Mainstreaming environmental action in peacebuilding programming:

Five key steps

Peacebuilders advocate for climate change, conservation and environmental action to be conflict-sensitive and peace-positive in fragile and conflict-affected states. The peacebuilding sector can lead by example and commit to ensuring that peacebuilding interventions are climate and environment sensitive.

Current climate change trends, including mass biodiversity loss and environmental degradation, interact with existing tensions and fragility to compound and exacerbate conflicts. Peacebuilding programmes need to recognise these inherent interactions and step up efforts to ensure programming with or without an explicit climate focus has a positive environmental impact.[1]

This guidance note offers five steps for peacebuilders to integrate considerations of climate and the natural environment into their work at different stages, from contextual analysis, to project design, review and operations. It supports the reflective and planning processes with guiding questions and links to useful resources.

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1 Understanding how environmental fragilities interact with conflict risk

What are the key environmental fragilities in your context?

How do they interact with conflict risks?

Start with your conflict analysis and incorporate key questions that build an understanding of the climate and environmental risks in your context.

Consider these at multiple levels and perspectives, from relationships to structures.

- **What are the most prominent climate vulnerabilities and environmental risks in your context? Why do they happen?**[2]
  For example, this could be recurring droughts (possible cause: deforestation, overexploitation of soils and aquifers, poor water resource management), earthquakes or pollution of water bodies (possible cause: mining or other industrial activities).
- **Which actors contribute to environmental conflict risks and how?**
- **How are these risks impacting the socio-economic situation in your region? How do they affect the communities you plan to work with?**
- **Do they exacerbate existing vulnerabilities or create new ones?**[3]
  - Use power analysis to understand who is most impacted by the change in the environment.
  - How do local actors comprehend these risks?
- **What plans are there to address the risks?**
- **What capacities are there to build on or strengthen?**
- **What are the responses by actors?**
  - How are those issues recognised as priorities by the local and national authorities?
  - Which local, national and international organisations are promoting disaster risk prevention, conservation or climate action?

2

Reviewing the impact of intended activities on the environment

How to identify and mitigate the negative impact of your intended activities on the environment and climate?

Using your analysis, consider how your project interacts with the climate and environmental context. Think about the possible intended and non-intended negative impacts.

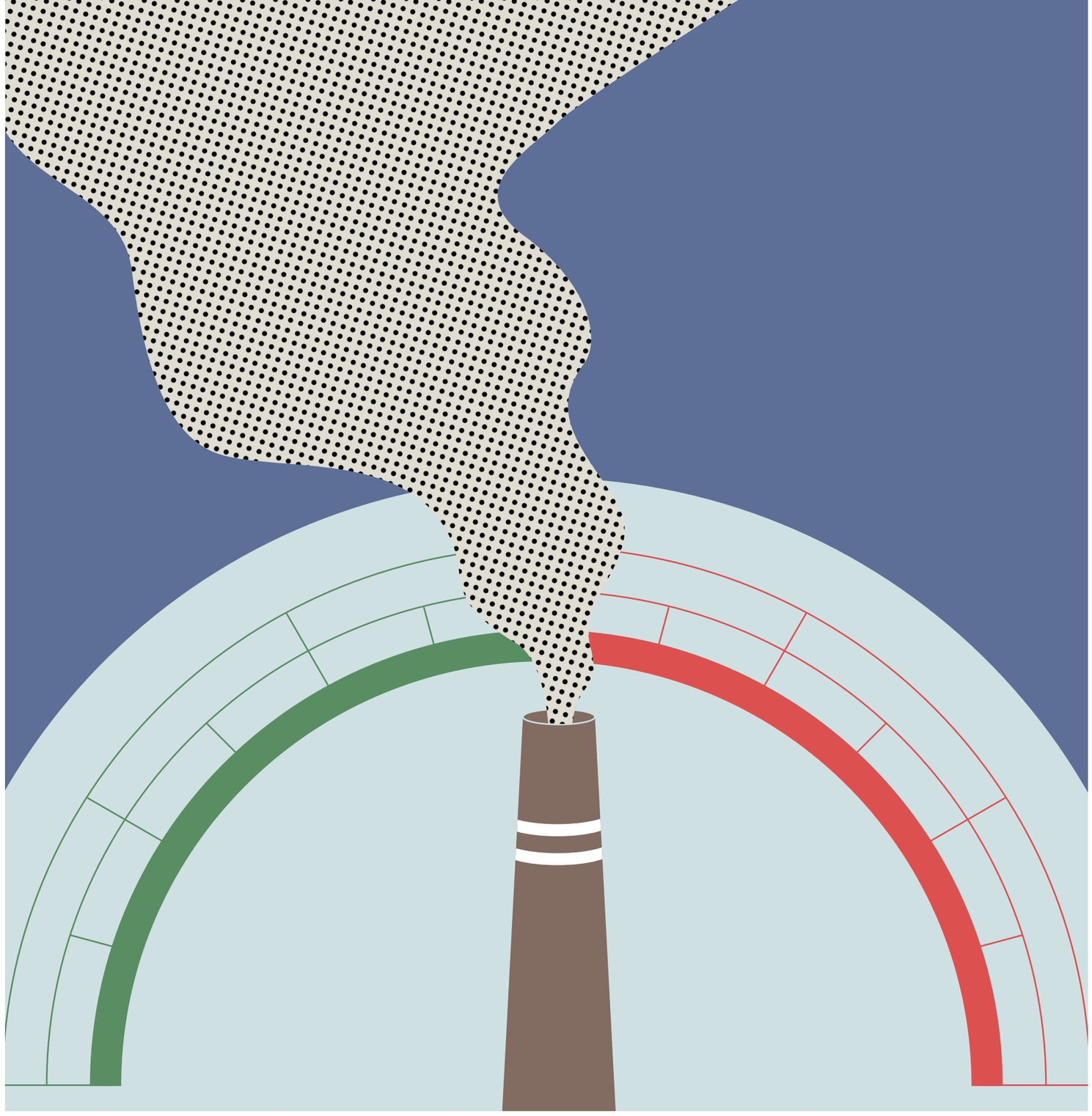
- **What are the possible negative impacts of the project activities on the climate and environment?**
  - What activities contribute to carbon emissions?
  - How do the project activities add to people's vulnerability to environmental stresses or disasters?

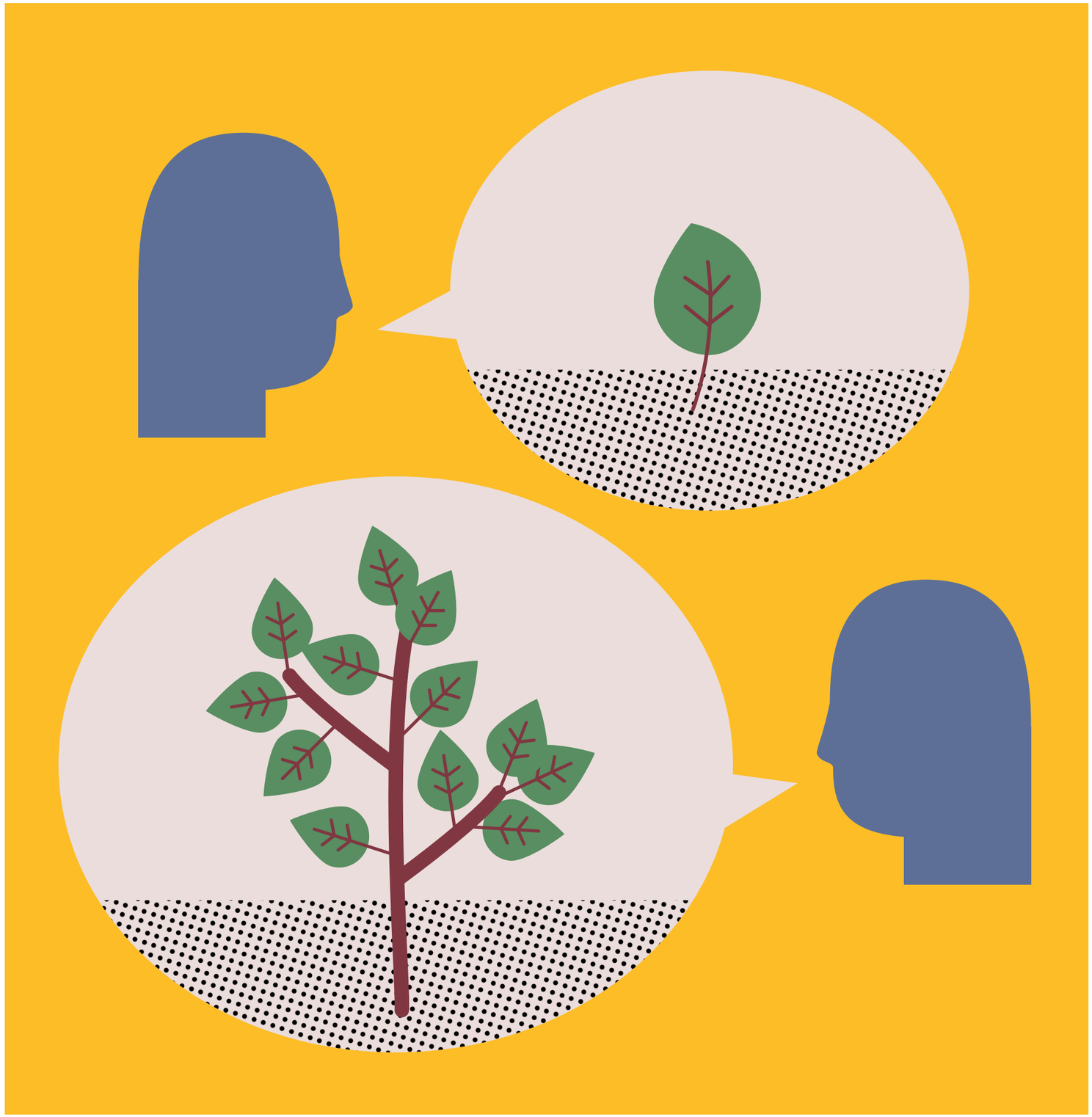
- **In what ways can you mitigate and minimise these negative impacts?**

  Prioritise which negative impacts are most urgent to address and for each of these impacts, think through ways to tailor your activities to minimise the negative impacts. For instance, consider how to adapt income generating activities to avoid exploitation of natural resources.

- **Strive to build environmental indicators into your monitoring and evaluation framework.**[4]

  Introduce green indicators, such as water quality and carbon emissions, into the project design, monitoring and evaluation, to ensure that your activities have considered thoroughly how to avoid or minimise negative impacts.





3

Identifying ways to mitigate negative impacts and boost positive impacts

After identifying the negative impacts and their remedies, review how your activities can have positive impacts on the climate and environment and how you can enhance those positive impacts.

→ **What are the potential positive impacts of project activities on the climate and environment?**[5]

- Can your dialogue work support better environmental protection?
- Could the peace process you engage in lead to better natural resource management?
- Are there climate or environmental champions who can support your activities?

→ **Tailor the activities to contribute positively to environmentally sustainable development.**[6]

- For capacity-building activities: What is the level of environmental awareness of different interlocutors involved in the project? How can the project contribute to improving it?
- For dialogue activities: What environmental issues are contributing to conflict? How can dialogue be designed to work towards agreement on measures to address these issues?
- For institutional strengthening activities: What climate policy (Nationally Determined Contribution to the UNFCCC, National Adaptation Plan) or environmental regulations (biodiversity protection, natural parks, anti-pollution regulation) exist? Are they enforced? How can the project support their enforcement and compliance?

4

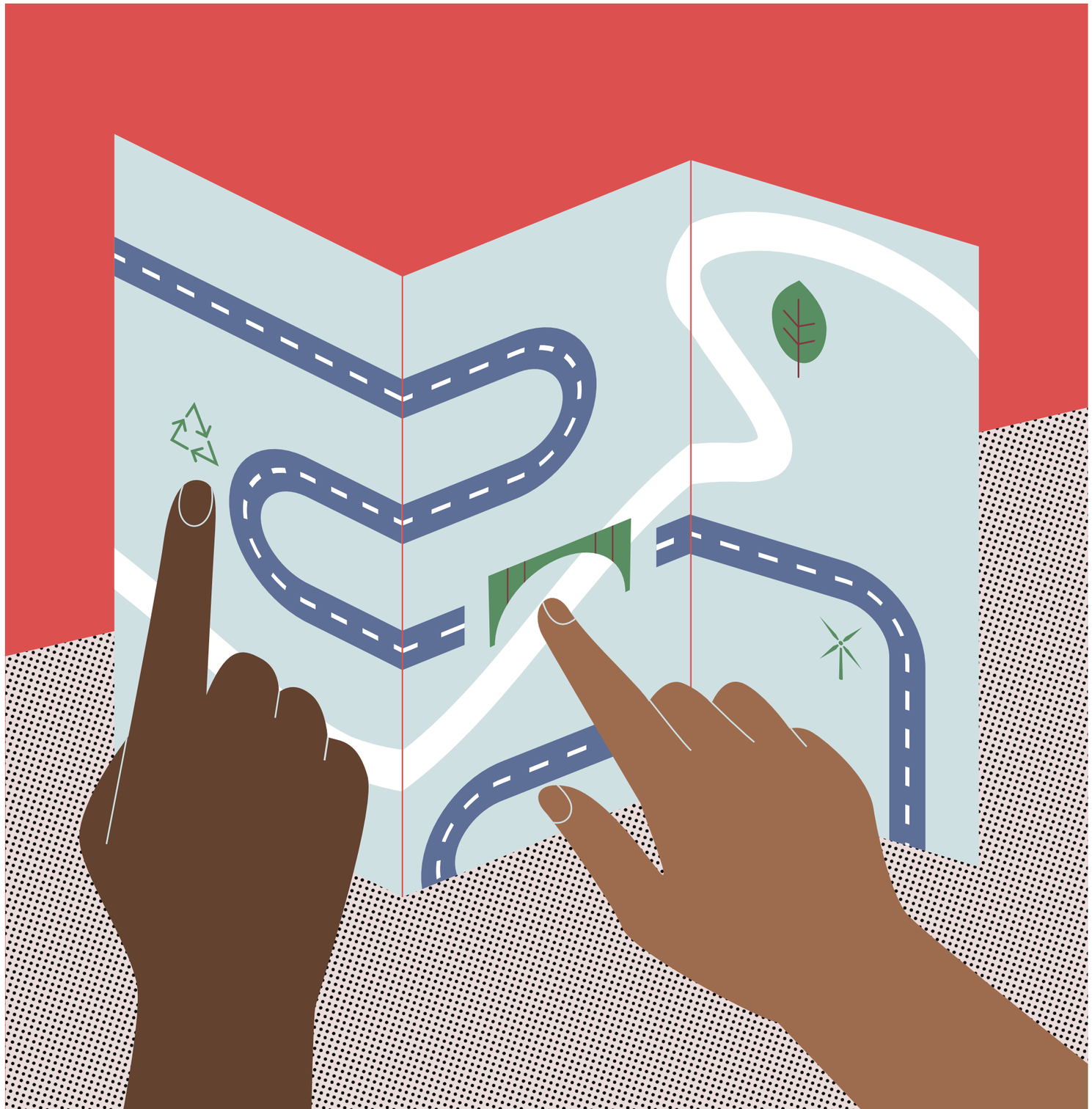
Assessing team capacity, mapping potential partnerships and addressing gaps

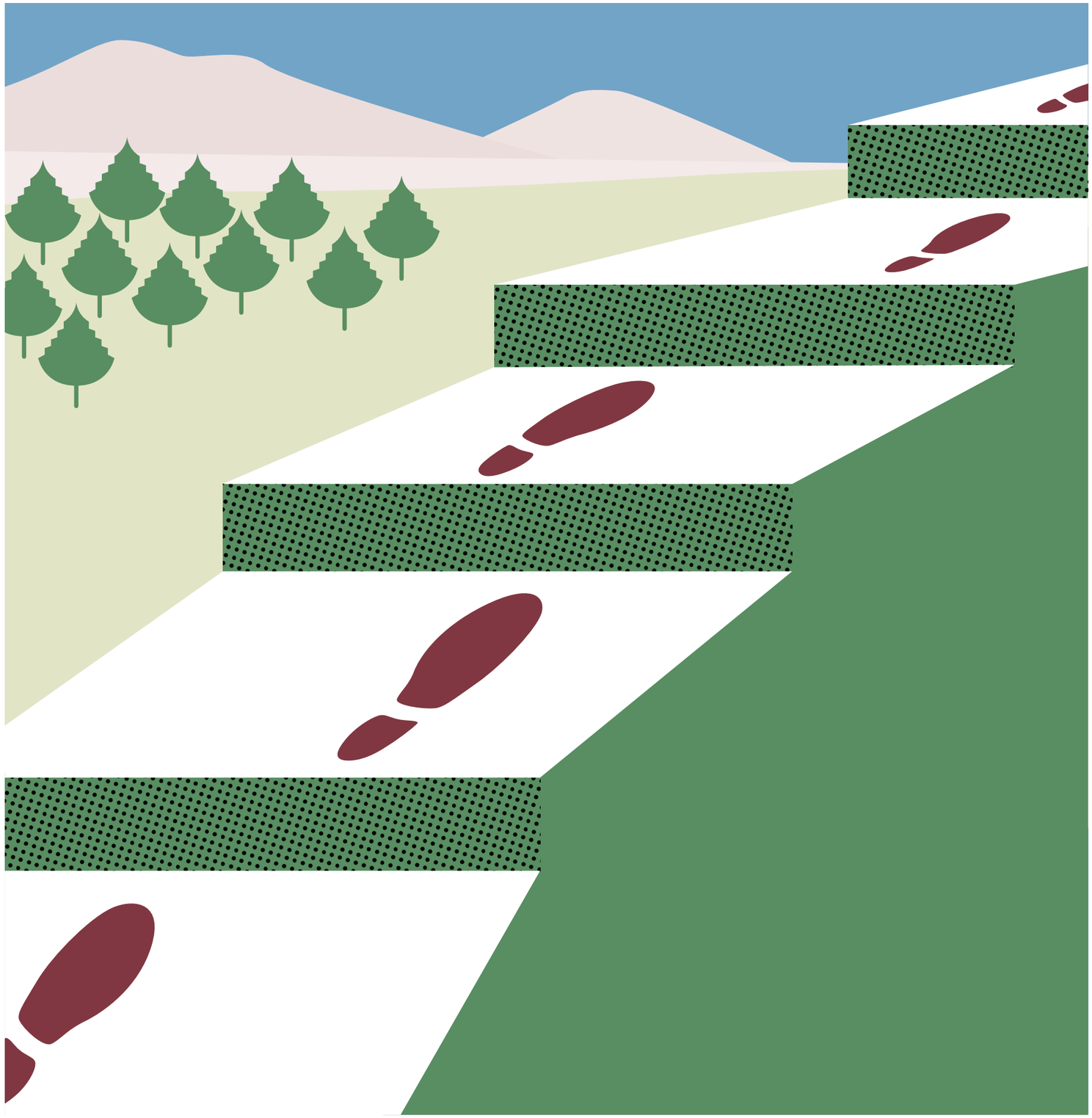
Is your team prepared to address gaps? What potential partnerships could support your ambition?

Working in a climate and environmentally sensitive way may require you to build your team's skills and knowledge, alongside developing different partnerships, to ensure you have the right mix of knowledge and experience.

Review the capacities of your peacebuilding team and partners on these issues.

- **What are project staff capacities for climate and environmental issues?**
- **What are the opportunities to introduce or strengthen these staff capacities?**
- **Which local or international climate, conservation or environmental partners could support you to build capacity as a strategic or implementing partner?**[7]





5

Assessing operations

Is the project in line with your organisation's environmental policy?

Organisations must increase their commitment to 'greening' their own operations, to avoid doing environmental harm. Consider this at project and organisational levels.

Reflect on how you can build a greener approach in project design.

- **What are the most significant climate and environmental impacts of the peacebuilding work of your organisation and partners?**[8]
  For example: Means and frequency of transport, energy consumption, waste management, water consumption.
- **What policies and practices are in place to monitor your organisation's carbon and environmental footprint?**[9]
- **What is the environmental footprint of your wider organisation's operations?**

Endnotes

1 Donors such as SIDA recognise this need and provide Guidelines for a Simplified Environmental Assessment. Training opportunities include UNSCC-adelphi's course on Climate Sensitive Programming for Sustaining Peace.
2 Explore the following databases to learn more about environmental stresses and risks: Ecological Threat Report, Economic Institute for Peace, Environmental Justice Atlas or the Global footprint data on Open Data Platform (footprintnetwork.org). Check the Notre Dame GAIN country index which calculates the climate vulnerability of the context in which you operate.
3 For specific environment and conflict methodologies, refer to: United Nations Climate Security Mechanism, Climate Risk Checklist for Political Analysis, or Adelphi, UNEP and EU, Toolbox: Addressing climate-related security risks: Conflict sensitivity for climate change adaptation and sustainable livelihoods', 2022, International Alert, Peace and Conflict Analysis guide.
4 For examples of environmental indicators, refer to International Alert's Approach To Impact, 2022. Also check USAID's Climate Links M&E Guide to Climate Risk Management.
5 For a comprehensive overview of monitoring and evaluation strategies, policies and projects that seek to increase resilience by linking climate change adaptation, peacebuilding and sustainable livelihoods, see UNEP's Toolkits, Manuals and Guides: Addressing Climate-Related Security Risks, 2019, or Adelphi's Climate-Fragility Discussion Paper. Linking Adaptation and Peacebuilding Lessons Learned and The Way Forward, 2020
6 See D. Tänzler, N. Scherer and A. Detges, Guidelines for conflict-sensitive adaptation to climate change, Umwelt Bundesamt, June 2022
7 For climate adaptation initiatives, see We Adapt's Map of Case Studies; For conservation organisations, see members of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature; to investigate who is funding what and where, see the EU's Joint Research Centre on biodiversity conservation.
8 The New Humanitarian, What's the aid sector's carbon footprint?, October 2021
9 S. Brangeon and F. Crowley, Environmental Footprint of the Humanitarian Assistance-scoping Review, Groupe URD, May 2020

About International Alert

International Alert works with people directly affected by conflict to build lasting peace. We focus on solving the root causes of conflict with people from across divides. From the grassroots to policy level, we bring people together to build sustainable peace.

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