



AT THE FOREFRONT OF CLIMATE ACTION

Local approaches to climate-
sensitive conflict and violence
prevention

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As sea levels rise, soil erosion accelerates, and droughts and floods intensify -- to name only three impacts of climate change -- local communities are increasingly affected. People lose their livelihoods and cultures, are forced to move, and suffer health problems. More broadly, human security is increasingly being undermined by climate change. Conversely, communities in conflict-affected settings often are also sources of innovation and repositories of first-hand knowledge and expertise for tackling climate-related risks through locally appropriate adaptation and resilience strategies. As a result, mapping and harnessing community-based approaches for addressing climate insecurities has become essential for addressing climate-related insecurities. Action to support rural women in entrepreneurship, strengthening early warning systems and response, building local capacities in adopting energy-efficient technologies, and educating youth to value and protect their environments would enable a more grounded approach to addressing climate-related conflict and violence.

The purpose of this mapping brief is to call attention to and provide examples of local initiatives for climate-sensitive conflict and violence prevention. Identifying existing initiatives at the local level is important because policy discussions of climate and security have focused largely on global, regional and national levels. Yet, without harnessing the lived experiences, perspectives, concerns and demands of local actors -- as well as their knowledge and capacity -- decision-making at higher governance levels runs the risk of leading to ineffective initiatives, or even, at the worst-case scenarios, to exacerbate conflict and violence. In sum, we provide an overview of key local initiatives to allow stakeholders such as international organisations, donor countries, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to better understand opportunities to develop locally-informed climate action in conflict-affected settings.

Women as Climate Pioneers

As the Women Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has acknowledged, even as women are disproportionately affected by conflict, they are also essential stakeholders in conflict prevention through efforts that range from mediation to community violence reduction [1]. With respect to local approaches to climate-sensitive peacebuilding, not only are women often at the forefront of implementing local initiatives, women activists and women's organisations often have a solid track record in championing community concerns [2]. Two examples of concrete initiatives are the Kwatanisa's Women's Group, in Uganda, and the Swayam Shikshan Prayog, in India.

[1] United Nations (2000) "Preventing Conflict: The Origins of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda" Chapter 8 in *Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. Available at: <https://wps.unwomen.org/preventing/>

[2] UN Women (2020) "Climate and Security: Sustaining peace on the frontlines of climate change". Available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/gender-climate-and-security>

Kwatanisa Women's Group -- a local group in Uganda's Hoima district -- aims "to empower local women with modern farming techniques for environmental conservation and climate change adaptation." The group works in a region that, according to the United Nations, received the least amount of rain in the last five decades. In this drought-prone part of the world, Kwatanisa promotes fruit tree cultivation -- an environmental conservation technique that can also boost food security -- to build resilience to climate change. According to the group leader, Monica Magambo, fruit trees -- especially mango and jackfruit -- reduce the greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and protect against flooding during heavy rains because their broad leaves can absorb carbon emissions. The local approach of conducting sensitisation meetings in the community to help people appreciate the importance of fruit tree growing by Kwatanisa also creates a sense of responsibility at the community level. The fruit trees serve an additional purpose as a source of livelihood and improve income generation from the fruits, ensuring food security in the Hoima district of Uganda.

India's Swayam Shikshan Prayog, from the state of Maharashtra, also recognises women as critical stakeholders of farming, who are largely excluded from the conversation in the drought-hit region of Marathwada. Drought in this region results in crop failure, depletion in groundwater levels, food security, and uncertain cash flows. Despite 70% of the total workers in agricultural activities in Maharashtra being women, they are perceived more as labourers than decision-makers. Therefore, Swayam Shikshan Prayog advocates for a Climate Resilient Farming model that "repositions women as farmers and bearers of the knowledge, enabling them to make informed decisions related to what to grow, what to consume and how much to sell and where, and promotes food, nutrition, income, and water security." In addition to encouraging women to gain cultivation rights, this project reshifts the focus of the conversation to the women who are leading their communities through climatic risks.

Youth as Climate Champions

In many places, local approaches to climate-sensitive peacebuilding involve awareness-raising and capacity-building for youth at the core of their community-based initiatives. When young people learn to use the tools to promote climate action, they do so innovatively, creatively, and with impact [3].

[3] United Nations Population Fund & United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office (2018) "The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth, Peace and Security". Available at: <https://www.youth4peace.info/system/files/2018-10/youth-web-english.pdf>

In Brazil, Iracambi's Young Eco-Leaders aims to promote the idea that healthy forests benefit everyone with fresh air, clean water, and opportunities for leisure. Helping the youth discover their connection and relationship with nature while developing their leadership skills encourages them to experience nature in all its vitality and have a deeper appreciation for their natural environment. Targeting the youth as change-makers in local communities creates a sense of belonging towards their environment and will lead lives fighting to protect them, with positive benefits for the entire community.

Indigenous Communities at the Forefront of Climate Action

Other noteworthy local approaches are led by indigenous communities, who develop extensive knowledge on practical local ways to address or curb climate-related risks. As primary owners of the land, indigenous communities are best positioned to take on this role. Due to their dependence upon, and close relationship with, the environment, indigenous peoples are also among the first to face the direct impacts of climate change. Indigenous communities' knowledge of topics such as plants, animals, microorganisms and ecosystem management among others plays a critical role in protecting the planet's biodiversity and in maintaining the overall health of the ecosystems. Combining these invaluable perspectives with modern resources can strengthen both mechanisms in order to best respond to the climate crisis.

In South America, local communities have proven fundamental in advancing broad conservation programmes. In Bolivia, efforts such as the Noel Kempff Climate Action Plan -- part of REDD+ to protect forests from illegal logging -- only worked with the consultation of indigenous communities. For these communities, whose members are also experts on the landscape in which they live, establishing clear land rights for indigenous groups first and foremost guarantees that these forests continue to exist.

The National Organisation of Indigenous Peoples in Colombia represents communities like the Sikuani, one of about 100 indigenous ethnic groups in the country. The Sikuani, who live in relative isolation in the Amazon rainforest, have five elaborate environmental management plans that include studies, maps and related recommendations for climate adaptation. Like other indigenous communities in Colombia, the Sikuani have drawn on their traditional knowledge to register and map crucial information such as the names and uses of local plants, ecological calendars, hunting grounds, and holy places.



Scaling Up Local Approaches

Local responses to climate insecurity have also been magnified through efforts at the municipal and national levels.

Adapt-Chile is a nonprofit organisation that identifies, develops, and promotes local responses to climate change. It works at the local, municipal level while also engaging with the national and regional government, academia, the private sector, and other social organisations. In addition, it works internationally through cooperation with other municipalities, cities, urban networks, and multilateral cooperative development agencies. Adapt-Chile's initiatives range from knowledge management to climate governance, and they also focus on training and tool development.

In Brazil, community-based initiatives to restore the Brazilian Atlantic Forest and mitigate climate change aim to reverse the impacts caused by the loss of vegetation cover. For instance, in the river basin of the Muriaé river, local communities have been attempting to solve the issue of water shortage and springs that fail during the dry season -- phenomena that affect not only local communities but also a broad range of endemic and endangered species that live nearby. Iracambi, a network of engaged citizens in the region and around the world, has pledged to plant 55,000 trees by the end of 2022. It also offers tree seedlings advice on organic fertilisers and helps with monitoring the trees for the first two years to restore this ecology.

The Impact of External Actors

Some local initiatives are induced through external actors but take root among local communities. Shedding light on such examples is important to NGOs, international organisations and other stakeholders to learn how to support local initiatives from a distance.

In Mexico, basic education programmes implemented by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) include an educational initiative called 'Subete.' ("rise up"). The project highlights the importance and fundamentality of education in responding to the challenges multiplied by climate change. Promoting climate-oriented education among the youth increases 'climate literacy,' promotes changes in their behaviour, and helps them adapt to climate change-related trends. Another initiative in Mexico, 'Sin Planeta B' ("No planet B"), has already impacted more than 6,000 children. It is currently waiting for approval from the Mexican government to insert climate change education into the national school curriculum. If this initiative gets the go-ahead, Mexico will be at the forefront of efforts in Latin America to ensure that children are well-educated on climate change and action.

In Chile, which has been experiencing the deterioration of biodiversity, soil, and water in the mountain territories, community-based projects have made a difference in conserving these ecosystems. For example, the GEF Montaña Project has contributed to the development of public-private initiatives that strengthen local environment management through efforts to improve air purification, soil formation, pollination, recreation, and sustenance of biodiversity. In turn, such efforts help to secure the water and food security of the region's populations.

Opportunities for Action

While many of these community-led initiatives facilitate meaningful actions to deal with climate-related insecurities, a broad spectrum of challenges constrain them.

First, **when government structures are weak and there is low trust in state institutions**, as is often the case in settings affected by conflict or violence, it becomes difficult not only to scale up initiatives but also to maintain the sustainability of locally implemented actions. Related issues include lack of political support, or even criminalisation of civil society engagement, which poses additional risks to those involved with community-based projects and environmental activism.

Second, **local groups and organisations lack adequate access to funding to conduct and sustain their projects for the long term**. This is particularly concerning because many international organisations, donor countries and other stakeholders lack sufficient knowledge about how to implement climate-risk projects in conflict-affected settings. Resources have become scarcer in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic as other priorities move centre-stage in donor's priority lists.

Third, **all too often input from women, youth, indigenous peoples, peoples of color, and other marginalised groups remain ignored by policymakers**. Decisions over conflict prevention and climate risk reduction are made top-down, without taking into account the lived experiences of local communities. In addition, lack of inclusive governance, including around natural resources, means that risks tend to increase and be disproportionately borne by groups that are already vulnerable to both climate and conflict.





Finally, **exchanges and interactions with other local organisations, especially South-South cooperations, are few and far between, whether with other initiatives in their own regions or across regions.** This is exacerbated by the lack of adequate access to technology, including basic resources like the internet, which makes exchanging knowledge and sharing lessons learned more challenging.

Whether focused on women, youth, or indigenous groups, local approaches to addressing climate-related risks represent essential pools of knowledge, expertise and action, which policymaking should acknowledge and support so as to offer more effective solutions by addressing the above challenges. From local and national governments to regional organisations and global institutions such as the United Nations, it is essential to ensure that local groups enjoy greater access to knowledge, resources, and technology, and opportunities for exchange, while deepening and strengthening their work in inclusive and sustainable ways.

ANNEX: Local approaches to climate-sensitive peacebuilding: selected examples

Initiative name	Description	Example(s)	Relevant Links
Forests 4 Water by Iracambi (Brazil)	Restoring the atlantic forest and supporting local farmers.	Initiative around planting 55,000 trees by the end of 2022.	https://iracambi.com/projects/forests-4-water/
Young Eco Leaders by Iracambi (Brazil)	Empowering and inspiring young advocates for sustainability and biodiversity.	Works with students from the local schools and conducts activities throughout the school year.	https://iracambi.com/projects/young-eco-leaders/
Proyecto GEF Montana (Chile)	Supports local communities to work with native animal species to control pests and restore more drought-tolerant native trees.	Contributes to the development of public-private initiatives that allow the conservation of biodiversity and protect or enhance the benefits of the Metropolitan Region and part of the Valparaíso Region.	https://gefmontana.ma.gob.cl/proyecto-gef-montana/
Adapt-Chile (Chile)	Non-profit that identifies, develops and promotes local responses to climate change.	Runs the Chilean Network of Municipalities for Climate Action and science-policy dialogues that connect universities with municipalities to ensure that applied research reaches municipal beneficiaries. Also does research and policy advice to local and national government.	https://www.ctc-n.org/network/network-members/asociacion-adapt-chile https://adapt-chile.org/

La Organización
Nacional Indígena de
Colombia (Colombia)

Represents the
indigenous
communities

Manages the carbon
stored in the Sikuani's
rainforest for thirty
years.

[https://www.onic.org.
co/](https://www.onic.org.co/)

Swayam Shikshan
Prayog (India)

Trains rural women in
entrepreneurship and
builds their capacities
for marketing clean-
energy projects in their
communities.

Works across 8 districts
in India and provides a
complete 'ecosystem'
approach as clean-
technology users,
educators, providers
and supporters in their
communities, which
helps make it easier for
people to adopt energy-
efficient technologies
and products that
address climate change.

[https://swayamshiksha
nprayog.org/](https://swayamshikshanprayog.org/)

Women-led climate
resilient farming by
Swayam Shikshan
Prayog (India)

The Climate Resilience
Farming model
repositions women as
farmers and bearers of
the knowledge,
enabling them to take
informed decisions
related to what to grow,
what to consume and
how much to sell and
where and promotes
food, nutrition, income
and water security.

Encourages women to
gain cultivation rights
from their families on a
small piece of land which
usually starts with half or
one acre.

[https://swayamshiksh
anprayog.org/women
-led-climate-resilient-
farming/](https://swayamshikshanprayog.org/women-led-climate-resilient-farming/)

Kwatanisa Womens
Groups (Uganda)

A local group in
Uganda's Hoima district
that aims to empower
local women with
modern farming
techniques for
environmental
conservation and
climate change
adaptation.

Carries out fruit tree
growing as a way of
building resilience to
the climate change
reality in the area, as an
environmental
conservation technique
as well as boosting food
security.

[https://africatimes.com
/2016/05/26/how-one-
womens-group-is-
fighting-climate-
change-in-uganda/](https://africatimes.com/2016/05/26/how-one-womens-group-is-fighting-climate-change-in-uganda/)

Women in Water &
Natural Resource
Conservation (Kenya)

Advocates for
grassroots
communities wellbeing
by transforming
women water burden,
household wealth,
environment, nutrition
and food security into
economic
opportunities.

<http://wwanckeny.org/2019/09/09/welcome-to-wwanc-kenya/>

Guerreiras de Floresta

Enforces protections
and prevention of
loggers from entering
Indigenous territories.

<https://news.mongabay.com/2020/08/amazon-women-warriors-show-gender-equality-forest-conservation-go-hand-in-hand/>

OFRANEH (Honduras)

A group of 35 local
women established a
nursery with cocoplum,
seagrape, and other
common native coastal
plants to help mitigate
climate impacts in
other coastal
communities.

<https://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/articles/entry/planting-resilience-to-climate-change/>

Sin Planeta B (México)

Promotes education of
climate change among
the children.

Currently waiting for
approval from Mexican
government to
implement official
education on climate
change in schools.

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/07/mexico-fighting-climate-change-classroom/>

Uganda Women's
Water Initiative
(Uganda)

A locally-led
environmental group that
teaches women climate-
resilient skills, such as
how to make rainwater-
harvesting systems and
biosand water filters.

Holds technical
trainings on disease
prevention.

<https://www.wri.org/insights/east-african-climate-groups-help-fight-covid-19-crisis>