



Seventh African Development Forum

*Acting on Climate Change for Sustainable
Development in Africa*

Governance for Peace and Security in a Changing Climate

Issues Paper #6

ADF VII • 10 - 15 October 2010 • United Nations Conference Centre • Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



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I. Overview

1. Africa's vulnerability arises from a combination of many factors, including extreme poverty, rising population, frequent natural disasters such as droughts and floods, and agricultural systems (crop and livestock production) that depend heavily on rainfall. It is a threat multiplier which exacerbates existing trends, tensions and instability, and undermines the sustainability of livelihoods.

2. Current scientific literature on climate change concludes that countries subject to environmental damage and dwindling production capacities – including deforestation and land degradation – are more likely to experience both internal and external conflict.

3. **Different countries** will experience the impacts of climate change in different ways. It benefits some individuals, communities and regions, and is detrimental to others. Certain developing countries will be extremely vulnerable to climate change because they are already at the limit of their capacity to cope with climatic events. Because climate change affects so many sectors and aspects of life, impacts will likely be felt first *as greater pressure on any pre-existing stress points*. The initial response to climate change therefore, is to address current weaknesses in society once and for all before they worsen and spread in a more hostile climate. Improved governance is required to defuse recognized problem areas.

4. **Weather related disasters, migration, peace, stability and security** provide a nexus of concern for the future of Africa in a changed climate. *Further decline in environmental security is likely with climate change. This will probably be expressed through pervasive decline in rural incomes and further environmental degradation, often as a consequence of decreasing water availability.* When people are hungry they have three choices: starve, revolt, or migrate.

5. **Conflict and poverty** are the two most important challenges to development and also among the most important drivers of refugee, migration and population displacement in the continent. Poor people are the most vulnerable to conflict, especially conflict over access to and ownership of natural resources that could result from negative impacts of climate change on livelihoods.

6. **Growth potential:** Africa is a young continent with many small States and a few large ones. It is going through a long process of post-colonial readjustment as power structures, resource flows and pathways for wealth creation become stabilized. It is now poised for economic takeoff and threatened badly by climate change and issues of equitable and sustainable utilization of limited resources of transboundary water ways. Managing the necessary processes of adaptation and transition to a Green Economy requires a continent of stability.

II. The main issues at stake

A. Stability and security as factors of climate adaptation

7. Maintaining stability and security is essential for the many adaptive and development processes to proceed as efficiently as possible. The relationship between climate change and security however is complex. It is difficult to predict where conflict may break out. However, climate change may

aggravate conflict in Africa in the following ways: changing patterns in climate and agricultural yield could result in increased population movements and increased stresses on urban destination areas; the control of resources could become a political instrument; and Africa's natural resources may attract the attention of richer, resource-poor countries and changes in climate could contribute to conflicts arising over competition for food, water, energy or land. For example, tension between farmers and herders is common: pastoral communities along borders are notoriously insecure and this could worsen in a more variable climate. Transboundary waterways may become flash points where rainfall decreases, runoff becomes more variable or inter-State tensions arise from competition for limited water resources.

8. **Other potential sources of conflict** related to climate change include unregulated migration, destabilized settlements and increased recruitment to armed groups as a result of reduced employment opportunities. The injustices of climate change impacts will make such recruitment easier.

9. **Opportunity to strengthen solidarity:** Against this backdrop, urgent action is needed to improve responses to variability and change, and ensure greater cooperation across sectors and between countries. There must also be more awareness of change and its implications beyond national borders. Climate change impacts may promote improved collaboration and co-existence if countries and their people elect to work together to find solutions. There should be real benefits from sustained investment in adaptation and mitigation, job creation and stimulus for economic development. Adaptation activities that emphasize – approaches such as early warning systems and engagement of civil society in community and stakeholder consultations about climate risks could help prevent conflict.

10. Likewise, adaptation could contribute to longer-term peacebuilding in conflict-prone areas by enhancing the capacity of local communities to adopt a low-cost adaptation strategy to manage communal resources. Respect for the rule of law is essential for such activities, whether they derive from traditional rulers or the modern State. Currently, the situation is such that the combination of water scarcity due to increased demand and changes to water resources due to climate change has made the need for cooperative and equitable and sustainable management of transboundary water resources more important than ever.

11. **Promoting stability:** Ongoing programmes to strengthen governance, reduce conflict and promote stability require sustained support, while some may stand to gain from incorporation of new initiatives. These should include 'climate proofing', national and local development strategies and programmes with employment generation as a by-product. The methodology used for environmental security assessments can help in evaluating impacts of environmental change and use of natural resources on peace, food security, and ecosystem sustainability. Peacekeeping must be well resourced with some capacity kept on standby so that when conflict becomes imminent or breaks out, stabilizing efforts are prompt and quickly effective, wherever required. Attention also needs to be given to ensuring that peacekeeping missions are provided with adequate mandates.

B. Vulnerability of fragile states and states in transition

12. Fragile States and those emerging from conflict are characterized by weak government institutional structures and services such as law and order, and as such, may inadvertently harbour illegal and anti-social behaviour. This situation makes it very difficult to assist communities in these countries (and those in neighbouring ones) to adapt to climate change. It also makes neighbouring countries more vulnerable to being overwhelmed in times of crisis, by an influx of climate refugees from less organized

and under-prepared States. The international community has recognized the importance of addressing the root causes of fragility and some donors are directing more than half their aid to fragile states. Greater priority must be given to repairing the social fabric of Africa and enhancing the capacities of key governance institutions.

13. As explained above, climate change poses significant security threats. Fragile states are characterized by weak structures and services, and are likely to struggle to address these threats. Therefore, these states are particularly vulnerable to the risks created by climate change.

C. Large-scale migration

14. Resource conflicts in the semi-arid areas of Africa are a growing concern. This is evident in pastoral conflicts and migration patterns, which, in turn, are affected by climate change. Drought, with its implications for water shortages and food insecurity, is currently the most significant weather-related hazard contributing to conflict and mass displacement/movement of pastoral communities. Action is needed to monitor movements and for governments to put in place strategies and policies to facilitate safe passage across borders.

15. Desertification is the primary cause of environmental refugees worldwide and can be expected to intensify as a result of water shortage and increased population stress. Many migrants end up in cities. More than half of the world's population currently live in urban environments, and urban migration or 'labour mobility' is an integral part of growth and development where jobs are available. While Africa is still predominantly rural, climate change is likely to disrupt rural livelihoods and accelerate urban migration. Not only is uncontrolled or forced migration a catastrophe for those concerned, it is also a cause for disease, it absorbs resources, stresses urban infrastructure and reduces food production, and lead to conflict. In some instances where resource constraints become impossible and conflict becomes unavoidable, voluntary migration to safer environments may need to be encouraged through incentives.

16. ***Africa already hosts the highest number of refugees, displaced and stateless people in the world.*** Historically, migration streams in Africa were determined by economic and social factors. Climate change and environmental degradation were rarely considered as important determinants of human mobility and migration. Consequently, climate does not feature at all in migration and development policies and plans in Africa. Global estimates suggest that as many as 200 million people could become climate migrants by 2050, doubling migrant levels today. An important emerging trend is the increasing number of women in African migration streams. The effects of climate change and its impact on pastoral communities are now more conspicuous than ever with evidence pointing to increasing levels of migration and conflict over often scarce resources.

17. ***Changing pressures:*** Climate-induced migration used to be the consequence of natural disasters. With climate change, resource scarcity, food insecurity, and water shortages will become important drivers of voluntary, long-term climate migration in Africa in the 21st century. Potential flash points therefore need to be identified and addressed.

18. ***Many small countries:*** Further, with its large number of relatively small countries, Africa is particularly prone to migration between countries in times of hardship. While refugees from natural disasters can usually return home over time, future climate migrants could be forced to find new permanent homes, often in other countries. The African Union Commission (AUC) and Regional Economic

Communities (RECs) may need to work with States to extend the current freedom to travel within the region, to freedom to settle, and provide appropriate incentives for this. Wherever possible, migrants should be encouraged and assisted to become self-supporting. Where international assistance is available, it should aim at enabling migrants to become integrated and productive assets to local economies, rather than long-term problems. Migration strategies and policies may require updating to encompass climate migrants. Government support may well be essential in such circumstances to create opportunity out of necessity, and avoid extra burden on already resource-constrained communities. In most cases it is more cost effective to reduce drivers of migration and keep people at home rather than react once they have moved.

D. Increased natural disasters

19. Increase in climate variability is an early sign, and sometimes, a confirmation of a changing climate. It has already led to a great number of weather-related disasters, affecting many vulnerable communities in Africa, especially the poor. The frequency and impact of disasters triggered by natural hazards, and the ensuing social and economic losses are rising in Africa. There is need for greater understanding of the complex interplay between socio-economic factors and biophysical hazards, evidenced in the high levels of vulnerability to disaster risks in several areas of the continent. Such disasters can lock people into endless poverty and become a powerful force for migration.

20. Current relief programmes try to respond to disasters quickly enough to keep communities together in their villages, with their livelihoods more or less intact. In a more hostile future climate, as disasters become more frequent and have greater impact on livelihoods, pressures to abandon unsustainable livelihoods in traditional homelands will grow. The impact of such occurrences must be mitigated however, through improved preparedness and resilience building (including information, early warning, and safety nets such as index insurance, temporary shelters and refuges, food relief and reconstruction assistance).

E. Hot spots

21. Climate change is far from equitable. While some countries may even benefit initially from a changed climate, others are particularly vulnerable and will suffer serious early impacts. There is a need to examine the underlying vulnerabilities in the region and determine levels of resilience to climate change. These will inform benchmarks for increasing socio-economic resilience and decreasing social vulnerability.

22. This calls for research and innovation. There is a need to examine how particular types of problems have been addressed in certain places and whether there is knowledge that can be used elsewhere. An example of such knowledge is the pastoralist innovation systems used in the Horn of Africa for herders to gain access to high-value fodder that enable their livestock to survive longer, and cooperation with farmers to sell hay to herders and permit their livestock to graze on drought-stricken fields. This is common practice in some parts of Darfur that might prove useful elsewhere. This indicates a need to support learning from innovations in households and local and national institutions.

23. Small island developing states and low-lying coasts in the Indian Ocean are expected to be among the most badly affected by climate change. Some islands even face total submersion from com-

bined sea level rise and storm surge. Coastal protection measures may postpone evacuation, but there are risks to life behind dykes, as shown by Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

24. The state is the primary player in addressing issues raised by climate change. Internally, it is the state that is responsible for administering the use of resources as well as managing conflict and contending with security threats. Externally, the state is the principal agent in negotiating the use of internationally-shared natural resources.

III. Conclusion

25. Faced with a growing number and severity of natural disasters and additional stress on existing pressure points in society, it is crucial to minimize the impact of such disasters and maintain peace and security by pre-empting strife. Stability is essential for sustaining growth and improving the quality of life. Key issues for improving governance in this domain include:

- a) The need to maintain **stability and security** by ensuring broad-based development;
- b) Building a coalition for action through strengthened institutional architecture and regional cooperation to address conflict prevention and resolution;
- c) Supporting **fragile states and states in transition**;
- d) The risks of **mass migration** destabilizing cities and neighbours;
- e) Improved **disaster preparedness** to reduce impacts; and
- f) **Hot spots**: supporting states most vulnerable to climate change.

IV. Key questions

A. Keeping the peace

26. What measures must be taken now to help ensure that peace, stability and environmental security are maintained through the major environmental, economic and social changes ahead? What is the role of good governance in preventing environmental-induced conflicts and dealing with climate change itself, through adaptation and mitigation? Do good governance and the rule of law extend far enough from capital cities? Are governments aware of the importance of environmental security assessments to help evaluate impacts of climate change on people's security, i.e., as a threat multiplier in the security domain?

B. Fragile states and states in transition

27. What special measures must be taken now to help strengthen fragile states and states in transition and assist them to adapt to climate change and move towards more sustainable development pathways? How do we ensure that disaster risk reduction measures are integrated into post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation processes? What measures are needed to create heightened awareness of the linkages between natural resources and conflicts, and the challenges and opportunities for conflict prevention, peacemaking, and peacebuilding?

C. Large-scale migration

28. How can the destabilizing effects of large-scale migration be avoided? What must be done to improve the environmental security of rural and urban dwellers? What strategies and policies are needed to address growing urbanization, massive growth of slum dwellings and growing concerns that the urban and peri-urban poor, who tend to live in ecologically-fragile zones, are disproportionately threatened by the environmental hazards and other risks posed by climate change. How can Africa avoid its cities becoming more overloaded through climate-driven urban migration? What more needs to be done to appreciate the link between conflict and natural disasters and vulnerability, especially in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, where population pressure is being exacerbated and land degradation and desertification are increasing rapidly.

D. Increased natural disasters

29. Do African countries have an appropriate level of awareness or adequate response mechanisms to disasters? How do we strengthen collaboration and coordination across regionally based structures and trans-regional networks to mitigate and respond to man-made disasters? How can we best preserve the basic rights of vulnerable communities, by ensuring that they are protected *from flood, drought and storms during the many changes ahead?*

E. Particularly hard-hit areas

30. What should be done for communities on vulnerable small islands or in areas that will bear the brunt of climate change? How secure are coastal defenses against sea level rise and larger storm surges? To where will their people move when their homelands are no longer viable?

F. Ongoing initiatives

31. How should these be strengthened? How do we build greater collaboration and coordination across regionally-based structures that include government, the United Nations, donors and civil society in the following areas?

- a) Risks identified, assessed and monitored; and
- b) Comprehensive preparedness.

32. What steps are needed to ensure availability of shared up-to-date data (climate change modeling, biodiversity assessments, etc.)? Are there other relevant programmes that would benefit from reinforcing?

- a) Capacity-building programme for peace and security within the African peace and security architecture, for rapid deployment of African peace keeping forces (AUC and RECs);
- b) Stability and security programmes in fragile states; and
- c) Implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Increase in disasters and people affected: First impacts of climate change

In line with scientific observations and computer modelling of future climate conditions, climatic disasters are on the increase as the earth warms up. The year 2007 was fraught with climatic crises, often of an unprecedented nature. They included Africa's worst floods in three decades, unprecedented flooding in Mexico and South Asia and heat waves and forest fires in Europe, Australia, and California. By mid-November, the United Nations had launched 15 "flash appeals", the greatest ever number in one year. All, but one, were in response to climatic disasters. At the same time, more people are being affected by disasters because of poverty, powerlessness, population growth, and the displacement of people to marginal areas. The total number of natural disasters, mostly floods and storms, has quadrupled in the last two decades. Over the same period, the number of people affected has increased from around 174 million to an average of over 250 million a year (Oxfam-2007).

