INTEGRATED CLIMATE SECURITY ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Integrated climate security assessment and management (ICSAM) supports holistic climate change adaptation and conflict management in complex situations by identifying existing risks to security and peace and assessing their significance. This is particularly important in complex situations, such as drylands, where climate change impacts and other vulnerabilities merge to create severe and continuous adverse impacts.

The capacity to adapt to change is the product of multiple factors including physical, economic and social dimensions. In such complex situations, these diverse factors can coalesce to increase vulnerability and decrease human security. Using ICSAM approaches, decision makers can identify diverse sources of vulnerabilities, which in turn support anticipatory and precautionary adaptation strategies. Including these approaches in adaptation helps neutralize the forces that heighten conflict, enhances the coping capacity of households and nurtures social ties.

Security risk factors include any set of events, or combination of events, that threaten or are perceived to threaten the quality of life or human wellbeing (economic, cultural, social, environmental and personal). Conflict can be both a risk factor and an outcome. Understanding these security risk factors, including their link to conflict, is critical if policy makers are to develop appropriate responses that enhance capacity and human security over time. In contexts of financial and skills scarcity this helps governments establish priorities and respond to the greatest risks at an early stage. Adopting ICSAM frameworks can be an important stepping stone to greater security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Understand the full extent of climate change impacts and their link to security (political stability, human wellbeing, and conflict) and their evolution over time.
2. Accurately identify potential drivers of insecurity, vulnerabilities, instability, and conflict arising from climate change.
3. Facilitate agreement on priorities including for budgetary allocation and investment decisions by revealing the greatest risks to human security and conflict.
5. Apply ICSAM horizontally across development sectors and vertically across hierarchical governance.

Integrated climate security assessment and management supports:

- Effective identification of risks—including weak and diminishing rights and social, environmental and economic factors—within a locality, supporting the adoption of strategies to manage these risks;
- Integrated understanding of the linkages among climate risks across sectors (horizontally) and different hierarchical levels (vertically) including global, national and local levels;
- The continuous analysis and management of trade-offs among economic growth, environmental protection, and human wellbeing;
- Anticipatory identification of security threats and possible impacts before it occurs, and is therefore a precautionary tool as it enables governments and communities to be prepared before conflict occurs.
Multi-level and multi-sectoral vulnerabilities to climate risks

- **Increasing aridity of land** means less land and fewer natural resources are available for productive activities, intergenerational transfer, new landseekers, and mobile pastoralism. This phenomenon is also increasing resource capture by powerful groups at the expense of poor rural dwellers. In a Partnership for African Environmental Sustainability (PAES) study in Ethiopia, 61% of the interviewees reported strong links between conflict and scarcity of land while 32% suggested the link was weak.¹

- **Weak property rights** adversely impact sustainable management. Where adaptation programmes are promoted under property rights that are not responsive to scarcity of resources and fail to allow for equitable access, efficient use and security of tenure, then conflict may ensue.²

- **Large investments** as adaptation measures including industrial agriculture, mega-dams and biofuels production often disadvantage already vulnerable groups as a result of the dislocation of households, the loss of cultivable land, and the loss of access to essential water resources.

- **Migration and resettlement** is a centuries-old strategy for coping with climate risk. It eases pressure on land and provides a way to pool climatic risks across space. However, large-scale migration can result in conflict, particularly between migrants and indigenous populations, especially when migrants are perceived as the reason for deprivation and despair. Dislocation can result in migrants claiming ‘parental’ land that they had previously discarded, further fuelling conflict.³

- **Limited access to justice**: Equal and unconstrained access to justice (both perceived and actual) is an important element in securing adaptation and avoiding conflict. For rural people, justice can be evasive where well-established indigenous institutional arrangements for managing conflicts have been replaced by state-run courts that take precedence over dispute resolution by community elders and leaders. Mistrust, prior experience and the perception that these courts are corrupt, incompetent or biased all contribute to an absence of legitimacy. This prompts people to take justice into their own hands.⁴

- **Development projects may privilege better-off groups over the most vulnerable** especially as these are often located where:
  
  - There is an existing infrastructure that facilitates access for outside investors and planners;
  - Human capacities are already relatively strong as this maximizes impact; and
  - Communities have the capacity to make financial and material contributions to co-fund the project.

  This can further marginalize already under-served communities and widen the income gap, consequently intensifying grievances of those who have less. This too will eventually contribute to insecurity and conflict.
Formulating security and conflict-sensitive climate adaptation programmes and integrating them into national development programmes still remain a big challenge, even though the Cancun Adaptation Framework underlines the importance of climate risk assessment in Sections 14 (b) and (e). Here we present a simple eight-step framework for assessment.

**Figure 1. Integrated Climate Security Assessment Framework: A Simplified Conceptual Diagram**

![Diagram](image)

This eight-step process can be described as follows:

1. **Profiling and contextualizing** the project area involves compiling baseline data that sets the context and explores community grievances.

2. **Identifying the climate security concerns or risks** includes those issues, sectors, and resources that directly or indirectly affect stability given their significance to economic, political, and social wellbeing.

3. **Determining the climate security factor (CSF) or factors** that relate to impacts of climate change; this includes those factors that impact on economic and social stability and welfare.

4. **Analysing the likely consequences of each CSF identified** involves determining relative impacts and vulnerabilities in order to develop a more finely-tuned understanding of climate security.

5. **Consulting with relevant authorities, stakeholders and rightsholders** helps gather information, opinions, and perceptions of local and sectoral experts through interviews and community-focused group discussions.

6. **Characterizing each of the identified CSFs**—the costs and benefits related to their social, cultural, behavioural, economic, and ethical dimensions—and assessing possible actions supports well-informed, locally-appropriated and holistic decision-making.

7. **Developing specific actions**—policy measures, as well as programmes and projects—on each CSF is then undertaken to recommend options to policy makers and stakeholders.

8. **Implementing and monitoring/following-up** includes comprehensive reporting on actions undertaken to assess their impacts.
Valuable lessons about the conceptualization and application of environmental security assessments can be drawn from: UNEP-Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC); African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS); International Security Studies (ISS); Foundation for Environmental Security and Sustainability (FESS); the Institute for Environmental Security (IES); and the Environmental Change and Security Program (ECSP) of the Woodrow Wilson Center, which is exploring the connections between population growth, water scarcity, degraded ecosystems, and their links to conflict. Adelphi Research, a Europe-based research organization, conducts, among other studies, quantitative modelling and indicator development to explain climate vulnerability and resource conflicts.

The USAID Conflict Assessment Framework is designed to: identify and prioritize the causes and consequences of violence; understand the interaction among factors considered triggers and amplifiers of violence; and ensure that development and humanitarian assistance supports local efforts to manage conflict and build peace. Although still at a draft stage, the East African Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) has also developed an environmental security assessment (ESA) guideline for the region and offered two high-level expert training programmes as part of its capacity development programme.

End Notes

1 UNDP 2012  
2 Teklu et al 2003; Ejigu 2009  
3 Teklu et al 2003  
4 PAES 2003; Ejigu 2006  
5 PAES 2003  
6 PAES 2003  
7 Baldwin 1997  
8 PAES Interview 2011

Policy Pointers

The integration of climate change in development policies and programmes has the potential to enhance peacekeeping and peacemaking processes. A climate security centered development strategy offers opportunity for conserving ecosystem integrity, regional growth and development while at the same time reducing inter-country tensions, including over transboundary water management.

Climate security should not be equated with national security and development, which would erode its distinguishing features among other policy objectives.7

Be aware that conflicts related to climate change induced scarcities and changing social relations may occur both during times of environmental strife and after. Elders in Southern Ethiopia, for example, explained that intercommunity conflicts (cattle raiding) occur not during times of drought, as both people and cattle are too weak to move around, but during times of recovery once pastoralists are able to establish how many cattle have perished.8 Raiding cattle of other clans or ethnic groups may be used as a strategy to restock.

To be effective, climate adaptation must promote holistic approaches aimed at alleviating poverty, enhancing food security and water availability, combating land degradation and soil erosion, reducing loss of biological diversity and ecosystem services, as well as improving adaptive capacity. Addressing social inequalities—such as differences in land tenure, the lack of access to resources including credit and education, exclusion from decision-making—are essential for enhancing ability to adapt the production chain sustainably. Such multi-sectoral, multi-level, multidisciplinary and multi-institutional undertaking requires enormous capacity at the planning, policy development and implementation levels.

Author: Mersie Ejigu is a member of the IUCN CEESP Theme on Environment, Conflict and Security. He is also Executive Director of the Partnership for African Environmental Sustainability (PAES) and is currently a lead member of the Africa 2060 team at the African Union.


The views expressed in this brief are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent IPACC or IUCN CEESP or our partners.

The publication of this series has been made possible in part through funding from the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa and the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs.