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Environmental Governance, Climate Change and Peacebuilding
International Expert Forum (IEF)

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SUMMARY

› This brief summarizes the presentations and discussions from the eighth International Expert Forum (IEF) on environmental governance, climate change and peacebuilding. The purpose of the IEF was to unpack and revisit the links between environmental factors and issues pertaining to peace and conflict and to discuss how environmental governance and climate change policies can contribute to peacebuilding.
› For organizations working in the field of peacebuilding and conflict prevention, there is a growing need to understand these linkages, and integrate a more holistic approach in our programming and daily activities.
› While each environmentally-related component discussed at this seminar and in this brief – such as climate change, environmental degradation, and natural resource management – all deserve a more in-depth analysis in terms of its relationship to, and implications for, peacebuilding – we recognize that the policy debate is still in its early stages and an overview of the debate may serve a better purpose at this stage. Such an approach also underlines the complexities and interlinkages involved – and can contribute to identify overarching causal mechanisms, such as the centrality of governance.

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INTRODUCTION

Environmental degradation, natural resources, and climate change have been part of the debate on peace and security at least since the publication of the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, known as the Brundtland Report, in 1987, which described environmental stress as a source of armed conflict. In 1994, environmental security became part of the development agenda with the milestone Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The report introduced a new paradigm of sustainable development and the concept of human security. Human security took the individual as primary referent, rather than the state, and expanded the scope of security beyond the traditional military angle, to include – among other things – environmental security. From 2008 to 2015, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)'s "Environmental Cooperation for Peacebuilding" has undertaken a major effort investigating the link between the environment, natural resources, and climate change with peace and war aiming to assess how questions related to natural resources and other environmental factors can become opportunities for peacebuilding.[1] Today, these issues form an important part of the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that highlight the importance of the environment, sustainable natural resources management, and the protection of livelihoods for peaceful development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement, which were agreed upon in 2015, are both universal and constitute part of the new global platform that can lead to comprehensive implementation strategies for sustainable, peaceful development and climate change mitigation measures.

It is within this context that the International Expert Forum (IEF) on Environmental Governance, Climate Change, and Peacebuilding gathered scholars and policymakers to assess the state of the knowledge and debate at the crossroads of environmental governance and peacebuilding, looking at recent research, case studies and experiences from the field.

In her opening remarks, Karin Johanson from the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs recognized that 2015 was indeed a remarkable year for global governance in the areas of climate change, environment, and sustainable development. The United Nations (UN) carried out three major review processes; on peace operations, the UN's peacebuilding architecture and the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security respectively.[2] UN member states also agreed on a new treaty to address climate change and a new development agenda for the next 15 years – the SDGs. With these normative frameworks in place, governments and international agencies now face the challenge of living up to the commitments, which all emphasize interdependencies and links between different issue areas. Therefore, there is a need to better understand their links, correlations, knock-on effects, and their implications on the ground in order to formulate sound policies.

The link between the environment and issues pertaining to peace and security, however, remains controversial, not least within the UN and among its member states. In 2013, for example, an attempt by the UN Security Council to recognize climate change as an international security threat was opposed by a large number of countries. This reflects, in part, concerns about the Security Council's limited membership and a desire to avoid encroaching on the responsibilities of the General Assembly and the UN Economic and Social Council. These divisions also reflect the complexity of the causal relationships involved. On the one hand, there are studies that suggest that armed conflicts affect the environment. The impact can be direct through environmental degradation, indirect through environmentally unsustainable coping strategies, or institutional when armed

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1. See, Environmental Cooperation for Peacebuilding, http://bit.ly/1XzIgJs.
2. On follow up and implementation of the recommendations of the reviews, see, Arthur Boutellis and Andrea O Suilleabhain, Working Together for Peace: Synergies and Connectors for Implementing the 2015 UN Reviews (New York: International Peace Institute, 2016).

conflicts lead to the collapse of governance mechanisms and institutions that manage the exploitation of natural resources or protect the environment.[3] On the other hand, there is an ongoing debate over the influence of environmental factors on armed conflict and to what extent environmental factors contribute to the outbreak of violence, how they sustain and fuel conflict dynamics, and how they affect peacemaking and peacebuilding.[4]

In line with the IEF series, this brief understands peacebuilding as a broad concept that includes early warning, conflict prevention, peacemaking and efforts to strengthen governance and statebuilding. Such a broad understanding of peacebuilding is close to the concept of "sustaining peace" that was introduced by the recently adopted UN resolution 2282. "Sustaining peace" provides an opportunity to overcome the linear understanding of conflict that lies at the core of the 1992 Agenda for Peace and that has been governing the way the UN and its member states have organized conflict resolution.

Although it is well known that conflicts do not develop in linear ways, the tools to address conflict – such as prevention, peacekeeping, mediation or peace-building – have been organized in institutional silos. As a result, the UN's approach is often characterized by compartmentalized strategies and fragmented interventions, in which peacebuilding has been relegated to be a post-conflict activity, rather than an inherently political process that spans prevention, medi-ation, conflict management, and resolution. In the spirit of "sustaining peace", the focus on environmental governance, climate change, and peacebuilding is an opportunity to reconsider the compartmentalized approach to peacebuilding and instead make use of the synergies that integrated approaches offer.

ENVIRONMENT AND PEACEBUILDING: A SHIFT FROM CONFLICT TO COOPERATION

Over the past decades, the focus of the debate on the links between environ-ment, peace, and conflict has changed considerably. Reviewing the evolution of the field in academia, Ashok Swain, Professor at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, described how the early 1990s saw a strand of scholarly works predicting resource scarcity, competition over resources like water, and environmental degradation to become major causes of armed conflict in the future. However, from the mid-1990s there was a shift in the debate when it became clear that these predictions lacked empirical evidence.

Instead of focusing on the risk of armed conflicts, the attention of researchers and policymakers shifted to the many examples of cooperation over the use and exploitation of natural resources, particularly between states over international rivers. The cases showed that cooperation over natural resources was not only possible, but also far more common than outbreaks of armed conflicts. Many river basin organizations received donor support, emphasizing and strengthening the opportunities for development and benefits of cooperation.

When the subject of climate change and its effects entered the debate, the agenda once again became dominated by the risk of insecurity and conflict. Yet, a growing body of research has shown that the link between climate change and conflict is far from straight forward. However, as Elisabeth Gilmore, Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland pointed out, the potential effects of climate change on all sectors of society are substantial. Continued global warm-ing may contribute to social instability through economic underperformance, food insecurity and human displacements as livelihoods are lost. Gilmore's own research shows how in the long run, lower rates of socioeconomic development

3. See, for example, Dan Smith and Janani Vivekananda, A Climate of Conflict: The Links between Climate Change, Peace and War (London: International Alert, 2007).
4. See, for example, Nils Petter Gleditsch, "Wither the Weather? Climate Change and Conflict," Journal of Peace Research 49, No. 1 (2012), as well as other articles in this journal issue. Also, see Idean Salehyan, "Climate Change and Conflict: Making sense of disparate findings," Political Geography 43, No. (1) 5 (2014) and Halvard Buhaug, "Climate Not to Blame for African Civil Wars," Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America 107, No. 36 (2010).

are likely to lead to higher risks of conflict and climate change can become a threat multiplier.

There are a few important lessons to be learned from the evolution of the debate on the links between environment, climate change and peace and conflict. First, knowledge about when and under what conditions environmental factors can lead to conflict is still limited. There is no conclusive scientific evidence for a direct causal relationship between environmental factors in general, and climate change in particular, and the occurrence and frequency of armed conflicts. However, under certain circumstances, environmental stress and competition over natural resources can become contributing factors of conflict. Examples include communal conflicts over access to land or water. In many cases, exploitation of natural resources fuels conflicts by providing a source of income for warring parties. In addition to high-value extractives such as diamonds, gold, and certain minerals, trafficking of timber, agricultural products, or illicit products such as narcotics or ivory play an important role in sustaining many conflicts.

On the other hand and under the right circumstances, natural resources can support the recovery from conflict. In many conflict-affected countries, exports of natural resources constitute a major source of revenue. How to control and distribute revenues therefore becomes an important aspect in the aftermath of conflict. While natural resource management is increasingly addressed in peace agreements and directly or indirectly also in mandates of peacekeeping operations, it is however rarely prioritized.

THE CENTRALITY OF GOVERNANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PEACEBUILDING

From the above discussion, it clearly emerges that the relationship between on the one hand environmental factors, and on the other issues related to peace and conflict, is not deterministic. Whether or not environmental factors will contribute to conflict depends on how communities, societies and governments manage natural resources and environmental degradation. In fact, environmental and climate-related factors are more likely to lead to conflict in countries characterized by weak governance and institutions.

Governance becomes central in managing the security risks related to climate change and environmental degradation, as it is poor governance that can lead to the breakdown of the social contract, instability, and violence. For example, in areas affected by climate change, poor governance structures may contribute to unsustainable coping strategies and the absence of measures to increase resilience and encourage adaptation. In addition, the lack of effective management and regulation of natural resources can lead to unsustainable exploitation and environmental degradation, illegal trade, and unequal distribution of resources and revenues, which in turn can become drivers of outbreak and continuation of conflict.

In the words of UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, "natural resources need not, and should not, lead to conflict. The root causes of conflict relate largely to poor governance, failure to distribute benefits, as well as to human rights violations and environmental degradation. When access to resources and their benefits is equitable, then resources can be a catalyst for cooperation."[5] Eliasson points out two essential aspects: the importance of governance and the opportunities for peaceful development that environmental governance has to offer.

Governance is also a key component of the emerging concept of environmental peacebuilding. Introduced by Carl Bruch from the Environmental Law Institute, environmental peacebuilding is "the process of governing and managing natural resources and the environment to support durable peace." The concept highlights the potential of environmental factors for peacebuilding through good resource governance for conflict prevention, by offering an entry point for

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5. See, http://bit.ly/1UQHkyx.

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dialogue or economic incentives for peacemaking, and by addressing employment, livelihoods and revenues in the aftermath of conflict. In this way, environmental governance can become a peacebuilding tool in its own right.[6] Just like the concept of "sustaining peace", environmental peacebuilding spans conflict prevention, mediation, management, and resolution.

Similarly, in the different scenarios and models projecting the effects of climate change presented by Elisabeth Gilmore, the importance of governance is highlighted. How the effects of climate change will affect societies depends on how societies manage to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. In order to meet the climate goals, policies addressing climate change are not isolated from other policy areas and will affect laws and institutions governing for example the use of land, which in turn will have further ramification for food security. Policies that will help to achieve the goal of limiting global warming to 1.5° C can also become important policies for achieving development goals. Policies for sustainable economic growth and higher education levels will not only help meet the challenges to adapt to climate change, but can also help reduce the risk of armed conflicts.

These examples show that there does not have to be a trade-off between policies addressing the environment or climate change, and peacebuilding. One way to avoid trade-offs is to make climate projects conflict sensitive or include conflict analysis in projects dealing with natural resources. The other way round, peacebuilding projects can also be designed to strengthen climate-change adaptation. The focus should be on identifying synergies through adaptive, flexible approaches in project design and implementation.

While there is a great potential for synergies, challenges remain. Not enough is known about when, how and why environmental factors can work for peace. In order to identify causal relationships, more evidence-based knowledge is needed. With a focus on governance, it is equally important to go beyond institutions and the drafting of policies to ensure implementation, compliance and enforcement of rules. This also raises the question of who the beneficiaries are and whose peace is considered. Finally, environmental peacebuilding requires a long-term approach that goes beyond the often limited timeframes and short mandates of peacebuilding projects.

The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement provide a window of opportunity to realize these synergies. As the 2030 Agenda highlights, the relationship between sustainable development, the environment, and governance are crucial components for peaceful, inclusive and just societies.

ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE AND PEACEBUILDING IN THE FIELD

The following section presents several case studies and examples of the relationship between environmental governance, conflict and peace.

Therese Sjömander Magnusson, Director of Transboundary Water Management at the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), presented two examples of how supporting water governance mechanisms can contribute to peace and stability. The first case is the lower Jordan River basin, for which a multi-stakeholder platform with representatives from Israel, Jordan and Palestine has been put in place, including representatives of 28 local communities to allow for cooperative decision-making on transboundary issues.

The cooperation at the local level has yielded important results for sanitation issues and distribution of drinking water. On the regional level, the need to engage on water governance has been recognized by all governments. This example shows how environmental challenges can become an incentive for dialogue

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6. For more information and material on environmental peacebuilding and the collaborative effort of the Environmental Law Institute, the United Nations Environment Programme, McGill University and the University of Tokyo, go to http://www.environmentalpeacebuilding.org/.

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rather than conflict between parties whose relationships otherwise are characterized by a lack of trust and cooperation.

The second example is the Nile basin, where SIWI primarily advises and facilitates a traditional track-I approach. Key issues in the Eastern Nile basin concern disagreements over water allocation and infrastructure between upstream and downstream countries. As a third party, SIWI facilitates the political dialogue between the riparian countries in order to strengthen cooperation and dialogue.

Lessons from these cases include: 1) Focusing on the interdependencies and the sharing of benefits that cooperation offers to all parties are key elements of the strategy; 2) Highlighting the costs and losses of non-cooperation is a convincing argument for cooperation; 3) In order to build trust, efforts should primarily focus on mutually beneficial options, like improving water quality; 4) Clear incentive structures and long term funding are essential; 5) Leadership and informed decision making remain crucial and any effort will depend on identifying and involving agents of change that support the process.

The research of Ph.D. candidate Florian Krampe from the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University on the political and socio-economic effects of micro-hydropower projects in Nepal highlights the inherent complexities of environmentally sustainable development, peacebuilding, and state-building. The Nepali Ministry of Environment in cooperation with the UNDP and the World Bank has implemented a micro-hydropower development project in order to provide electricity to households in rural communities. The effects have been positive from a socio-economic point of view and a human security perspective. Communities gained access to a range of services and food security was improved. Traditional gender roles have also been positively affected.

A major question is whether such projects can also contribute to peace, increase stability and improve state-society relationships in post-war Nepal. Krampe's research shows inconclusive results in this respect. Surveys in communities that benefited from the hydropower development, showed that the involvement of local elites in the project strengthened the social cohesion locally and made alternative governance structures stronger. The project did not however result in increased trust and legitimacy for the state, as it was the international NGOs and individuals involved in the hydropower development that were given credit for the improvement, not the state.

The findings potentially contradict an important theoretical argument of the peacebuilding literature and assumption of many projects, namely that service delivery and performance of state actors can strengthen the legitimacy of the state and improve state-society relations. Even though the findings are based on a single case and might be due to context specific factors in Nepal, it points to a potential policy dilemma for peacebuilding efforts aiming at improving the relationship between the state and its citizens. For the emerging field of environmental peacebuilding, it shows that more research is needed in order to get a clearer understanding of the links and the dynamics at work.

The conflict in Darfur has repeatedly been linked to environmental scarcity and the effects of climate change. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated in 2007 that "the Darfur conflict began as an ecological crisis, arising at least in part from climate change."[7] However, framing the conflict in Darfur as a climate conflict misses the role of the government in Sudan and the failure of the institutions to manage livelihood changes peacefully.

The work of Johan Brosché, Assistant Professor at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, shows the non-deterministic link between environmental degradation and violent conflict in the regions of Darfur and Eastern Sudan. Both regions have been affected by drought, land degradation and shrinking pasture areas over a long period of time. However, while

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7 See, http://wapo.st/1F5UOik.

Eastern Sudan has not experienced any significant levels of violence, Darfur has experienced conflicts at the communal level between nomads and farmers, between local elites, between the centre in Khartoum and the periphery, and between the Sudanese and Chadian governments.

A major difference between Darfur and Eastern Sudan is the strong bias of the Sudanese government towards actors in Darfur. Government practices in Darfur, such as recruiting fighters and favouring certain groups over others, have had a lasting impact on the relationships among local elites and between local and central elites. In Eastern Sudan, the government has been acting in a more neutral way. Local elites in Darfur have been excluded from decision-making processes whereas the central government has allowed local actors in Eastern Sudan more influence.

The comparison between Darfur and Eastern Sudan entails a number of important conclusions. Instead of focusing the debate on whether climate change and environmental factors increase armed conflict, the question needs to be under what circumstances these factors can contribute to conflict. Moreover, there is a need to improve the understanding of how agency and institutions interact. Institutions need to be strengthened, but which institutions matter? Climate change and environmental degradation cannot be blamed for violence. It is the leaders who are responsible. A better understanding of these mechanisms will also improve the understanding of how environmental governance can be used to strengthen peacebuilding.

The different cases provide insights about the complex relationship between environmental factors, climate change and peace and conflict. Under certain conditions, environmental factors can be used to promote dialogue, development and peacebuilding. Managed poorly, the same factors can become a contributing factor to violence. There is a clear need for a better and more nuanced understanding and generalizable theories. The same applies to some of the assumptions and theories of change underpinning the design and implementation of peacebuilding projects. The case of Nepal points to the challenges that donors and implementing organizations face in terms of the potential of environmental projects and programmes to strengthen peacebuilding.

THE EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

In order to better understand the security risks posed by climate change, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs has commissioned a research project that looks at the circumstances under which climate change increases the risk of violent conflict.[8]

Within this project, a separate study by Maria Therese Gustafsson, researcher at the Department of Political Science at Stockholm University, has looked at different development organizations' efforts to integrate climate and security at the policy level and at the operational level. At the seminar, findings were presented concerning climate-resilient peacebuilding and conflict-sensitive climate change programming of the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ).

In terms of climate-resilient peacebuilding, climate risks are part of high-level policy documents of DFID and GIZ. However, climate risks are not required to be included in conflict analysis, early warning systems or country strategies. If peacebuilding projects are climate-integrated, it mostly happens at the initiative of individual staff members who have the knowledge and expertise. In both organizations, integration is hampered by the lack of knowledgeable staff and the fact that it is not mandatory. The climate proofing strategies in both organizations are based on a do-no-harm approach and are designed to avoid negative effects. Synergies and positive effects of an integrated approach are not

8 For more information on the project, see, http://bit.ly/1ZUi4ZP.

FBA

prioritized. Similarly, the integration of a conflict dimension in climate change programming is not mandatory.

The findings emphasize the challenges that organizational silos pose for integrated programming and environmental peacebuilding. There is a need to improve coordination across policy areas and to create awareness for the importance of knowledge and expertise across organizational silos. The tools and knowledge are often there, but due to internal structures and priorities, integration remains a challenge.

The Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) shares many of these experiences, and the challenges associated with implementing integrated approaches to development cooperation. Following the political priorities established by the Swedish government, all development cooperation programming and projects should depart from a poverty perspective, be rights-based, gender mainstreamed, conflict-sensitive and include environmental considerations. According to Elisabet Hedin, Senior Policy Specialist Human Security at Sida, and Sara Gräslund, Senior Policy Specialist Climate Change and Environment at Sida, arriving at an analysis that integrates all these aspects is still work in progress. Eventually, the goal is to capture the opportunities of an integrated analysis and to move beyond a mere do-no-harm approach. One of the challenges is to find the right balance between zooming in on what is important, and doing justice to all aspects. Eventually, this process is about bringing together peace-building, environmental development, political and institutional development as well as economic and social development.

Some projects have come further in adopting an integrated approach and can be used as illustrative examples. Sida's cooperation with Burkina Faso combines environmental considerations with a conflict-sensitive approach in order to strengthen governance and peaceful development. Burkina Faso has a long history of communal conflicts between pastoralists and farmers over the right to and access to land. Sida supports processes in which communities, municipalities and civil society actors jointly develop plans for natural resource management. In Somalia, Sida supports a joint programme between the UN and the Somali government addressing the challenges related to the charcoal sector. The programme addresses institutional capacities, develops alternatives to charcoal, provides livelihood options and supports reforestation in a conflict-sensitive way. In Colombia, the role of natural resources in the peace process is of major concern for Sida's work, in particular with regard to the presence and the role of the state in natural resource management and how this role is linked to state legitimacy in relation to economic actors and civil society.

From Sida's perspective, these projects emphasize an important lesson. On the local level and for many projects, environmental governance and peace-building are inseparably interlinked. The barriers between policy areas such as climate, environment and peacebuilding are created by donors and implementing agencies. Similar to GIZ and DFID, the challenges for Sida are to find new approaches that connect and transcend the organizational silos.

According to Maria Nyholm, Global Programme Coordinator at the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, their experiences from the joint work with the UNDP in Colombia are very much in line with Sida's experiences. The focus on the political conflict and a political solution oftentimes risks overshadowing the underlying conflicts that are linked to poor governance of natural resources. Yet, the magnitude of the challenges related to natural resource management for sustainable peace in Colombia cannot be underestimated.

Similarly to Sida's internal efforts to break down organizational silos, the cooperation between the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and UNDP aims to bring together different areas of expertise on public administration, environmental governance and gender. A particular focus of the work is on human rights and the rule of law. Establishing cooperation between organizations across different

policy areas in order to jointly address several issues at the same time is challenging, not least in terms of securing funding. Yet, introducing a public administration approach based on rule of law into the debate with mining companies about resource management, for example, has provided important lessons, and introducing a human rights terminology of right-holders and duty-bearers has been very beneficial for the discussion on natural resource management.

A key lesson from the cooperation between the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and UNDP is the benefit of working together and pooling resources for projects that cut across different policy areas. Given the complexity of the field and the multiple perspectives involved, organizations should be aware of the synergies that cooperation and strategic partnerships can offer. Funding schemes and regulations need to be flexible in order to allow joint projects across different policy areas. Another example of pooling of expertise and resources is the cooperation between UNEP, UN Women, the Peacebuilding Support Office and UNDP in a joint programme on promoting gender-responsive approaches to natural resources management for peacebuilding.[9] This project is an example of the synergies of environmental peacebuilding and how a gender mainstreamed approach to natural resource management in peacebuilding serves as a means to improve gender equality, enhance women's participation in political processes, increase ownership and stimulate economic opportunities. In recent years, the work of UNEP in relation to environmental peacebuilding has changed fundamentally. Previously, UNEP was primarily concerned with the direct environmental effects of conflicts, for example in post-conflict Kosovo. Today, UNEP addresses post-crisis environmental assessments and recovery, disaster risk reduction and environmental cooperation for peacebuilding.

As an example of the latter, Hassan Partow, Programme Officer at UNEP, presented UNEP's work on artisanal gold mining in eastern DRC. The project addresses the environmental concerns related to the practices of artisanal mining, which involves the use of toxic elemental mercury for amalgamation, in ecologically sensitive areas. Moreover, artisanal mining is often linked to armed groups that use the gold for funding. UNEP is working to set up a certification mechanism to help create a conflict-free supply chain for gold and to improve the practices of gold extraction to reduce its negative environmental impact. The project uses an incentives-based approach by offering technical assistance to artisanal gold miners if the gold miners sell the gold legally through the certification mechanism. UNEP and MONUSCO provide technical assistance so that gold miners can increase production by 30 percent while the use of mercury is reduced. The certification mechanism ensures that armed groups do not benefit from the trade.

This pilot project provides some valuable lessons. It shows how an incentive-based model can work to bridge environmental projects and peacebuilding and underlines the value of community-based and participatory approaches. It is also an example of how targeted and effective technical assistance can yield results that relate to several SDGs on environmental factors and peacebuilding.

The examples show the potential synergies of programmes that combine environment and peacebuilding. A key challenge that implementing organizations face are the bureaucratic structures and thematic silos that represent stumbling blocks for joint analysis, programming and implementation. As the examples of GIZ and DFID show, efforts to break up the silos is difficult, particular when it comes to conflict programming in the design of projects. A more flexible and adaptive approach is needed. More flexibility is also required when it comes to monitoring and evaluation of projects. Even when a conflict lens is integrated during the analysis and design phase, a rigid Results-based Monitoring (RBM) approach will not be able to capture all the changes and developments that

9. For more information on this project, see http://bit.ly/1cK63PT.

takes place on the ground. More flexible methods like outcome mapping and adaptable theories of change can be of help. Not least, more flexibility is also needed as long as funding is tied to budget lines that do not reward projects that cut across different thematic areas.

The examples also point to the difference between rights-based and incentive-based approaches, and whether one works better than the other in the context of environmental peacebuilding. Some argue that in conflict contexts in particular, an incentive-based approach should include a rights-based perspective, even though this can be difficult to implement in practice. At the same time, others emphasize that a that a rigidly normative, human-rights-first approach may not necessarily be the most effective way to establish cooperation and dialogue with local governments and other actors.

CONCLUSIONS

The rich discussions during the seminar suggest that environmental governance can become a peacebuilding tool in its own right. By promoting dialogue and cooperation over environmental issues such as sharing of resources or regimes for environmental protection between communities or across borders, environmental peacebuilding can serve as an opening for parties to build trust over presumably low-key issues, providing a foundation for collaboration on other issues. However, both research and practice show that the relationship is not straightforward, as environmental governance needs to be conflict-sensitive and be aware of potential unintended consequences. A lack of objective data and environmental assessments can, for example, become a considerable obstacle to peacebuilding, and, if poorly managed, even increase mistrust between parties.[10] On the other hand, measures to protect the environment or to reduce vulnerability to climate change can unintentionally exacerbate tensions and conflict, e.g. when communities are displaced from areas that are turned into protected areas.

As the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development highlights, the relationship between sustainable development, the environment, and governance is critical in the establishment of peaceful, inclusive, and just societies. National and local institutions need to be strengthened in order to protect the environment, to adapt to the effects of climate change and to manage resources and their economic benefits. A failure to do so risks undermining the social contract and the peacebuilding process as a whole.

Below are a few selected takeaways from the discussions at the IEF seminar:

› Environmental degradation and climate change can sometimes contribute to conflict and violence. However, research and historical record show that natural resource scarcity and environmental challenges lead more often to cooperation. Nevertheless, more research is needed, both on uncovering the causal mechanisms involved, and in establishing the general patterns and trends across a large set of cases. Therefore, for programming purpose, the key question should be how environmental projects can contribute to peace. For example, natural resources can support the recovery from conflict because they constitute a major source of revenue in many conflict-affected countries. However, while natural resource management is increasingly addressed in peace agreements, it is rarely prioritized in the mandates of peace operations.

› Environmental peacebuilding is "the process of governing and managing natural resources and the environment to support durable peace." The concept shows the potential of environmental factors for peacebuilding through good resource governance for conflict prevention, by offering an entry point for dialogue and economic incentives for peacemaking, and by addressing employment, livelihoods, and revenues in the aftermath of conflict. In this

10. Ken Conca and Jennifer Wallace, "Environment and Peacebuilding in War-Torn Societies. Lessons from the UN Environment Programme's Experience with Postconflict Assessment," Global Governance 15, No. 9 (2009).

way, environmental governance can become a peacebuilding tool in its own right. Just like the concept of "sustaining peace", environmental peacebuilding spans conflict prevention, mediation, management, and resolution.

› Policymakers should improve the understanding of agency, and not only of risk factors. Because governance is a key variable on whether environmental challenges can lead to the occurrence of armed conflict and violence, the emphasis for policy development should be on the political processes and actors at all levels of governance. This requires the integration of solid stakeholder analysis in program development.

› It follows that how the effects of climate change will affect societies largely depends on how societies manage to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. Environmental policies and peacebuilding should not be seen mutually exclusive. One way to avoid trade-offs is to make environment projects conflict sensitive and peacebuilding projects attentive to climate adaptation. The focus should be on identifying synergies through adaptive, flexible approaches in project design and implementation.

› Equitable and sustainable natural resource governance also has gender implications. In post-conflict settings, women are often particularly dependent on access to natural resources for their livelihoods. Moreover, armed conflict often challenges traditional gender roles, resulting in women adopting roles in natural resource management traditionally regarded as male sectors. Both the vulnerability of women and changing gender roles in relation to environmental issues need to be taken into account in peacebuilding processes so that gender-related inequalities associated with, for instance, access and right to land are not exacerbated. A gender mainstreamed approach to natural resource management in peacebuilding can thus serve as a means to improve gender equality, enhance women's participation in political processes, increase their ownership and open up for economic opportunities.[11]

› The emphasis on governance requires thinking about local capacities, and not only laws and regulations. Often, frameworks are in place, but donors do not support the development of capacities to implement and enforce the laws, for example through anti-corruption, capacity-building, and compliance programmes.

› Organizational silos in governments and international institutions, as well as in academia, have become stumbling blocks. How can these artificial structures be overcome and what are the connectors that will enable organizations to work together and pool resources and expertise across different policy areas? Breaking up the silos will allow us to focus on the synergies and opportunities that integrated and comprehensive approaches have to offer. Some suggestions include cross-agency knowledge centers, institutionalized consultations with local actors and influencers, and identification of program connectors, such as the ones discussed above between environment and peacebuilding programmes.

› Realizing these synergies through strategic partnerships and integrated approaches will require a more adaptable approach in terms of funding and project design. Many of the tools that implementing organizations use for project design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation are not flexible enough.

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11. UNEP, Women and Natural Resources. Unlocking the Peacebuilding Potential (UNEP, 2013).