



international
alert



PRACTICE NOTE

Integrating peace

Responding to the realities of working
in fragile and conflict-affected settings

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Glossary

Climate adaptation	Taking action to prepare for and adapt to current and future climate change impacts. This includes adjusting social, economic and ecological systems, infrastructures and institutions, for example, making cities flood resistant or agricultural practices drought resilient.
Conflict drivers	Underlying factors that give rise to conflict and fragility. This could include, socio-economic inequality or exclusion, weak governance (including state legitimacy and accountability), gender inequality, political grievances (lack of access and power in decision-making), environmental destruction and lack of access to resources.
Conflict sensitivity	An approach that considers local conflict contexts and dynamics to help anticipate risks and ensure interventions and efforts avoid unintended harm and maximise positive impacts.
Do no harm	A fundamental, ethical principle that underpins humanitarian and development interventions to ensure efforts do not inadvertently worsen existing conflicts or cause other negative impacts for communities.
Gender sensitivity	Incorporating an awareness of context-specific issues affecting or engaging men, women, and sexual and gender minorities into humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programme plans. This approach seeks to minimise exclusion and promote gender equality.
Humanitarian, development and peacebuilding (HDP) nexus	An approach that promotes stronger collaboration, coordination and coherence between HDP efforts in fragile and conflict affected settings (FCAS).
Peacebuilding	Supporting people in or at risk of conflict to prevent or end direct violence and creating the conditions for sustainable peaceful coexistence and peaceful social change by addressing structural violence.
Peacekeeping	Providing a physical presence to prevent the resumption of violence.
Peacemaking	High-level, elite national and international negotiations aimed at stopping immediate violence.
Peace integration	The proactive adoption of peacebuilding practices into broader humanitarian and development interventions and efforts. This includes embedding peace measures into programme plans and designs, and monitoring processes and results frameworks from the outset.
Peace-positive approach	Actions that reduce the risk of violent conflict, strengthen social cohesion and build conditions for lasting peace and stability. This can occur at the individual, community and institutional level.
Positive peace	The attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies, and help to develop thriving communities. Societies that are rich in positive peace are less likely to experience conflict.

Positive-peace outcomes	Measures intentionally embedded within humanitarian, development and peacebuilding interventions that contribute to long-term peace and stability. In practice, this might look like a food distribution programme that is intentionally designed to ensure fair access for all groups, reducing disputes and building trust within communities.
Structural violence	Harmful political, institutional, social and economic structures that prevent people from meeting their basic needs and reaching their full potential, while causing suffering. These structures include discriminatory laws, exclusion of certain groups in decision-making or adequate service provision, and hindering access to resources for development. This form of violence differs from direct physical violence.

Introduction

The world faces a set of deep, interconnected crises. Protracted conflicts, accelerating climate shocks, economic fragility and record levels of displacement are becoming progressively interwoven, with far-reaching consequences. This impacts vulnerable communities the most, undermining livelihoods, destabilising local economies, intensifying competition over natural resources and complicating governance systems, among other significant ramifications. This is especially true for more than two billion people living in fragile and conflict-affected settings (FCAS).¹ Yet, despite this, these communities are systematically under-served by international investment, overseas development assistance and climate finance. Traditional responses to these complex global challenges – focused on short-term, project-based programming, rigid organisational mandates and top-down decision making – often operate in silos, missing out on crucial opportunities for collaborative and sustainable ways of working towards shared, long-term benefits. Many aspects of the current business models for international aid, climate finance and development-focused investment mean those models simply do not work well, or at all, in the most fragile contexts.

A different approach is urgently needed. Applying a conflict-sensitive lens can offer more sustainable solutions. By building awareness and understanding of local conflict contexts into humanitarian and development programme designs, humanitarian, development and climate adaptation actors can help ensure their responses and activities reach those who need them most, and avoid deepening divides and fuelling tensions. Employing established peacebuilding methods such as conflict analysis, dialogue and platforms for collaborative learning can strengthen programme outcomes and contribute to long-term stability. Furthermore, adopting peace-positive approaches that foster social cohesion, support locally led solutions and promote inclusive governance helps to address the root causes of conflict, breaking recurring cycles of unrest and enabling communities to thrive. Peace is the necessary foundation for reducing humanitarian need, promoting sustainable development, enabling effective climate adaptation and reducing investment risks. It is in the interests and within the power of all actors in FCAS to contribute to peace.

International Alert has worked for decades with actors from a range of sectors – humanitarian, development, investment and climate – to support their work in FCAS. This paper summarises insights and key learning from our work, and the work of our partners, and sets out why creating the conditions for peace must be a collective global effort. The paper draws insights framed around our core approaches to peace integration and is informed by three more detailed thematic papers, which, respectively, focus on the integration of peace-positive approaches in humanitarian response, climate adaptation and development finance investment. These papers explore the examples and themes covered by this paper in more detail. This note is aimed at policy-makers, practitioners, implementing agencies and funders, and offers guidance on operating in conflict contexts.

Why peace must be a collective effort

Violent conflicts are increasing in intensity and frequency and becoming more deadly. Most humanitarian, development and peace interventions are now carried out in FCAS² and conflict is recognised as one of the main obstacles to achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs).³ In 2022, 87% of people in need of humanitarian assistance were living in countries experiencing high-intensity conflict.⁴ In 2024, nearly 80% of civilian deaths occurred in countries already receiving humanitarian aid; in 2025, violence is expected to claim 20,000 lives every month.⁵ Conflict impedes the safe and effective delivery of aid, putting humanitarian workers at risk, breaking down vital infrastructure and restricting access, making it harder to reach those most in need.

Extreme poverty is increasingly concentrated in FCAS. Across the world, conflict-affected areas generally face worse economic outlooks compared to other places.⁶ These negative impacts can “extend across decades and even generations.”⁷ Without addressing conflict drivers, gains made by development investments are put at risk and future economic prospects remain locked. In FCAS, communities’ coping capacity for climate crises are significantly reduced by protracted conflicts, deep social divisions and fragile governance systems. Climate change interacts with conflict drivers, including poverty, weak institutions and socio-economic and political exclusion that negatively affects people, systems and nature.

Consequently, people in FCAS are being left further and further behind. The decrease in funds for humanitarian and development assistance, including recent aid cuts by major donors and governments, is contributing to the cycles of conflict, poverty, inequality and fragility. The needs of people experiencing conflict and the reality of the funding context demand that aid is delivered differently in FCAS. This requires funders to consider how they can adapt their ways of working to help address the drivers of conflict and promote peace. By making sustainable contributions to peace, the international community can address the drivers of growing global instability that are hampering humanitarian and development work.

Creating the conditions for sustainable peace

Peace is when people resolve conflicts without using violence. It allows for respectful coexistence, positive social change and sustainable development. Peacebuilding means working with communities affected by conflict to prevent violence and improve relationships and trust. It also involves working to create the conditions for sustainable peaceful coexistence and peaceful social change by addressing structural violence.⁸ This involves addressing people’s immediate needs for safety, as well as supporting sustainable inclusive governance and development. This inclusive approach to peacebuilding, sometimes referred to as ‘small p’ actions, is distinct from peacekeeping and national or international peacemaking, referred to as ‘big p’ actions.

There are several different entry points through which non-peacebuilding actors can begin to consider how they engage in conflict-affected settings and how their work can contribute to outcomes that support sustainable peace. These concepts and processes present differing opportunities and challenges for the development of peace-positive programming and investments.⁹ Ultimately, their specific framing is less important than the opportunity that they provide to achieve specific outcomes; however, change must occur at multiple levels: organisational and programmatic, but also system wide.

Achieving positive peace

Beyond simply the absence of violence, positive peace “describes the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies”.¹⁰ Countries with high levels of positive peace are more likely to maintain stability and recover from shocks, and so avoid the likelihood of conflict.¹¹ By investing in holistic and systemic improvements in the attitudes, institutions and structures that create peaceful societies, countries emerging from conflict can transition from violence to positive peace.¹²

Indicators for positive peace¹³

- A well-functioning government
- Equitable distribution of resources
- Free flow of information
- Good relations with neighbours
- High levels of human capital
- Acceptance of the rights of others,
- Low levels of corruption
- A sound business environment
- Health and wellbeing of the population

At the intervention level, peace-positive outcomes could include:

- excluded groups playing a decision-making role in how local resources and services are distributed for inclusive community benefit;
- reduced tensions related to access to communal land and water sources;
- reduced grievances related to access to job and economic opportunities;
- enhanced trust between different community groups across divides;
- inclusion of gender, youth and other perspectives;
- collaborative and fair ways of working and sharing resources between affected groups;
- more positive perceptions of fairness and transparency of service delivery or aid provision;
- increased access to economic markets; and
- increased transparency in business environments.

Supporting and sustaining peace is fundamental for all sectors and groups operating in conflict contexts. In FCAS, insecurity, instability and social tensions directly impact on the ability of humanitarian, development, and climate actors to deliver support and services effectively. Organisations working in conflict-affected settings, whether providing shelter to people displaced

by conflict, supporting education or investing in infrastructure, interact with local conflict dynamics. This is unavoidable; their presence comes with the power to influence the dynamics and direction of conflict. Sustaining peace is essential because it creates stable and secure conditions for all actors to operate effectively and achieve lasting impacts for the communities they work in.

Integrating peace in FCAS

In Alert's experience, there are several key elements required to successfully integrate peace into humanitarian, development, climate and investment efforts. Alert has used a range of approaches with non-peacebuilding partners to support their interventions; these are described below.

Locally led solutions

Locally led peacebuilding puts local ownership and agency at its core. Impacted communities define what peace means in their context, set priorities, strategic direction and governance structures; they are not merely implementers of externally defined programmes. Decision-making power over strategy, programme design and resources shifts towards these local groups, rather than being held by international donors or external organisations. For example, Alert worked alongside local civil society partners in Nigeria, Angel Support Foundation and Kende Avese Foundation, to implement the Powering Peace through Climate Adaptation project. This focused on community-driven planning and decision-making across pre-existing conflict divides to co-develop local peace and climate adaptation plans. This approach meant that impacted communities had ownership over the conflict and context analysis ensuring that the solutions and approaches were more relevant and sensitive to local dynamics. By centring the voices of marginalised community members, including women and youth, the approach helped to avoid reinforcing existing inequalities. The project delivered a peace dividend, uniting communities that had previously fought over natural resources both in the protection of those resources and in the shared economic benefits and opportunities.

To support such solutions, we have collaborated with other actors, offering technical assistance, organisational development, training and mentoring in ways that enhance rather than replace local capacity. For example, during our work within the Conflict Sensitivity Integration Hub (CSIH) in Honduras with consortium partners FHI360 and Dexis, we worked with local partners to co-design a methodology to conduct a peace and conflict analysis, moving away from the conventional service delivery model and ensuring the transfer of technical skills to local implementing partners for more locally led and sustainable outcomes. Emphasising equitable, local partnerships means that roles, risks, rewards, resources, voices and decision-making are shared fairly, supported by transparent communication, processes and learning.

Dialogue can be a useful process to enhance mutual understanding between different community groups and between communities and authorities. It helps to find areas for collaboration, supports planning and builds awareness of community tensions and conflict drivers. It also supports participation for key local groups such as community leaders, government, civil society and business stakeholders. Our experience shows that, when shaped and driven by those directly affected by conflict, dialogue leads to more sustainable peace outcomes. In Rwanda, for example, survivors,

perpetrators and other impacted communities of the 1994 genocide co-designed trauma-informed dialogue to support reconciliation. Similarly, in Lebanon, the use of dialogue brought together Lebanese and Syrian refugee communities to reduce tensions and strengthen social cohesion. By enabling communities to identify issues and lead conversations, dialogue can become a powerful tool for locally led peacebuilding.

Locally led initiatives must be rooted in local realities, reflecting conflict dynamics, power relations, cultural norms and both formal and informal structures, ensuring that interventions are contextually relevant and adaptable. This approach contributes to sustainability and legitimacy, making peacebuilding efforts more likely to be embraced by communities, strengthening long-term resilience and enduring beyond external funding or timelines.

Context and conflict analysis

Context analysis is a fundamental part of effective approaches that respond to complex dynamics and understand the needs and interests of an array of actors. Effective analyses, whether framed around conflict, violence, fragility, political economy or risk mitigation, should examine underlying economic, social, cultural, environmental and political drivers and root causes of conflict and tensions (horizontal, between and among community groups, and vertical, between community groups and authorities). The analysis includes examining relationships between and roles of different actors – those that can support relief, development, peacebuilding and business efforts – and the spoilers for peace.¹⁴ For example, as part of its work on the European Investment Bank's (EIB) Conflict Sensitivity Helpdesk, International Alert developed a framework for EIB to understand how its projects interact with fragility and resilience, including ways to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive-peace outcomes. The methodology analyses fragility and resilience across seven dimensions and identifies implications for EIB projects. Alert conducted a number of assessments for EIB using this methodology, including political economy analysis where appropriate. This supported EIB projects to be more sensitive to the local peacebuilding context, while meeting their internal requirements around conflict and fragility.

Analyses for peacebuilding, or work that has a more explicit emphasis on positive-peace outcomes, also assess sources and capacities for conflict and violence prevention, and resources that support resilience (individual, community, systems etc.) Analyses should also include examination of the gendered dynamics of conflict.

Gender-sensitive and inclusive programming

Gender sensitivity and gender inclusion offer opportunities to integrate peace-positive approaches into humanitarian and development work, as well as business activities and investments. This is especially true in contexts where gender inequality, gendered power imbalances and patriarchal gender norms represent key drivers of conflict and barriers to inclusive development.

Alert has worked on gender-centred peacebuilding and violence prevention programming and with partners to integrate a gender inclusion and conflict sensitive (GICS) approach into their work through training, capacity development and joint initiatives. This involves adopting a comprehensive and relational approach by examining femininities, masculinities and other gender identities and how

the relations between gender identities co-construct expectations on each other and define power relations.

An intersectional approach considers how gender interacts with other social identity markers, such as age, class, ethnicity or caste, sexual orientation, rural/urban location, disability and marital status, to create different positions of power, agency, need and vulnerability. A transformative approach aims to challenge or transform unequal gender and power relations, promoting equality in addition to specific programme outcomes.

Alert's Living with Dignity project in Tajikistan aimed to prevent violence at the family level, using a combined sensitisation, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and economic empowerment approach that looked to transform harmful behaviours towards women and girls in 120 families. The intervention worked with family members to explore harmful societal and patriarchal norms that restrict the rights, mobility, and physical and mental wellbeing of women, seeking to shift attitudes to allow women to realise their economic rights and decision-making potential. The approach led to significant reductions in violence and increases in income and economic wellbeing. For example, a significant reduction was found in reports of all forms of intimate partner violence with the number of men perpetrating and women experiencing emotional, physical or sexual intimate partner violence being reduced by 50%. After the intervention, the proportion of women earning money increased approximately four fold to 78.9%. Furthermore, food and financial insecurity dropped, with the percentage of people reporting having borrowed food or money in the past month reducing by 60% for women and 18% for men.¹⁵ Understanding and addressing gendered socio-economic barriers and drivers of conflict supports inclusive development.

Skills building and tailored training

Working with local partners to develop tailored training and advisory support is a key peace integration technique. Skills building and tailored training can contribute towards sustaining peace in context-specific ways. This is primarily among local conflict-affected communities, but also among stakeholders, such as the government, private sector, media and civil society organisations (local, national and international). For example, through the Alert-led project Enabling the Business and Human Rights Agenda in the Horn of Africa, International Alert and local partners provided training and technical advice to oil, gas and mining companies around conflict-sensitive due diligence and grievance mechanisms. Using our guidance toolkit, we supported them to integrate approaches that meet human rights requirements, while becoming more sensitive to the conflict context and risks. This included learning from peacebuilding approaches to build trust with and between communities. The results were positive both for communities and for the companies and investors who benefited from better risk management and improved social licence.

This approach involves building community leaders' skills to prevent and manage conflicts and tensions, facilitate dialogue, and analyse conflict dynamics and conflict sensitivity. It is also a key method for building credibility and trust in services and institutions, and among key community leaders and groups. Skills building and training are most effective when sustained and framed by clear objectives, and closely aligned to the incentives and interests of the relevant actors.

Collaborative learning platforms

In FCAS, addressing overlapping humanitarian, development and peacebuilding challenges requires coordinated conflict-sensitive approaches. Collaborative learning in platforms such as conflict sensitivity hubs provides structured spaces for humanitarian, development and peace actors to share experiences, analyse emerging trends and strengthen collective understanding of local conflict dynamics. These platforms typically offer a combination of research, training, capacity-building, convening and advocacy, while also providing direct advice and support to partners. By focusing on joint learning and collaboration, they enhance the quality, coordination and impact of humanitarian, development and peace interventions, ensuring that programming is responsive to local realities and informed by diverse perspectives.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), our team established a Conflict Sensitivity Hub to integrate an enhanced understanding of context dynamics into development and humanitarian responses and to respond to the growing appetite to coordinate assistance better. The hub in DRC has so far supported 311 development and humanitarian organisations (277 local and 34 international) to deliver their work in the areas of the country most affected by violence. This support ensured humanitarian access, managed risk and generated peace-positive interventions that were better adapted to the needs of conflict-affected communities. Conflict sensitivity hubs typically offer a combination of research, analysis, training, capacity-building, learning and lobbying. While providing advice and support directly to partners, these hubs aim to enhance the quality, coordination and impact of interventions in conflict settings for those most affected.

Flexible and participatory approaches

Alert ensures its work is flexible and participatory, both foundational features of locally led peacebuilding. This way of working increases access to funding for local and non-state actors, enabling communities to design and implement programmes that reflect their priorities. Additionally, these approaches establish inclusive mechanisms for community participation in decision-making, ensuring that diverse voices shape interventions and that activities are responsive to local realities. Finally, participatory monitoring and accountability systems, including peace indicators, ensure that programmes remain transparent, adaptive, and aligned with both local needs and broader humanitarian, climate, and development objectives.

We recognise that working in FCAS can pose challenges for different sector partners, such as risks to physical safety of staff, partners and communities, access issues, delays to operations and the need for rapid and changing responses in a dynamic environment. As such, we work in ways that champion safe and adaptable approaches. This includes adopting an adaptive programming model, continuous robust risk assessment and maintaining updated conflict and context analyses. These measures allow for Alert and our partners to anticipate and respond more effectively to emerging risk, minimise harm to those involved, safeguard programme continuity and ensure interventions remain sensitive to the evolving needs of affected communities.

Key entry points for lasting, positive change

The lessons identified here are drawn from International Alert's work with local and national partners, international non-governmental organisations, multilateral agencies and donors, and companies and development finance institutions (DFIs). They outline how to integrate conflict sensitivity and adopt programming approaches, policies, structures and culture to achieve positive-peace outcomes. The lessons are drawn from the pitfalls and challenges as well as good practice. We have gathered experience on these issues through institutional relationships (service provision, advice and strategic partnering), consortia (providing a peacebuilding element to a development or humanitarian intervention), conflict hubs, and conflict reporting and monitoring systems.

Our approach to integrating conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding is based on the needs of the context, including conflict and peace dynamics and operational constraints, partner organisational mandates, priorities, expertise, capacities and methods, and intended change goals. Methods and entry points include:

- working with local, national and international partners to leverage their context and technical knowledge to inform wider practice;
- support on conflict analysis, risk assessment, conflict monitoring and early warning;
- conflict sensitivity hubs;
- training and capacity development; and
- institutional capacity-building, strategy development and monitoring, evaluation and learning for conflict and gender sensitivity.

Alert has partnered with and supported stakeholders and organisations across a wide range of sectors to integrate peace into their work in FCAS. Through our work, we have gained insights into three key areas – humanitarian assistance, development finance and climate adaptation – for peace integration that can deliver greater impact, contribute to long-term stability and foster shared, positive outcomes across sectors. Our key learning on how this applies to these areas is outlined below.

Humanitarian assistance

Conflict continues to drive humanitarian needs worldwide. Applying a conflict-sensitive approach to humanitarian programme design can enhance and support the effective and efficient delivery of aid to those most in need. Effective humanitarian action requires more than meeting immediate needs; it calls for a deep understanding of the context in which assistance is delivered. Regular conflict analyses should inform due-diligence processes, ensuring that programmes account for the complex links between aid, peace and social cohesion. This awareness enables interventions to minimise harm while maximising their contribution to stability.

A proactive integration of peace is essential. Embedding peace within results frameworks, risk assessments and evaluations ensures that programmes are not only responsive to needs but also intentional about reducing tensions. This approach moves conflict sensitivity from a compliance

exercise to a driver of more equitable and sustainable outcomes. With this approach, humanitarian aid can help to prevent the next crisis, not simply respond to the current one.

Adaptive and participatory methods are equally critical. By creating spaces for community dialogue, elevating local voices and adopting flexible management practices, humanitarian actors can better align interventions with community priorities and remain responsive in volatile environments. Sustainability also depends on building skills and partnerships. Investments in conflict sensitivity hubs, incentives for peace-positive proposals and stronger partnerships with peacebuilders help institutionalise practices that bridge humanitarian and peace objectives.

Neutrality and impartiality are not compromised by conflict sensitivity and peace-positive approaches, they are strengthened. By engaging with conflict realities responsibly, humanitarian actors can deliver aid that is safer, more effective, and ultimately more sustainable. Humanitarian actors face significant constraints when working in FCAS, including heightened physical risks to staff and communities, increased operational costs, limited access to affected areas, and frequent disruptions due to volatile conditions. For humanitarian partners in particular, aid delivery can unintentionally deepen tensions or foster cohesion, depending on how it is managed and approached. While integrating conflict sensitivity and promoting social cohesion is widely acknowledged as important, practical barriers remain. Limited funding, time pressures, and the absence of resources, guidance, or incentives make integration challenging. There are also concerns that addressing conflict dynamics could compromise humanitarian neutrality or redirect funding away from crisis contexts.¹⁶

The complexity of conflict settings further complicates intervention efforts. Communities often face layered stressors such as displacement, gender-based violence, and limited access to basic services, which reduce their engagement with aid programmes. In regions like South Kivu in the DRC, ongoing land-access issues, inter-community tensions and disease outbreaks worsen these challenges. Although comprehensive conflict, context, and gender analyses are sometimes seen as secondary to immediate aid delivery, in practice they are crucial for effective, adaptable programming.¹⁷

Conflict sensitivity builds on the principle of ‘do no harm’ by enabling actors not only to reduce risks but also to strengthen opportunities for positive dynamics such as social cohesion or trust in institutions. Peace-positive humanitarian action goes further by intentionally contributing to conditions for sustainable peace.

Embedding positive-peace outcomes into programme designs can help break entrenched cycles of violence by addressing conflict at its root causes. This makes recurring outbreaks of conflict less likely, laying the groundwork for lasting solutions and, ultimately, reducing humanitarian need.

Development finance

In FCAS, local businesses can significantly influence peace and conflict dynamics. While economic development is recognised as a tool for post-conflict recovery, private sector and development programmes frequently lack inclusive, peace, conflict and gender-sensitive approaches.

DFIs like the African Development Bank and the European Investment Bank have acknowledged the importance of conflict sensitivity, and the emerging field of peace finance is aligning investment with peacebuilding goals. Innovations such as Peace Bonds, Peace Renewable Energy Credits and

the Peace Finance Standard aim to channel investment into initiatives that support peacebuilding. Tensions persist, however, between economically strategic investments and the peacebuilding need for inclusive growth that benefits society at large. Although DFIs are traditionally focused on growth and returns, they are uniquely positioned to deliver peace dividends due to their ability to offer concessional finance and leverage public funds.¹⁸

Multinational corporations, particularly in the extractives sector, often operate within volatile environments but may withdraw due to high risks or lack of viable opportunities. To address these challenges, International Alert works with businesses, investors and DFIs to make their efforts more peace positive. Our tailored support includes conflict analysis, policy review, training and monitoring. Additionally, we collaborate with climate initiatives to ensure these projects are not only conflict sensitive, but that they actively contribute to peace. This multifaceted approach aims to foster sustainable investment and peacebuilding in the regions most affected by conflict and instability.

Peace and conflict analysis equips DFIs to manage risks in both directions: risks that arise from the context and affect the investment, and those that flow from the investment to the context. Beyond safeguarding financial performance, this analysis strengthens environmental, social and governance outcomes and highlights opportunities to generate peace dividends. To be effective, it must go beyond narrow political risk assessments and instead be framed around fragility, resilience and political economy. This includes generating project level insights within broader national dynamics, looking beneath visible violence to underlying drivers such as exclusion, mistrust or contested land use, and mapping power relationships with explicit attention to gender.

Participatory methods such as dialogues, focus groups and joint workshops ensure affected communities are at the centre, while continuous updating keeps analysis relevant. When these elements are in place, peace and conflict analysis becomes not just a risk management tool, but a pathway to more inclusive and resilient investment. By aligning investments with peace, DFIs can unlock long-term stability and returns while supporting resilient economies.

Climate adaptation

Violent conflict and instability put climate programmes at risk. Climate change impacts threaten livelihoods, especially those that are weather-dependent, reduce income, create food insecurity and worsen poverty. Conflict compounds this by hampering communities' ability to adapt, cope and respond to climate shocks such as extreme weather events and rising temperatures. In FCAS in particular, it is imperative that conflict prevention goes hand in hand with climate action,¹⁹ yet FCAS receive significantly less climate funding than other low-income countries.²⁰

When climate action fails to consider conflict dynamics in FCAS, it can inadvertently reinforce inequalities, deepen divisions and fuel further violence. Changing this is necessary and possible. Climate action that is informed by local conflict contexts, power dynamics and human security considerations can effectively mitigate risk and contribute to positive, lasting change. Integrating peacebuilding approaches into climate action is more likely to deliver shared benefits such as social cohesion, conflict prevention, stability and justice, increasing the impact and sustainability of climate programmes. Furthermore, peacebuilding tools like dialogue can open spaces for cooperation across conflict divides and build trust.

Effective climate adaptation in FCAS requires more than technical solutions: it must also integrate peacebuilding principles. Conflict-sensitive approaches ensure interventions 'do no harm', while peace-positive strategies go further by intentionally fostering inclusive governance, trust and cooperation. By addressing underlying social tensions, promoting equitable participation, and linking climate and conflict expertise, adaptation programmes can become more sustainable, resilient and impactful.

Climate adaptation implementers can achieve this through the following approaches:

- Embedding peace and gender sensitivity into climate adaptation enables programmes not only to reduce risks and prevent maladaptation, but also unlock opportunities for collaboration, inclusion and resilience.
- Integrating conflict analysis, participatory governance and local knowledge means that interventions strengthen social cohesion while achieving environmental objectives.
- Aligning climate action with peace-positive approaches enhances both the effectiveness and sustainability of investments, creating durable benefits for communities in FCAS.

Recommendations

Integrating conflict sensitivity and peace-positive approaches into the work of DFIs, climate adaptation and humanitarian actors is a necessary step if they are to meet the needs and support the aspirations of communities affected by conflict. Furthermore this is essential to delivering the objectives and missions of the actors and institutions themselves.

Sustainable development requires new and adaptable approaches across all sectors engaging in conflict contexts, where the majority of need is. These contexts represent the greatest opportunities to make a meaningful impact. A business model for development that has left behind so many people living in FCAS needs genuine change if it is to deliver real impact. Focusing on conflict sensitivity and peace-positive approaches across humanitarian, investment, development and climate responses offers an opportunity to shift away from fragmented interventions to collaborative strategies that lay the foundations for peace and long-term stability.

The recommendations below provide entry points for peace integration. They are based on the work of Alert and our partners, as well as lessons from the wider sector. This list is not exhaustive, but it offers a starting point for deeper discussion and collective global action.

From risk awareness to conflict sensitivity

- Recognise the links between climate, conflict and fragility in strategies and programmes.
- Break silos through coordinated, system-wide analysis and response.
- Adopt organisation-wide approaches to conflict sensitivity beyond standard project checklists.
- Make robust conflict and peace analysis the foundation of all programming.

Proactive integration of peace and inclusion

- Move from 'do no harm' to 'do good' by embedding peace outcomes.
- Use shared climate adaptation, humanitarian and development security challenges as entry points for cooperation.
- Incorporate dialogue, mediation and trust-building into all interventions.
- Prioritise gender transformative approaches for equitable adaptation and peace.
- Integrate conflict, gender and peace into results frameworks and evaluations.

Flexible and participatory approaches

- Increase access to funding for local and non-state actors.
- Create inclusive mechanisms for community participation in decision-making.
- Build local capacity to reduce knowledge and power imbalances.
- Establish participatory monitoring and accountability systems with peace indicators.

Capacity and structures for integrated action

- Apply peace and conflict lenses in selecting funding locations and partners.
- Build institutional awareness and capacity for conflict sensitivity across donors and implementers.
- Invest in cross-sector partnerships and locally led processes.
- Link research with practice to inform evidence-based programming.
- Provide flexible, long-term funding to sustain impact.

Learn more about our approach to peace integration: <https://bit.ly/peace-integration>

Endnotes

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- 3 The 17 goals, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs – Sustainable Development, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>, accessed on xxx
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- 6 Real GDP growth, International Monetary Fund, April 2025, https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDP_RPCH@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEO_WORLD
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- 8 What is peacebuilding?, International Alert, <https://www.international-alert.org/about/what-is-peacebuilding/>, accessed on 1 August 2025
- 9 A fundamental challenge to the nexus is that it can serve to deepen silos rather than encourage a truly integrated approach in complex, conflict settings. An unintended consequence has been that agencies define themselves within their pillar (humanitarian/development/peacebuilding) rather than examining opportunities for their interventions to respond to and address conflict dynamics and contribute to peace. Indeed, the nexus is founded on the assumption of 'three' separate systems, whereas peace integration is about a systems-wide understanding of and engaging with the context and taking a peace-positive approach across an array of interventions.
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- 11 Positive peace report, Institute for Economics and Peace, <https://www.economicsandpeace.org/research/positive-peace-report/#:~:text=Positive%20Peace%20is%20defined%20as,approach%20to%20analysing%20societal%20systems>, accessed 1 August 2025
- 12 What does terrorism tell us about peace, International Alert, November 2017, <https://www.international-alert.org/blogs/what-does-terrorism-tell-us-about-peace/>
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