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Integrating gender and security in climate adaptation

Principles for success

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Introduction

Men and women, and boys and girls, experience climate change, peace and security in different ways. Deeply rooted gender norms, expectations and roles lead to different impacts and shape differential coping and adaptation mechanisms for different genders, generations, ethnicities, religions, abilities or sexual orientations. Ignoring these dynamics risks creating new vulnerabilities and reinforcing existing inequalities.

To be truly fit for purpose, sustainable and context-specific solutions to security threats deriving from climate stress must be grounded in the dynamics of each context and the unique needs and insights of people in their varied social identities. Harnessing the valuable contributions of diverse stakeholders and tailoring initiatives to lived experiences of climate change, insecurity and conflict is critical to making climate adaptation decision-making and strategy development sustainable.

This guidance note builds on a series of engagements and research conducted in Myanmar, Mali, Lebanon and Jordan into the current state of climate adaptation programmes and policies, and the extent to which they integrate gender and security. It offers six principles and responses that can support donors and practitioners globally to better integrate conflict and gender into climate adaptation programming.

Principle 1:

Maintain focus on the impacts and threats of the climate crisis when responding to conflict insecurity or disaster.

- Keep the climate crisis at the top of the agenda despite competing priorities.
- Practise an interdisciplinary approach, with an emphasis on inclusion.
- Seize the opportunity for climate adaptation to have a positive impact on peace and gender inequalities.

The challenge

The climate crisis presents us with an unprecedented challenge. A history of complacency and too little action has led to a crisis that now threatens everyone. But while the threat is global, its direct effects are not equally distributed. The impacts of the climate crisis are felt particularly severely in places already experiencing the shocks and

repercussions of violent conflict.¹ The economically marginalised, who often depend on the natural environment for their very survival, suffer the twin burdens of conflict and environmental degradation. Over time, the variation in temperatures, as well as the changing frequency and intensity of rainfall and extreme weather events (wildfires, floods or dry spells), stack on top of existing stress factors to increase the risk of political instability and violence.

Despite this, climate stress is often deprioritised in the face of more immediate shocks or crises. In the past year alone, the countries in which we conducted research not only suffered from the impacts of COVID-19 but also experienced economic crisis and an explosion (Lebanon), a government overthrow (Mali) and a military coup (Myanmar). While policy, government investment and donor support for climate adaptation and mitigation is put on hold,² groups in vulnerable situations continue to live and deal with the stresses of climate change. The underlying pressure of climate stress keeps on building in the background, interacting with other conflict dynamics as a ‘threat multiplier’.³

The response

The first step towards an integrated security, gender and climate response is to maintain focus on the impacts and threats of climate stress despite competing priorities. Recognising these impacts and stresses are woven into security dynamics and therefore need to be addressed together, will **keep climate at the top of the agenda** in the face of conflict insecurity or disaster. This will help build responses that understand and address the competing shocks of climate and conflict in an integrated and sustainable way.

Affected populations need to be at the centre of any response. Their indigenous knowledge and experiences are vital to designing interventions sensitive to the dynamics and needs of different populations. This requires **an interdisciplinary approach with an intentional emphasis on inclusion**. It includes creating the space to bring together affected populations, expertise from a range of sectors, including gender, natural resource management, climate adaptation, peacebuilding and conflict, as well as working ‘outside of the silo’ to bridge sectoral barriers and better prepare for local-level shocks and stresses. Ensuring this happens through, for example, promoting a consortia approach to project design and programming, and encouraging partnerships across sectors would lead to interventions strengthened by the involvement of a broader range of stakeholders.



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A man watering crops near the Niger river in Segou, Mali

Meaningful representation of a diversity of groups promoting and designing holistic programmes will lead to more effective solutions. In turn, this will help build community and governance resilience to the overlapping threats of climate change and conflict stressors.⁴ Failing to include this diversity risks either overlooking the needs and existing response mechanisms of those most affected or, at worst, leading to programmes based on an incomplete understanding, for example, framed by the perceptions of a small, aged, male elite from majority groups that sideline women’s voices. This will result in inadequately designed programmes, which in themselves risk becoming a source for new grievances.

Such an approach will help to avoid unintended negative consequences, or maladaptation; when actions backfire and have the opposite of the intended effect – increasing vulnerability rather than decreasing it.⁵ But it goes further than this. It offers **an opportunity to use climate adaptation interventions to also build peace**, and for peacebuilding interventions to have a positive impact on climate stress. The threats and effects of the climate crisis transcend ethnic and geographic lines. Integrating a peacebuilding approach into efforts to mitigate these impacts can bring

people together across conflict lines. The much-needed focus on opportunities for future cooperation, such as on proper water management, over land use and tenure, or on environmental preservation, can foster dialogue and exchange and start to build trust through joint action.

Principle 2:

Build an understanding of the environmental, political and social context.

- Integrate conflict and gender analysis into climate adaptation programming and vice versa.
- Ensure assessments and early warning systems apply a gendered approach that integrates climate and conflict.
- Regularly monitor the context and update the analysis to continually adapt programming.

The challenge

Climate change increasingly converges with political, social and economic pressures and shocks to expose uneven

economic development, weak governance and existing inequalities. Layering the impacts of climate change on top of this increases vulnerabilities to climate-induced conflict, in different ways for different people based on their identities.⁶ At the same time, people's resilience to climate shock is weakened by protracted conflict and fragility. In Mali, 80% of the population is engaged in agricultural activity, farming, herding or fishing, for self-subsistence or additional revenue. The double pressure of climate and conflict is illustrated by pressure on output. Climate variation impacts water availability and quality of soil, in turn impacting the quantity of agricultural output. Conflict can limit access to fields and water points, and disrupt trading habits. Women, primarily engaged in subsistence agriculture and small trade activities, are particularly affected by this, with their livelihoods impacted twice over, by climate and by conflict.

Every intervention in climate-stressed, conflict-affected areas therefore needs to strive to understand the environmental, social and political context in which it is taking place. Building a picture of local and national governance dynamics, existing management of natural resources, social relations and inequalities, pre-existing situations and grievances will help to design a programme that both avoids unintended consequences and builds peace-supporting opportunities.

In rural-based populations, natural resources are the lifeline for the day-to-day survival of subsistence-based population groups. But what of those who are landless, or the urban poor, or those who have physical/mental impediments, belong to minority religious/cultural groups or are just simply labelled and undervalued by local power structures? Defining marginalised groups requires going beyond a tick-box exercise and working not only within local structures, but directly with 'identified' groups themselves, to be able to define how they fit within the local structural and cultural systems in place.

The response

This requires **bringing conflict and gender analysis into climate adaptation** programmes and **early warning systems** and climate analysis into peace and conflict programmes. Analysis should look at where climate and security risks overlap and how they are shaped by people's gender and social identities. It should identify if, where and how climate stress exacerbates social tensions related to the environment and natural resources. Such findings can be broken down to explore how diverse women, men, girls and boys are experiencing and responding to these risks,

including access, use and control of resources, household and community expectations, decision-making power, and physical mobility and migration.

In this, being sensitive to situations of maladaptation is required. Adaptations that communities themselves make to cope with conflict, climate change and environmental degradation can increase vulnerabilities and inequalities, such as retracting to ethnic identities for support, turning to armed groups or riskier economic behaviour.⁷ For example, Shan farmers in Myanmar, displaced from more fertile valleys, struggle to grow legal crops in the less fertile upland areas to which they have been moved. Consequently, farmers have turned to growing the more resilient crop of opium.⁸ Adaptation for these farmers has therefore led to the practice of riskier and illegal economic behaviour.

The same risk of maladaptation applies to external intervention. Poorly designed interventions aimed at supporting adaptation may create new problems and grievances.⁹ Building a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics that shape actions and inequalities, or how gender shapes the differences in the social expectations surrounding diverse women and men, can help guard against climate adaptation negatively impacting on conflict dynamics and influencing how and why conflict turns violent, and how violence is perpetrated.¹⁰

Both conflict fluctuations and climate shocks can rapidly change how things look and operate on the ground. Therefore, the ways in which they interact and the ways in which interventions interact with them can also rapidly change for better or for worse. Time and budget needs to be built into interventions to **allow for regular monitoring of the programme and its interactions with the environment**. This needs to be a compulsory component of the project cycle, risk management and mitigation. This will enable the regular assessment of the tools and approaches employed and rapid adaptation based on results.

Analysis and monitoring should take a broad approach to focus on the impacts of climate stress on social, political and economic dynamics, to differentiate the impacts on diverse groups of people, to look at the governance of resources and to explore livelihoods and the way populations provide for themselves. Doing this alongside building an understanding of local ownership and positive coping mechanisms will help to focus intervention on the most needed areas and enable the tailoring of programming to the specific dynamics in each area.

Principle 3:

Put gender transformation at the centre of the action.

- Build programmes around an understanding of gender relations and inequalities.
- Ensure all groups have access to information, knowledge and decision-making processes.
- Integrate local experience and action into national and global frameworks to ensure more equitable gender representation and engagement in shaping responses.

The challenge

Conflict dynamics, gender norms and expectations, and power dynamics play a major role in shaping both how climate change is experienced by men and women, different generations, ethnicities, religions, abilities or sexual orientations, and their agency to adapt and respond to shocks. Women and girls are not only often victims of violence fuelled by resource scarcity and at increased risk of sexual violence due to displacement,¹¹ but their livelihoods can also be affected, especially if they are (or are forced to become) the sole/main breadwinner of the household. Gendered 'push' and 'pull' factors lead men and women in and out of affiliation with armed groups by different social mechanisms. These pathways are constituted by (for example) expectations for men to 'provide for and protect' a family, and for women to marry, gain an education and economic security, and support family life.

Likewise, gender norms and expectations can play a significant role in peacebuilding and civil society activity. While this cannot be generalised, patterns of social exclusion and marginalisation condition women to cooperate, rather than compete, to achieve their goal.¹² This is seen through women taking crucial roles in defusing local tension, resolving intergroup conflict and providing communication networks, as well as advocating for inclusive governance processes. At the same time, adaptation increases pressure on women where they suffer the double, sometimes triple, burden of practical barriers, gendered norms and burdens related to conflict legacies.

Whether men are fighting, fall victim to armed violence or have to flee the risk of violence, this can inadvertently create space for women to step up to local leadership and governance roles. This may have contributed to higher numbers of female village tract/ward administrators (VT/WAs) in Karen-populated areas in Myanmar. These VT/WAs

play an essential role as the interface between the central state government and the rural population in Myanmar. Here, the practice of electing women as village chiefs has spread since the 1980s as men were "increasingly reluctant to risk their lives as chiefs". Many women who took on this challenge only did so when asked to stand by respected male leaders in their community, seeing it as a way of serving their community rather than a desire for a leadership role. They emphasised how they used strengths perceived as belonging to women, such as supporting community development, with a focus on cooperation and negotiation.¹³

While gender dynamics are gaining attention¹⁴ in climate-security circles, there is still some way to go in making this practical in policy-making and programming.¹⁵ Addressing inequalities requires a transformative approach that accounts for how existing structures often deny women's rights and marginalise sexual and gender minorities.

The response

Given the centrality of gender in shaping how people experience and respond to conflict and climate change dynamics, it is critical that **programmes are built around an understanding of gender**. Integrating gender from the outset into the design and planning phases of climate change and security programming will enable this. There are three key aspects: (i) identifying vulnerabilities through considering the impact of conflict and climate on different gendered actors, gendered access to power and gendered power dynamics; (ii) identifying the difference in access to knowledge and information between different gendered actors; and (iii) identifying opportunities for action.

The integration of gender needs to go beyond the programming level to ensure that a diversity of groups can meaningfully participate in climate change policy and planning processes, including nationally determined contributions, national climate change action plans and land tenure policies.¹⁶ While public discourse is often the domain of elder males, indigenous women usually have their own knowledge and practices for transmitting this to the next generation. Building spaces for women and for young women and young men to participate in dialogues around climate change and the security context surrounding natural resource management is critical for genuine representation of diverse perspectives. This is important for harnessing the ideas, approaches and experiences of this broader group, and it is key to building the next generation of engagement and action. However, it can also provide critical insights into conflict dynamics. For example, motivations for women's



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Syrian refugees harvesting chard in Bekaa Valley, Lebanon

support for violent extremist groups in the central Sahel are multifaceted. Women may take a pragmatic approach on 'jihadist governance', while not necessarily fully sharing the ideology of the extremist groups. They look at this as a package, highlighting, among other things, the ability of these groups to manage natural resources in areas otherwise neglected by failing states. At the same time, while the most repressive measures, such as limiting access to education and decision-making, may not be supported, they do not represent any change to the everyday lives of women living in rural areas in the central Sahel.¹⁷

Understanding the relationship between natural resource management, and the social, political and conflict dynamics surrounding it, helps build a picture of how better engagement of communities in stronger governance of resources can have an impact on providing alternative coping mechanisms to deal with economic and resource-scarcity issues.

This requires all **groups, including varied social and gender identities, to have access to information, knowledge and decision-making processes.** Different barriers for diverse men and women must be addressed, and spaces and mechanisms created to ensure broad representation.

Similarly, **local experience and action needs to be connected to national and global frameworks** for equitable gender representation and engagement in shaping responses. For example, connecting the experience on the ground to the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda recognises the interaction between the climate crisis, conflict-affected contexts and the impacts on women's and girls' safety. Creating the space to learn from these experiences and shape responses accordingly in national WPS planning and monitoring processes is key.

Principle 4:

Integrate commitments to global frameworks in national policy and planning processes.

- Create clear guidance for climate National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Gender Action Plans (GAPs) on the interaction between conflict, fragility and gender and their impact on climate adaptation actions and vice versa.
- Follow up commitments to support climate adaptation with investment in programming that integrates a gender- and conflict-sensitive approach.

The challenge

Countries have signed and ratified a number of international frameworks on gender: the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the WPS agenda and their related National Action Plans (WPS NAPs).

Similarly, there are international frameworks and plans to address the climate crisis, notably the 2015 Paris Agreement and Nationally Determined Commitments (NDCs), the Cancun Adaptation Framework and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and the Lima work programme on Gender Action Plans (GAPs). NDCs have outlined the actions that individual countries will take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to build resilience to adapt to rising temperatures. NAPs go further in putting this into action at a country level, identifying medium- to long-term adaptation needs and implementation strategies.

Frameworks, policies and plans therefore exist. The challenge is not so much in the number, or types, of agreements but in that these plans rarely intersect or 'speak' to each other. This results in implementation that is often slow and that develops in silos, where a coordinated analysis and roll-out would be more effective. The situation is further hampered by a lack of funding, presenting a serious challenge to implementation. In 2018, 76 countries had made commitments to WPS NAPs. However, budget allocations for these NAPs were made for just 22% of these plans.¹⁸ The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) reported in 2019 that 62% of all bilateral aid remained gender blind and only 4% of development aid targets gender equality as its primary objective.¹⁹

Climate-focused NAPs rarely take security issues into consideration. WPS, on the other hand, has a strong understanding of the influence of gender norms, relations and inequalities, and how they drive and intersect with conflict. In 2015, there was the first formal recognition that climate change interconnects with the WPS framework.²⁰ However, the linkage between security, climate and gender is yet to be consistently or substantially highlighted in WPS NAPs. Analysis of the WPS NAPs of 80 states found that 14 included language on climate change following resolution 2242.²¹ While this is progress, there is clearly a need for increased action to make these resolutions effective and translatable on the ground.

The response

The WPS agenda offers an entry point for an international framework to integrate gender, climate and security. It provides a useful lens through which to address climate change as a global security threat, while focusing on its gendered dimensions. This can filter down to the related NAPs, offering a ready vehicle for member states to put these resolutions into action.

Lebanon's National Forest Plan (NFP) offers an example of adapting national policy along the lines of a global framework. In 2015, the NFP was created to increase protection of forests steered by the Ministry of Agriculture. Through the NFP, the Ministry aimed to align national policies on environmental protection with international frameworks. Gender is integrated throughout the NFP document. It engages with women's roles and their socio-economic vulnerabilities, and it considers how forest-related issues particularly affect low-income communities. The NFP promotes gender assessments and seeks to actively integrate gender-related activities and indicators. As an instrument, it aims to empower women's participation and leadership by focusing on capacity-building. While progress has been made with the integration of gender, the understanding of its intersection with conflict remains a challenge.

Like Lebanon, Mali has ratified multiple international frameworks on environment, climate change, and women and security. The Agency for Environment and Sustainable Development (AEDD) in Mali is at the forefront of ensuring that national environmental policies and international policies are aligned. The AEDD has a gender focal point and is assisted by a National Environmental Council, comprising of local civil society and experts. In 2011, the Ministry of Environment and Sanitation launched its first national climate change policy (SNCC), a national climate change strategy and the National Adaptation Programme of Action with the support of the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation and the German Corporation for International Cooperation. The AEDD coordinated the entire process. The injection of support from the international community has accelerated the opportunities for the alignment of national environmental policies and international policies, enabled the inclusion of a gender focal point and championed the involvement of local civil society.

NAPs and GAPs offer the best chance to respond at a national level directly to the impacts of the climate crisis.

NAPs are invaluable here because they feed down into the community level to support local initiatives. But they can also be used to support peacebuilding dialogues around natural resource management. To engage in these activities, there needs to be a feedback loop from communities and civil society to influence the progress on climate and WPS NAPs. This requires **clear guidance on the interaction between conflict, fragility and gender, and their impact on climate adaptation actions and vice versa.**

However, guidance alone is not enough. Climate funds can play a significant role in ensuring that conflict and gender are prioritised and integrated. **Commitments to supporting climate adaptation must be followed up with investment in programming that actively supports a gender- and conflict-sensitive approach.** Setting criteria for gender and conflict analysis to accompany any funding proposal and for gender and conflict to be considered throughout the proposal along with targets for ensuring the inclusion of a gender- and conflict-sensitive approach would contribute to shifting understanding and programming in climate response.

Principle 5:

Strengthen the links between local realities and responses and broader governance and decision-making processes.

- Broaden engagement at the sub-regional level. Include representation from different genders, generations, ethnicities, religions, abilities and sexual orientations.
- Build inclusive bottom-up climate policy.
- Use peacebuilding approaches to strengthen links between the local, sub-regional, national and global.

The challenge

Communities are having to adapt to the impacts of climate stress on their lives and livelihoods every day. In Mali, cultivators continue to farm despite variation in rainfall and longer dry spells, and herders have to change their traditional transhumance routes and habits due to the variation of river courses. In Lebanon, communities live with water sources that are polluted to dangerous levels, and ecosystems stretched due to increasing demand. In Myanmar, they must adapt to the impacts of deforestation on their way of life and livelihoods (hilly region) and salinisation due to coastal degradation (delta and coast), or face extreme heatwaves and drought (central Myanmar).

Policy-making is too often piloted from the capital city, which is buffered from the realities of conflict in communities living at the periphery. At the best of times, central government can seem remote to communities. International agendas are even more remote, disconnected from the realities, socio-cultural norms, traditions and lived experience on 'the front line'. This is the case for the gender and climate agendas, which remain significantly donor-driven and dependent on international support.²²

In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, there is the added complication of the breakdown in trust and relationship between citizens and the state, particularly where there is ongoing contestation between different authorities, such as in Myanmar's national ceasefire areas where state government and various ethnic armed organisations vie for control²³ or in Mali's Inner Niger Delta.²⁴ This mistrust, together with the state government and services often having limited to no reach in remote areas, can result in the state having little practical meaning in people's daily lives.

This is compounded in places affected by conflict with overall weaker governance. Where there is weak governance there will also be weaker natural resource governance mechanisms. These will fail to meet need, exacerbating existing inequalities, for example, in access to water and land. These inequalities are compounded when groups that already face discrimination are discriminated against again in response efforts. This was the case in Sunsari, Nepal, when floods destroyed villages in 2008. Families with metis (a traditional identity referring to male-bodied feminine people) received only half the relief given to other families due to discrimination by the district leaders who were distributing supplies.²⁵ Learning from local realities and taking these lessons into national and global approaches is key to developing contextualised programming.

The response

To bridge the gap, **engaging with a wide range of stakeholders at the sub-national level** presents an opportunity to learn from adaptation already happening and support continued local ownership. An understanding of the gender dynamics of local structures is essential. The obvious go-to for consultation tends to be the more traditional structures and leaders and formal local authorities. These structures, while important, can also be patriarchal, gerontocratic and limited in their representation of different social and gender identities. For example, in Myanmar's Kachin state, Christian churches

and organisations are crucial actors in responding to environmental and conflict crises, but their leadership structures are male dominated. Engagement that stops at this level risks missing women's and young people's perspectives, concerns and contributions.

Identifying the barriers to inclusion in broader governance processes and strengthening connections between local and national governance would help **build inclusive bottom-up climate policy rather than a top-down application of international frameworks**. This requires linking community-based organisations (CBOs) to work with broader national policy-making and implementation. Policy-makers need to act on this, to include representation of diverse groups in policy formulation. The WANA Institute in Jordan provides local communities with a platform to exchange experiences on both horizontal and vertical levels. CBOs worked with one another, building a diverse network across the country, and sessions were held between CBOs and governmental bodies. Capacity-building and accompanying support improved their proficiency in advocacy and coordinated action. WANA bridged the experiences of local groups with institutional entities through opening conversations and co-designing strategies. This improved communication and enabled local communities to think and plan collectively about how to address issues affecting them all.

As the WANA case demonstrates, **a peacebuilding approach helps to strengthen the links between the local, national and global**. The creation of safe spaces and the use of, for example, dialogue can tease out the complexity of lived challenges in the face of climate and security impacts, along with the resilience and adaptation that already exists. It can work with people to identify their own solutions and how they want to influence national and global policy-making. Similarly, peacebuilding approaches can design the right kinds of spaces and mechanisms to positively include different genders, generations, ethnicities, religions, abilities or sexual orientations. WANA wanted adaptation plans to have a solid understanding of gender dynamics, noting how roles and responsibilities differ depending on issues related to access to resources, legal protocols and socio-political norms. This translated at the project level into capacity-building training and consultation workshops that looked at ensuring availability of information on how climate change affects men and women, ensuring that women have access to resources to tackle the impacts of climate change and seeking the opinions of women in vulnerable situations.

These approaches are key to building an adaptation policy and approach that links local realities and responses to broader governance and decision-making processes. With this in place, responses are more likely to be better suited and adapted to the realities on the ground, making the most of the informal and formal mechanisms that already exist, and in their very application to work to promote greater inclusion and equality.

Principle 6:

Promote and support the active participation of diverse groups.

- Ensure diverse groups and their concerns are an integral part of designing, or building upon, adaptation measures.
- Engage different groups in community dialogues or processes in ways and in spaces that do not detract from income generation or unpaid home/family care work.
- Put into place gender-sensitive community-based monitoring systems that track the effectiveness and sustainability of adaptation programmes.

The challenge

In rural-based populations, natural resources are the lifeline for the day-to-day survival of subsistence-based population groups. Climate change adaptation and peacebuilding activities therefore need to support the different genders, generations, ethnicities, religions, abilities or sexual orientations that use and are impacted by such natural resources to be a part of processes on access, utilisation, and monitoring of natural resources. Programming that takes into account the diverse needs and opportunities of a broad range of stakeholders will have a better chance of being effective and sustainable. But it also offers climate adaptation approaches the chance to double up as a transformative process that both tackles the issue of the impact of climate change while also redressing exclusionary practices and norms.

If participatory processes are not present throughout climate adaptation design and implementation, the very same activities can not only become ineffectual but may also potentially increase the vulnerability of the same groups that it sought to support.²⁶ Climate adaptation needs to move beyond the stronghold of experts, to be acknowledged as "...a social change process which also entails transforming systems and structures".²⁷



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A young woman working in a rice paddy in Myanmar

The response

Understanding who uses and accesses local natural resources and for what purpose, and who is recognised to make 'legitimised' key decisions in the community about those resources **must be an integral part of designing, or building upon, adaptation measures**. This includes understanding who is not afforded a voice at this table, and why. In forest areas of the Karen state in Myanmar, both women and men perceive the forest as a male space, which hinders recognition of women's participation. Women state that they do not play any role in using or managing forests and are not, therefore, relevant stakeholders. However, women collect firewood from the forest daily, and a female shop owner who sells firewood directly uses and brokers forest-derived products.²⁸ If programmes include the voices of only those who are seen as 'legitimate', they will miss what these women's experiences of forest management have to offer adaptation responses, risking project effectiveness. This will further exclude women from their right to participate in decision-making that affects them. Conversely, highlighting women's roles and daily use of forest products could serve to strengthen their confidence in stepping into leadership roles in forest management.²⁹

Embracing a participatory approach will facilitate a better understanding of how natural resources are used, and how the impacts of the climate crisis and environmental degradation can positively or negatively impact the availability and access

to land, water and forests. It will also draw on lessons on how to build resilience and adaptation. Furthermore, climate adaptation itself can become a move towards positive peace through gender-transformative approaches.

For this to happen effectively, **different groups need to engage in community dialogues or processes on their own terms in ways and in spaces that do not detract from time needed for income generation or unpaid home/care work**.

This is essential in ensuring that groups are not overburdened with additional responsibilities that take them away from earning an income or brought into the conversation in such a way that presents them with risks to their safety and security, such as asking women to travel to venues in insecure areas, or expecting women and men to have equal dialogue in environments where this is socially unacceptable.

Those leading these processes therefore need to understand why and how to include diverse groups in consultation around natural resource management and security. This could mean, for example, holding dialogues or conducting research in the spaces that different groups already attend. It may involve thinking out of the box to find those spaces that are 'safe'. In Lebanon, healthcare centres were recognised as spaces that could provide opportunities to reduce tension and create connectedness between different communities because of the centrality and importance of healthcare provision to both host communities and refugees.³⁰ Taking the conversation to where people are increases both

participation and inclusion, but without increasing the burden on the individual to participate.

Merely including diverse groups in consultations and dialogue is not enough. To ensure that adaptation programmes are effective and sustainable, **community-owned monitoring systems should be put in place**. Such systems can measure who is using what natural resources and for what purpose. They can monitor whether the promotion and inclusion efforts are working to identify required adaptations, as well as whether communal resources are protected according to community-agreed guidelines. These systems can help to measure how well adaptation to different shocks or changes happens, and how diverse and marginalised groups and those in vulnerable situations benefit (or not). They can flag early if natural resource management processes are exacerbating or mitigating tensions, enabling programmes to adapt quickly to minimise harm and maximise the positive impacts that emerge.

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About the Peace Research Partnership

Saferworld, Conciliation Resources and International Alert are collaborating on a research programme that generates evidence and lessons for policy-makers and practitioners on how to support peaceful, inclusive change in conflict-affected areas. Funded by UK aid from the UK government, the research focuses on economic development, peace processes, institutions and gender drivers of conflict. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

Endnotes

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