



Integrating peacebuilding and climate action

Lessons from Nigeria and Kenya

SUMMARY

In climate security hotspots, where natural resources under severe climate stress are driving conflict, it is both possible and essential to integrate climate action and peacebuilding.

Through International Alert's Powering Peace Through Climate Action project, we worked with local communities in Kenya and Nigeria to address the connected challenges of climate change, natural resource scarcity and violent conflict.

In Northern Kenya and Nigeria's Northwest and Middle Belt regions, communities are highly dependent on rain-fed agriculture and pastoralism. The effects of climate change including rising temperatures, droughts, changes in rainfall patterns and destructive floods put people and their livelihoods at growing risk of devastation. Food insecurity and limited and unequal access to arable land, pasture and water are putting additional pressure on communities. Competition for natural resources creates tensions that, when not well managed, often culminate in violence.

In Nigeria, the project worked with local organisations to support the development of Local Peace and Adaptation Plans that brought together divided communities to find sustainable livelihood alternatives and peaceful solutions to frequent disputes over natural resources.

In Kenya, International Alert advocated for integrating a climate security perspective and community priorities in county, regional and national policy-making on climate action, and supported local mechanisms for the peaceful and sustainable management of natural resources.

The project has shown exciting promise for the climate sector to adopt a peacebuilding lens as part of adaptation programmes to meet the needs of local communities. By enhancing livelihood resilience and peaceful management of resource-based conflicts, as well as promoting conflict sensitive national and local policy-making, the work shows how organisations can successfully improve climate action in conflict-affected settings.

Project: Powering Peace Through Climate Action

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Northern Kenya and
Nigeria's Northwest
and Middle Belt
regions

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

Our approach

We focused on three key areas:

- 1. Building awareness, trust and collaborative climate action** by working with local communities to strengthen knowledge and skills, facilitating dialogue processes over shared climate security challenges and conflicts, and carrying out joint analysis and priority setting for community-led adaptation responses.
- 2. Supporting and enhancing inclusive climate governance** with community participation to establish conflict-sensitive climate policies and plans by local authorities, centred around community needs.
- 3. Promoting learning and influencing policy and action** to demonstrate the value of conflict sensitive, peace-conducive climate adaptation policies and action.

How we made an impact

Working directly with communities and local governments, the project sought to make climate adaptation policies and action more effective, inclusive and conflict sensitive to meet the needs of communities. As part of the work, we focused on empowering marginalised groups, like women and youth.

In Sokoto and Benue states in **Nigeria**, we employed participatory approaches to develop community-based Local Peace and Adaptation Plans. At state level, the establishment of multi-stakeholder advisory committees ensured policy uptake of the climate security challenges. It also supported local actors to identify and implement livelihoods solutions, such as sustainable fishing and eco-friendly fuel options, helping to resolve natural resource-based conflicts. The creation of locally led climate hubs, spaces designed to facilitate learning and dialogue on natural resource management, became a core tool for communities to develop their own solutions.

At the borders of West Pokot and Turkana counties in **Kenya**, we worked with communities on natural resource management to address the depleting rangelands in West Pokot, that drove pastoralists into neighbouring Turkana to search for fertile land. This regularly resulted in violent clashes over scarce natural resources. We worked with the local conservancy committee to re-establish seasonal grazing patterns and restore depleted rangelands, preventing future conflicts. Moreover, the project supported participatory governance mechanisms like the Ward Climate Change Planning Committees, under the World Bank-led Financing Locally Led Climate Action initiative, to make community needs central to climate adaptation plans. At county and national level, the project put and kept climate security on the agenda and strengthened capacities for conflict sensitive approaches that consider the interlinked climate and conflict challenges.

Why should climate adaptation include peacebuilding?

We found that integrated programmes can:

- Contribute to more effective, needs-oriented and environmentally and socially sustainable responses to climate security risks.
- Resolve and prevent violence by addressing causes and drivers of conflict and offering insurance for effective climate adaptation. An integrated approach can decrease the risks of losing investments to destruction and violent conflict and triggering new disputes over the use of and access to adaptation solutions.
- Demonstrate an alternative to securitised responses to reduce violence.
- Enhance livelihood resilience and introduce peaceful resolutions for community natural resource-based conflicts.

How to integrate peacebuilding and climate action

We identified **three key areas** for success:

1. Facilitating locally led climate action in conflict settings. This is essential for effective and sustainable solutions that meet community needs and challenge a 'top-down', elite-driven approach. Local leadership on adaptation can be supported through:

- Working with local partners who have access to and are well-trusted by communities. They bring a deep understanding of local realities and power dynamics, such as the use of and access to resources or cultural norms in conflict management. Local partners also play critical roles in ensuring inclusivity and community ownership of projects, such as finding spaces and culturally suitable ways to support the participation of marginalised groups.
- Creating community awareness and supporting local movements in their advocacy for change.
- Facilitating channels of communication by fostering personal relationships and trust between state officials and communities. This provides people with the chance to address the responsible government agency directly.

2. Addressing structural and cultural barriers that exclude groups like women and youth from decision-making on natural resources and adaptation programming. It is crucial to recognise and support marginalised groups as agents of change by:

- Investing in leadership skills for women and youth to become champions of climate action and peacebuilding, and supporting their inclusion in conflict and natural resource management.
- Strengthening women's and youth capacities in eco-friendly and sustainable livelihoods to improve their economic stability and their status and role in local natural resource management.
- Providing safe spaces for marginalised groups so they can comfortably participate in climate and peacebuilding activities and decision-making processes.

3. Supporting governance and policy-making on integrated peace and climate action to improve responses to climate security and conflict risks. This can be achieved through:

- Encouraging horizontal and vertical cooperation between governments, departments at national and state or county level for the development of conflict-sensitive and harmonised action to address the links between climate and conflict issues.
- Strengthening existing policy instruments and actors through tailored support, such as advising and training.
- Supporting inclusive mechanisms like multi-stakeholder platforms for the meaningful participation of communities in governance processes on climate adaptation and natural resource management.

Additional considerations

Through the project, in addition to our lessons on integrating peacebuilding and climate action, we have identified a set of enabling actions to support improved interventions by climate and peacebuilding actors in climate security hotspots.

For effective interventions, we need to:

- Make more smaller scale funds available for community-based climate adaptation with simplified contracting and procurement processes, to allow for locally led initiatives on livelihoods and restoration of depleted resources that meet the needs of communities.
- Collect more evidence and share learning from programmes that link climate action, environment and peacebuilding interventions.
- Integrate peace indicators in the project design and monitoring, evaluation and learning of climate adaptation programmes to better understand the value of linking peacebuilding and climate action.
- Increase in flexible, long-term, grants-based finance from donors and implementers that allow space for flexible project frameworks to pilot approaches that can serve community needs.
- Scale up the work implemented in climate security hotspots, across state and county borders, while simultaneously consolidating support where progress to address climate conflict and security issues has already been made.

Read the full learning paper [here](#).

Find out more about the project: international-alert.org/publications/ppca2024