, and environmental law. While these frameworks are primarily designed to govern the actions of states and their armed forces, they also have implications for non-state armed groups. The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, which govern the conduct of armed conflict, require parties to a conflict to take all feasible precautions to minimise environmental damage. While the conventions primarily address states, Common Article 3 and Additional Protocol II applies to internal armed conflicts and, by extension, to non-state armed groups involved in such conflicts. Specific rules of customary international law, such as the prohibition against unnecessary destruction and the principle of proportionality, also apply to non-state actors.

Various UN resolutions have also called for protecting the environment during armed conflicts. While not legally binding, these resolutions serve as influential norms. Resolution 687, which followed the 1991 Gulf War, addressed environmental damage as a consequence of conflict. Regional agreements like the African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and regional human rights frameworks may contain provisions that could be interpreted to apply to armed groups. Soft law instruments like the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights can also be relevant if an armed group is involved in commercial activities that have environmental implications. Finally, with growing attention to the link between human rights and environmental protection, human rights law could also be a tool for advocacy and compliance. Other norms and guidelines can be expanded to reference armed groups explicitly. For instance, PERAC could be expanded, or a corollary developed, to include detailed provisions on non-state armed groups.

All of that said, the binding force of these frameworks on non-state armed groups is often weak or non-existent, making actual accountability a significant challenge. However, we know that many armed groups seeking statehood or other forms of legitimacy try to follow international norms to gain some sort of positive international recognition.[34] We also know that involving armed groups in creating and spreading norms has more impact than ignoring their existence or excluding them.[35]

Policy pathways

While we have already seen some promising changes in strategy and policy from the UNFCCC, World Bank and others, more remains to be done. Existing operational UN and multilateral frameworks and programming should be adapted to address the unique challenges of climate adaptation in areas beyond state control. For example, current frameworks and theories of change typically do not consider the influence of armed groups or other non-state authorities on climate adaptation outcomes.

Existing frameworks such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Climate Vulnerability Framework could be adapted to include metrics and criteria specifically focused on conflict-affected areas and non-state actors like armed groups. Climate adaptation initiatives could be integrated into existing peacebuilding frameworks. This includes the UN Peacebuilding Commission's efforts and country-specific peace accords. This would make them more

comprehensive and ensure climate concerns are integrated into post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding.

Funding pathways

One of the major obstacles to working in areas beyond state control is funding. Bilateral development assistance and other forms of aid could provide greater flexibility to work in areas beyond the control of the state. This could be done, for example, by funding smaller climate activities implemented by local development partners.

While COP28 promises to support the case for more climate funding to conflict areas, we need to create incentives for this type of funding to flow to conflict zones and areas beyond state control. In order to do this, we first need to understand what type of programming is possible in these areas, and we don't yet have enough evidence in this regard.

Programmatic pathways

Exploring programmatic pathways is the most urgent and impactful element of this paradigm shift. This is in part because non-state armed groups often have more localised impacts, particularly on intercommunity relations and tensions around natural resources.[36] Evidence shows that some non-state armed groups are willing to engage with external actors such as aid workers, corporations, and civilians (e.g., clan or religious leaders) to support various aims, from community protection to aid programmes. Where there is a mutual interest, it is reasonable to assume that climate adaptation activities can work similarly.

While humanitarians have a long history of and capacity for this engagement, climate adaptation actors do not. But bridging the gap between humanitarian aid and longer term climate-related work is crucial for peace and stability. There is a need for more collaboration and learning across sectors, specifically the Triple Nexus, drawing relevant lessons for climate work. Local peacebuilders, humanitarians, and customary authorities, who already act as intermediaries with armed groups, could play a critical role in climate adaptation outreach and may, in fact, already be doing so. Climate adaptation could also be mainstreamed into some programmes, or used as part of an integrated approach to peacebuilding.[37] Part of this is acting on recommendations that have already been made elsewhere about the need to improve early warning systems, and integrating climate resilience measures into broader humanitarian programming.[38]

Climate can also be better integrated into ongoing efforts to engage armed groups on other issues. Armed groups often have their own internal codes of conduct and policies; as discussed above, some of these already address environmental or climate issues. This creates an opening for discussion, and a chance to monitor their compliance and promote the expansion of such provisions. On the other hand, some groups haven't done so. This offers an opportunity to initiate discussions with them regarding the importance of incorporating environmental protection and other measures.

"While COP28 promises to support the case for more climate funding to conflict areas, we need to create incentives for this type of funding to flow to conflict zones and areas beyond state control."

Other interventions do not require direct engagement by climate actors with armed groups. Indeed, there is an evolving literature on the engagement of customary authorities, such as elders and traditional or religious leaders, in climate change adaptation. These local actors often have pre-established relationships, social capital, or even explicit agreements with the armed groups that could make them more amenable to discussions on climate adaptation.

These intermediaries should help identify measures likely to be deemed appropriate by the community and permissible by the armed group. For instance, if all actors agree water scarcity is a significant issue, a community-led programme could be introduced with the armed group's permission. Intermediaries can also advocate for the inclusion of successful climate adaptation strategies in the armed group's policies or codes of conduct. That said, the relationship between armed groups and communities or other authorities is typically complex, and the specific nature of those dynamics must be taken into account.[39]

All of these measures require a well-informed, proactive approach to risk mitigation. Thorough risk assessments can be done before initiating engagements with armed groups. A due diligence framework can be developed that identifies possible pitfalls, gender considerations, security risks, and ethical dilemmas, outlining measures to address them. Programmes should be tailored to each area's specific ecological and conflict dynamics, so as not to exacerbate existing tensions. This should involve conflict sensitivity training for programme implementers. Given the complexities and risks, external agencies or third-party experts could be contracted to assess the conflict risks and ecological impacts of climate adaptation efforts in areas controlled by armed groups.

Research pathways

There is a clear need for more rigorous empirical study of armed group behaviour and the options for adaptation approaches in conflict-affected areas. One way forward could be to develop a typology of armed group attitudes and behaviours could help illuminate which factors are most salient. While not exhaustive, it could consider the group type, primary objective, relationship with the incumbent state, and whether it is concerned with factors like territorial control, local legitimacy (e.g., acceptance from the population), and international legitimacy (e.g., recognition).

Other factors which might be considered include:

- **external support**, as some groups may receive external backing, which can influence their environmental behaviours
- **conflict duration**, as long-standing groups may show more sophisticated attitudes toward climate adaptation and some acknowledge the need for longer-term planning
- track record of **external engagement**, with humanitarian actors or in political processes, as engagement might indicate the space for dialogue on these issues
- **public acknowledgment** of climate issues, indicating that they believe in climate change and understand its effects

This typology could provide a framework for identifying salient features of armed groups likely to shape attitudes and behaviours toward climate adaptation. Developing an assessment tool, based on this typology, could help external actors figure out whether and how to engage with armed groups. This could inform and structure efforts toward engagement, identifying key variables that allow for productive dialogue or negotiation.

A typology of this nature could also yield cross-case comparison, suggesting what worked in one instance may work with similar armed groups in a different context. However, given the dearth of research and testing, more work should be done to experiment with and refine typological approaches and their application.

Conclusions

While donor discourses and strategies are slowly shifting to acknowledge and prioritise climate work in conflict areas, a significant gap between rhetoric and reality remains. For a meaningful shift to occur, barriers to financing climate work in conflict areas must be addressed. Simply put, financing is the main barrier. At present, climate financing simply is not set up to support fragile and conflict affected contexts. Providing financing modalities is an urgent priority. To provide appropriate financing modalities, however, we must understand more about the kind of approaches that can work in different contexts.

There is significant anecdotal evidence about what might work to build on. Much can be learned and adapted from the practical experiences of humanitarians and peacebuilders. Customary authorities and national organisations can serve as essential conduits, making the often-daunting task of liaising with armed groups or working in areas under their control more feasible. Still, there is admittedly much we do not yet know about how to address climate adaptation in contested and armed group controlled areas. Further research and analysis can also support the development of programmatic tools to guide interventions, thereby directing resources more effectively and ethically.

Notes

1. Extrapolated from the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative Country Index, https://gain.nd.edu/our-work/country-index/
2. UNDP (2021) Climate Finance for Sustaining Peace: Making Climate Finance Work for Conflict-Affected and Fragile Contexts. New York: UNDP.
3. International Crisis Group. (2022) Giving Countries in Conflict Their Fair Share of Climate Finance. Brussels: International Crisis Group.
4. Moshiri, N. (2023) Why the Africa Climate Summit can't afford to overlook conflict. New Humanitarian, September 4. UN Security Council Meeting Summary, June 13, 2023; Cao, Y., et al. (2021) Exploring the Conflict Blind Spots in Climate Adaptation Finance. London: SPARC.
5. Wilton Park conference on addressing humanitarian needs and famine risks: the role of climate finance. (2023) Chair's summary. August 4.
6. Green Climate Fund (GCF) (2023) Strategic Plan for the Green Climate Fund 2024–2027. GCF Documentation.
7. World Bank Development Committee (2023) Ending Poverty on a Livable Planet: Report to Governors on World Bank Evolution.
8. Bamber-Zyrd, M. (2023) ICRC Engagement with Armed Groups in 2023. ICRC website. October 10.
9. UNFCCC (2022) National Adaptation Plans 2021. Progress in the formulation and implementation of NAPs.
10. ICRC, ODI, ICVA, Mercy Corps, RCCC, UNHCR & WFP (2022) Embracing Discomfort: A Call to Enable Finance for Climate-Change Adaptation in Conflict Settings. London: Cao, et al. (2021) .
11. UNEP (2009) Protecting the Environment During Armed Conflict. Nairobi: UNEP.
12. ICRC (2022) COP27 - The ICRC's Call to Strengthen Climate Action in Conflict Settings. October 24.
13. Homer-Dixon, T.F. (2001) Environment, Scarcity, and Violence. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Gleditsch N.P., Furlong K., Hegre H., Lacina B.A., & Owen T. (2006) Conflicts over shared rivers: resource scarcity or fuzzy boundaries? Political Geography, 25, 361–82; Maxwell, J.W. & Reuveny, R. (2000) Resource Scarcity and Conflict in Developing Countries. Journal of Peace Research, 37(3), 301–22.
14. Koubi, V. (2019) Climate Change and Conflict. Annual Review of Political Science, 22, 343-360; Lamain, C. (2022) Conflicting Securities: Contributions to a Critical Research Agenda on Climate Security. Globalizations, 19(8), 1257-1272.
15. Ide, T., et al. (2021) The past and future(s) of environmental peacebuilding. International Affairs, 97(1), 1-16; Brown, O. & Nicolucci-Altman, G. (2022) White Paper on the Future of Environment Peacebuilding. Geneva: DCAF - Geneva Center for Security Sector Governance.
16. Beevers, M.D. (2019) Peacebuilding and Natural Resource Governance: After Armed Conflict Sierra Leone and Liberia. Springer; Verweijen, J., Schouten, P. & O'Leary Simpson, F. (2022) Armed Actors and Environmental Peacebuilding: Lessons from Eastern DRC. Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace.
17. Teiner, D. (2022) Rebel governance: a vibrant field of research. Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft, 32, 747–766.
18. Mampilly, Z. (2011) Rebel Rulers: Insurgent Governance and Civilian Life during War. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Arjona, A., Kasfir, N., & Mampilly, Z. (2016) Rebel Governance in Civil War. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
19. Bandula-Irwin, T., et al. (2022) Beyond Greed: Why Armed Groups Tax. Studies in Conflict & Terrorism.
20. Provost, R. (2021) Rebel Courts: The Administration of Justice by Armed Insurgents. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
21. Jackson, A., Weigand, F., & Tindall, T. (2022) Crime and Communities: Life Under Criminal Group Control. ODI & The Centre on Armed Groups; Barnes, N. (2022) The Logic of Criminal Territorial Control: Military Intervention in Rio de Janeiro. Comparative Political Studies, 55(5), 789–831; Lessing, B. (2021) Conceptualising Criminal Governance. Perspectives on Politics, 19(3), 854–873; Rodgers, D. & Muggah, R. (2009) Gangs as Non-State Armed Groups: the Central American case. Contemporary Security Policy, 30(2), 301–317. See also, Ebus, B. (2023) Landmark Amazon Summit Needs to Grapple with Crime as well as Climate. International Crisis Group, August 2.
22. Jackson, A., Weigand, F., & Tindall, T. (2022) Understanding Agency in Civilian-Armed Group Interactions. ODI & The Centre on Armed Groups; Arjona, et al. (2016); Barnes (2022); Brenner, D. (2017) Authority in Rebel Groups: Identity, Recognition and the Struggle Over Legitimacy. Contemporary Politics, 23, 408–426; Kalyvas, S.N. (2006) The Logic of Violence in Civil War. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Krause, J. (2018) Resilient Communities: Non-Violence and Civilian Agency in Communal War. New York: Cambridge University Press; Mampilly, Z. & Stewart, M. (2020) A Typology of Rebel Political Institutional Arrangements. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 65(1), 15-45.
23. Davies, G., et al. (2023) Community Engagement, Protection and Peacebuilding: Reviewing Evidence and Practice. Humanitarian Practice Network, 82(1).
24. Jackson, A. (2021) Negotiating Survival: Civilian–Insurgent Relations in Afghanistan. London: Hurst & Co.
25. Shire, M.I. (2021) Dialoguing and Negotiating with Al-Shabaab: the Role of Clan Elders as Insider Partial Mediators. Journal of Eastern African Studies, 15, 1–22; Mubarak, M. & Jackson, A. (2023) Playing the Long Game: Exploring the Relationship between Al-Shabab and Civilians in Areas Beyond State Control. ODI, Centre on Armed Groups & Hiraal Institute.
26. Van Baalen, S. (2021) Local Elites, Civil Resistance, and the Responsiveness of Rebel Governance in Côte d'Ivoire. Journal of Peace Research, 58, 930–944.
27. Jo, H. (2015) Compliant Rebels: Rebel Groups and International Law in World Politics. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Morrow, J. D., & Jo, H. (2006) Compliance with the Laws of War: Dataset and Coding Rules. Conflict Management and Peace Science, 23(1), 91–113; Heffes, E & Kotlik, M. (2014) Special Agreements as a Means of Enhancing Compliance with IHL in Non-International Armed Conflicts: An Inquiry into the Governing Legal Regime. International Review of the Red Cross, 96(895/896); Bellal, A., Bongard, P., & Heffes, E. (2022) From Words to Deeds, A Study of Armed Non-State Actors' Practice and Interpretation of International Humanitarian and Human Rights Norms. Research and Policy Conclusions. UK Research and Innovation; ICRC (2020) The Roots of Restraint in War. Geneva: ICRC.
28. MacLeod, A., et al. (2016) Humanitarian Engagement with Non-State Armed Groups. London: Chatham House; Walch, C. (2018) Disaster Risk Reduction Amidst Armed Conflict: Informal Institutions, Rebel Groups, and Wartime Political Orders. Disasters, 42, 239-264; Pangaro, J., et al. (2013) What Evidence Exists for Initiatives to Reduce Risk and Incidence of Sexual Violence in Armed Conflict and Other Humanitarian Crises? A Systematic Review. PLOS ONE, 8(5).
29. de La Bourdonnaye, T. (2021) Greener Insurgencies? Engaging Non-state Armed Groups for the Protection of the Natural Environment During Non-International Armed Conflicts. International Review of the Red Cross, no. 914; Sivakumaran, S. (2015) The Law of Non-International Armed Conflict. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
30. South, A. (2023) Conflict, Complexity & Climate Change: Emergent Federal Systems and Resilience in Post-Coup Myanmar. Chiang Mai: Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD), Chiang Mai University.
31. Key informant interviews with residents and authorities in Jilib, Somalia, January-February 2023.
32. Munive, J. and Stepputat, F. (2023) How Non-State Armed Groups Engage in Environmental Protection. DIIS Policy Brief.
33. Lia, B. (2015) Understanding Jihadi Proto-States. Perspectives on Terrorism, 9(4), 31–41; Mampilly (2011); Mampilly & Stewart (2020).
34. Jo (2015).
35. Somer, J. & Heffes, E. (2020) Inviting Non-state Armed Groups to the Table: Inclusive Strategies towards a More Fit for Purpose International Humanitarian Law. London: ODI Center for the Study of Armed Groups.

36. See for example Verweijen, et al. (2022).
37. Much of this work is country specific, and some recent examples on Somalia suggest interesting ways forward. See Broek, E. & Hodder, C.M. (2022) Towards an Integrated Approach to Climate Security and Peacebuilding in Somalia. Stockholm: SIPRI; Quevedo, A., et al. (2023) Financing Climate Adaptation in Fragile States: A Case of Somalia. London: ODI.
38. IASC Task Force on Climate Change (2009) Addressing the Humanitarian Challenges of Climate Change, Regional and National Perspectives, Preliminary Findings from the IASC Regional and National Level Consultations; de Geoffroy, V., et al.. (2021) Adapting Humanitarian Action to the Effects of Climate Change, London: ALNAP.
39. See van Metre, L. (2019). From Self-Defense to Vigilantism: A Typology Framework of Community-Based Armed Groups. Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace.

Contact

armedgroupscentre.org | info@armedgroupscentre.org

Centre on Armed Groups
Research. Dialogue. Advice.