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**LEARNING PAPER**

# Integrating peacebuilding and climate action

## Lessons from Nigeria and Kenya

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# Introduction

In climate security hotspots, where natural resources under severe climate stress are driving conflict, climate action and peacebuilding can and should go hand in hand. Northern Kenya and Nigeria's Northwest and Middle Belt are examples of such hotspots where peacebuilding and climate action can effectively be integrated.

Communities in these regions are highly dependent on agriculture and pastoralism, contending with severe climate stress from rising temperatures, droughts and changes in intensity and frequency of precipitation, often causing flooding. People face the additional pressures of food insecurity as well as limited and unequal access to arable land, pasture and water. Natural resource competition creates tensions that when mismanaged often culminate in violence.

Powering Peace Through Climate Action, a project funded by Irish Aid, placed communities affected by climate change and natural resource-related conflicts in the driving seat of integrated climate action and peacebuilding approaches and activities. The project worked with local communities in Kenya and Nigeria to develop practical solutions to the challenges, and in doing so, generate learning that informs wider policy and practice.

This paper presents lessons from the Powering Peace Through Climate Action project and demonstrates how integrating peacebuilding approaches into climate programming can contribute to more effective, needs-oriented and environmentally and socially sustainable responses to climate security risks. It outlines the project approach, the climate security contexts in which project activities took place and demonstrates various benefits of integrating peacebuilding and climate responses. The paper then examines programming and policy interventions that can contribute to simultaneously managing conflicts, reducing conflict risks and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

The lessons contained in this paper were gathered through ongoing reflection and a participatory outcome harvesting approach,<sup>1</sup> engaging project participants in monitoring and joint learning. It seeks to contribute to the discourse and body of research on climate action and peacebuilding with learnings on how to integrate peace and climate action in practice. The paper offers insights to actors in the climate sector, international funds, donor governments, policy-makers as well as national and international implementers of climate action and peacebuilding.

# Project background and context

The Powering Peace Through Climate Action project (November 2022-October 2024) aimed to align climate action with peacebuilding approaches in climate security hotspots in Kenya's West Pokot, Turkana and Elgeyo Marakwet counties and Nigeria's Benue and Sokoto states. It focused on mobilising climate adaptation to bring together divided and marginalised communities to address the interlinked challenges of climate change, natural resource stress and violent conflict.

Working directly with communities and local governments, the project sought to make climate adaptation policies and action more sustainable, inclusive and conflict sensitive.

## 1. Context

### How climate change and conflict interact in Nigeria

Nigeria is highly vulnerable to climate change and experiences insecurity, exacerbated by natural resource competition. Food insecurity and the dependency of livelihoods on natural resources are major factors driving competition for these resources<sup>2</sup>, which are often scarce due to climate stress and mismanagement. In Benue and Sokoto states, climate change is causing rising temperatures and increased variability in precipitation and higher frequency rainfall, often causing flooding.<sup>3</sup> Communities are highly dependent on rain-fed farming and animal husbandry for their livelihoods and therefore particularly vulnerable to the impacts of these climatic shifts.

Sokoto state experiences more extreme temperatures and droughts, reducing crop yields and the availability of water and pasture. Benue state sees longer dry periods which are more frequently followed by extreme flooding during the rainy season.<sup>4</sup> The shrinking of available natural resources, along with inefficient use and poor management of these scarce resources, fuel competition among communities.

In Sokoto and Benue states, conflicts are occurring between different livelihood groups - pastoralists, farming, and fishing communities – over access, use and management of water, pastures and arable land. Competition among pastoralists for grazing areas frequently escalates into cattle rustling and armed attacks. In Benue state, the scarcity of fertile land triggers violent clashes when herders in search of pasture pass through farmland and destroy crops.<sup>5</sup> Concurrently, lower crop and livestock yields are compelling farmers to extend their cultivation into grazing and forest reserves, further fuelling tensions.<sup>6</sup> The ensuing violence threatens lives and impedes livelihood activities.

### How climate change and conflict interact in Kenya

Similarly, in Kenya's pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in the arid and semi-arid Kerio Valley region, changes in precipitation are causing longer and more severe droughts, often followed by intense flash floods, resulting in decreased agricultural productivity, or even complete crop loss, damage to infrastructures and rising levels of food insecurity.<sup>7</sup>

People in these communities are unprepared to cope with shifting climate patterns and other conflict drivers like undefined boundaries (territorial disputes), the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, ethnic rivalries and divisive politics. In combination, these conditions are driving instability and further increasing people's vulnerability. Particularly in West Pokot, Turkana and Elgeyo Marakwet counties, uncoordinated livestock movement across community territories and county borders, as well as forced access to grazing areas and water points, are fuelling conflict and insecurity. Long droughts are exacerbating the situation and motivate cattle raids to replenish decimated herds, resulting in vicious cycles of violent attacks<sup>8</sup>, including against civilians by pastoralist militia groups.<sup>9</sup> These conflicts are often rooted in historical grievances related to land ownership and management, and access to natural resources.

## 2. Project approach

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The Powering Peace Through Climate Action project addressed climate security challenges by focusing on three areas of action and tailoring activities to the specific needs and context of each locality.

- ***Building awareness, trust and collaborative climate action through capacity development, dialogue between conflicting communities*** over shared climate security challenges and facilitating cooperation, joint analysis and priority setting for community-led adaptation responses, to support the resolution of conflicts over water or grazing areas. For instance, in Kenya's West Pokot county, at the border with Turkana, this included supporting community members within Masol conservancy to develop mechanisms for re-establishing dry and wet season grazing patterns and restoring depleted rangelands. The aim is to ensure sufficient pasture for livestock and thereby limit the need for often unplanned and uncoordinated movement into Turkana territory, which repeatedly sparks conflict.
- ***Supporting and enhancing inclusive climate governance to establish conflict-sensitive climate policies and plans*** by local authorities, centred around community needs. This included building the knowledge of local governments on conflict sensitivity and participatory governance in climate adaptation and co-creating community-government platforms.

In Nigeria, participatory approaches were used to identify community priorities for the development of Local Peace and Adaptation Plans (LPAP). At government level, establishing multi-agency/stakeholder committees referred to as state level Advisory Committees ensured policy uptake of the climate security challenges and helped to identify solutions for improving livelihoods and resolving natural resource conflicts among disputing groups. The creation of community-led climate hubs,<sup>10</sup> spaces for learning and dialogue on joint natural resource management, supported communities to develop their own solutions.

In Kenya, the project focused on supporting the Ward Climate Change Planning Committees, created under the World Bank led Financing Locally Led Climate Action (FLLoCA)<sup>11</sup> initiative, to jointly identify community needs and priorities to then develop adaptation plans, which mainstream conflict sensitivity in climate actions in conflict-affected areas. We also supported the National Climate Change and Security Response Programme (NCCSRP) led the national government to coordinate climate change interventions. The programme includes efforts to address climate-related security risks and supporting enhanced coordination and collaboration in climate action and peacebuilding for the regional platform North Rift Economic Bloc (NOREB).<sup>12</sup>





Community members in Benue feed fish at a sustainable fish pond. © Imaobong Edukere/International Alert

- **Promoting learning and influencing policy and action to demonstrate the value of conflict sensitive, peace-conducive climate adaptation policies and action.** In Nigeria, this included making recommendations during national validation meetings organised by the Federal Ministry of Environment (October 2024) to integrate conflict sensitivity into Nigeria’s National Adaptation Plan.

In Kenya, the project advocated for integrating local experiences in county, regional and national level policy-making on climate action. It engaged with the national government through the National Climate Change and Security and Response Programme by contributing to the development and rollout of coursework on climate security for the national government administrators’ training programme. This included briefing senior government administration officials and training all 47 county commissioners.

# The benefits of including peacebuilding approaches in climate programmes

**Resolving and preventing violence and addressing root causes of conflict can offer an insurance for effective climate adaptation** by decreasing the risks of losing investments to violent conflict and destruction and the risk of triggering new disputes over the use of and access to adaptation solutions, for example, solar-powered boreholes.

Building trust and supporting dialogue on ways to address shared challenges collectively, such as resource scarcity, helps to open spaces for addressing the wider drivers and causes of violent conflict, including engaging the young herders often involved in violent clashes.

In Nigeria's Benue and Sokoto states and northern Kenya, this focus on trust-building and dialogue laid the foundation for the climate adaptation work that followed, opening the way for extended cooperation on livelihood resilience and fair, sustainable natural resource management. The cessation of hostilities and conflict management between the Tiv and Jukun tribes of Fiidi community in Makurdi, Nigeria, provided the insurance and a basis for the adaptation work, making it feasible.

In the communities targeted by the project in Kenya and Nigeria, government responses to climate and natural resource-based conflict are often securitised. The security sector plays a role in civilian protection, disarmament and preventing armed groups from taking territorial control<sup>13</sup> to deter or mitigate the risk of immediate physical violence. However, in the long term, the root causes of conflicts are not addressed successfully, and the violence persists. **Integrating peacebuilding approaches into climate resilient livelihoods projects demonstrates an alternative to securitised responses and a way to reduce violence effectively.**

Situational reports by Nigeria's military undertaken in September 2024 on Agatu communities in Benue state, where Alert's integrated peacebuilding and climate project is implemented, highlight a reduction in the incidence of violent natural resource-related conflicts between the Egba and Ologba ethnic groups who have been in conflict for over a decade. Representatives of security agencies and other government institutions are on the project's Advisory Committee and this participation has led to increasing awareness of effective strategies for addressing resource-based conflicts and vulnerabilities to climate security risks.

In Kenya's Masol ward in West Pokot county, Alert's project supported the local community to adopt effective rangeland management, with the aim of sustaining pastoral livelihoods and ending the often violent disputes with the neighbouring community in Turkana.<sup>14</sup> Members from both communities and the Masol conservancy board agreed collectively to reserve the Masol hills as a dry season grazing area and drafted bylaws to guide the utilisation of this area. The grazing laws close the area to human settlement and grazing for certain periods of the year, for example, during



A community training session on eco-friendly briquette production in Benue, Nigeria. © Imoter Tarzaan/Angel Support Foundation

rainy seasons, to aid the recovery of rangeland, and the land management plan also outlines how to control the invasive species of plant that limits the growth of grass. As a result, some areas have regenerated significantly. During community consensus building forums, the conservancy leaders who participated in Alert's climate change and conflict sensitivity trainings continue to work on raising community awareness on the issues and promote the bylaws. Cross-border committees have been a successful mechanism for peaceful dispute resolution and de-escalation.<sup>15</sup> They have also been critical in enabling livestock recoveries after cattle raids and functioning as early warning and response hubs to prevent conflict escalations, as well as helping local administrators and security personnel to recover illegal firearms from both communities.

Similarly, the Nigeria project's development of Local Peace and Adaptation Plans provides a mechanism for communities to collaborate on identifying activities to address climate security and conflict risks. Training on sustainable charcoal briquette production (to replace firewood taken from forests) were accessible to all members of the Fiidi communities, resulting in decreased deforestation from firewood collection and resolution of the inter-ethnic conflict over access to the forest. The conflict in Benue state over decreasing fishing resources, with the drying Benue River, is managed by providing a shared fishpond for fish farming and a fish smoking oven, addressing climate adaptation needs and resolving a source of conflict.<sup>16</sup>

These examples from Kenya and Nigeria demonstrate the benefits of integrating peacebuilding and climate action, and **how climate adaptation and peace outcomes are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.**



# How to integrate peacebuilding and climate action

Alert's project in northern Kenya and Sokoto and Benue states of Nigeria offers some core lessons on the practice of integrating peace and climate action, such as ensuring that communities understand, drive and own the processes, offering targeted support to marginalised groups and strengthening governance mechanisms and processes.

## 1. Facilitating locally led climate adaptation

Local communities know best what they need to build their climate resilience and how to overcome and prevent conflicts in the process. Top-down climate adaptation creates the risk of maladaptation, especially when it ignores the contextual specificities and needs of affected stakeholders, and it often inhibits their participation in decision-making and implementation.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the increasing recognition of the importance of locally led climate adaptation,<sup>18</sup> in practice it still often falls short.<sup>19</sup> Alert found that involving local populations in adaptation activities can become treated as a tick-box exercise and in the Kenya experience it involves the risk of elite capture in adaptation programmes.<sup>20</sup> To overcome these challenges, the project focused on promoting locally driven processes through participatory analysis to assess localised climate conflict dynamics, by working with local partners, fostering awareness among all stakeholders, and by strengthening the technical skills of community members.

### Working with local partners

**Local actors have better access and deeper understanding of the realities on the ground**, such as the local power dynamics between different groups over the use of and access to resources and cultural norms determining conflict management or women's inclusion. Local organisations are usually well trusted by communities, particularly in areas with experience of violent conflicts that have cost lives and disrupted social cohesion. In Alert's project, local organisations have been indispensable in supporting participatory analysis with communities on the localised impact of climate change and related conflicts.

**Local actors play critical roles in ensuring inclusivity and community ownership of projects**, for example, finding spaces and culturally suitable angles for the participation of marginalised groups. During Alert's first engagement in Kenya's West Pokot county, the partnership with Pokot Youth Bunge was essential for building trust and community ownership of the project.

Developing long-term, sustainable solutions to climate security challenges requires a range of skills and therefore may involve local, but also national and international actors to create effective interventions. **Local actors are and must be central to all stages of programmes and it is important to seize the opportunities for sharing the learning among actors.**



Tiv and Jukun leaders demonstrating unity for community-led climate action, bridging divides in Benue, Nigeria. © Imaobong Edukere/International Alert

Reflecting on Alert's collaboration with Kende Avese Foundation, Angel Support Foundation, Community Links (Benue), Jireh Doo Foundation and Save the Child Initiative (Sokoto) in Nigeria reveals how enriching the partnership was for all parties regarding learning about Alert's approaches to the Local Peace and Adaptation Plans and climate hubs.

### **Creating community awareness to strengthen agency**

The links between climate change, insecurity and conflict in Nigeria and Kenya are documented in reports<sup>21</sup>, however communities experiencing these challenges do not necessarily connect them<sup>22</sup> nor use the information available to advocate for best suited, integrated responses. Hence, building community awareness and supporting action was central to Alert's project.

Communities in Sokoto and Benue states learned about climate security risks and received opportunities for alternative livelihood practices. When communities understand the climate security nexus, they can take true agency and make informed decisions, such as formulating Local Peace and Adaptation Plans in Fiidi, Ologba, Egba, Asara and Gwadabawa communities. Trainings accompanied by localised participatory analysis, including a mapping exercise to identify climate stress on the environment, natural resources and related conflicts, prepared them for the joint planning. Community members developed their skills through technical training, for example on water-saving irrigation and briquette production, contributing to their economic empowerment and confidence.

**Communities with knowledge and skills relating to the climate security nexus are better able to advocate towards local decision-makers and among their peers.**

In Kenya, Alert has been working with communities and county governments for some years now, raising their knowledge of climate change and climate security.<sup>23</sup> POTUMA, a women's peacebuilding network, bringing together women from Turkana, Elgeyo Marakwet, Baringo and West Pokot counties, has been revived and expanded. The network originally focused on peacebuilding, however, through the project they became champions for peacebuilding and climate security within and beyond their counties. Their strong grassroots presence and robust leadership that has linkages with decision-makers at state and

civil society levels makes POTUMA an effective community voice calling for action on climate security and conflict. POTUMA representatives participated actively in the Africa Climate Week and Summit held in Kenya in 2023, leading on messaging for climate security and gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding and climate action.

## **Supporting communities to advocate for change**

Communities and civil society organisations should have the power to advocate for their rights and hold governments to account in addressing climate-related insecurity and delivering on promises made for climate adaptation. Rather than a lack of knowledge or capacities, it can be an absence of channels to government officials or a lack of visibility that inhibits communities reaching public officials or traditional leaders with their messages. **Facilitating channels of communication by fostering personal relationships and trust between state officials and communities provides people with the chance to address the responsible government agency directly, without bureaucratic procedures.**

In Sokoto and Benue, Alert supported communities to connect with the government focal points on climate. Previously, people in Agatu and Fiidi community, Benue, were unable to communicate directly with government staff. As a result, in Fiidi, an appointed community committee (with representatives from both ethnic groups) was able to advocate to the community social development agency in Benue state to request that their community will be included in the government's support to riverine communities for dry season farming. The government agency responded to the community committee's request with a promise to assist them to access organic fertilisers for dry season farming in the upcoming season.

## **2. Involving marginalised groups effectively, focus on women and youth**

In Kenya and Nigeria, there are structural and cultural barriers to involving women and youth in climate action and peacebuilding. These include patriarchal norms that exclude women and youth from decision-making over natural resources, structural obstacles for women to own land<sup>24</sup> and stigmatisation of youth, especially young male herders as instigators of violence.<sup>25</sup> Integrating a peace lens into climate action requires building understanding of these dynamics and prioritising marginalised groups.

**Sideline marginalised groups, ignoring their needs and priorities, and failing to capitalise on their potential to be agents for positive environmental and social change can undermine the effectiveness of climate programming in conflict settings, where power divisions are also fuelling conflict.**

### **Recognising women and youth as agents of change for integrated peace and climate action**

Understanding the gender and youth dimensions in the climate security nexus is valued in analysis and to some extent in programmes, however the focus often rests on the vulnerability of these groups instead of their potential for change.

Indeed, women and youth in rural Nigeria and northern Kenya are particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and related insecurity and conflicts, as their subsistence in pastoral and farming communities depends heavily on rain-fed farming and rangelands under climate stress.<sup>26</sup> In both contexts patriarchal culture and structures limit women's access to land rights, credits and decision-making on natural resources, which decreases their adaptive capacity to climate change.<sup>27</sup>

High levels of illiteracy limit the extent to which critical information trickles down to the most vulnerable groups. Youth are seldom involved in key decision-making on natural resources or climate programmes. At the same time, the role pastoral young men play in violent attacks has gained more attention in studies<sup>28</sup>, but it often remains a sidenote in action on climate security. Due to social norms, stigmatisation and intergenerational tensions, it is challenging for young people and women to be perceived as agents for change.<sup>29</sup>

Regardless of the vulnerabilities and exclusions, **youth and women should be recognised as driving forces in the incremental move towards desired changes on climate adaptation and peacebuilding.**

Peacebuilding in Kenya and Nigeria is traditionally perceived as a matter for men; however, the POTUMA network shows how aspects of marginalisation such as entrenched patriarchy can begin to be transformed. The women of POTUMA from the two communities of Kaben and Cheptulel in West Pokot and Marakwet meet monthly, whatever the security situation at the county border. Doing this sustains the positive interactions and encourages the communities to focus on maintaining livelihoods collectively and addressing climate security, rather than stressing ethnic differences that fuel conflict. Together, the women plan business ventures and joint adaptation initiatives; they sing and embrace one another openly, signalling to the larger community the possibilities and benefits of peaceful coexistence. The women from POTUMA are living the change they want to see in their societies. Attitudinal change in highly patriarchal societies can be slow, but the POTUMA initiative is gaining prominence as a positive example of changing attitudes and relations within and between communities.

## **Investing in women's leadership capacities**

Gender inequality and economic exclusion are considered factors of conflict. Strengthening women's livelihood resilience (hence their adaptive capacity to climate change) and their leadership capacity on conflict management can change structural and cultural exclusion.

In Nigeria, Alert's project shows how **strengthening women's roles in eco-friendly and sustainable livelihoods is improving their economic stability and increasing their roles as leaders on climate action and peace.**

Widows and elderly women in rural areas usually do not hold leadership positions, so supporting them on livelihood resilience and conflict management is helping to raise their status as well as increasing climate-friendly practices. Alert's support included providing technical training on eco-friendly charcoal production, fish farming and smoking as well as conflict management training to community members, with a special focus on women.

Interviews reveal that the women feel more confident, as follows: Hazina Ibrahim, a widow, relies mainly on subsistence farming to support her family of five children. Like others, she received drought-resistant seeds for her food security and participated in the trainings on mediation and





Women peacebuilders learn about tree species for propagation as part of the cross-county restoration of depleted rangeland in West Pokot, Kenya. © Martin Mwangi/International Alert

eco-friendly charcoal production. Hazina explains how she can resolve local disputes effectively and refer more complex issues to the district head, when necessary. She also mentions that her newly acquired skills are earning her recognition within her family and close community, allowing her to play a leading role in fostering peace.

Supporting women's leadership is an effective entry point to breaking down local gender dynamics of exclusion and fostering community-based climate action.

### **Creating dedicated spaces and support for marginalised groups**

Creating dedicated safe spaces for youth, women and other marginalised groups, including reformed bandits,<sup>30</sup> can enable their effective participation in climate and peacebuilding activities<sup>31</sup> and increase equal participation in decision-making.<sup>32</sup> **Spaces for marginalised groups to voice their concerns and priorities, accompanied by targeted support, empowers these groups to influence how their climate adaptation needs and livelihoods are addressed.**

Along the Elgeyo Marakwet and Baringo border, Alert works alongside other NGOs like the IMARA consortium<sup>33</sup> that works with young male reformed bandits to develop community-driven processes on natural resource management and related conflicts. This is accompanied by livelihood support for resilience, such as beekeeping, pasture, tomato and onion farming. Including former bandits in livelihood projects and community processes on resource governance enables them to find new, more accepted roles in their communities.

In rural Nigeria, Alert worked closely with youth and women by convening them in separate meetings to help them understand and articulate their needs and priorities for the development of the Local



Peace and Adaptation Plans. In the project locations, deforestation is triggering conflicts between women who are competing for the remaining timber for their firewood collection. Sustainable alternatives to firewood, such as the eco-friendly charcoal briquette production, is one of the priorities in the adaptation plans. **The dedicated engagement of women ensures their priorities are addressed in the local adaptation solutions.**

### **3. Supporting governance and policy-making on integrated peace and climate action to improve responses to climate security and conflict risks**

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Alert's project witnessed an openness and willingness from local and state/county governments, as well as traditional governance bodies like ethnic and religious leaders, to address climate security and conflict challenges, but there remain obstacles to turning this goodwill into effective governance. These include the absence of adequate policy frameworks on climate action and peace, the lack of capacities on conflict sensitivity and fragmented policies and siloed action by different government departments. Throughout the work with governments at state, county and national level, Alert has identified and pursued approaches to help address these challenges.

#### **Facilitating cross-regional and inter-ministerial coordination and planning**

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Government work on peace and climate is often siloed, making it a challenge to coordinate and harmonise policy-making and its implementation. **Encouraging inter-ministerial cooperation, as well as joint policy-making and implementation can help prevent fragmented responses to the inherently interlinked issues of climate change and conflict.**

Kenya, for example, has a comprehensive framework to mainstream climate adaptation in various sectors,<sup>34</sup> with the Ministry of Environment leading climate action. However, there are other interventions, such as the National Climate Change and Security Response Programme led by the Ministry of Interior and FLLoCA led by the Treasury (Ministry of Finance) and implemented by the county governments. Kenya has also both national level and county specific Climate Adaptation Plans. At county level, the respective departments for climate change and peacebuilding work with limited collaboration, which bears the risk of siloed policy-making and separating climate adaptation from peacebuilding interventions.

Alert's project has therefore focused on engaging with national and county authorities to support coordination and planning, by deepening their understandings of the links between climate and insecurity and conflict sensitivity to deliver on both adaptation and peace outcomes.

In northern Kenya, the challenges of climate change and conflict span across borders, hence the need to strengthen cross-regional cooperation. Alert therefore engaged with the North Rift Economic Bloc (NOREB),<sup>35</sup> a quite young entity with cross-county mandate and potential to facilitate integrated responses on peace and climate change. The project supported the establishment of working groups on peace, security and climate change. These groups facilitate coordinated planning between NOREB members, the private sector, international donors, civil society organisations and (I)NGOs. They are spaces to raise voices and share lessons from the communities to the regional and national policy-makers.

In Nigeria, a lack of coordination mechanisms between state and local governments and communities, hinders effective and harmonised climate action and peacebuilding. Alert therefore inaugurated state level Project Advisory Committees in Sokoto and Benue to promote active working relationships among ministerial departments and agencies, local authorities, security agencies, civil society organisations, traditional leaders and community members.

The committees and the sub-committees on peace and conflict resolution, environmental management and monitoring and sustainability function as a platform to form synergies on climate and peacebuilding activities in the communities. At state level, the Advisory Committees are also entry points for Alert to promote peacebuilding approaches in climate action.

## **Strengthening existing policy instruments and actors**

Climate adaptation and peacebuilding instruments often exist in climate and conflict-affected countries, yet many face capacity and funding challenges. **Interventions should avoid introducing new structures and instruments but instead seek to consolidate, build on and strengthen the roles and capacities of existing instruments and engaged actors where possible.**

In Nigeria, the National Adaptation Plan coordinated by the Federal Ministry of Environment provided such an entry point for Alert to share lessons from our work on climate security, seeking to integrate conflict sensitivity into the plan.

In Kenya, Alert worked to strengthen existing institutions at national and county level. Aiming to advance national policy-making on climate security risks, Alert partnered with the Pastoralist Parliamentary Group (PPG) of Kenya's 13th Parliament to support their newly-established working committees on climate change and conflict management. Formed in May 2023, these committees represent a significant step towards a more structured approach to address the challenges of climate change and resource-based conflicts in the pastoralist regions. They are a pioneering move, replacing previous ad hoc engagements. Their permanent status provides a more strategic and structured vehicle for national, international and regional (IGAD) advocacy on climate security and finance.

At county level, working together with other organisations, Alert supported the governments of West Pokot and Elgeyo Marakwet to elaborate their peacebuilding policies,<sup>36</sup> signed into law in 2023. These underscore climate change as a conflict driver and the need for cross-departmental collaboration to address climate-security risks. Although funding challenges limit the capacity of local governments to undertake substantive cross-county action, county authorities are engaging actively in dialogues on natural resource management. **Policy operationalisation is slow and therefore requires resources and continuous support to deliver long-term peace and adaptation outcomes.**

## **Supporting mechanisms for meaningful participation and inclusive governance**

**Supporting participatory and inclusive governance prevents ill-suited and top-down climate action and peacebuilding as well as governance structures favouring certain groups.** Multi-stakeholder platforms have proven to be useful spaces for joint agenda setting and participatory decision-making on community-led natural resource management and climate adaptation.

Alert has continuously supported the West Pokot and Elgeyo Marakwet Ward Climate Change Planning Committees, which bring together community representatives and government



Kenneth, a youth leader and climate action and peacebuilding champion, Baringo, Kenya © Martin Mwangi/International Alert

stakeholders to develop and implement adaptation plans for the County Climate Change Fund under FLLoCA. Through training and guidance on locally led adaptation, the committees ensured that the development of the Ward Adaptation Plans are informed by localised climate security assessments and consider the needs of all, especially vulnerable groups. This ensured that structural impediments to participatory natural resource governance and decision-making on climate adaptation, such as patriarchy and low literacy levels, were addressed.

In Nigeria, Alert established inclusive, local, community-based committees comprising community representatives including of women, people with disabilities and traditional and religious leaders. These groups have occasionally attended the state level Project Advisory Committees meetings, which helped to bridge the gap between the state and citizens. The state-level committees serve as an advisory board to community climate adaption projects and natural resource management. In addition, they help to identify and mitigate tensions before they escalate, for example, in Mallamawa and Kabanga communities in Sokoto. Local committees have functioned as an early warning mechanism to prevent conflicts and sensitise community members on peace and climate resilient livelihoods.

These examples demonstrate that **mechanisms designed for participation and joint planning on climate adaptation and natural resource challenges can also be substantial bodies for early action on climate and natural resource-related violence.**

# The way forward

The integration of peacebuilding and climate action is not only possible and effective but necessary to meet the needs of local populations in climate security hotspots, where natural resource competition is fuelled by climate change.

Alert's project, though limited in terms of geographical reach, reveals promising impacts for the climate sector to adopt a peacebuilding lens as part of their climate adaptation programmes. The impacts include enhanced livelihood resilience and peaceful resolution of community natural resource-based conflicts as well as initial changes in county policy-making to integrate a climate security lens into plans and actions. Central to facilitating locally led adaptation is the focus on working with local partners and strengthening the communities' awareness and advocacy capacities. Furthermore, marginalised groups need spaces to raise their concerns as well as targeted support that enhances their status and resilience.

The core of integrating climate adaptation and peacebuilding lies with effective governance to address exclusion and power imbalance in decision-making and tackle obstacles to intergovernmental coordination and planning. Key to that is strengthening the capacities of local and national authorities on conflict sensitive and inclusive climate adaptation.

Moving forward, towards improved integrated interventions from climate and peacebuilding actors, the following actions are recommended:

- National and international climate adaptation programmes tend to be large in funding and scale. **There also need to be smaller-scale funding opportunities made available for community-based climate adaptation programmes** with simplified contracting and procurement processes. This would support locally led initiatives on livelihoods and restoration of depleted resources, like rangelands, that meet the needs of communities. While such initiatives only require smaller amounts of funding, the local actors need to be able to access facilities that provide these smaller grants.
- **Collect more evidence and share learning from integrated programmes that link climate adaptation, environment and peacebuilding interventions.** Such programmes are still in their infancy, yet the need for them to be scaled is evident. More openness of actors from the climate and peacebuilding sectors operating in climate security hotspots to share what is working is needed for climate action and peacebuilding alike.
- Many climate adaptation programmes work on governance and often (implicitly) address exclusion and unequal power relations in natural resource management or community relations over shared climate stressors – all of which are conflict drivers. However, in monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) peace indicators like improved cooperation or reduced violence over resource access are not standard, nor asked for by donors. **Integrating peace indicators into project design and MEL of climate adaptation programmes, actors in the climate sector will contribute to a better understanding of the value of linking climate adaptation interventions with peacebuilding efforts.**
- This project has shown how integrated climate action and peacebuilding programming is possible. **Flexibility and openness of donors and implementers on the project framework gives room to adjust to the community realities and needs and to pilot new approaches,**

such as the Local Adaptation and Peace Plans and climate hubs in Nigeria. Breaking siloes between climate and peace work becomes possible with leeway to engage in both to the extent necessary and to adapt along the way. The project experience underlines what has been called for by numerous other peacebuilding actors, namely, the **need to increase more flexible, long term, grant-based finance** for integrated programmes on climate adaptation and peacebuilding.

- We acknowledge that the reach within this project is limited. Therefore, **the priority for donors, policymakers and implementers alike should be scaling up the work implemented in climate security hotspots, across state and county borders, and consolidating support where progress on integrating climate and peace action has been made.**



# Endnotes

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- 10 Each community decides, based on their needs, the priorities for what the climate hubs host. For example, a fish farm as an alternative to contested river fishing, an eco-friendly briquette production oven to combat firewood collection, fish kilns for drying fish (to counter deforestation for firewood) and solar-powered boreholes. The hubs represent the heart of community engagement and cooperation to address livelihood and related conflicts.
- 11 FLLoCA is a national programme focused on devolving climate finance to county and community level to support locally-led adaptation. Under the initiative, communities can receive funds for climate adaptation through local wards, the administrative unit closest to the community. An important element for community participation is the ward climate change adaptation committee that supports the identification of community priorities in relation to climate change and subsequently informs ward adaptation plans.
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- 14 The Pokot community has traditionally been seen as the aggressor in the conflict with the Turkana because every drought period forces pastoralists from Pokot to move their livestock into Turkana territory, which is richer in pasture that lasts into the dry season.
- 15 Similar results are seen in Lomut ward, West Pokot and Endo ward, Elgeyo Marakwet, where the IMARA consortium led by Saferworld has worked to strengthen natural resource management. See Saferworld, Stockholm Environment Institute, Masai Mara Wildlife Conservancies, Northern Rangelands Trust, World Vision, Integrated management of natural resources for resilience in the arid and semi-arid lands of Kenya (IMARA) Project Profile, <https://www.saferworld-global.org/downloads/improving-natural-resource-management-in-kenya.pdf>
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- 35 NOREB is an economic bloc of eight North Rift counties, established to capitalise on the economies of scale in agriculture, sports tourism, trade, natural resources, wildlife and the area's rich cultural heritage. See <https://igrtc.go.ke/views/img/resource/COUNTY/Regional%20Economic%20Blocs%20in%20Kenya.pdf>
- 36 International Alert supported West Pokot, while Saferworld supported Elgeyo Marakwet.

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