Resilience Rising:

Youth Research Informing Global
Climate and Conflict Responses

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Findings from Burkina Faso, Niger, Pakistan, the Philippines,
Somalia and Uganda

Kofi Annan
Foundation

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Summary

Climate change and **insecurity** are deeply interconnected challenges. Countries most affected by climate and environmental issues are often those suffering high levels of instability and insecurity, despite contributing minimally to the global climate crisis. The impacts of climate change can accelerate social, political, and economic instability, particularly in fragile regions. This, in turn, may exacerbate tensions, generate conflict, and could pose significant challenges to environmental governance. These issues **disproportionately impact youth,** 90%[1] of which live in conflict-affected nations. Despite young people's significant role in advocating for climate action and peace, they face systemic barriers, including ageism, which limits their political participation and access to opportunities. While a majority of global leaders have acknowledged the interdependence of peace and sustainable development, their responses have remained state-centric and fragmented. To effectively address the intertwined challenges of climate change, environmental degradation and instability, there is a need for more **inclusive multilateral cooperation** that amplifies youth voices and perspectives in decision-making.

Supported by the Global Challenges Foundation, the Kofi Annan Foundation collaborated with six youth-led organisations – Cercle Dev, Elman Peace Center, HIVE, KRIS for Peace, Suudu Andal, and the Uganda Muslim Youth Development Forum – and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) to conduct research amplifying youth voices in climate and security discussions. This initiative aims to address a significant representation gap by ensuring that young people, especially those from marginalised communities, are included in discussions that influence their future. It also underscores the importance of providing youth with the necessary support to advocate for their interests and those of future generations.

This research explores the intersection of climate change and conflict through the experiences of young people in six countries: **the Philippines, Pakistan, Somalia, Uganda, Niger, and Burkina Faso**. Led by young researchers from the Kofi Annan Foundation's Extremely Together network, the study emphasises marginalised youth perspectives and highlights success stories from local youth initiatives. The study specifically targets **vulnerable geographic areas** facing climate and security risks and focuses on young people from hard-to-reach communities and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Using both primary and secondary data, the teams conducted literature reviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys. To ensure a deeper understanding of the issues, the teams consulted traditional leaders, government officials, and international partners.

The research found that the combined effects of climate change, environmental degradation and insecurity create **overlapping vulnerabilities** for young people, particularly in regions dependent on climate-sensitive sectors like agriculture and fisheries. As extreme weather events increase and resources become scarcer, **competition** intensifies, undermining social cohesion and raising the risk of violent conflict. These conditions often lead to unemployment, poverty, and crime, further weakening community ties. **Women and girls** face heightened risks of sexual and gender-based violence and exploitation. In many places, the failure of governing institutions to provide basic services worsen the situation – creating a **governance** vacuum and an erosion of trust. This often

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1   Defined between 15-24 according to the source. (Global Center on Adaptation (GCA), 2021)

strengthens the influence of **armed groups and elites²** who exploit the weakened state, controlling resources to further their agendas.

As livelihood opportunities dwindle and governance structures falter, young people frequently turn to **migration**, facing threats such as human trafficking and conflict with host communities. **Armed groups** also become more attractive options to disenfranchised youth, offering a sense of stability and belonging in a deteriorating environment. Although many young people are aware of climate change and its impact, they often struggle to engage in meaningful community action due to security threats, lack of resources, and the necessity of prioritising immediate survival needs. Despite their potential to contribute to resilience-building efforts and adaptation strategies, youth are often **excluded from decision-making processes at all levels**. A coordinated, inclusive approach for addressing these interconnected challenges is more urgent than ever.

Through this research, young people have put forward a set of recommendations they believe can be tangibly implemented at various levels of responsibility – from grassroots initiatives to multilateral forums – to foster more inclusive and effective solutions:
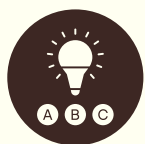
1. Rethinking decision-making and accountability mechanisms
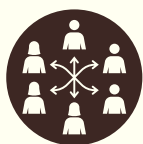
2. Promoting cross-disciplinary, intergenerational, and multilevel exchange

3. Strengthening gender-responsive adaptation

4. Encouraging sustainable and peace-sensitive finance

5. Supporting communities through training and skills development

6. Delivering climate and peace-sensitive emergency relief

These recommendations aim to reshape multilateral strategies to ensure long-term resilience and the meaningful participation of young people and those most affected by climate change and insecurity.

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2   Landowners, corporate groups that control industry, or other groups that control resources.

About

THE PARTNERS

THE KOFI ANNAN FOUNDATION (KAF)

SWITZERLAND

Learn more about the Foundation:
https://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/

The Kofi Annan Foundation is an independent, not-for-profit organization that works to promote better global governance and strengthen the capacities of people and countries to achieve a fairer, more peaceful world. One of the Foundation's key focus areas is promoting youth leadership in the context of preventing violent extremism which it works on with its Extremely Together initiative. Launched in 2016, the Extremely Together initiative collaborates with a global network of young people who help them respond to the increasing threat of recruitment and narratives of violent extremist groups. The network is made up of ten founding young leaders from around the globe and several country chapters led by local partners – the Philippines (KRIS), Pakistan (HIVE), Somalia (Elman Peace), Uganda (UMYDF), Niger (Cercle.Dev) and Burkina Faso (Suudu Andal). Through their initiative, Extremely Together aim to provide a sense of identity and purpose to young people worldwide, helping them act for positive change and peace in their communities.

STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE (SIPRI)

SWEDEN

Learn more about SIPRI:
https://www.sipri.org/about

SIPRI is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control, and disarmament. Established in 1966, SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public. Based in Stockholm, SIPRI is regularly ranked among the most respected think tanks worldwide. This project with GCF and KAF, which falls under the Institute's Climate Change and Risk Program, is part of SIPRI's efforts to contribute to timely and relevant research on youth, climate, peace and security.

CERCLE DEV

NIGER

Learn more about Cercle Dev:
https://cercledev.org/

The mission of Cercle de Réflexion et d'Action pour un Développement Local ("Cercle Dev") is to create the conditions for innovative local development based on the empowerment of local skills and resources in Niger. Since its creation in 2016, it has developed a country-wide network of 250 volunteers committed to enhancing local potential and empowering youth to become actors of change within communities living in rural and peri-urban settings. Cercle Dev supports youth leadership through their engagement in civic actions and violence prevention efforts, the promotion of volunteerism and their socio-professional integration.

ELMAN PEACE CENTER

SOMALIA

Learn more about Elman Peace Center:
https://elmanpeace.org

Elman Peace is a non-profit organization, founded in 1990 and is dedicated to promoting peace, cultivating leadership and empowering the marginalised brackets of society to be decision makers in the processes that ensure their wellbeing. It provides innovative, life-saving support to those in need and strive to create more enabling and progressive environments through its work. Elman Peace's philosophy on aid and development is centred on locally driven solutions from a committed and professional collective of compassionate people.

HIVE
PAKISTAN

Learn more about HIVE:
https://hive.org.pk/

Established in 2015, HIVE is a social-impact organization working to address issues of extremism and marginalization. HIVE strives to work for an inclusive, equal, and peaceful Pakistan through community-led research, facilitative grant-making, upstream mobilization, innovative campaigning, needs-based mentorship and participatory collaboration. Since its inception, HIVE has designed and administered over 500 trainings, 300 community engagement activities, 10 national-level campaigns and administered 100 grants to a diverse range of youth actors in more than 50 cities in Pakistan.

KRIS FOR PEACE
PHILIPPINES

Learn more about KRIS for Peace:
https://www.krisforpeace.org/

KRIS for Peace is a non-profit organization based in the Philippines that aims to promote peace through education by empowering young people to become pillars of peace in their own families, schools, and communities. It started in 2008 by building peace libraries, providing scholarships, and donating educational resources to young people affected by conflict and poverty. KRIS aims to strengthen the networks between the youth and its fellow civil society organizations through different projects, campaigns, and exhibits to showcase unity in the country despite differences between individual Filipinos.

SUUDU ANDAL
BURKINA FASO

Learn more about Suudu Andal: https://bf.linkedin.com/company/suudu-andal

Suudu Andal ("Temple of Knowledge" in Fulfuldé) was created in 2016 to pursue the vision of contributing to a fairer, more inclusive, more united, and more prosperous world. By supporting youth and women's leadership and their participation in peace and development, Suudu Andal pursues its mission to create the conditions to "act together for a bright future in Burkina Faso".

UGANDA MUSLIM YOUTH DEVELOPMENT FORUM (UMYDF)
UGANDA

Learn more about UMYDF:
https://umydf.org/

Founded in 2011 by two young survivors of the 2010 attack on the Kyadondo rugby grounds in Kampala, Uganda Muslim Youth Development Forum (UMYDF) is a non-profit, faith-based peacebuilding and development organisation that seeks to address root causes and effects of violent conflicts through education, research, art, sports, gardening, dialogue, advocacy, and strategic communications.

THIS PROJECT WAS FUNDED BY:

THE GLOBAL CHALLENGES FOUNDATION (GCF)
SWEDEN

Learn more about GCF:
https://globalchallenges.org/

The Global Challenges Foundation is a Swedish non-profit organisation dedicated to raising awareness of global catastrophic risks and strengthening global governance to address these pressing challenges. Recognising that global catastrophic risks like climate change, weapons of mass destruction, and ecosystem collapse require global co-operation, the foundation fosters international collaboration and supports the improvement of the global decision-making architecture. The Foundation also plays a critical role in bridging science and policy and supports pioneering research. By doing so, it aims to improve global governance, which is essential to managing these risks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Contents

ACRONYMS & KEY DEFINITIONS

ACRONYMS

ADF: Allied Democratic Forces
ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AS: Al-Shabaab
AU: African Union
BARMM: Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao
BLA: Balochistan Liberation Army
CSO: Civil Society Organisation
EPC: Elman Peace Center
FGD: Focus Group Discussion
IDP: Internally Displaced Person

INGO: International Non-Governmental Organisation
KII: Key Informant Interview
NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation
SGBV: Sexual and Gender Based Violence
UN: United Nations
UNDP: UN Development Program
UNFCCC COP: UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of the Parties
UNOY: United Network of Young Peacebuilders
UNICRI: UN Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute

KEY DEFINITIONS

ADAPTATION:
The process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects in order to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities.
This may include adjusting the way we live in response to our changing climate.

CLIMATE CHANGE:
A significant change in the Earth's climate. The Earth's temperature is rising as human activities release greenhouse gases that trap heat in the atmosphere. The term "global warming" refers to warmer temperatures, while "climate change" refers to the broader set of changes that go along with warmer temperatures, including changes in weather patterns, the oceans, ice and snow, and ecosystems around the world.

CONFLICT/ARMED CONFLICT:
When armed force is used by an organised actor against another organised actor, or against civilians, resulting in at least 25 battle-related deaths in one calendar year. The definition includes three types of conflict:

→ **State-based** conflict takes place between two states (inter-state conflict), or between one state and one or more rebel groups (civil conflict)

→ **Non-state** conflict is fought between two organised, armed actors, of which neither is the government of a state.

→ **One-sided** violence is perpetrated by an organised armed group, either a state's military forces or an armed group, against civilians.

COP AND UNFCCC:
The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an environmental treaty that nations joined in 1992, with the goal of stabilising greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system. Meanwhile, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNFCCC is a yearly international climate conference where nations assess progress and determine next steps for action through the UNFCCC treaty.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION:
The deterioration of the environment through depletion of resources such as air, water, and soil; the destruction of ecosystems and the extinction of wildlife. It is defined as any change or disturbance to the environment perceived to be harmful or undesirable.

ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE:
A system of laws, norms, rules, policies, and practices that guide the management and oversight of environment-related regulatory bodies. It involves government, business, and civil society, focusing on ensuring sustainability by managing human activities across political, social, and economic spheres.

INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS:
Not-for-profit organisations operating at the international, transnational, or global level with membership, participation, or presence in multiple countries.

MARGINALISATION:
When individuals or groups have limited access to essential services or opportunities, restricting their ability to fully participate in society. It is sometimes referred to as social exclusion.

MITIGATION:
Reducing the release of heat-trapping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere by cutting emissions from major sources such as power plants, factories, vehicles, and agriculture. Forests, oceans, and soils play a crucial role in absorbing and storing these gases, forming an important part of mitigation efforts.

MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS:
Structures, groupings or organisations involving actors from several countries who work together to coordinate policies and seek common interests.

MULTILATERALISM:
A process of organising relations between groups of three or more states. Beyond that basic quantitative aspect, multilateralism is considered to comprise certain qualitative elements or principles that shape the character of the arrangement or institution.

PEACE:
Most understood as the absence of conflict and freedom from fear of violence between groups of individuals. Beyond this basic understanding of the term, peace could also be interpreted as an environment conducive to personal fulfilment and well-being.

PEACE/CONFLICT SENSITIVITY:
A peace or conflict sensitive approach involves gaining and applying an understanding of the dynamics between an intervention and the context in which that intervention takes place to minimise negative impacts and maximise positive impacts of this intervention on conflict dynamics.

POLICY:
A set of ideas or plans that is used as a basis for making decisions, especially in politics, economics, or business.

SECURITY:
The state of being free from any danger or threat. In the context of this research, we understand security as the capacity of the state or other organisation to provide safety from danger to its citizens.

RESILIENCE:
The process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress.

VIOLENCE:
The intentional use of physical force or power threatened or actual, against another person that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, or psychological harm.

YOUTH:
Definitions of youth can be broad ranging. For this study, youth is understood as the transitional phase between childhood and adulthood[3], defined by the 18-35 age bracket.

3　　(Kofi Annan Foundation, 2022)

Introduction to the research

YOUTH, CLIMATE AND PEACE
How do they connect?

Climate change and environmental degradation are undeniable realities and are considered among the biggest threats of the 21st century. Human activities – principally through emissions and greenhouse gases – have unequivocally caused global warming which, in turn, has drastically affected many weather and climate extremes worldwide.[4] Currently, we are on the path to double the 1.5°C rise in global temperature limit recommended by the UN.[5] More than half of the world's population – about 4 billion people – experience water scarcity due to drought or uneven rainfall for at least one month in the year.[6] Excessive emissions have led to approximately 90-95% of the world's population breathing air that far exceeds the safe pollution threshold calculated by the World Health Organisation.[7] This is accompanied by a severe increase in the number of illnesses, deaths, and climate-induced migration. As climate-related catastrophes multiply across the globe, the international community is scrambling to deliver adequate support to those most affected.[8]

4   (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 2023)
5   (UN climate report: It's 'now or never' to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees, 2022)
6   (Merkonnen & Hoekstra, 2016)
7   (Health Effects Institute, 2020)
8   (United Nations Environmental Program, 2024)

In parallel, references to **conflict, dissent, and the breakdown of social cohesion** dominate current headlines. Across regions from the Sahel to South Asia, populations face rising levels of insecurity, driven primarily by intra-state conflicts. Recent trends[9] suggest the uptick in the number of state-based armed conflicts is to blame for the increased number of people in situations of extreme insecurity. Between 2010 and 2020, the number of intra-state conflicts rose to 56, nearly doubling from the end of the Cold War (30).[10] This increase coincides with a sharp rise in the number of refugees and forcibly displaced persons, from 41 million in 2010 to over 82 million in 2020.[11] However, the recent revival of inter-state conflict – notably with the Russian invasion of Ukraine and recent developments in the Middle East – has increased violence against civilians[12] and cast further insecurity on collective hopes of a more peaceful future.

> *Climate change and insecurity are intrinsically linked. Countries most affected by climate change and environmental degradation are often those facing significant insecurity.*

Notably, half of ongoing UN peace operations are concentrated in countries most exposed to climate shocks.[13] Despite having contributed minimally to the global climate crisis, these countries disproportionately suffer its impacts. Evidence shows that climate change and environmental degradation accelerate social, political, and economic instability which can further fuel violence if unaddressed.[14] In contexts where social cohesion and governance structures are already weakened by conflict, not only does climate change act as a risk multiplier with the potential to exacerbate existing tensions and grievances, but it also makes environmental governance hard to achieve. However, in some cases, cooperation around environmental and natural resource governance can emerge as a positive outcome, creating pathways for environmental peacebuilding.

A staggering 90% of the global **youth**[15] population[16] live in emerging or conflict-affected countries where climate change is a serious risk multiplier.[17] Young people – alongside women, girls, indigenous communities and other marginalised groups – bear the brunt of these global trends. Recognising this reality, youth have taken on a leading role in **influencing, demanding, and advocating** for more responsible and targeted action from global leadership. The Global Youth Statement,[18] presented during COP26, gathered input from over 40,000 young leaders who demanded their rights be guaranteed in global climate agreements. Youth leaders around the world have led organised action for climate, most famously with school strikes occurring in 150 countries.[19] Young people have also been at the forefront of advocating for peace and demanding accountability for violations of human rights in conflicts. Student protests for a ceasefire in Gaza,[20] Kenyan youth's anti-tax protests, or the Hong Kong Occupy movement are only a few recent examples of this. In fact, research has shown that 70% of Gen Zer's are involved in a social or political cause.[21]

9   (Petterson, et al., 2021)
10   (Petterson, et al., 2021), (Gleditsch, Wallensteen, Eriksson, & Sollenberg, 2002)
11   (UNHCR, 2021)
12   (Pettersson, Davies, & Oberg, 2023)
13   (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2021)
14   (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2021)
15   Defined between ages 15-24.
16   A total of 1.8 billion.
17   (Global Center on Adaptation (GCA), 2021)
18   (UN Climate Change Conference of Youth (UCOY), 2021)
19   (Modeer & Otieno, 2022)
20   (Al Jazeera, 2024)
21   (Carnegie, 2022)

Despite this, young people continue to report **ageism** – discrimination based on age – which severely hampers their political participation, employment opportunities, health, and access to justice. Not only does this severely impact their wellbeing, but it also prevents governments and multilateral bodies from designing inclusive policies and services that are fair for all ages.[22]

While many **global leaders** have agreed that "there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development,"[23] their approach to addressing these challenges remains fragmented and overly state-centred, rather than focused on human needs. Peace and climate are only beginning to be addressed together, with recent steps by high-level multilateral fora such as the UN Security Council or at the African Union level. However, real progress on addressing these cross-cutting vulnerabilities has yet to be made as the human-centred framing remains far too absent from current response planning. While governments play an undeniably important role in enacting change, "national-level thinking should not be the response to global threats."[24] Recent policymaking trends demonstrate that **effective solutions incorporate the perspectives of those most affected**. To ensure a secure future for generations to come, the research advocates for **more ambitious multilateral cooperation**, anchored in **meaningful youth engagement** and **representation in decision-making**, particularly in addressing pressing and compounding challenges from climate change and insecurity.

SNAPSHOT OF EXISTING LITERATURE

The nexus between youth, peace, and climate change has garnered increasing attention in global policy and research in light of the pressing challenges posed by environmental degradation and its impact on peace and security.

Bilateral relationships between climate and conflict, youth and climate, or youth and conflict have all been studied to varying lengths. In the *Environment of Peace* report,[25] SIPRI – one of the key partners in this project – retraces the linkages between rising levels of insecurity and worsening indicators of environmental degradation globally. More context specific studies like that of the UNICRI in Chad[26] shed light on local manifestations of violence in communities in regions most affected by climate change. Large-scale surveys like the *Peoples' Climate Vote*[27] showcase a clear concern for environment and climate-related issues amongst younger demographics. This is echoed in other publications like the UNDP's *Elevating Meaningful Youth Engagement for Climate Action*[28] which underscores the central role played by young people in tackling global emergencies and advocating for change. Together, these publications stress the importance of integrating youth perspectives into peacebuilding and climate action strategies.

While the existing publications provide valuable insights, most fail to comprehensively address the nuanced ways in which youth can contribute to both peacebuilding and climate resilience

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22   (Modeer & Otieno, 2022)
23   (United Nations, 2015)
24   (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2021)
25   (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2021)
26   (UNICRI and Swissaid, 2022)
27   (UNDP, 2024)
28   (UNDP, 2022)

simultaneously. For example, the UN's *Common Agenda*[29] and *New Agenda for Peace*[30] highlight the crucial need to address climate concerns within conflict but do little to acknowledge the key role of youth in this. Similarly, of the three UN Security Council Resolutions shaping the Youth, Peace, and Security agenda, only one makes explicit reference to climate through the mention of "dangerous weather events."[31] A significant step back was also taken when the link between climate and peace was removed from the UN Pact for the Future earlier in 2024 following resistance from some UN Member States.[32]

Bridging these gaps requires more integrated research and policy frameworks that not only recognise that youth are disproportionately affected by climate change but support their dual role as both climate and peace actors. Discussions are already being led by some actors such as UNDP, SIPRI and Folke Bernadotte Academy through their guidance note *Beyond Vulnerability: A Guidance Note on Youth, Climate, Peace and Security*[33]. Building on these efforts, this report aims to drive these discussions forward, highlighting youth experiences by providing insights into their experiences and amplifying their perspectives as a key group on the frontline of the crisis but also at driving change.

METHOD

APPROACH

This research was designed to capture the lived experiences of young people at the nexus of climate and conflict and showcase their role in contributing to solutions. With the support of the Global Challenges Foundation (GCF), the Kofi Annan Foundation, SIPRI and young researchers from six countries co-designed a comparative study to be rolled out in the Philippines, Pakistan, Somalia, Uganda, Niger, and Burkina Faso. Each study was led by a team of young researchers from a local Chapter of the Kofi Annan Extremely Together network. The research process was led entirely by youth from these countries.

Central to this research is the idea of **perception** and how young people perceive vulnerabilities to climate change and threats to their safety. Whilst global policymaking is increasingly concerned with challenges faced by youth, young people are rarely provided with the space or tools needed to voice their concerns. Instead, there is a tendency to impose complex jargon and terminology on their experiences, often overshadowing their perspectives. This research seeks to address this gap by seeking out young people who are rarely consulted and providing them with a platform to discuss climate and security in a way that authentically captures their experiences. By doing so, it aims to ensure that youth are authentically represented and heard in the broader multilateral discourse on climate and security.

29   (United Nations, 2021)
30   (UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, 2023)
31   (UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, 2023)
32   (Farand, 2024)
33   (Folke Bernadotte Academy, United Nations Development Programme and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2024)

TARGET AREAS

In each country, the research teams chose to focus on areas that were especially vulnerable to climate change, environmental degradation, and insecurity. In many cases, these areas are confronted with extreme weather conditions (e.g., flash floods, droughts) coupled with political, ethnic, or land conflicts. The teams deliberately chose a mix of urban and rural areas to display the range of issues the different youths can be confronted with in these settings, and the actions they have taken.

Whilst these areas are at the heart of the climate and security issue, their populations are marginalised and often left out of development and policy discussions and exchanges. Interaction is frequently limited by their remote location, but external parties may also be dissuaded from visiting because of high security risks, government, or military restrictions, or for fear of provoking political tensions by appearing to favour the voice of one group over another. For example, reaching areas like Dori[34] in Burkina Faso, which has been cut off from the rest of the country due to insecurity on the roads, proved a significant challenge for the research team. Across the six countries, the teams worked deliberately to reach populations who are deeply impacted by the effects of climate change and insecurity. The researchers employed innovative and context-specific strategies to access hard-to-reach communities, including collaborating with local gatekeepers and community leaders to gain trust, obtaining formal permits from authorities, leveraging online surveys for areas with limited physical access, and, in high-risk regions, operating with local officials to ensure both safety and effective engagement.

TARGET GROUPS

The study targeted young people aged 18-35 affected by climate change or impacted by conflict, or both. A total of 1,150 young people were consulted, 1,036 (463 women and 573 men) of whom took part in surveys and 114 in in-depth interviews. In addition to focusing on hard-to-reach communities, the research placed emphasis on youth from disadvantaged backgrounds and minority groups. When relevant, studies also focused on IDP youth. Researchers also engaged participants across various education levels. Due to contextual factors and accessibility, some teams targeted more educated youth, and others worked with a broader cross-section of the population.

The teams also interviewed secondary participants outside the youth bracket to provide diverse perspectives on young people's roles and the gaps in addressing climate and security issues. All teams engaged community leaders or traditional and religious leaders, who play a key role in community-level conflict resolution. Several teams engaged government officials and local authorities, who provided insights from both climate and security standpoints. The teams consulted civil society organisations, climate and conflict experts, NGOs, activists, and international partners, as well as the UN and various INGOs. In the Philippines, the team reached out to private entities and think tanks.

TOOLS

This study is based on both primary and secondary research. Each country team conducted desk research to gather existing literature and relevant publications to their specific context.

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34   Accessibility to the town via the Kaya-Dori axis is hindered by terrorist group activity along the route. The Naré bridge located along the axis has been sabotaged several times by explosives and deadly ambushes regularly occur. Road traffic has therefore come to a halt of its own accord and only convoys secured by the armed forces currently venture onto the route to supply the town.

This included reviewing studies, reports, and data related to climate change, environmental degradation, and conflict dynamics. While resource availability varied among countries, this initial review established a foundational knowledge base to support primary research efforts. To gather primary data, the teams conducted Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and surveys, with each method tailored to address context-specific needs and vulnerabilities among target groups.

CHALLENGES

The teams faced several challenges in generating data and conducting the study:

→   **ACCESSIBILITY:**
     The study aimed to capture the perspectives of young people in hard-to-reach areas owing to geographic remoteness or security concerns. In Uganda, researchers faced challenges accessing a conflict-prone region near the Democratic Republic of Congo, requiring staff to take safety precautions. Seasonal heavy rains also delayed data collection efforts. In Niger, securing military permits proved difficult for researchers targeting a high-risk area in Mandarounfa, which necessitated travel by convoy. Despite these challenges, efforts to engage these communities were well-received, as many felt overlooked by local authorities and other decision-making bodies. However, certain populations, such as those in militant hotspots in Pakistan, remained inaccessible.

→   **DISTRUST:**
     All teams reported difficulties in approaching certain groups, either because of their perceived outsider status or cultural sensitivities. In Pakistan, research teams, who came from outside of the region, were mistakenly perceived as being government agents by some community members, requiring the teams to invest additional time in gaining trust and work alongside local community leaders to conduct interviews. Researchers also faced difficulties when approaching women in more conservative communities, despite efforts to respect cultural and social norms, such as deploying female researchers to facilitate women-only FGDs. In Somalia, cultural norms limiting women's public participation, safety concerns for female staff, and stringent safeguarding protocols further restricted the engagement of young women in the research.

→   **BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN LOCAL AND GLOBAL:**
     A gap exists between the immediate, impactful change young people hope to see from participating in these processes and the expectations multilateral bodies often place on local communities to develop 'collaborative solutions' without adequately supporting these efforts. This misalignment of priorities can leave young people feeling that their local realities are not fully integrated into broader peace, climate, and conflict frameworks. Many respondents face immediate threats to their livelihoods, making it understandably difficult to connect their experiences within the broader framework of peace, climate, and conflict. To address this, researchers contextualised multilateral dynamics alongside local realities to clarify the study's purpose. In Uganda's Kasese district, for example, some survey participants anticipated that the study would lead to direct climate adaptation efforts in their area. In response, research teams worked to align expectations by explaining the study's goals and how its results would inform larger advocacy and policy efforts.

LIMITATIONS

The challenges encountered in the data collection have impacted the results of the study to varying degrees. The following limitations are acknowledged:

→ **DISPROPORTIONATE GENDER REPRESENTATION:**
Challenges faced by some teams in reaching female participants may have limited the range of perspectives included in the research findings. Teams in Niger[35] and Somalia[36] were not able to achieve equal representation between women and men due to safeguarding rules and cultural norms restricting women's participation. Other teams, such as the Pakistani team, succeeded in engaging more female respondents, but observed notable differences in the depth of responses between women and men, particularly in the initial stages of data collection. Consequently, the findings may lean slightly toward male experiences of climate change and insecurity. However, these insights could lay a foundation for future research specifically focused on gender perspectives in climate and security, ideally led by researchers with strong connections to women in these remote communities.

→ **PARTIAL REPRESENTATION OF MARGINALISED GROUPS:**
Limited access to certain geographies and the distrust among specific respondent groups means the study may not fully cover or represent highly vulnerable groups, despite researchers' best efforts to actively seek this. For example, groups living under Al-Shabaab (AS) control are underrepresented in the Somalia case study because of restricted access to those areas. In the few cases where respondents from these areas participated, they were wary of being recorded and suspicious of technology.[37] This is because AS often bans smartphones in their controlled areas, generating fear amongst those living there.

→ **INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION:**
Surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions were conducted in the local languages. While this allowed respondents to share their experiences more comfortably in their own dialects, language barriers between researchers and participants may have resulted in misinterpreted nuances. This was particularly evident in Niger, where discussions were held in Hausa, a local dialect in Mandarounfa, making transcription challenging due to the regional accent and difficult-to-translate terms. All research teams were asked to translate their findings into English or French (oftentimes, their second language), which further risked losing nuances. Capturing the full depth of local experiences for a wider audience remains an inherent challenge in translation and research.[38]

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35   For FGDs, "A total of 20 focus groups were conducted, involving 140 individuals total, 105 men and 35 women aged between 15 and 35". For KIIS, "A total of 28 individual interviews were conducted with 26 men and 2 women".

36   The case study notes that "despite efforts to balance the gender of the data collection team, difficulties in recruiting young women and strict safeguarding rules led to only 29% female representation compared to 71% male."

37   Surveys were conducted on paper, when possible, to mitigate this fear.

38   Goitom, M. (2019). Multilingual Research: reflections on translating qualitative data. The British Journal of Social Work, 50(2), 548–564. https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcz162

→ **LIMITED LITERATURE BASE:**
The highly localised nature of this study made it challenging to access existing literature in the studied contexts for preliminary reviews. Research teams found it especially difficult to find reliable sources exploring the emerging and complex intersection of peace, climate, and youth in these local areas. Consequently, the case studies relied on a limited local literature base, balanced by an in-depth review of broader publications on the subject.

→ **OTHER AREAS OF INQUIRY:**
Important topics emerged during data collection that researchers were unable to explore fully due to limitations in time, space, and expertise. Notably, young people emphasised the significance of mental health support in coping with the impacts of climate change and insecurity, viewing the growing discourse around this topic as a positive development. Additionally, discussions highlighted the significant role of media and information sharing, which, for many young people, has become a central part of daily life. Youth raised with constant information access, such as many in the Philippines, recognise both its power and its risks, and how to use it effectively to shape global action. However, access varies, and, in countries like Burkina Faso, Somalia and Niger, many young people do not have the same connectivity, impacting their ability to fully engage in global dialogues. This study lays the foundation for deeper exploration of these issues.

Findings

CONTEXT

The study finds that each country's context is uniquely affected by the effects of climate change – often through a combination of extreme weather events and increasing resource scarcity. These challenges are accompanied by high levels of violence and insecurity, which both contribute to and are intensified by the instability associated with climate change.

Niger faces severe challenges from rising temperatures, deforestation, and water scarcity driven by pollution, irregular rainfall, and the drying of water sources. These climate change impacts disrupt agricultural and pastoral activities, harming production, and community incomes. Niger is ranked 10th on the 2024 Global Terrorism Index[39] and has experienced increased political and social instability following recent coups.

Burkina Faso is grappling with rising temperatures, deforestation, and water scarcity. This is severely threatening the country's economy which heavily relies on agriculture and livestock farming. The country is also facing its worst security situation in nearly a decade, primarily driven by terrorism, resulting in significant loss of life and mass displacement. Burkina Faso remains the country most affected by terrorism, ranking first in the 2024 Global Terrorism Index.[40]

39   (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023)
40   (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023)

Ranked 14th most vulnerable by the ND-GAIN index[41], **Uganda** suffers from erratic rainfall, floods, and droughts, which disrupt agriculture, causing food insecurity. The effects of climate change intensify resource competition, fuelling ethnic tensions and conflicts, especially in regions where the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), an armed group linked with extremism and terrorism operates. The ADF has exploited socio-economic vulnerabilities and insecurity to bolster recruitment, capitalising on the vulnerability of displaced and unemployed youth.

Communities in **Somalia** face erratic weather patterns and reduced water availability, damaging agriculture and livestock. This, in turn, is worsening resource scarcity, fuelling competition, and increasing conflict and insecurity. Ongoing conflicts and political instability have also given way to aggravated humanitarian emergencies and large flows of IDPs throughout the region. The Islamist militant group Al Shabaab continues to pose a significant threat in Somalia.

Pakistan's disastrous floods dominate the headlines every year. The floods, coupled with extended droughts, heatwaves, and dry conditions, have contributed to soil erosion, impacting agricultural productivity. Additionally, the country faces high levels of sectarian violence and internal conflict, particularly in Balochistan, where the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) has been in prolonged conflict with the government, which was a focus area for this research. Border security issues and violent extremism remain pressing concerns.

In **the Philippines**, extreme heat is severely affecting agricultural productivity, particularly seaweed farming. Deforestation, soil erosion, water scarcity, and economic hardships are prevalent, contributing to mass displacement and increased violence. Health issues such as diarrhoea and malaria are also on the rise. Islamist militancy in the southern region, where this research took place, along with territorial disputes and maritime security concerns, continues to contribute to the country's insecurity.

41   (University of Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, 2024)

PATTERNS OF VULNERABILITY AND VIOLENCE

The rapidly changing impacts of climate change, combined with security risks, create a range of vulnerabilities for young people in these regions. Together, these factors contribute to an environment increasingly susceptible to violence, often following a recognisable pattern of escalation.
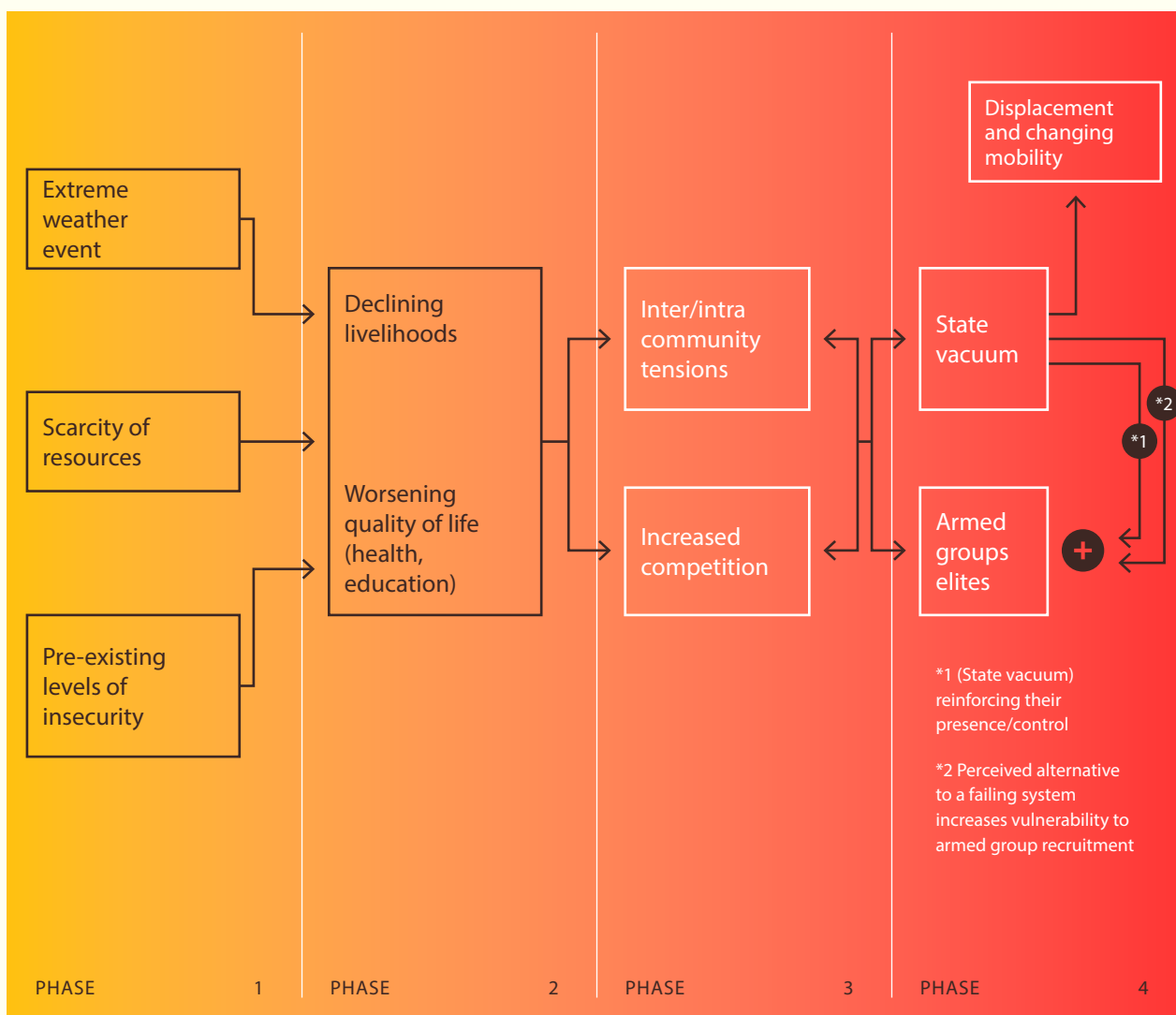
FIGURE 1 | Shows the mechanism of how climate change interacts with pre-existing insecurity and vulnerabilities to exacerbate competition for resources and community tensions.

These relationships must be understood in the wider context in which they occur, as they can take as many forms as there are actors. Outcomes may vary according to the social, political, and economic structures of each setting. Factors such as state presence, institutional strength, community resilience, social cohesion, climate severity, and external influence can either amplify or mitigate these dynamics.[42]

42   (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2023)

DECLINING LIVELIHOODS

Climate-related extreme weather events and the declining availability of resources, such as arable land and water, have significantly affected livelihoods. Most young people in the studied contexts rely on sectors that are climate-sensitive, including agriculture, fisheries, livestock, tourism, and forestry. Changes in weather patterns and resource availability have increased **uncertainty** and **fluctuations in income levels**. In Burkina Faso for example, prolonged droughts have left farmers weary of investing in their crops, fearing low returns. They also find themselves priced out of agricultural and livestock markets, which has generated a rise in **unemployment** amongst agricultural communities and **food shortages** across the country.

This increased uncertainty encourages **competition over resources and livelihoodd opportunities, undermines social cohesion,**[43] and **enhances the likelihood of violence** in contexts where security concerns are often already present Case studies in Uganda, Somalia and Niger show disputes arising over water points and grazing land, with conflicts between herders and farmers becoming more frequent. Unemployment and poverty resulting from decreased livelihood opportunities encourage crime and make young people vulnerable to organised violence. In Niger, for example, young people have taken to road ambushes to steal motorbikes and other valuables.

The findings also show that the adverse impacts of climate change and insecurity on livelihoods **disproportionately affect women and girls**. In the studied contexts, women's traditional caregiving roles mean they take on added responsibility during disasters and subsequent periods of hardship, leaving them open to increased risk. All six countries in the study noted that **risks of abuse and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)** grew with the onset of climate and security-related challenges. In Niger, researchers note that disruption to livelihoods has encouraged women to turn to sex work as an alternative source of income for their families. In the Philippines, women are perceived as more of a liability, increasing their chances of getting married off at a young age. FGDs in all six countries also noted that longer distances to collect water and firewood exposed women to abuse and serious health risks:

> *"It's the women who do the housework. Like fetching water and wood for cooking. Because of the drop in rainfall and desertification, they are suffering to carry out these tasks, which used to take less time."*

Young woman from Dori, Burkina Faso

WORSENING QUALITY OF LIFE

Climate change and related extreme weather events further impact livelihoods and diminish young people's overall quality of life. School closures have emerged as a concerning trend in at least four of the six countries studied. In the Philippines, for instance, schools are closing due to extreme heat and are frequently repurposed as evacuation centres. Similarly, in Uganda's Kasese district, classes are frequently cancelled due to flooding. In Burkina Faso, schools are being closed for different reasons – more than 1 million children are no longer able to safely access education because of the growing security concern posed by armed groups.[44] The closure of schools has

43   (Kahl, 2006)
44   (UNICEF, 2023)

had devastating effects on literacy rates and young people's ability to educate themselves.[45] This ripple effect reduces their capacity to grasp the complex impacts of climate change and insecurity on their lives, lowering the likelihood of communities taking constructive action to build resilience. The findings indicate that school closures have a gendered impact, as observed in Pakistan, where reduced educational access for women correlated with increased SGBV and domestic abuse during the 2022 floods.[46]

Four of the six studies mentioned **health issues**. In Pakistan, stagnant water from floods has led to an increase in vector-borne diseases and an escalating health crisis. In the Philippines and Sahel countries, limited access to maternal healthcare during emergencies has driven maternal mortality rates higher, particularly impacting young mothers. In Uganda, IDPs living in camps face limited access to healthcare and basic services which has increased malnutrition, maternal health risks, and communicable diseases. Beyond this, mounting stress and heightened expectations have taken a significant toll on young people's **mental health**. In Burkina Faso, burn out amongst young activists emerged as a concern, while Filipino respondents remarked on the mental strain from ongoing insecurity:

> *"During floods, it's challenging to manage both home and work.*
> *We worry about our family's safety and our livelihood."*

<div align="right">Health worker from Datu Saudi Ampatuan, Philippines</div>

A CRISIS OF GOVERNANCE AND STRUGGLE FOR CONTROL
Two competing dynamics emerge from these livelihood uncertainties:

1.   **EROSION OF TRADITIONAL FORMS OF GOVERNANCE:**
Worsening livelihood conditions and insecurity **affect the capacity of the state or any other governing institution to provide basic services** to its populations.[47] As pressure builds on governments and multilateral institutions to provide, aid itself has become a point of contention. In some instances, aid is instrumentalised to reinforce political allegiances, as was the case with basic supplies (i.e., tents and plastic sheets) during the 2022 floods in Pakistan. In other cases, aid distribution methods unintentionally deepen divides, without adequately considering the need for conflict sensitivity.

As state and local authorities face additional stress and fail to meet the needs of their population, they may also **struggle to address tensions** that arise from this volatile environment. Researchers in the Philippines, Niger and Somalia found that communities' strained relationship with governing bodies hindered conflict-resolution and fuelled further tensions between groups. Distrust in judicial systems led communities to seek alternative dispute-resolution methods, which at times only escalated conflicts.

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45   (Malala Fund, 2021)
46   Firsthand testimony by female participants of a FGD run by researcher Dera Murad Jamali.
47   (UNICRI and Swissaid, 2022)

2. **EMERGENCE OF ARMED GROUPS:**
This **vacuum of governance or the inability of government authorities to cater
for their population** strengthens the position of armed groups and elites
(e.g., big landowners in Pakistan's feudal system) who take **control** of coveted
resources and opportunistically **utilise community vulnerabilities and grievances
against authorities to their advantage.**[48] These groups attempt to replace
governing structures by acting as service providers or offering relief to cement
their own position within a community and extract gains.[49] This may be to
expand their power, guarantee their own food security, or generate some form
of income. In Somalia, for instance, water infrastructure (e.g. dam and canal
projects) are being weaponised by AS to establish control over strategic areas
and limit government penetration.[50] Armed groups may exploit climate-related
pressures on communities to **boost recruitment of young people**. In Uganda, for
instance, the ADF exploited weak governance and lack of community resilience
to recruit young people, offering protection and income in exchange for loyalty.

DISPLACEMENT AND CHANGING PATTERNS OF MOBILITY

Climate-related migration has become an increasingly common option for young people when
faced with these overlapping challenges. Declining livelihood prospects and quality of life, coupled
with a complex struggle for productive resources have encouraged young people to leave their
communities in search of better opportunities. Young respondents reported relocating to areas
near their original homes, as well as undertaking longer journeys to urban centres—both of which
expose them to various threats and vulnerabilities.

*"Due to climate change young people have left their villages and come
to town and started small businesses such as brewing alcohol, selling
firewood, poultry farming, and selling food stuffs abandoning earlier
livelihoods like brick laying, artisanal mining and crop farming."*

Young woman from Bweera, Uganda

Young people often embark on these journeys **alone with little protection** or knowledge of what
awaits them. In the Sahel, young men of working age are undertaking mass rural exodus towards
urban centres, exposing themselves to theft, assault, or human trafficking along the way. On arrival,
conflict sometimes arises between displaced populations and host communities when these new
influxes are perceived to increase livelihood insecurity for the hosts[51], as highlighted in the case
studies from Burkina Faso and Somalia.[52] **Competition over resources** also occurs, as seen with
nomadic agropastoral communities that may encroach on land owned by other community groups
due to increased mobility needs to provide pasture and water for their animals.

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48   (Nett & Ruttinger, 2016)
49   (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2023, pp. 6-7)
50   (International Crisis Group, 2024)
51   (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 2023, p. 5)
52   Somalia's case study notes that "Nearly two-thirds (63%) of respondents experienced moderate to extreme conflict with host
        communities, underscoring the risk of escalating violence due to resource competition and strained social cohesion".

Climate-related migration has a **gendered dimension**, as evidenced in the case studies from Pakistan and Niger. Young men often migrate to cities or other areas in search of opportunities during crises. However, social norms often prevent young women from doing the same, leaving them in the affected areas with fewer options for escape or recovery. During crises, women, who may be without a primary breadwinner, are often left vulnerable to increased risk of SGBV.

INCREASED ADHERENCE TO ARMED GROUPS

When faced with limited livelihood options, young people may be lured to join armed groups – most often violent extremist organisations or criminal gangs – who offer **the promise of income stability, belonging, and protection**. In the contexts in which Extremely Together Chapters operate, the breakdown of social cohesion and pervasive insecurity strengthen the allure of these groups, as they present themselves as **alternatives to the failing systems** that have left these young people marginalised and without hope for a better future.

"When I joined them (AS) it felt like the only choice. It was fear but also it wasn't much of a choice because I saw this happen to others before that made it easier to agree. They promised safety for my family's small herd of goats, and they would not make them pay the taxes and that would allow my family to survive and eat. It also allowed me to have more freedom, being a part of them meant you could go anywhere that was otherwise restricted. I never thought what they were doing was right if I didn't join it would impact my family and I'm the only boy, my father is too old."

Mahad, Young man from Afgoye, Somalia

The research also highlights a strong gender aspect within recruitment trends. Traditional expectations for young men to be providers make them particularly susceptible to recruitment, especially when opportunities for stable employment are limited or when traditional livelihoods, like farming or herding, are no longer sustainable due to climate change. Young men often become directly involved in violent activities whereas women are more likely to assume supporting roles. Women can also be perpetrators of violence, as was the case with Mahal Baloch, a young female student who conducted a suicide bombing attack on behalf of the BLA.[53] On average, however, women are disproportionately affected as victims of violence (e.g., SGBV, casualties, or injuries linked to armed group activity).[54]

53   (MM News, 2024)
54   (UN Women , 2024)

GAPS BETWEEN AWARENESS AND ACTION
Obstacles to organised youth action

In all six research contexts, surveyed youth displayed a **good general awareness of climate change**, its effects, and potential implications – with some drawing a clear distinction between the effects of climate change on one hand and environmental degradation on the other. These young people spoke clearly about how weather anomalies as well as alterations in annual rain and temperature cycles affected them. When it came to establishing a **link between climate and conflict**, a portion of young people could draw a distinction between the changing environment and social tensions, but many were **unclear on the causal relationship**.

The willingness and ability of young people to **get involved in initiatives** to address climate change or bolster community resilience did, however, vary by country and by group. In the Philippines' BARMM region, 64% of respondents said they participated in community clean-up initiatives. In Pakistan's Balochistan, young women have been notably active in leading relief efforts during climate-induced events. In other areas, young people faced more obstacles to getting involved in community action. For example, a young person leading a clean-up activity in Niger noted the lack of support from local authorities:

> *"When we voluntarily started this activity, it was very interesting and ambitious to the point where some people thought we were being paid. We were really ambitious, but the lack of support from the authorities or our partners meant that we couldn't do it. We made many complaints to the town hall, but to no avail."*

> Young man from Kaffi, Lake Madarounfa District, Niger

Yet, the greatest obstacle to youth involvement is the **need to prioritise basic survival over contributing to climate-conflict issues**. When daily life revolves around securing food, water, and safety, there is little time or energy left for broader concerns. In the Philippines, for example, youth reported being preoccupied with direct security threats (e.g., electoral violence, armed groups, and land grabbing) over broader existential threats. Survey participants in almost every country showed themselves more receptive to discussions on **revenue-generating activities rather than broader discussions on climate policy and government.**

Lack of education and **illiteracy** also hinder the efficiency and quality of initiatives, as well as people's overall willingness to take part. Even when there is willingness to get involved, low levels of knowledge of **methods** to combat these problems and **limited access to material resources** are major obstacles to youth inclusion. For example, research in Uganda's Rwenzori sub-region demonstrated that youth education levels strongly correlate with their awareness and ability to respond to climate change, with those with higher education more likely to participate in climate initiatives.

Finally, **relief efforts, mitigation processes, and adaptation strategies** that are put in place by external actors or even communities themselves **rarely involve young people** or other marginalised groups. Youth often face stigma within their communities which can mean they find themselves excluded from major decisions. In Uganda's Kasese district, for instance, young people were excluded from consultations on a new agricultural adaptation strategy to address climatic shocks, as it was assumed their perspectives did not matter since they did not yet own land.

TOWARDS UNIFIED ACTION ON CLIMATE AND CONFLICT

While resilience and adaptation efforts are essential, they place the onus of change on local communities and strip the international community of its responsibilities. **Multilateral cooperation** should instead be promoted as the main vehicle for change. Yet, governments, civil society organisations, and the private sector often operate in **silos**, with their efforts sometimes undermining one another. This fragmented approach coupled with the **heterogenous application of international conventions** hampers effective action on climate-conflict issues. For instance, respondents shared how environmental laws protecting wetlands are being selectively applied in the Lake Victoria River basin with certain key plots offered to investors.[55]

Furthermore, current support structures – when in place – only **address symptoms rather than the root causes**. Current approaches resemble firefighting, with short-term relief activities taking precedence over sustainable reconstruction and rehabilitation. Although national governments and international bodies do provide emergency aid, they often fail to support long-term adaptation strategies which leaves communities vulnerable to recurring crises. Youth involvement could play a role in bridging this gap in engagement and action. Yet, young people are frequently excluded from discussions that directly impact their future—a point underscored by findings in this study.

Corruption and **poor governance** exacerbate these challenges. In Pakistan, for example, the national government's response to flooding has been criticised as inadequate, leaving local communities and philanthropists to manage recovery efforts. Respondents report that resources were distributed based on political allegiances and patronage politics rather than need. In Somalia, 78% of respondents identified the lack of strong institutions as a key factor contributing to violent conflict over natural resources. Weak institutional mechanisms fail to protect natural resources and adapt to climate change, leading to environmental degradation and competition for resources. Adding to this issue is the widespread availability of small arms, which intensifies intercommunal conflicts.

Conflict-affected regions receive disproportionately low per capita climate funding compared to non-conflict areas with similar needs, highlighting inequities in allocation.[56] UNEP's Adaptation Gap Report 2024 warns of a growing gap between adaptation needs and financial flows, urging stronger commitments in future climate pledges.[57] Young people often report that insufficient resources are allocated to climate initiatives, with government financing often mismanaged and international aid poorly targeted.Loans from multinational banks and international organisations are often project-based, lacking a **conflict-sensitive approach** – especially when it concerns youth. Capacity-building activities receive funding but without follow-up or support to implement the skills acquired.

Finally, **representation** on **information sharing platforms** is another critical consideration. The impacts of the climate-conflict nexus are often not accurately represented, and community-led initiatives are sometimes used as window dressing rather than to genuinely empower local voices. A visit by the UN Secretary-General to Balochistan, for example, did not include meetings with flood victims because of bureaucratic hurdles. This left affected communities without a platform to share their experiences and ideas. Similarly, in Uganda's Rwenzori sub-region, there is high media coverage of climate-related disasters, but local communities are given limited platforms to voice their concerns and share ideas for long-term solutions.

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55   Anecdote from a person in Uganda during findings workshop (11 June 2024).
56   (SIPRI, 2024)
57   (UNEP, 2024)

Recommendations

The global mismanagement of climate and security challenges highlights a crisis in multilateral governance, driven by poor funding allocations and a lack of long-term strategies. Consultations with young people from diverse backgrounds have shown that existing mechanisms for addressing climate and security threats are inadequate. The following recommendations emerged through the research and aim to guide multilateral stakeholders toward strategies that better address the long-term needs of those who are most impacted by climate change and insecurity.

1. RETHINKING DECISION-MAKING AND ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

CHALLENGE:
The age gap in decision-making resulting in the systematic exclusion of young people from discussions that shape their future. Ensuring genuine participation, rather than tokenism, remains a challenge, as does holding national and multilateral bodies accountable for their inclusivity commitments.

TARGET AUDIENCE:
Community leaders and local decision-makers (mayors, elders, traditional and religious leaders, influential persons), national policymakers and government bodies (youth ministries, ministries of the environment and defence), UN bodies and other multilateral institutions.

Involving youth at every level of decision-making is essential to creating policies and programs that address their specific needs. Efforts should go beyond the tokenistic involvement of young people often witnessed in many national, regional, and international fora.

→   **PROMOTING PLATFORMS FOR MEANINGFUL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:**
Youth councils, advisory boards, and consultations with representatives of different youth groups are discussion formats that tend to drive youth-centric policy design and implementation – keeping in mind that some formats may be more adapted to certain contexts than others. However, to be truly effective, these must not be taken as stand-alone platforms but should be integrated into broader decision-making bodies to ensure senior leaders consider youth perspectives. Young people emphasised inter-generational exchange as key to decisions that benefit all of society, imagining the voices of women and marginalised youth as central features of these discussions. They also expressed frustration at the tokenistic involvement of young people in decision-making, demanding deeper engagement by decision-making actors. In Uganda, for example, surveyed youth expressed a keen desire to have more support from the government in implementation of climate and conflict adaptation strategies.

→   **FORTIFYING COMMUNITY LINKAGES:**
Youth involvement at the community level presents a promising entry point for fostering local resilience. However, respondents noted that discrimination within communities often limits young people's participation. Strengthening ties between youth-led bodies and community leaders could foster inclusion and develop youth credibility, enhancing community cohesion and resilience. Formal mentorship programs between youth and community leaders could help young people build credibility within their communities whilst giving them the chance to develop leadership skills in peace and climate action. This could also help bolster the credibility of women – and especially young women – who are all too often sidelined from formal community decision-making spaces. Contextual adaptation of these initiatives is essential; in Niger, participants recommended intergenerational dialogues to address shared resource management in the Lake Madarounfa region, including land and water, demonstrating the need for tailored, locally relevant solutions.

→   **LOBBYING FOR NATIONAL POLICY CHANGE:**
Young respondents also made it clear that grassroots efforts must be reinforced by national policies that support youth-led peacebuilding and climate resilience. Governments can institutionalise support by developing policies that are pro-youth, pro-climate, gender inclusive and peace sensitive. Examples include:

1. Developing policies that mandate community involvement in climate and resilience planning.
2. Earmarking funds for youth-led peace climate adaptation initiatives.

3. Creating conflict management systems people can trust by reinforcing judicial mechanisms. In Somalia, for instance, integrating Xeer[58] , a traditional conflict resolution method, into formal structures has bolstered confidence in formal conflict resolution and minimised the onset of tensions.

58   Xeer is a traditional legal practice in Somalia from which Somali law draws its inspiration. Under this system, elders known as the "xeer begti" act as mediator judges to help settle court cases, taking precedent and custom into account. (Definition: Wikipedia).

→ **ESTABLISHING MULTILATERAL CONTROLS FOR YOUTH-INCLUSION:**
Participants recommended that multilateral actors adopt standardised accountability
mechanisms to ensure the proper integration of youth, peace, and climate concerns in
policies and project plans at national and regional levels. This could take several forms:

1. Using multilateral institutions to ensure that member states not only adopt but also implement national climate and youth policies, as well as international treaties like the RAMSAR Convention on Wetlands.[59] The UN Population fund (UNFPA) or UN Youth Office could monitor youth policies, while other agencies such as the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) and the United Nations Environmental Programme could oversee climate policy.

2. Establishing a universal periodic review, modelled after the Human Rights Council's accountability mechanism, to track climate, peace, and youth commitments within multilateral frameworks.
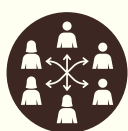
2. PROMOTING CROSS-DISCIPLINARY, INTERGENERATIONAL, AND MULTILEVEL EXCHANGE

CHALLENGE:
The siloed approach to information-gathering, knowledge sharing, and dialogue, with insufficient recognition of the links between climate and insecurity in international fora.

TARGET AUDIENCE:
Multilateral institutions including the UN, international and national donors, knowledge generating bodies (research institutes, think tanks, etc.), INGOs and NGO consortiums.

→ **ACKNOWLEDGING INTERLINKAGES AT THE MULTILATERAL LEVEL:**
For exchange of any kind to succeed, multilateral institutions must first lay the groundwork
for interconnected thinking in their own frameworks. The link between climate change,
environmental degradation, and conflict must be fully recognised in international policies
and frameworks. While this connection was acknowledged in the 2023 New Agenda for
Peace[60], it was notably absent from the 2024 Pact for the Future.[61] Given the significant threat
climate insecurity poses to youth, this relationship must become a central focus in peace,
security, and climate policies across the board. This should include making climate insecurity
an official agenda item at COP and ensuring it is addressed when the Pact for the Future is
reviewed at the 83rd UN General Assembly. In addition, a promising initiative emerging from
the COP processes is the Global Framework on Children, Youth, Peace, and Climate Security.

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59   (RAMSAR, n.d.)

60   "Where record temperatures, erratic precipitation and rising sea levels reduce harvests, destroy critical infrastructure and displace communities, they exacerbate the risks of instability, in particular in situations already affected by conflict. Rising sea levels and shrinking land masses are an existential threat to some island States. They may also create new, unanticipated areas of contestation, leading to new or resurgent disputes related to territorial and maritime claims. Climate policies and green energy transitions can offer avenues for effective peacebuilding and the inclusion of women, Indigenous communities, the economically disadvantaged and youth" (United Nations, 2023, pp. 6-7)

61   (United Nations, 2024)

The framework aims to address the intersection of children and youth engagement, peacebuilding, and climate action. It seeks to support and recognise the active role that children and youth play in promoting peace and security in the context of climate change.

→ **ENCOURAGING CROSS-DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH:**
International peacebuilding, humanitarian and development actors are increasingly moving to a nexus approach to tackling the world's most pressing problems. This interdisciplinary method has yielded positive results insofar as they have generated solutions that both address a crisis and its underlying issues. Young people called for continued investment in cross-sectoral analyses, as well as collaboration between private and public knowledge bodies at all levels. To ensure equity, clear safeguards must be established to prevent power imbalances or one actor exerting too much influence over the research outcomes. For instance, respondents in the Bangsamoro Region of the Philippines expressed interest in multilateral-funded cross-disciplinary research involving youth, elders, and experts as a way of making knowledge production comprehensive and inclusive.

→ **MAXIMISING REGIONAL SYNERGIES:**
Regional dialogue is crucial for sharing lessons on climate and security among actors facing similar challenges. It is also key to addressing cross-border conflicts that transcend national boundaries. Respondents proposed establishing multi-actor dialogue platforms to mediate resource disputes and share lessons. These dialogue platforms could lead to integrated peace and climate action plans, incorporating perspectives from youth, marginalised groups, and community leaders. Additionally, the creation of regional communities of practice would enable organisations in the environment and peace sectors to engage in mutual learning, joint problem analysis, and coordinated action. These could be co-facilitated by youth climate and peace networks like YOUNGO[62] and UNOY or led by regional bodies like ASEAN and the AU. INGOs could play a vital role in rallying regional actors and serving as impartial mediators in conflicts of interest. It should be noted that inter-regional learning is equally of value and could be a potential next step once regional synergies are solidified.

→ **BUILDING GLOBAL YOUTH EXCHANGE INFRASTRUCTURE:**
Existing peace-climate exchange platforms at the international level lack robust youth inclusion and do not adequately connect with multilateral decision-making. Young researchers recommend amplifying the reach and mandate of platforms[63] like the Global Coalition on Youth, Peace and Security, YOUNGO, and the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN) to strengthen youth representation and foster exchange with experienced decision-makers across sectors. Suggested actions include funding scholarships, supporting exchange programs focused on the peace-climate nexus, and investing in youth-peace-climate expertise within these structures.

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62   The Official Children and Youth Constituency of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
63   Examples include the Official Children and Youth Constituency of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (YOUNGO UNFCCC), the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GBYN) led by the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Secretary General's Youth Climate Advisory Board or regional initiatives such as the Young Entrepreneur Exchange Project (YEEP) African Alumni.

3. STRENGTHENING GENDER-RESPONSIVE ADAPTATION

CHALLENGE:
Limited research on the gender dimensions of climate and conflict creates barriers to understanding the specific needs of women and girls, particularly in remote and underserved communities.

TARGET AUDIENCE:
International development organisations, governments, and community leaders

Empowering young women in climate adaptation and decision-making brings inclusive, sustainable, and effective strategies for building climate resilience, reduces gender-based vulnerabilities, and strengthens community resilience and conflict resolution.

→ **PROMOTE GENDER-RESPONSIVE RESEARCH:**
To address the knowledge gap, invest in context-specific research on the gender dimensions of climate and conflict, especially within marginalised and hard-to-reach communities. This approach can provide a better understanding of gender-specific needs and inform targeted adaptation strategies. Due to existing barriers, findings lean slightly towards male perspectives of climate change and insecurity. These insights could serve as a foundation for future research that centres gender perspectives on climate and security. Such studies would benefit from being led by researchers who have established trust and connections within women's networks in remote communities.

→ **ADOPTING GENDER-RESPONSIVE APPROACHES TO ADAPTATION:**
Involving women in local adaptation strategies helps mitigate risks linked to resource scarcity and gender-based violence, equipping them to protect their families and communities in times of crisis. In Uganda, findings showed that young women are more likely to be engaged in climate-sensitive activities such as subsistence farming, which are directly impacted by extreme weather events. Enhancing women's participation in climate action is a key pathway to achieving inclusive peace and security. This requires supporting grassroots women's organisations, recognising women's contributions to climate resilience, and ensuring their voices are central in climate negotiations and policy development.

4. ENCOURAGING SUSTAINABLE AND PEACE-SENSITIVE FINANCE

CHALLENGE:
International financial and grant-making systems often fail to meet the needs of affected communities and can exacerbate issues by neglecting to consider sustainability and peace-sensitivity. This ties into the issue of siloed information-gathering which shapes funding mechanisms for specific actions, and which may have unintended consequences in other areas.[64]

TARGET AUDIENCE:
International funding institutions, private sector industry, foreign affair offices of large donor governments, supra-regional funding bodies.

Finance plays a critical role in shaping how populations experience climate and security challenges. Governments, multilateral institutions, and private sector industries significantly influence vulnerabilities through their funding choices.

➜   **ALLOCATING FUNDS TO PREPARE FOR PREDICTABLE SHOCKS:**
The lack of resources to prepare for predictable shocks leaves communities vulnerable to severe impacts on their well-being and safety. Funders addressing the long-term effects of climate insecurity must also invest in building the capacities of local authorities and CSOs to equip communities for recurring shocks. Respondents suggested that proactive preparation can help mitigate the most detrimental effects of climate shocks, strengthening resilience and reducing long-term damage. Solutions must be driven by context-specific needs. In Pakistan, for instance, the threat of recurring floods would call for flood resistant infrastructure, improved drainage systems, community flood plans, and disaster risk insurance. In the Sahel, where agropastoral communities are suffering the effects of drought, funders could consider supporting water storage facilities, drought-resistant crops, or sustainable land management efforts.

➜   **MAKING INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT FUNDING RESTRICTIONS:**
As funding shifts toward localised models, increased restrictions and earmarking has begun to hinder collaboration between the local and the global. Local actors have strong contextual knowledge but may require technical support from regional or international partners who are sometimes excluded from funding requirements as part of well-meaning but often poorly calculated efforts to decolonise aid. Other times, INGOs find it difficult to receive accreditations to operate in certain countries. Donors must therefore conduct thorough assessments of the peacebuilding landscape in concertation with communities to build funding structures that recognise synergies between actors.

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64   Examples include biodiversity conservation projects that undermine livelihoods (e.g. farming, fishing), or resource management projects that favour one community over another – both potential sources of conflict because of well-meaning initiatives.

→ **REDEFINING FUNDING PRIORITIES:**
As discussed throughout this study, it is all too common for initiatives meant to address climate and security challenges to cause unforeseen harm and undermine community cohesion. Youth from Niger and Pakistan both expressed concerns about the misalignment of donor funding with local needs. They suggest that joint analyses by climate and peace experts should guide donor funding towards long-term initiatives that integrate climate adaptation, conflict resolution, peace-sensitivity, and community empowerment. Community consultations should also become a requirement for all donor-funded projects in fragile regions, ensuring funding priorities are aligned more closely with local needs.

→ **CREATING ACCOUNTABLE DISBURSEMENT MECHANISMS:**
A lack of accountability often arises when funds are transferred from governments to grassroot actors. As previously illustrated in the case of Pakistan, funds and resources are sometimes used for political leverage, thus preventing communities who need it the most from receiving support. Transparent disbursement mechanisms that are integrated by donors into their funding schemes are essential to ensure proper use of aid funds. Examples offered by respondents include third-party audits, digital tracking, and independent observers (e.g., CSOs).

5. SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES THROUGH TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

CHALLENGE:
Insufficient external support for communities, particularly young people, to not only adapt to the challenges they face and strengthen their resilience, but also to empower them to take the lead on developing locally led solutions to context-specific problems.

TARGET AUDIENCE:
National and regional governance, international and national development organisations, community-led NGOs, private sector businesses (specifically from climate-related sectors), funding mechanisms, grant making institutions.

→ **INTERVENING STRATEGICALLY IN THE DESIGN OF ADAPTATION STRATEGIES:**
Effective resilience-building must be grounded in local knowledge, rather than externally imposed solutions. Youth suggested that international and national organisations should refrain from imposing ready-made solutions and limit their intervention to providing technical support like resource management, infrastructure development, and technology training. By enabling local youth to create their own adaptation strategies, this approach would empower communities to develop context-sensitive and tradition-aligned solutions. Needs-based assessments that are cross-cutting across genders and social strata would help deliver targeted interventions that support young people in a practical manner. These should acknowledge that needs can differ from one group to the next, with a special attention brought to women who are often left behind in the design of adaptation strategies. In the Philippines, for instance, respondents in the region of Mindanao expressed a need for training on sustainable agricultural practices tailored to the specificities of their landscapes.

➔ **CREATING ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF REVENUE:**
Time and resources are best spent developing livelihood opportunities for young people, particularly those without land or in vulnerable positions. Programs delivered by partners in Burkina Faso, which offer professional reconversion support for rural youth, have proven highly successful, becoming self-sustaining as older cohorts train their younger peers. To enhance these efforts, young people should also be given access to capital to start businesses, including green and smart agriculture ventures. Partnerships between NGOs and private companies specialising in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and smart technologies (e.g., such as solar power, wind energy, and sustainable fish farming) could drive this forward. Involving the private sector would facilitate technology transfer, equipping communities to tackle the challenges of climate change. It would also ensure new jobs are climate-resilient and contribute to long-term stability and climate goals. The Somali case study illustrates this: "While agri-business and small businesses offer potential in Afgoye's centralised role in agriculture, youth lack the resources to start businesses in relevant trade skills like metalworking, electronics repair, or tailoring. This underscores the need for investment in training programs and access to capital for enterprise development and skills training that are tailored to local needs and market demands."[65]

➔ **ESTABLISHING IDP-SPECIFIC SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMS:**
Sustainable livelihood programs specifically designed for displaced youth could help integrate them into the local economy, mitigate tensions with host communities, and minimise the risk of radicalisation. As was suggested by respondents in Burkina Faso and Somalia, providing these young people with employment in climate-resilient sectors (e.g., sustainable agriculture, water management, etc.) could potentially contribute to economic stability in regions affected by climate-induced migration. These efforts could be driven by national or regional governments, external NGOs, the private sector, or a combination of these actors to ensure lasting benefits for both IDPs and their host communities.

➔ **FOCUSING ON THE WOMEN LEFT BEHIND:**
As the study reveals, common migration patterns often see men leaving their home communities in search of opportunities, while women, due to social norms, are left behind with limited mobility. Adaptation strategies and alternative livelihood initiatives must therefore address the distinct needs and vulnerabilities of women, particularly those in households where the primary breadwinner has migrated. For example, interviews in Niger showed that women rely on selling food items, a practice increasingly challenged by hot weather, forcing them to spend much of their limited income on preserving stock (i.e., purchasing ice), when more affordable, adaptive solutions could be implemented.

65   See page [x].

6. DELIVERING CLIMATE- AND PEACE-SENSITIVE EMERGENCY RELIEF

CHALLENGE:
The mismanagement of short-term emergency relief, its exploitation by local actors for personal gain, as well as its use in dividing communities, creating tension, and fuelling conflict.

TARGET AUDIENCE:
International humanitarian organisations who deliver aid, foreign governments and multilateral structures who disburse aid and sponsor interventions, branches of national governments in charge of organising relief.

→ **ESTABLISHING CONTROLS:**
While long-term reform of global governance is necessary, participants in the study stressed that there should also be immediate attention brought to how we deliver short-term emergency relief. Poorly designed aid efforts risk escalating conflict and environmental damage. For instance, surveyed Somalian youth shared that the unequal distribution of resources between different crisis-affected communities in Afgoye has historically sparked animosity and, oftentimes, violence. Standardising climate- and peace-sensitive controls for all emergency plans could reduce these risks and help make the delivery of emergency aid more efficient. An easily implementable option would be a standard checklist developed with input from experts as well as youth and gender perspectives. Integrating community-based feedback mechanisms into relief plans can provide ongoing monitoring and adaptation throughout the implementation process.

→ **DEVELOPING COMMUNITY ACTION MECHANISMS:**
Empowering communities through training, such as first aid and community organising, ensures their active involvement in emergency relief. Local governance structures[66] should play an active part in designing and delivering these trainings to ensure cultural acceptance and ownership. This approach strengthens local resilience and reduces the risk of aid being misused. For example, young respondents in Pakistan suggested that material goods donated by INGOs during the recent floods might not have been used by local officials for political gain had communities been more involved in the distribution efforts. Research has also shown that focusing training efforts on women heads of household tend to yield more altruistic decision-making in crisis situations.[67]

66   Examples include religious leaders, indigenous councils, community organisers, etc.
67   (Gammage, Neetu, & Schaub) (Hathaway, 2016)

Conclusion

We now stand at a critical juncture, where the intertwined challenges of climate and security demand immediate, decisive action. Global stakeholders must prioritise solutions that not only address the environmental crisis but also foster peace and stability in the most vulnerable regions, accounting for the needs of the populations. This begins with empowering communities through training and awareness raising, ensuring climate- and peace-sensitive emergency relief, and integrating youth into decision-making processes. Embedding gender-responsive perspectives throughout these strategies is essential to ensuring that both women's and men's distinct needs and contributions are fully addressed. Young people, particularly those from marginalised communities and conflict-affected areas, are essential to building resilience and driving innovative approaches to these complex issues. Their inclusion is not optional—it is critical to shaping a sustainable and secure future. In parallel, we must strengthen collaboration between regional and global actors, advocating for cross-sectoral, intergenerational, and multilevel collaboration. Funding mechanisms should be redefined to ensure transparency, accountability, and long-term sustainability. As we move forward, we must commit to reshaping multilateral strategies to prioritise resilience, inclusion, and meaningful participation.

Together, we can forge a path toward a future where climate resilience and peace are within reach for all, through inclusive cooperation and a shared sense of responsibility.

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