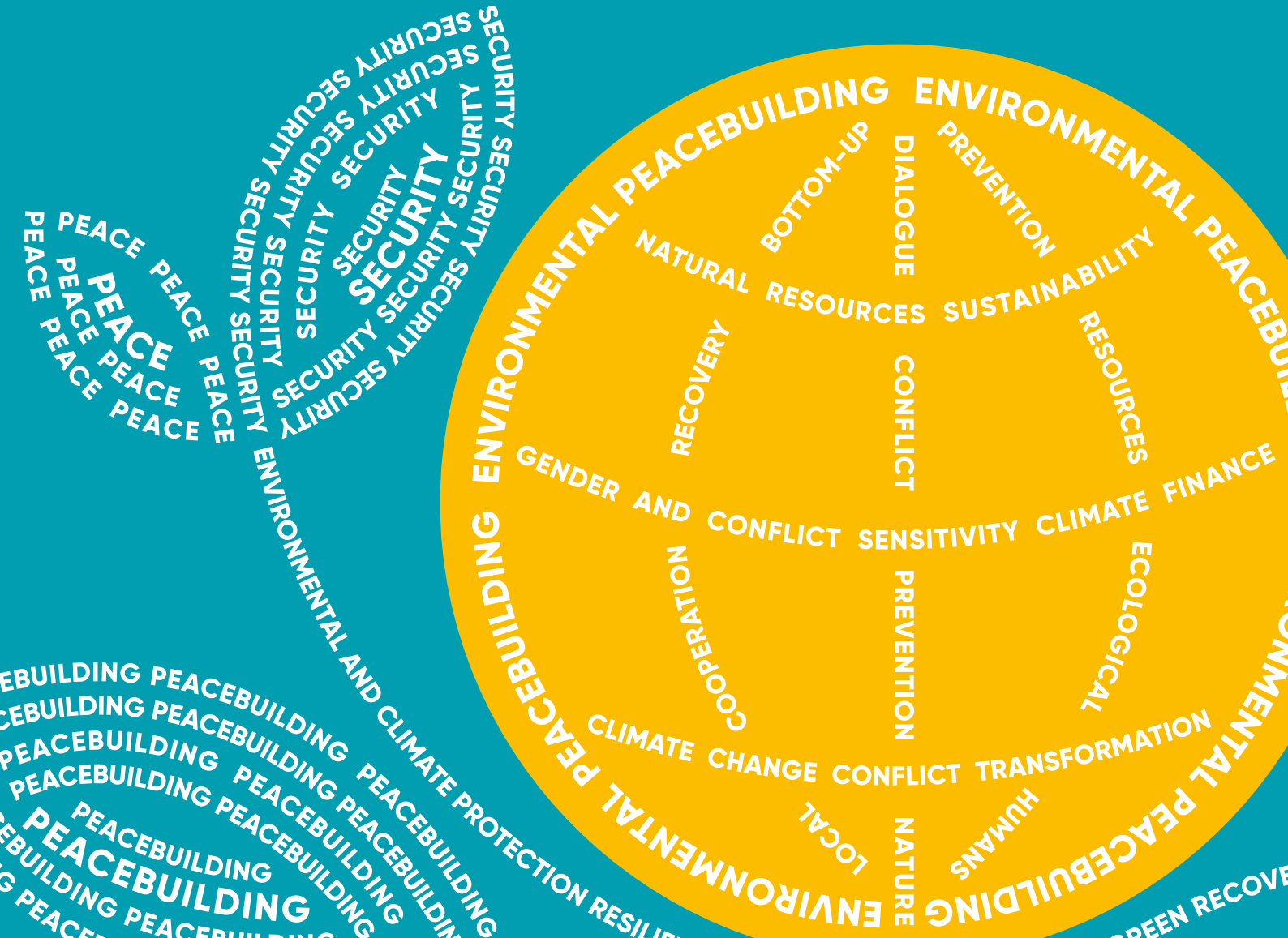
Advisory Board to the Federal Government
Civilian Crisis Prevention and Peacebuilding

Civilian Crisis Prevention through Environmental Peacebuilding

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE PROTECTION-ORIENTED APPROACHES FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE

STUDY 7 FROM THE ADVISORY BOARD'S STUDY SERIES



Study by the Advisory Board to the German Federal Government for Civilian Crisis Prevention and Peacebuilding

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Foreword

Tackling global environmental problems and the escalating climate crisis represents one of the greatest challenges for societies worldwide. The increasing exploitation of natural resources, disregard for the environment of our planet, and the associated social and economic consequences are no longer simply ecological problems but increasingly threaten global peace and security. Environmental and climate issues are closely linked to conflicts and humanitarian crises. Recognizing this interconnection is a crucial step towards a more comprehensive understanding of security. Against this backdrop, the Advisory Board's Working Group on Climate and Security is deeply engaged in exploring the interplay between both climate and environment, as well as peace and security, which is becoming increasingly relevant in the conception of strategies by the German federal government.

The German Federal Government's 2017 policy guidelines, Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Promoting Peace, already highlighted the challenges posed by climate change to foreign and defence policy, emphasizing that peace, security, and development urgently depend on a stable global climate. In the context of the ongoing development of these guidelines, initiated in 2024, the relevance of the nexus between climate and security should once again be underscored—particularly given the increasingly alarming changes in the Earth's system, which often act as catalysts for existing tensions and conflicts. Hence it follows that there is immense need for innovative approaches to conflict resolution that integrate climate and environmental factors.

The field of Environmental Peacebuilding offers significant potential in this regard. Approaches of Environmental Peacebuilding assume that jointly addressing environmental and climate challenges, as well as protecting natural resources, can not only resolve ecological issues but also help overcome social and political crises, de-escalate conflicts, and promote long-term peace. Particularly in conflict regions, the management of resources offers the opportunity to build trust between former conflict parties and promote long-term cooperation. However, this requires a close interlinking of climate and environmental policies with peace processes and vice versa. Moreover, international climate financing should be designed as a conflict-sensitive instrument.

This study discusses the potential of Environmental Peacebuilding and highlights the role that Germany can play, especially by promoting innovative approaches in the areas of climate and security. The study draws on existing lessons learnt from various Environmental Peacebuilding projects. Protecting the environment and combating the climate crisis are not only matters of ecological sustainability but also serve to safeguard global peace. Finally, the study offers recommendations for designing sustainable solutions within the framework of Environmental Peacebuilding.

We thank the Advisory Board's Working Group on Climate and Security for preparing this study and look forward to further dialogue.

Dr Kira Vinke
Co-Chair of the Advisory Board
from 2018 - 2024

Deputy Commissioner Crime (retired) Lars Wagner
Co-Chair of the Advisory Board
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Advisory Board to the Federal Government for Civilian Crisis Prevention and Peacebuilding

Mai 2025

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Executive summary

Objective

This study examines the approach of Environmental Peacebuilding and its potential to foster peace and stability across various conflict regions. The core idea behind Environmental Peacebuilding is that environmental challenges, resource scarcity, and the effects of climate change can be utilised as a platform for dialogue and cooperation between stakeholders. This approach aims to prevent, de-escalate, and resolve violent conflicts, while supporting long-term peace. By purposefully integrating environmental and climate considerations into peace initiatives, violent conflicts can, under certain conditions, be alleviated, durable peace structures can be strengthened, and resilience within affected communities can be enhanced. Within the context of further developing the German government's policy guidelines "Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace", this study provides an overview of academic insights and illustrative exemplary cases, leading to actionable recommendations.

Approach

The study is based on a review of academic literature and an extensive array of international case studies to highlight the diverse methods and impacts of Environmental Peacebuilding. Projects analysed include cooperative initiatives such as EcoPeace, small hydropower projects in the Balkans, Environmental Peacebuilding measures in West Africa, the Camel Caravan in Kenya, Tara Bandu in Timor-Leste, and international efforts to strengthen the role of women within Afghanistan's energy sector. These case studies span a broad spectrum of regions and contexts, including the current example of environmental degradation in Ukraine caused by the ongoing Russian invasion. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of gender and intersectionality within Environmental Peacebuilding to achieve inclusive and sustainable peace solutions. Climate finance is also discussed as a lever for establishing Environmental Peacebuilding structures, especially considering the emerging Loss and Damage Fund.

Findings and recommendations

The study shows that Environmental Peacebuilding can successfully contribute to crisis prevention and support conflict mitigation, particularly when tailored to the needs and experiences of local communities. Sustainable environmental practices and the integration of environmental considerations within peacebuilding efforts not only address immediate conflicts but also contribute positively to social stability. Participatory and locally rooted approaches are shown to be especially effective. The study recommends increased support for Environmental Peacebuilding initiatives that are inclusive and context-specific. Climate and environmental issues should be consistently linked with social justice and gender considerations to maximise the long-term peace potential. The German government and international funding bodies should strategically support these projects as key elements of civilian crisis prevention and peacebuilding, particularly within the framework of advancing Germany's policy guidelines "Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace". The success of Environmental Peacebuilding relies on achieving the temperature targets of the Paris Agreement. Only radical reductions in emissions can create the space for cooperation that is needed to deal with the already unavoidable consequences of climate change.

1 Introduction

Filipino residents try to recover usable materials from their properties damaged by a landslide after heavy rains in Marayag Village, Mindanao, Southern Philippines.
©picture alliance / dpa | Ritchie B. Tongo

The joint sustainable management and regeneration of natural resources poses enormous challenges for societies. The so-called tragedy of the commons manifests itself in many ways in existentially important aspects of the earth system, such as the atmosphere, the oceans and biodiversity, whose poorly regulated overexploitation leads to enormous and unequally distributed damage. Although the significance of the conservation of global goods for human livelihoods and socio-economic development has been widely demonstrated, protective measures have been insufficiently implemented to date.[13] The consequences are cascading and interacting risks that threaten to overwhelm even the disaster management of industrialised countries. The practice of "environmental peacebuilding" attempts to overcome the tragedy of the commons and turn it into a virtue: through the shared use, conservation and restoration of natural resources, politically polarised groups (Smith et al. 2024) or parties to a conflict should be able to reconcile, while at the same time improving livelihoods.

[13] The tragedy of the commons describes the problem of collectively used resources being overused and destroyed as a result of individual behaviour because some individuals benefit more than they contribute to conservation. However, this does not necessarily have to be the case; people can also develop rules for the sustainable use of collective resources (Ostrom 1990).

In 2017, the German government adopted guidelines for civilian crisis prevention entitled “Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace”; these guidelines identify environment-related security risks as one field of action in crisis prevention. Since the publication of this framework for German peace engagement, global environmental problems have continued to deteriorate dramatically. This is evident, for example, from the demonstrable transgression of planetary boundaries, the rapid rise in global mean temperature, which has already exceeded the 1.5°C mark for 12 consecutive months (Copernicus Climate Change Service 2024), as well as in the consequences for deaths caused by storms, floods or heat extremes, ruined livelihoods, health crises and massive economic damage (Richardson et al. 2023). These negative consequences of the overuse of natural resources mean a change in the risk landscape, which favours the emergence of conflicts, as well as an intensification of humanitarian crises due to crop failures and physical risks of extreme weather events. Instruments that address both traditional and non-traditional security risks have thus gained in importance.

Approaches to environmental peacebuilding often involve measures to strengthen social cohesion and are now being implemented by many different institutions. This study focuses on the areas of application of environmental peacebuilding and derives lessons learnt from projects in different countries. It highlights the topic of gender in the context of environmental peacebuilding. In addition, climate finance is discussed as a lever for building environmental peacebuilding structures, particularly with regard to the emerging Loss and Damage Fund.

Furthermore, the potential of a “green recovery” for Ukraine is discussed. This analysis is carried out in the context of environmental peacebuilding with a view to strengthening domestic social cooperation, which has been exposed to the effects of the Russian war of aggression. Finally, the authors formulate specific recommendations for German engagement in civilian crisis prevention and peacebuilding. One focus is on the further development of the German government's crisis guidelines, the implementation of which will also be continued against the background of other strategic documents, such as the National Security Strategy and the Climate Foreign Policy Strategy.

What is environmental peacebuilding?

Originally known as “environmental peacemaking” (Conca & Dabelko 2002), the term “environmental peacebuilding” is now predominantly used. The basic idea of environmental peacebuilding is that environmental problems, scarcity of resources or the effects of climate change can be used as a field of action for dialogue and as a reason for cooperation between stakeholders in order to avoid violent conflicts, defuse them and promote long-term peace (Conca & Dabelko 2002). Currently, there are various definitions (see Table 1) that differentiate to varying degrees the links between resource management and peace work.

Despite the short history of research, the literature has already produced several definitions of environmental peacebuilding. The definition of the Environmental Peacebuilding Association (2024) is often used as a reference. According to this, “environmental peacebuilding integrates natural resource management in conflict prevention, mitigation, resolution, and recovery to build resilience in communities affected by conflict”. For the purpose of this study, we use the following explanation: “environmental peacebuilding comprises efforts to prevent environment-related conflicts, to build trust and establish shared identities, to facilitate integration between conflict parties, and to build capabilities for resilient and sustainable livelihoods” (Bruch et al. 2022: 49).

However, it should be noted that realisation of the aspects mentioned is not equally possible in every context. Depending on the specific circumstances, initial dialogues, confidence-building activities or even the mere avoidance or escalation of violent conflicts can be considered significant successes. The development of shared identities between parties to a conflict, in addition to their existing affiliations, is therefore not a prerequisite for environmental peacebuilding, but it can be a component of it, depending on the context.

Source	Definition
Environmental Peacebuilding Association 2024	"Environmental peacebuilding integrates natural resource management in conflict prevention, mitigation, resolution, and recovery to build resilience in communities affected by conflict"
Bruch et al. 2022: p. 49	"Environmental peacebuilding comprises efforts to prevent environment-related conflicts, to build trust and establish shared identities, to facilitate integration between conflict parties, and to build capabilities for resilient and sustainable livelihoods. Environmental peacebuilding can build both negative peace (e.g., by addressing conflict resources and other measures to end conflict) and positive peace (e.g., by creating a context for cooperation and integration, making conflict unthinkable)."
Dresse et al. 2019: p. 104	Environmental peacebuilding is "the process through which environmental challenges shared by the (former) parties to a violent conflict are turned into opportunities to build lasting cooperation and peace."
Ide et al. 2021a: p. 2f.	"Environmental peacebuilding comprises the multiple approaches and pathways by which the management of environmental issues is integrated in and can support conflict prevention, mitigation, resolution and recovery."
Ide 2019: p. 329	"Environmental peacemaking refers to all forms of cooperation on environmental issues between distinct social groups, which aim at and/or achieve creating less violent and more peaceful relations between these groups."
Krampe et al. 2021: p. 2	"The focus is on environmental peacebuilding—defined in its narrow sense as the conflict-sensitive and sustainable management of renewable natural resources in conflict-affected or postconflict states—that supports 'the ecological foundations for a socially, economically and politically resilient peace'" (see also Krampe 2017: p. 1) "In its broadest sense, environmental peacebuilding can be defined as the sustainable management of natural resources before, during or after conflict, emphasizing the potential for environmental governance—especially cooperative governance between conflict actors—to support peace and stability."
Maas et al. 2012: p. 103	"[Environmental peacebuilding] should be considered as an umbrella term that covers a wide range of aspects, which are united by their focus on the relationships between environment, conflict and peace."
UNEP 2016: p. 52	[Environmental peacebuilding] is "the process of governing and managing natural resources and the environment to help lay the foundation for enduring peace."

Table 1. Overview of various definitions of environmental peacebuilding.

The guiding assumption of environmental peacebuilding is that solving environmental problems is in the interest of all parties to the conflict, regardless of national, local and political differences (Carius 2006; Hachmann et al. 2023). Despite possible tensions, such as in the case of the Renaissance Dam between Ethiopia and Egypt, studies on transnational river basins show that the likelihood of cooperation in such cases is nevertheless significantly higher than that of violent conflict (Böhmelt et al. 2014; Dinar 2011; Link et al. 2016; Wolf 2007). Environmental peacebuilding approaches can be applied at both the international and the intranational level (Sommer & Fassbender 2024). Moreover, the search for solutions to environmental problems requires long-term and contextually flexible cooperation (Harari & Rosemann 2008). Cooperation between the stakeholders involved can not only contribute to the exchange of knowledge and the identification of solutions, but also can promote personal exchange between different groups that would not come into contact with each other under other circumstances (Carius 2006). Ideally, cooperation can thus help to avoid violent conflict and build trust and understanding between the groups of people involved through long-term communication (Ide et al. 2021a). Cooperation can become institutionalised (in both formal and informal institutions) and expand to include further topics (a process known as spillover effect). This creates mutual interdependencies, which in turn can prevent the emergence of violent conflicts. In the long term, and under certain conditions, this can lead to the transformation of values and identities and, for example, favour the emergence of cross-group identities (Ide & Scheffran 2013).

Environmental peacebuilding in the policy field of Germany's civilian crisis prevention

The 2017 policy guidelines of the German government “Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace” recognise the threat to peace posed by non-traditional security risks, such as climate change. The intensification of the risks posed by the climate crisis is taken into account in the German government's 2021 implementation report on the guidelines, in which climate and security are discussed in depth as one of a total of four political emphases. In the first German National Security Strategy of 2023, sustainability, alongside defence and resilience, is emphasised as a pillar of security and the risks posed by the loss of biodiversity are also seen in the broader context of the interlinked Earth system risks. Under the concept of integrated security, the links between human security and the traditional understanding of security, which focuses on protecting the state from military threats, are to be given more consideration.

The climate foreign policy strategy, which was also adopted in 2023, devotes an entire chapter to the topic of climate and security. The cross-cutting issues are examined from various angles. Both the mainstreaming of emission reduction and climate adaptation in crisis engagement and the necessary conflict sensitivity in climate projects are addressed.

Although the approach of environmental peacebuilding is not explicitly addressed in these various government documents, the peace-security-environment nexus is mentioned both in the respective problem analysis and in the action-guiding frameworks and the concrete implementation projects. This means that there are concrete starting points for environment-related crisis prevention, which make their increased application appear appropriate for achieving the strategic goals of the German government.

Document	Mention of the peace-security-environment nexus
Guidelines of the Federal Government: Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace (2017)	Problem analysis/situation report "It is the change taking place in the international order, the oftentimes weak state structures, an extremely high rate of population growth in many regions of the world, and the ever-increasing effects of climate change which pose huge challenges to our peacebuilding policy." (p. 19) Principles for action "We must tackle the causes of conflict at their root. [...] This involves containing the risks of climate change." (p. 13) "The goals of Germany's involvement are: to understand **the human right to water and sanitation and the human right to adequate food** as the direct expression of human dignity and to promote the implementation thereof at all cost; where water resources are used across borders, the promotion of cooperative resource management is paramount for regional security; (p. 96) [...] to work towards the fair **distribution of the revenue from resource extraction** (e.g. crude oil or diamonds). It is the Federal Government's firm belief that the fair and inclusive distribution of income generated in the extractive industries will reduce the potential for conflict in societies while diverting away resources from the profiteers of the war economy in acute crisis situations, thereby counteracting conflict prolongation;" (p. 97) "The task for the upcoming years will be to **integrate climate issues even more systematically into Germany's crisis engagement**, and to strengthen potentially affected regions' resilience. Programmes and projects for promoting adaptation to climate change are especially important to politically fragile regions and states already affected by climate change." (p. 133) Instruments/projects/implementation "To achieve these goals, the Federal Government of Germany has at its disposal a range of approaches and instruments, including the following: [...] **Agricultural and food and nutrition security projects**, such as agricultural training courses and professional training programmes, are **an additional important element of peacekeeping.** Rural development is an important anchor of stability for the lives of the local people;" (p. 100) [...] "The climate partnership (NDC Partnership) initiated by the Federal Government is additionally supporting developing countries in the implementation of their national climate protection contributions, which, in addition to measures for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, also include measures for helping these countries to adjust to climate change. In fragile states, there is a special focus on strengthening their resilience to the already visible impacts of climate change." (p. 102)
Report on the Implementation of the Policy Guidelines of the Federal Government: Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace (2021)	Problem analysis/situation report "In places where climate change poses a threat to people's livelihoods, **the international community needs to take action before political conflicts (over resources, for instance) escalate into violence**." (p. 184f.) "Climate-resilient societies and economic systems are better placed to deal with political fragility and conflicts; in the absence of this resilience, there is a risk of mutually reinforcing dynamics. Germany therefore promotes the climate change adaptation capacities not only of countries but also of private-sector undertakings through development cooperation." (p. 96) Principles for action "Our priorities for the coming years are therefore as follows: [...] remaining mindful of interdependencies between the climate crisis and peace and security issues." (p. 8) "Since 2017, the Federal Government has therefore developed an **integrated approach** which views climate change in all its aspects as an environmental, development and security problem in equal measure. [...] This includes close cooperation in the fields of early warning, crisis prevention, stabilisation and peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance and development cooperation." (p. 184)

Document	Mention of the peace-security-environment nexus
	"To reflect this, the BMZ 2030 reform strategy for more effective and more efficient German development cooperation identifies "Responsibility for our planet – climate and energy" and "Peaceful and inclusive societies" as core areas for prioritisation in development policy." (p. 187) "The new Advisory Board [for Civilian Crisis Prevention and Peacebuilding] has adopted an ambitious working plan; since 2019, it has worked on topics including gender, peace and security, policy coherence for peace, public communications on crisis prevention and climate change as a security risk." (p. 192) Instruments/projects/implementation "At many of the United Nations Security Council meetings attended by the Federal Government in its capacity as a non-permanent member, it was able to emphasise the importance of crisis prevention aspects, in particular with a view to the **interdependencies between the climate crisis on the one hand and peace and security on the other**, the role of women in conflict resolution or issues relating to small arms control." (p. 170) "Together with these countries, Germany has driven forward the United Nations' capacities to systematically consider climate security risks in its analyses and reports. [...] Moreover, as one of four main donors, Germany is supporting the Climate Security Mechanism." (p. 186) "In addition, the Federal Government supports the United Nations' **ability to take preventive measures to counter climate-induced risks of conflict on the ground**." (p. 186) "In order to improve the analytical foundations for decision-makers worldwide, the Federal Foreign Office has prompted the elaboration of a comprehensive report on forecasting climate security risks [:] [...] **Weathering Risk: A Climate and Security Risk and Foresight Assessment**. [Moreover,] a high-level international conference format on climate and security, the Berlin Climate and Security Conference, [was established]. Every year it brings together all relevant stakeholders from politics, the scientific community and civil society to discuss specific, **preventive options to tackle climate-induced security risks at an early stage**. Since 2017, the climate and security issue has been an increasing focus of **the Federal Government's bilateral engagement for crisis prevention and stabilisation as well. For example, the Federal Foreign Office has supported dialogue and mediation measures in Somalia, in Nigeria's Middle Belt and in northern Mali designed to help find local solutions to climate- and weather-induced conflicts over resources**." (p. 187)
National Security Strategy. Robust. Resilient. Sustainable. Integrated Security for Germany (2023)	Problem analysis/situation report "Curbing the climate crisis and dealing with its consequences is one of the fundamental and most pressing tasks of this century." (p. 16) Principles for action "The Federal Government will further intensify its engagement in an integrated approach that combines international crisis prevention, stabilisation, peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance and development cooperation. These measures will take climate needs into account and put the focus on protecting the individual." (p. 42) Instruments/projects/implementation "**The need to cooperate at regional and international level to protect our natural resources also creates opportunities for engaging in intergovernmental confidence-building and conflict prevention.**" (p. 65)
Strategy on Climate Foreign Policy of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany (2023)	Problem analysis/situation report: "A **climate-neutral economy** must not only be more environmentally friendly and resource-efficient but can also help **avoid conflicts**." (p. 11) "In many places, climate change is aggravating existing multidimensional crises." (p. 47) Principles for action "The climate-security nexus is factored into our political strategies and we ensure that projects in the spheres of humanitarian assistance, stabilisation and development cooperation foster **climate resilience** and take **climate needs** into account." (p. 9)

Document	Mention of the peace-security-environment nexus
	"We aim to address crisis prevention, anticipatory humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and long-term cooperation as a continuum and, in the spirit of the nexus of humanitarian assistance, development cooperation and peace promotion (HDP nexus), overcome a silo mentality." (p. 46) "**We are developing and expanding capacities and expertise for the prevention, containment and management of climate-related conflicts**." (p. 56) "**We want peace mediation activities to be increasingly carried out in a cooperative context when it comes to water, the environment and climate**." (p. 56) "Germany plays a key role in continuing to advance this issue at a political and technical level within the United Nations." (p. 57) Instruments/projects/implementation "We will actively promote the **climate, peace and security nexus in the context of the UN** Security Council and will once again make it a key element of Germany's candidacy for membership of the Security Council in 2027/2028." (p. 15) "To this end, we are strengthening the capacity of crisis relief organisations **to integrate climate action and climate adaptatio**n into their work. We are adopting a climate-resilient approach to our crisis prevention activities – with improved risk forecasting, climate data and vulnerability analyses incorporating humanitarian, security-related and climate data." (p. 46) "We are expanding our support for anticipatory humanitarian assistance as an important instrument to minimise the humanitarian consequences of climate change and provide more efficient assistance for affected communities. Every year, we intend to commit at least 5% of the resources earmarked for humanitarian assistance to anticipatory humanitarian assistance, where we always take climate resilience into account." (p. 47) "In our development-oriented transition aid, we particularly promote **projects that increase climate resilience, in order to enable vulnerable groups to adapt to climate change** and, where necessary, transform their livelihoods. In many places, climate change is aggravating existing multidimensional crises. We are therefore **integrating climate-sensitive activities into the multi-sectoral approach of capacity-building transitional assistance,** in order to ensure the sustainability of investment in crisis management and reduce future humanitarian costs." (p. 47) "We work with UN funds to ensure that investments in crisis contexts are climate-sensitive, while climate projects are peace-building. Moreover, through the appointment of climate and security advisers within the scope of UN missions – such as in Somalia and at the Horn of Africa – we contribute to tackling conflict- and climate-related crises in a joined-up way." (p. 56) "Building on the G7 Foreign Ministers' Climate, Environment, Peace and Security Declaration during Germany's G7 Presidency in 2022, we have established the **Climate for Peace Initiative** together with partner countries. Here, 28 countries are sharing their experience and needs regarding climate, peace and security-related projects and addressing challenges on a multilateral basis." (p. 56) "We are strengthening our commitment to crisis prevention, stabilisation and peacebuilding in relation to climate risks, in order to lessen the conflict-exacerbating impacts of climate change. Among other things, we are doing this through pilot projects in the Bay of Bengal, Iraq, Yemen, Nigeria and Somalia. **These pilot projects are based on the Weathering Risk initiative initiated by Germany, which prepares data for climate modelling and conflict analyses**". (p. 56) "Through the United Nations Group of Friends on the environmental management of UN peacekeeping operations, we support the use of renewable energy and efforts to reduce the peacekeeping-related ecological footprint. Within the peacekeeping reform process, we continue to advocate adaptation to the impacts of climate change and strengthening the operational readiness and resilience of UN peacekeeping missions and troops providers." (p. 57)

2 State of research: environment, climate change, violent conflicts and the potential of the environmental peacebuilding approach

Over the past few decades, the links between the environment, climate, violent conflicts and security have increasingly become the focus of political attention and scientific research. Initially, the focus was on the effects of and interactions between violent conflicts and the environment. Over the last decade, the focus has shifted to include climate issues and the positive links between the environment and peace.

The link between the environment and violent conflicts

Violent conflicts have been fought over natural resources for centuries (Brown & Nicolucci-Altman 2022). Even if these are rarely the sole cause of a conflict, natural resources do influence the outbreak, duration and intensity of conflicts (Rustad & Binningsbø 2012; Matthew et al. 2009). Natural resources can also have an impact on the situation after the end of violent internal conflicts. Between 1946 and 2006, the length of peace periods following internal conflicts over natural resources was only half as long as comparable peace periods following conflicts with other causes of conflict (Rustad & Binningsbø 2012). As the world population grows, consumption increases and technology advances, so does the demand for and the conflict over such natural resources (Rüttinger et al. 2015).

Ecosystems and the resources associated with them can become the subject of conflict, but they are also acutely threatened with destruction by armed conflicts. Used as a "weapon" by humans, considerable damage can be done to the environment, for example by diverting river courses (Bruch et al. 2024; Linke & Ruether 2021; Sowers et al. 2017). The environmental damage caused by Russia's illegal war of aggression against Ukraine, as well as the potential of the environmental peacebuilding approach in this context, are analysed in Chapter 4. Environmental resources also often serve as a financial resource for parties to a conflict, thus helping to sustain conflicts (Bruch et al. 2024; Ide et al. 2021a). Furthermore, environmental damage forces many people to migrate within their own country and, in some cases, internationally, which can lead to further social tensions and conflicts (McClain et al. 2022; Bruch et al. 2024). Among other topics, Chapter 3.3 addresses the migration of herders from the north to the south of Nigeria, which is caused by the drying up of water sources and further exacerbates the conflict over land and resources.

Context matters:

When analysing the relationship between the environment and conflict, it is important to consider the specific circumstances, such as socio-economic inequalities and ethnic or ideological divisions. The way in which resources are managed (Matthew et al. 2009; Rustad & Binningsbø 2012) and the type of natural resources (Dresse et al. 2016) can also have a significant influence on the interaction between conflict and the environment. It should also be noted that the impacts mentioned are not distributed equally across all population groups. Marginalised population groups are often disproportionately affected because, for example, their access to resources is more restricted or their financial security is low (UNEP et al. 2020). Marginalisation can occur both between different population groups, such as between rural and urban communities, and within individual communities. A dried-up water source potentially affects all individuals within a community. However, for the elderly, women or people with physical disabilities, obtaining water from alternative sources can be more physically demanding (Karuga et al. 2023). These difficulties arise not only from a possibly inadequate infrastructure, but also from long distances and the weight to be carried. In addition, alternative water sources often involve financial costs, which significantly limits access to clean water for people with fewer financial resources. The disadvantage of certain groups is thus often the result of several factors.

Limited access to water can have far-reaching consequences, for example for health and hygiene (ibid.). All these aspects complicate conflict resolution, securing the livelihoods of the population and reconstruction after violent conflicts (Sowers et al. 2017). In contrast, sustainable management of the environment and the provision of sustainable livelihoods can have a positive effect on peace, both within and between states (Ide 2018; Johnson et al. 2021). This perception seems to have become established at the political level, with peace agreements increasingly taking into account aspects of resource management and environmental protection (Bruch et al. 2024).

Climate change and violent conflicts

For a long time, the research community debated a possible linear causal relationship between climate change and violent conflict. However, since then, the scientific debate on the topic has progressed (Hsiang et al. 2013; Buhaug et al. 2014; Ide et al. 2020). Consequently, climate change is widely regarded as a risk multiplier that causes cascading negative socio-economic impacts and can thus also influence the development of conflicts (Goodman & Baudu 2023). The climate crisis fosters a series of interrelated risks, for example through increased temperatures, the increase and intensity of extreme weather events and rising sea levels. The climate crisis can thus affect the availability and quality of natural resources, causing inequalities in a wide range of spatial dimensions, political instability, poverty, food insecurity and displacement (Bruch et al. 2024; Rüttinger et al. 2015). Such developments can reinforce each other. Overall, the increasing frequency of extreme weather events will exacerbate the simultaneous occurrence of ecological, social, economic and political stresses and make it more difficult to manage them (Gemenne et al. 2014). The impacts of climate change and adverse cascading effects must always be considered in conjunction with governance issues, particularly with regard to inequalities and ethnic fractionalisation (Scheffran et al. 2014; Schleussner et al. 2016). If these complex challenges and problems cannot be adequately managed, the risk of violent conflict increases. The security risks associated with this extend beyond the traditional understanding of security and also affect human security (Vinke et al. 2021). The scientific discussion about the cascading effects of climate change on conflicts overlaps considerably with the discussion about the links between the environment and conflicts, since climate change manifests itself through changes in the environment (Ide & Scheffran 2013).

Other factors directly related to conflicts, such as socio-economic development or the quality and capabilities of states or political institutions, are still considered more influential in the emergence of violent conflicts (Buhaug & von Uexkull 2021; Mach et al. 2019). However, it is precisely these factors that can be intensified by climate change. Climate change is increasingly affecting already fragile state structures. This can increase the vulnerability of the state, but also of certain population groups. Fragility can be defined as “the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, system and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks” (Bruch et al. 2024: p. 5). Violent conflicts and the associated destruction of infrastructure can contribute to impairing the capacity of states to cope with and adapt to climate and weather extremes (Buhaug & von Uexkull 2021; Ide 2023). Extreme weather events can cause higher numbers of victims in fragile states and further exacerbate fragility (Darwish et al. 2023). Not only are the risk factors for armed conflicts influenced by climate change, but armed conflicts also affect the ability of states to respond appropriately to climate-related extreme weather events. By contrast, resilient states and actors can overcome climate-related stresses peacefully, thereby maintaining political stability and preventing the use of force (Rüttinger et al. 2015).

Activist of West Bengal unit of Fridays for Future are seen in a peaceful demonstration against effect of usage of fossil fuel and rise in global warming, during Global climate strike in Kolkata, India, on 25 March 2022.
©picture alliance / NurPhoto | Debarchan Chatterjee

When limited adaptive capacities encounter mismanagement, corruption and the marginalisation of individual groups, this can lead to a downward spiral and thus exacerbate existing socio-economic challenges. For example, preferential treatment of settled population groups can marginalise nomadic or semi-nomadic groups. These diverging ways of life often go hand in hand with ethnic identity. The discrimination of certain groups can thus fuel existing ethnic tensions and foster violence. The unfair or even corrupt distribution of funds for adaptation to the climate crisis can also exacerbate the potential for conflict (von Loeben et al. 2022).

Inequalities in the climate-security nexus play a major role at many levels. Climate-related changes will not increase equally worldwide; rather, some states and groups of people will be significantly more affected by the consequences of climate change (Schleussner et al. 2018; Vinke et al. 2021). Particularly vulnerable are both states and groups of people who are directly and disproportionately dependent on natural resources and who at the same time have only limited adaptive capacity. The factors that influence the adaptive capacity of individual population groups include, among others, the socio-economic context, national legal frameworks, political participation, age, gender and ethnicity (IPCC 2023; UNEP et al. 2020). In particular, marginalised people with few financial resources have comparatively little capacity to adapt (Hallegatte et al. 2020). Extreme weather events such as droughts, increase the vulnerability of agriculturally dependent or politically marginalised population groups in poor countries, which in turn increases the likelihood of sustained local violence (Kelley et al. 2015; von Uexkull et al. 2016). At the household level, for example, it was found that less resilient households are more likely to support political violence (von Uexkull et al. 2020).

Building on these research findings, initial adjustments have been made in recent years to the implementation of international (peacekeeping) missions. For example, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) is one of the first worldwide to have included climate and environmental issues in its mandate (Hodder 2021). Another example is the training provided to a wide range of stakeholders in the fight against environmental crime as part of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo (OSCE 2021).

Environmental peacebuilding: Cooperation and the environment

The environmental peacebuilding approach focuses on the positive effects of environmental cooperation. Under certain circumstances, resource scarcity can both fuel conflicts and serve as a catalyst for increased cooperation (BenDor & Scheffran 2018; Link et al. 2016). Environmental cooperation can have a positive impact on various dimensions of peace. In this context, peace is often understood as a continuum that encompasses the absence of direct violence (negative peace), symbolic rapprochement (a change in the perception of threats towards solidarity, trust, and the development of a shared identity) and substantial integration of the respective communities (positive peace, far-reaching coordination) (Ide 2019). This understanding of peace has been expanded by some authors to include further dimensions. Johnson et al. (2021) argue for the inclusion of capabilities of individuals and communities to counter threats to their human, environmental and social rights. Similarly, but with a stronger focus on climate change, Sommer & Fassbender (2024) argue for the inclusion of “Climate Resilient Peace” (Barnett 2018) as a further dimension of peace. Climate Resilient Peace is understood as the resilience of states and communities to environmental change and as an essential component of a sustainable and lasting peace (Sommer & Fassbender 2024).

Approaches to environmental peacebuilding that take into account the interactions between the environment and its natural resources and their potential for peacebuilding have become increasingly important over the past twenty years, while also developing further (Hardt & Scheffran 2019). While state-centred top-down processes still dominated in the late 1990s and early 2000s, there is now an increasing focus on local communities, marginalised population groups and associated bottom-up processes. An evaluation of the literature on domestic resource management shows that articles in which an overall "positive" peacebuilding effect was identified mostly dealt with bottom-up initiatives (Johnson et al. 2021: p. 12). By contrast, top-down initiatives that increasingly aim to promote state-building or economic growth have been found to have more negative impacts on peacebuilding (Johnson et al. 2021). Although environmental peacebuilding as a concept has been discussed in academic research for only a few years, the approaches have already been implemented in practice for centuries, for example by indigenous populations (Brown & Nicolucci-Altman 2022). This indigenous knowledge should also be central in peace processes to strengthen the resilience of individuals and groups to social and ecological shocks (Darwish 2022). In this regard, colonial power relations also play a major role, often undermining the sustainable management of natural resources (ibid.).

Challenges and risks of environmental peacebuilding

Since the research field of environmental peacebuilding is still in its infancy, there is no established set of methods, which makes it difficult to compare studies. Accordingly, there are still gaps in the theoretical foundations and empirical evidence (Johnson et al. 2021; Dresse et al. 2019). Furthermore, the potential negative consequences of the practical implementation cover various aspects. For example, there is a risk that context-specific injustices and power asymmetries will be overlooked or neglected in the context of a depoliticised problem-solving approach (Ide 2020). Environmental peacebuilding projects can also lead to the displacement of people under certain circumstances, for example if larger areas are to be used for peace parks (ibid.). If projects fail or are perceived as unjust, this can contribute to the delegitimisation of the state by undermining trust in state institutions (ibid.). There is also a risk of discrimination against certain population groups (ibid.). Against the background of racist, sexist and discriminatory social structures, to a certain extent these projects are also influenced by these structures and reflect them. In the worst case, and contrary to the goal of environmental peacebuilding, inadequate planning can contribute to an intensification of conflicts or worsen environmental aspects (Ide 2020). Measures to reduce emissions and adapt to unavoidable impacts of the climate crisis can also lead to new tensions or exacerbate existing ones (Grzybowski & Hunnie 2021). These potential negative effects and their interactions often occur unintentionally. This makes it all the more important to take them into account when planning environmental peacebuilding projects in order to effectively solve ecological problems and sustainably promote peace processes.

Despite these criticisms, the concept of environmental peacebuilding offers a unique opportunity for peacebuilding due to its integrative approach, in which various causes of conflict and their interdependencies can be addressed (Ide 2020). In addition to working together for a sustainable peace, conflict potential is also reduced by considering resource management and tackling the climate crisis. Involving local communities means that acceptance among the population is often greater than in other international peacebuilding interventions (Ide 2020). With its global challenges, the climate crisis also offers opportunities to promote peaceful cooperation between states that do not share a common border or resources (Sommer & Fassbender 2024).

Gender and environmental peacebuilding: an integrated approach for a positive and lasting peace

People's vulnerability to environmental issues and conflicts is significantly influenced by their socio-economic status, their living situation, geographical and temporal aspects, legal frameworks, and other diversity characteristics such as age, disability, religion, sexuality, ethnic origin, skin colour, migration or refugee status, and gender. This concept of intersectionality is crucial to understanding the differential impacts of environmental issues and conflict dynamics. Peacebuilding initiatives should adopt an intersectional lens to ensure that efforts are inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs and rights of affected groups (Yoshida et al. 2021).

The intersection between gender and environmental peacebuilding represents an important aspect within the broader discourse on sustainable development, peace and conflict resolution. Where the term sex refers to the biological characteristics assigned to a person at birth, the term gender refers to “the existence of a set of characteristics associated with (perceived) sex” (Sjoberg 2012: p.9; Sjoberg 2014). Hence, gender can be understood as a social construct that varies according to local context and time, but has real effects on people's lives. The active inclusion of gender is not only a question of equality, but is also of crucial importance for achieving sustainable peace and ecological sustainability. This approach adds an essential dimension to approaches of environmental peacebuilding. It recognises that environmental problems and (post-)conflict contexts are gender-specific experiences due to social roles, responsibilities and access to resources.

Since each individual experiences the context before, during and after violent conflicts differently, the inclusion of different perspectives in peacebuilding approaches enables a comprehensive understanding. Even if an agreed ceasefire can end direct and armed hostilities between different groups, this does not mean that the violence ends for everyone; some forms of violence continue or even increase in “peaceful” or “post-conflict” societies, especially gender-based violence against women (Porter 2016). Nevertheless, peace initiatives have been and are largely led by men, with little or no meaningful participation of women and other marginalised groups, and thus gender issues have been addressed only to a limited extent (Council on Foreign Relations 2024). Various research results suggest that the comprehensive involvement of women increases the effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives (Bjarnegård et al. 2015; Krause et al. 2018; O'Reilly et al. 2015; Paffenholz 2015; Paffenholz et al. 2015). Similar dynamics can be observed in the use of natural resources, where women are often more directly dependent on resources, but have less access to them and to the associated decision-making processes (UN Women, 2022). For example, in seven out of ten households that obtain water from outside their own property, women and girls are responsible for the water supply (UNICEF & WHO 2023). The time needed to collect water varies depending on the context, and makes access more difficult, especially for women and girls. In countries where women and girls are primarily responsible for fetching water, the time required for this task is significantly higher than in countries where men and boys are responsible for this task (ibid.).

At the same time, due to gender-specific role allocation, women often have specific knowledge of proven adaptation strategies that can be of crucial importance for environmental peacebuilding initiatives. As the main providers of water for households in many places, women not only acquire in-depth knowledge of local water sources, but also effective strategies for dealing with situations of resource scarcity (UNEP et al. 2013). By incorporating gender perspectives, effective measures could be developed – building on this gender-specific knowledge – to ensure a fairer distribution of resources and reduce inequalities.

Numerous studies deal with the particular significance and challenges of the different genders in conflict and peacebuilding contexts, with the broader implications for sustainable peace and development, or environmental and climate initiatives. However, to date there is a lack of relevant literature and, above all, little empirical research that addresses the interplay of these two largely separate areas from a gender perspective (see as exceptions, for example Fröhlich & Gioli 2015; Mead & Jacobsson 2023; Yoshida & Céspedes-Báez 2021). The gender perspective in the field of environmental peacebuilding has received little attention to date (Ide et al. 2021a).

In more recent environmental peacebuilding projects, such as the pilot projects of the Weathering Risk Peace Pillar initiative, climate aspects and their impacts on conflict dynamics and local populations are increasingly being linked to peacebuilding approaches. Some of these pilot projects have formulated goals for the inclusion and representation of women in the project processes, even if this is not the main focus of the projects themselves (see Appendix 2). This involvement varies in intensity depending on the local context and existing social structures. Related topics, such as male stereotypes and male vulnerabilities, often play a subordinate role (ibid.). In addition, the projects take into account various other aspects, such as the representation of young people, people with disabilities and people from different local communities (ibid.). These aspects overlap, connect and reinforce each other, shaping the vulnerability and experiences of individuals in complex ways.

Although the UN Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has been in place since 2000 and is now well established and mainstreamed, it does not yet take into account the impact of the climate crisis on the peace and security of women and girls. Central to this is ensuring the participation of women and girls in decision-making processes related to climate change and the environment, as well as the integration of gender and environmental perspectives into conflict, security and peacebuilding projects. Women and girls play an important role in the management of natural resources, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected communities (Yoshida et al. 2021). Organisations working to build peace are increasingly recognising the importance of taking gender issues into account, promoting women's political and economic empowerment and strengthening their contribution to peace through inclusive management of natural resources. This approach has led to the implementation of pilot projects in countries such as Sudan, Colombia and the African Great Lakes region, which aim to test ways of strengthening the role of women in conflict prevention and peace consolidation (UNEP et al. 2013).

3 Knowledge gained from environmental peacebuilding projects

The complex interplay between climate change and security requires context-specific approaches that account for the local socio-economic conditions. Although the climate crisis is already affecting all inhabited areas of the world, the impacts, risks, adaptation measures and vulnerabilities vary from region to region (IPCC 2022). The extent to which the consequences of climate change directly or indirectly influence conflict dynamics therefore also has a decisive influence on possible starting points for peacebuilding.

The following case studies illustrate the various problems and solutions of environmental peacebuilding. Based on a cross-section of different regions, both positive and negative experiences are shown.

3.1 EcoPeace and the "Good Water Neighbours" project

Background:

EcoPeace, founded in 1994 in the context of the Arab-Israeli peace process, was among the first non-governmental organisations in the field of environmental peacebuilding. This effort combines environmental protection and peacebuilding in the Middle East region, which is particularly affected by conflicts. Through its activities, EcoPeace brings together Israeli, Palestinian and Jordanian actors to jointly address ecological, social and political problems caused by environmental degradation and resource scarcity. Its work encompasses various levels of engagement, from grassroots movements to political negotiations at the level of governments and the United Nations.

Dam and reservoir in Wadi al-Mujib (known as "Jordan's Grand Canyon"), Jordan.
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3.1
EcoPeace and the Good Water Neighbors project
Location: Israel, Jordan, Palestinian territories
Actors: EcoPeace Middle East, political actors, local communities
water cooperation, environmental protection
3.2
Small-scale hydropower plants in the Balkans
Location: Kosovo, South Serbia, Bosnia
Actors: Western Balkan states, international donors (esp. EU)
climate & energy projects, small-scale hydropower plants
3.5
Tara Bandu
Location: Timor-Leste
Actors: local communities, international actors
local-specific practice (bottom-up)
3.2
3.1
3.6
3.3
3.4
3.5
3.3
Top-Down vs. Bottom-Up in West Africa
Location: Mali, Nigeria, Niger
Actors: local population groups (farmers and pastoralists)
pastureland, agriculture, drought, water scarcity
3.6
The role of women in the energy sector
Location: Afghanistan
Actors: Afghan government, international development organisations, energy utilities, women
Observed period: 2001 - August 2021 (until the Taliban's return to power)
energy sector partnerships
3.4
Camel Caravan
Location: Kenya, Ewaso Ng'Iro River
Actors: NGOs and local communities
water scarcity, drought, pastureland

In practice:

One focus in this water-sparse region involves working together to find joint solutions for the vital resource of water, because its scarcity and unequal distribution harbours potential for conflict if cooperative solutions are not found. EcoPeace Middle East was able to provide important impetus for fair and sustainable water use, which contributes to conflict mitigation and peacebuilding. The Good Water Neighbours (GWN) project was launched in 2001 and aims to raise awareness of the shared water supply in the territories of Jordan, Palestine and Israel and to strengthen the political will for cross-border cooperation between municipalities in the areas of water and wastewater disposal (EcoPeace 2012). The GWN transcends political boundaries to promote understanding and trust between neighbouring communities, for example through joint waste collection campaigns, environmental education workshops and infrastructure projects. The focus is on local measures such as environmental education for young people, development aid for communities, and the coordinated creation of infrastructure and protected areas.

At the same time, EcoPeace works to encourage environmentally friendly policies and to create an environment that facilitates dialogue between political stakeholders, reduces tensions and supports cross-border agreements through public education. Face-to-face meetings serve as a bridge, helping to overcome barriers to joint water management and build trust between population groups in conflict. The factors leading to success include professional relationships between local project participants in municipal structures and communities, investments to solve the challenges in water cooperation and the linking of ecological and economic interests, from agriculture to tourism.

The Green Blue Deal for the Middle East, an initiative of EcoPeace presented in 2020, proposes measures in four key areas that would reduce the risks of climate change and multiply the opportunities for cooperation in dealing with it (Bromberg et al. 2020). To this end, synergies in the water-energy nexus should be exploited:

- Cross-border cooperation to improve adaptability and security with regard to water and renewable energies,
- Progress in the redistribution of natural water resources and water management between the territories of Israel and Palestine,
- Rehabilitation of the Jordan River and its once rich biodiversity by investing in climate-smart initiatives throughout the region and creating green jobs,
- Promoting public awareness and education programmes, especially for young people, on resilience diplomacy in the areas of water and climate as a means of conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Learning experiences:

Despite some success in addressing acute environmental security issues and strengthening the resilience of the cooperating communities, civil society initiatives such as EcoPeace operate within the political power relations and structures of occupation that are responsible for conflicts and water-related problems in the Palestinian territories (Reynolds 2016; Aggestam & Sundell-Eklund 2014; Schilling et al. 2017). Top-down and bottom-up approaches are far apart and are limited to technocratic solutions to improve the regional water situation. In the face of escalating conflict, with numerous deaths and severe environmental impacts, activities for environmental peacebuilding are coming under increasing pressure.

Long-term environmental cooperation to address common problems of tension reduction and peacebuilding remains urgently necessary. EcoPeace has the potential to develop influence beyond the region and serve as an inspiration for others. This is also evident from its engagement with the United Nations and the nomination of EcoPeace Middle East for the Nobel Peace Prize (EcoPeace 2024). The conviction remains strong that peace and sustainability belong together and can develop synergies for overcoming the most pressing problems.

3.2 Integrating conflict prevention into environmental projects: lessons learnt from the promotion of small-scale hydropower plants in the Balkans

Background:

The blue heart of Europe beats in the Balkans, in south-eastern Europe, between Slovenia and Greece. The last wild rivers in Europe flow here, with an enormous density and uniqueness of biodiversity (Schneider-Jacoby et al. 2010). The region, which is also referred to as the "Western Balkans" due to its geographical location west of the Balkan mountain range and stretching to the Adriatic Sea, is of particular political importance for Germany and Europe. Five of the six Western Balkan states are candidates for EU accession, and three of them are NATO members. Furthermore, the region has a young European history of conflict as a result of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, the causes of which have not yet been fully resolved and which the EU is trying to resolve through integration. Russia, China and the Republic of Türkiye are also increasingly exerting influence on the region and are attempting to maximise this influence by exacerbating ethnic and political tensions. The region generates heat and electricity primarily from the combustion of lignite and gas. Energy poverty is widespread (Energy Community Secretariat 2020), raising the question of a socially acceptable energy transition. At present, around 3,200 small hydropower plants (capacity below 10 MW) in ecologically sensitive areas threaten both the natural wealth and the social peace in the region. The necessity of an energy transition, local corruption structures and European procurement practices are inextricably intertwined here (for more information, see Schwarz & Vienna 2022).

In practice:

Numerous small-scale hydropower plants have been built since the 2010s, after all six Western Balkan countries had introduced feed-in tariffs for renewable energy projects. This had been requested by the European Union and the Energy Community, in line with corresponding measures in the member states. The small hydropower plants were often financed from funds of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and the EU recovery fund, which were made available in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, weak governance structures allowed corruption and embezzlement of public funds to flourish. Thousands of projects were established, mostly by inexperienced local developers, but also by a few European companies (see, for example, Kelag in Kosovo). In response to the sometimes irreversible devastation of local ecosystems with little energy generation from small hydropower plants, citizens' initiatives were formed, often across national borders, that mobilised thousands of people. (The Nature Conservancy 2023).

From a peacebuilding perspective, it was not the small hydroelectric power plants that contributed to the urgently needed pacification and reconciliation between the ethnic groups in the Balkans, but rather the resistance against them. The best-known example comes from Štrpce in southern Kosovo (BBC 2019).

Conflict prevention at Kelag small hydropower plants in Kosovo

Company: Kelag (Kärntner Elektrizitäts-Aktiengesellschaft) is an Austrian energy company registered in Kosovo through its subsidiary KelKos.

Projects: The Belaja, Deçani and Lumbardhi 2 hydroelectric power stations in the Bjeshkët e Nemuna National Park

Financing: Kelag, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the German Investment and Development Company (Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft, DEG)

Environmental regulations: EU directive on environmental compatibility (e.g. water ecosystems, biodiversity)

Conflicts: environmental damage, lack of environmental impact assessments, protests

Court judgement: The Supreme Court ordered the closure in 2021.

SLAPP cases: Kelag withdrew controversial lawsuits against environmental activists (Strategic Lawsuits against Public Participation, SLAPP).

Consequences: closure, ongoing protests (Save the Blue Heart of Europe 2020; Spasić 2021).

Learning experiences:

One lesson to be learnt from this is that climate and energy projects in the Balkans financed by international donors should always be planned and implemented in a regional context. The Berlin Process, for example, or projects of the Energy Community, could serve as reference points. The Berlin Process is a process initiated by the German government that aims to promote integration in the Western Balkans region beyond the EU accession process on the basis of specific topics (e.g. trade, visas, energy) and projects. The Energy Community, based in Vienna, assists EU accession candidates in transposing the EU acquis in the field of energy policy.

German funding guidelines should therefore include strict criteria for the financing of small hydropower plants with German taxpayers' money. This should be done in particular with regard to compliance with environmental impact assessments (EIA), state aid rules and social responsibility of the projects. This applies both to projects directly funded by, for example, KfW/GIZ and to projects of the World Bank, the EU or EBRD/EIB. The guidelines of the Energy Community Secretariat for the promotion of small hydropower plants should be followed (Energy Community Secretariat 2020).

Peruako Jezero reservoir, Tara National Park, Rastite, Serbia.
©picture alliance / imageBROKER | Sascha Selli-Grabowski

A positive contribution to an affordable energy supply while maintaining the natural conditions on which farmers, for example, depend, has a long-term conflict-preventing effect. This applies particularly to the South-East European region, where many households have to spend a disproportionately high share of their income on electricity and heating costs.

Finally, the lessons learnt from the challenges faced by small hydropower plants should be incorporated into the current debate on lithium mining in western Serbia (Šterić 2023). This is happening against the background of the aim to source critical raw materials for the energy transition in the EU as regionally as possible in order to reduce dependencies on countries such as China and Russia (EU Critical Raw Materials Act, European Commission 2023). The German government should avoid any action that could exacerbate the political polarisation in the country and indirectly strengthen the autocratic President Vučić through the project. As with other mining projects with foreign investment, Vučić and his entourage would benefit economically from the lack of compliance mechanisms; the EU would make itself dependent in a strategic area on a pro-Russian government in Europe. In specific cases, this can be prevented only by strictly minimising the environmental follow-up costs of lithium mining, by monitoring and compliance mechanisms, by ensuring local value creation and by a participatory process on the ground. The German government can exert influence through its high-level political commitment (see Federal Chancellor Scholz's visit to Belgrade in July 2024), the EU Commission, as well as German companies and organisations in the field.

3.3 Top-down vs. Bottom-up in West Africa

Background:

The Sahel region of West Africa is currently one of the most conflict-ridden in the world. Recent years have been marked by military coups and an intensification of jihadist activities. Since 2020, military coups have brought to power regimes in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger that generally view international peace missions (such as MINUSMA) and cooperation with Western states critically. Germany has engaged alongside France in various UN and EU missions, both militarily and with civilian development projects (for the country examples of Mali and Niger, see Schnabel & Witt 2022). German interests were mainly focused on cooperation in the areas of migration, natural resources and security. As a result of the military coups, Germany's engagement to date is being reviewed.

The current conflict dynamics are rooted in the historical marginalisation of nomadic communities such as the Tuareg and Fulani, which has lasted from the colonial era to the present day (Brachet & Scheele 2019; International Crisis Group 2017; Magrin & de Montclos 2018). Nomadic herders, such as the Fulani ethnic group, often experience discrimination and are less represented in public office than sedentary populations. In recent years, a dangerous escalation of the herder-farmer conflict towards commercially oriented banditry has been observed in northwestern Nigeria. Armed groups attack villages, kidnap people and steal cattle in order to create an economic base and gain political influence. In many parts of the region, local state structures have either collapsed or were never present (Nathan 2023; Appendix 2, C1). Inter-community mediation faces major challenges, with trust eroded in many places. Active peace initiatives in Nigeria include, for example, the Middle Belt Initiative and the Jireh Doo Foundation (Climate Diplomacy n.d.; Jireh Doo Foundation n.d.). Recently, gold mining has become increasingly relevant as a source of income for jihadist groups, which in turn is associated with environmental damage. The gold obtained is usually laundered in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) via the Dubai transshipment centre, which underlines the need to apply a comprehensive approach and to think in terms of an interconnected foreign policy (Osasona 2023). In this specific case, this would mean considering the issue in the context of the G7 Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and addressing it with the UAE.

Climate impacts such as extreme droughts exacerbate conflicts because they destroy livelihoods (ICRC undated). One specific example of this is the conflict between farmers and herders, which is contributing to fragility and armed conflict in both northern Nigeria and Mali. Transhumance – the seasonal migration of herders in search of grazing land and water – plays a central role in this. For example, the drying up of the Lake Chad water sources is forcing herders from northern Nigeria to migrate further south, thus exacerbating the conflict over land and resources with the local farming population. Criminal, jihadist groups often profit from this destabilisation. The case study of the "Weathering Risk" initiative in Mali (Nagarajan et al. 2022) shows that narratives about climate-related insecurity in Mali are often reduced to the problem of violence between farmers and herders. However, the reality is far more complex. Humans have always adapted to changes in their environment, but the pace of current change, combined with ongoing violence, makes effective adaptation nearly impossible for many communities. Corruption and rent-seeking politics often further hinder adaptation by the state and other authorities. As a result, tensions over natural resources increase, and existing inequalities are further exacerbated due to the stresses created by climate change and conflict.

In practice:

In the Sahel, however, there are centuries-old traditions of resolving conflicts. The coexistence and relationship between different communities should therefore not be perceived a priori as characterised by violence (Amnesty International 2018).

Pastoralists with a herd of goats crossing the Niger by pirogue near Mopti, Mali.
©picture-alliance / Herve Champollion / akg-images | / akg-images

One practice that corresponds to the environmental peacebuilding approach is the reforestation technique “Farmer-managed Natural Regeneration” (FMNR), which has demonstrated success in the context of the “Green Wall of Africa”. For example, GIZ is supporting the Office for Strategic Preparedness and Resilience (OSPRE), a conflict prevention institution of the G5 countries in the ECOWAS region, which facilitates the implementation of resilience measures by regional stakeholders. This includes rebuilding local structures such as civic offices and community centres in northern Nigeria. However, further cooperation within the G5 and ECOWAS must be evaluated in the light of current political developments.

Learning experiences:

In the Sahel region of West Africa, the causes of conflict are closely interwoven with complex reasons for economic, political and social insecurity. The concept of human security, as enshrined in the German government's National Security Strategy, NATO's Strategic Concept 2022 and the EU's Strategic Compass 2030, thus provides an analytical framework for conflict resolution. German and European foreign policy towards the Sahel region should focus its activities on human security as it develops. This would enable a better understanding of the challenges facing society as a whole and how to address them, starting with the individual and their needs, fears and concerns. This also applies to the migration issue, which, as mentioned at the beginning, has often been the guiding principle behind Germany's Sahel policy. For example, after the cancellation of the migration agreement in Niger, environmental peacebuilding approaches could present a new offer.

In summary, two approaches can currently be observed in the search for solution strategies: one that ultimately views pastoralism and herders as a group in need of integration and transformation, and one that views pastoralism as the key to adaptation to climate change in Africa's drylands. The latter would aim to strengthen and protect the livelihoods of pastoralist communities, while the former would ultimately seek to pacify and transform them.

Policy that resolves and prevents conflict should be more climate-sensitive and provide comprehensive, integrated responses, as envisaged in the first German National Security Strategy. For example, the Nigerian NGO Surge Africa proposes integrating the climate-environment-peace nexus in security interventions to address socio-economic and developmental causes of armed conflicts. The focus should be on land reclamation, sustainable agriculture and environmental resource management. However, structural causes such as weak governance, inadequate policy implementation and a lack of legal frameworks must also be considered (Surge Africa Organisation 2023).

While international attention has tended to focus on political and security-related developments following the military coup in Mali in August 2020, the international community should take a comprehensive, bottom-up approach to security and governance challenges in the region. This requires better information sharing to support conflict-sensitive climate adaptation, more inclusive natural resource management and support for climate-smart, conflict-sensitive agricultural practices. Stakeholders in civil society who have relevant local perspectives should be supported in these areas through long-term financing. A new funding strand for environmental peacebuilding could provide a framework for this. Where security forces are deployed in UN and other international missions, they should be able to help populations adapt sustainably to climate change, particularly those who are already socially marginalised.

3.4 Conflict transformation through dialogue: the Camel Caravan in Kenya (Civil Peace Service)

Background:

The effects of climate change in Kenya are clearly visible in the form of unreliable rainy seasons and one of the longest droughts in years. Particularly in the north, competition for natural resources such as water and grazing land is increasingly leading to conflicts. Due to the drought, grazing conditions for pastoralists are deteriorating dramatically. Pastureland and surface water are scarce and wells are drying up. This leads to increased mortality rates among livestock and, as a result, to threats to human livelihoods, food insecurity, malnutrition, social marginalisation and inter- and intra-group conflicts.

In practice:

In northern Kenya, the NGOs Indigenous Movement for Peace Advancement and Conflict Transformation, Regional Pastoralists Peace Link and Children Peace Initiative Kenya organise an advocacy event and a camel caravan along the Ewaso Ng'iro River every year as a result of a participatory conflict analysis. In the past, local residents often competed for water use, which led to numerous, often violent conflicts. During the caravan, various interest groups visit settlements along the river and engage in dialogue with each other. They include representatives of various communities living in the Ewaso Ng'iro catchment area, as well as representatives of local water resource user associations (WRUA), including women from the committees. The dialogue has been a success: many illegal water pipes have been disconnected, fewer riparian forests have been cut down and less sand has been taken from the river. A new community forum facilitates collective action such as planting trees in headwaters. Together, government agencies and civil society have launched the Lake Management Plan, which aims to protect and manage the wetland resources through a multi-stakeholder approach.

Following the recommendations of the Camel Caravan in recent years, the Samburu County government has introduced a sand mining policy that regulates the activities of informal sand traders and has reduced inter-communal clashes along the banks of the Ewaso Ng'iro River. Isiolo County is in the process of formulating a similar policy to address sand mining and pollution hazards along watercourses. All of this was made possible by the planned engagement of the Camel Caravan organisers. The Camel Caravan has promoted mutual understanding between communities in the upper and lower reaches of the river system, thus reducing the risk of further violent conflict.

Learning experiences:

This example shows that it is worthwhile combining environmental and climate protection with peacebuilding. If this is successful, it has a doubly positive effect: it furthers the necessary ecological and economic transformation and promotes a just and sustainable peace. Most of the countries particularly affected by climate change are also fragile and shaken by violent conflicts. For climate and development policy geared towards sustainability in line with the 2030 Agenda, it is necessary to address the causes of conflict and to work towards resilience to climate-induced effects for those locally affected and involved, as well as towards a transformation based on the reduction of inequalities.

A man carries the sand he extracts from the bottom of the Lake Victoria with a shovel to a boat at Nyamware village in Kisumu, Kenya.
©picture alliance / GFFO | Gerald Anderson

3.5 Tara Bandu – ecological peacebuilding in Timor-Leste

There are only a few scientifically proven examples of successful bottom-up practices in the field of environmental peacebuilding (Johnson et al. 2021). However, scientific analysis is important to create a more balanced picture of environmental Peacebuilding and to derive recommendations for action that create sustainable peace. With this in mind, we present a bottom-up practice of environmental Peacebuilding: Tara Bandu from Timor-Leste (Ide et al. 2021b; Sändig et al. 2024).

Background:

After almost 500 years as a Portuguese colony, a Japanese occupation during the Second World War and an Indonesian occupation between 1975 and 1999, Timor-Leste became independent in 2002. In order to facilitate a smooth transition to independence and to establish a Timorese government, the so-called UN Transitional Administration in East Timor was established in 1999, which was the most extensive peacekeeping mission in history up to that point. However, after the withdrawal of the UN mission in 2006, the remaining tensions escalated to such an extent that the country was on the brink of civil war. The UN administration returned and remained for another six years. Since then, there has been no relapse into violence in Timor-Leste and in 2017 the first national elections were held without a UN presence (Fitzpatrick 2002; Ide et al. 2021b; Krampe & Gignoux 2018).

In practice:

Since independence, the population of Timor-Leste has reintroduced many traditional practices such as Tara Bandu, which had been suppressed during the Indonesian occupation. Tara Bandu is a geographically widespread but very localised practice (e.g. in villages or sub-villages). Central to Tara Bandu are public ceremonies led by local dignitaries, such as village chiefs, where social and ecological norms are defined and harmful practices are identified and banned by sacred oath. The aim is to regulate social and ecological relations and avoid conflicts while managing natural resources. Tara Bandu ceremonies take place in different contexts. Environmental factors often play a role, such as protecting water resources or forests or promoting responsible livestock management to avoid crop damage by free-ranging animals. Tara Bandu can also serve to prevent and prohibit violence, including sexual and domestic violence. Research shows that although female victims in Timor-Leste have options under state law, many prefer the Tara Bandu system, which emphasises their role in the traditional legal system (Costa et al. 2017). Nevertheless, women often lack a strong position within the Tara Bandu due to socio-cultural and patriarchal structures. However, the system is not officially recognised by state law as an alternative form of justice for combating violence against women (ibid.). Those who violate the communal norms and prohibitions of Tara-Bandu face material punishment. In addition, the associated belief system presumes that supernatural punishments, such as illness and death, are also possible. Research suggests that communal sanctions, as well as being rooted in the belief system, lead to much higher compliance than the imposition of formal laws, especially since the conditions were jointly developed and adopted (Ide et al. 2021b; McWilliam et al. 2020; Palmer & McWilliam, 2019).

As a post-conflict country, Timor-Leste faces significant political and socio-economic problems, including the destruction of agricultural capital, land disputes and communal violence. These challenges required a response that the new state was unable to provide to a sufficient extent, leading local dignitaries to reintroduce the Tara Bandu. And it is having an impact, as field research in the villages of Baucau district suggests. There, Tara Bandu has helped to resolve land disputes and conflicts within families and communities that arose from forced resettlement during the Indonesian occupation. Overall, Tara Bandu is seen as a successful tool that both strengthens community cohesion and resolves disputes over natural resources, including land; it also receives support from the government (Ide et al. 2021b).

Learning experiences:

In contexts where resources are limited, international support for comparable practices could be relevant and also offer a possible starting point for German international cooperation. Hybrid formats, in which international support is combined with local traditions, also present numerous challenges, however. Although religious officials can be effective multipliers for raising awareness of issues such as environmental protection, the fear of supernatural retribution can also be exploited, and thus religiosity can be abused. Above all, external actors have limited capacities to understand local complexities, and highly localised practices such as Tara Bandu remain elusive phenomena for them. This was also the case in Timor-Leste, which led to such Tara Bandu hybrid practices having at best a temporary effect. To make hybrid ecological peacebuilding more successful, we need a better understanding of local social dynamics and a more flexible and nuanced view of local traditions and circumstances (Ide et al. 2021b; Scambary & Wassel 2018).

3.6 International efforts to strengthen the role of women in Afghanistan's energy sector

Background:

Afghanistan has performed poorly in terms of gender equality ever since data has been collected (see, for example, the Gender Inequality Index, UNDP (undated)). With the return of the Taliban in August 2021, the situation for women has drastically worsened, as they are systematically discriminated against and their fundamental rights and freedoms violated (Qazi Zada & Qazi Zada 2024). However, there have been efforts in the past, for example between 2001 and 2021, to improve the situation so that women could play a more active role in various sectors of the economy. Between the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 and their return to power in 2021, significant financial resources and numerous international development organisations entered Afghanistan to support the reconstruction of the country, including the energy sector. During this period, the national government and international development organisations have pursued various dimensions of energy system development despite ongoing insurgency and threats to infrastructure projects. Some of these efforts relating to the empowerment women in Afghanistan's energy sector are described below, in particular the creation of a network.

In practice:

Although the environment and energy-related projects in Afghanistan were not carried out under the environmental peacebuilding label, there were various practical links. Despite all the challenges, Afghanistan has made significant progress in terms of institutional and organisational changes in the energy sector.

International development organisations actively promoted gender equality through policy advice and project implementation. Studies show that international development organisations have actively sought to promote the recruitment, capacity building and contribution of women (Fahimi et al. 2024). Efforts ranged from advocating for gender quotas in legislation to ensuring women's representation in community development projects (Beath et al. 2015; Bush 2011). Immediately after the fall of the first Taliban regime in 2001, the international community supported the establishment of a Ministry of Women's Affairs. In the subsequent years, Afghanistan ratified several international human rights and women's rights documents. In the energy sector, as in others, development organisations took concrete measures to promote and support women's participation. For example, in some cases, local partners working with or implementing projects for international donors were required to have a certain number of women (e.g., 20 percent) on their work teams. In addition, women-only capacity-building programmes, networking trips to neighbouring and regional countries, and educational workshops were organised. The World Bank in 2018 helped form WePOWER, a network of women in the energy sector in South Asia, and supported the energy utility of Afghanistan, DABS, in becoming an institutional partner (World Bank 2018). In 2019, the energy utility set up a gender department within its structures. Furthermore, as part of this collaboration, DABS in 2021 committed to training 50 female interns and employing 100 women, including 15 graduates, setting up nurseries in two provinces, providing separate prayer rooms and toilets for women in all 34 provinces, and continuing the policy of three-month maternity leave and flexible working hours for female employees. The WePOWER network enabled broader collaboration and capacity building for women in the energy sector.

The dissemination of such norms by transnational actors that support human empowerment and the strengthening of civil society has a positive impact on peace in post-conflict contexts (Krampe et al. 2021).

Learning experiences:

The rapid takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban and the withdrawal of the international community, including most development organisations, in August 2021, reversed much of the progress made since 2001. The fact that some policies and projects had not been tailored and adapted to the context of Afghanistan accelerated their collapse (Hassan 2023; SIGAR 2021). Some projects, however, were not only continued, but also replicated by the target communities. For those that were continued, local communities were involved in the planning, implementation and monitoring phases (Strand et al. 2022). One such project was the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), a community-driven programme that elected 35,000 gender-balanced Community Development Councils (CDCs) nationwide (UN Habitat 2017). The CDCs then defined and prepared proposals for development projects for their village, with financing provided by donors and the central government.

An Afghan woman holds up the peace sign during the evacuation of non-combatants at Hamid Karzai International Airport, part of Operation Allies Refuge August 20, 2021, in Kabul, Afghanistan.
©picture alliance / ZUMAPRESS.com | 1lt. Mark Andries/U.S. Marine

Lessons learnt include the need for comprehensive legal frameworks, the inclusion of stakeholders and capacity building. Building on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, the UN and the international community are encouraged to recognise gender apartheid as a crime against humanity, with Afghanistan as a case in point (Akbari & True 2024). In conclusion, the example of international engagement in Afghanistan highlights the importance of holistic approaches, the involvement of stakeholders and adaptable strategies when tackling complex development tasks. Institutional change and women's empowerment initiatives require long-term commitment, collaboration and responsiveness to local conditions in order to achieve real impact and sustainability. Short-term commitments are not only unsustainable, but in some cases the principle of “do no harm” is also called into question, as the women who have worked with international organisations are at risk after their sudden withdrawal.

From learning experiences to strategic implementation

The case studies presented above show the complex relationships between climate and peace and underscore the importance of holistic approaches. Particularly in regions that suffer from both the consequences of climate change and instability, an integrated approach is essential to achieving positive long-term results; climate and conflict factors are often too closely linked to be dealt with separately.

In doing so, stakeholders should be guided by local conditions and traditions. As the examples from the Sahel and Timor-Leste illustrate, local populations have often been adapting to the changing environment for generations, developing practices that to some extent facilitate peaceful solutions. Even if the accelerating climate change overwhelms existing approaches, these can provide a good basis for innovative solutions to be developed. International stakeholders should familiarise themselves with the local conditions in detail and avoid importing cookie-cutter ideas and approaches in a way that is sometimes counterproductive.

The experiences of EcoPeace Middle East and those with small hydropower plants in the Western Balkans show that the involvement of various interest groups, particularly local civil society, is a key factor in understanding and addressing their diverse needs. Particular attention should be paid to women, young people and other often marginalised groups who, especially in the Global South, often rely particularly heavily on the environment and natural resources for their livelihoods due to their social status. These groups are therefore not only more affected by change, but are also uniquely positioned to develop ideas for solutions. Only through long-term engagement and the development of a relationship based on trust can these groups be addressed and included in the design and implementation of projects.

The case studies of Afghanistan and EcoPeace Middle East also demonstrate the need to combine local approaches with activities at the political level. The impact and sustainability of projects that fail to have an effect on policy are inevitably limited. This may involve engagement with sub-national or national government units as well as with stakeholders on the global political stage.

In summary, the case studies underscore the need for comprehensive, tailor-made approaches to address the complex interplay between climate and conflict. Sustainable results with positive effects for both climate and peace policy do not happen by chance, but are possible only as a result of targeted measures that consciously promote multidisciplinary approaches. This should be considered from the outset and implemented in all projects at the interface of climate and peace.

4 Environmental destruction as a field of action: the potential of environmental peacebuilding in Ukraine

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine has already claimed hundreds of thousands of lives and displaced millions.[14] The most serious war crimes and human rights violations have been documented (Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine 2023; 2024). In addition to the violence that is having an immediate effect, human suffering is also caused by massive environmental damage. In the long term, this will damage the health of the people in Ukraine and reduce their development opportunities. The serious environmental damage is only partly the unintended consequence of the fighting; environmental damage is also being used deliberately as a weapon. One example that led to widespread destruction is the blasting of the Kachowka Dam in June 2023, which was probably the work of Russian forces.

Even if the war continues, the question of reconstruction is already being raised. There is no lack of evidence that this should be a “green recovery”. In June 2024, a recovery conference was held in Berlin, attended by more than 60 countries, at which green recovery was a central topic. In Februaryy 2024, the international High-Level Working Group on the Environmental Consequences of War, established by Ukraine, published a report describing the various levels of green recovery (High-Level Working Group on the Environmental Consequences of the War 2024). President Zelensky's peace plan already emphasises environmental protection as a prerequisite for peace (Ukraine 2023). Unlike in other conflicts, the environment is not a silent victim in the Russia-Ukraine war. Rather, it was recognised early on that a sustainable peace – understood as a socially, economically and politically resilient peace that includes the ecological foundations (Krampe & Swain 2021; Krampe 2017) – can be achieved in Ukraine only if the consequences of the environmental disasters associated with the war are taken into account.

Both the consequences as well as the causes of the environmental damage go beyond the attack since Februaryy 2022 and also the fighting since 2014. They are embedded in a longer historical context of imperial ambitions of Russia and other countries towards Ukraine, dating back to the late 18th century. Particular mention should be made of Germany during the Nazi era. Hitler's interest in Ukraine included the acquisition of resource-rich territories. Seven million Ukrainians, including one million Jews, were killed during the Second World War (Flamm & Kroll 2024).

Ukraine's rich agricultural and fossil fuel resources were important for the centres of industrialisation in Russia and the Soviet Union, but also for other parts of Europe. The south-east of the country developed into a centre of the coal and steel industry in 19th-century imperial Russia. Russia's extractivist interests continued into the early 20th century, now with Ukraine as part of the Soviet Union. A centrepiece of Stalin's first five-year plan (1928–1933) was the Dnipro hydroelectric power station in Zaporizhzhia. More recently, in 1986, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster also illustrates the imperial relationship between Moscow and the periphery in the non-Russian republics (Kuzio 2002: p. 241). The secrecy and inaction of the Kremlin leadership in connection with the accident led to the use of nuclear power as yet another “instrument of Moscow's domination of their republic” (Plokhy 2015: p. 312).

This brief historical background of Russia's imperial rule over Ukraine, particularly with regard to natural resources and industrialisation, shows how today's political, economic and social structures have been deeply influenced by extractivism. Ukraine's rich natural resources have long been exploited by external actors, with the local population often not only largely excluded from the value added, but also suffering from the resulting negative environmental impacts.

[14] The following section is based on Flamm & Kroll (2024).

Aerial view of a modern agricultural machine in a wheat field near Odessa, Ukraine, on June 17, 2022, while the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine continues.
©picture alliance / GFFO | Metin Aktas

One example of this is the centuries-old, environmentally harmful mining of coal in Donbass for export to the Russian Empire and later the Soviet Union, which has often been carried out illegally by mafia-like structures since independence. Many sites of historical Russian colonisation and industrialisation in the territory of Ukraine have now become battlefields. The Russian attacks on these sites are thus a continuation of the long imperial history of Soviet and Russian exploitation in Ukraine. It is important to take this background of Russia's colonial territorial claims and the role of natural resources into account when analysing the conflict and considering possible paths to reconstruction and an end to the war.

At the Ukraine Recovery Conference, funding opportunities for reconstruction and the involvement of different interest groups were discussed in 2023 and 2024. Various plans for reconstruction already exist, for example from the Ukrainian government, the EU and the OECD. Twenty of these plans were analysed in terms of the rupture of historical ties with Russia, Ukraine's European integration and the inclusive and participatory nature of the reconstruction effort. In terms of sustainability, one focus was on the areas of agriculture and energy, which were important in the extractivist past (Flamm & Kroll 2024). The European and Ukrainian plans differ little in their rhetoric and ambitions with regard to a green recovery. The political and economic future of Ukraine is seen in a stronger orientation towards and integration into Europe.

However, if Ukraine is to be oriented towards stronger European integration, it will be important from the outset to limit new dependencies for Ukraine as much as possible, if not to avoid them altogether. This requires an ambitious and fundamental restructuring of the economy in Ukraine. The plans of the OECD, the G7 and the German Environment Agency take this into account and explicitly emphasise the importance of organising the reconstruction locally and decentralising the political structures accordingly. Overall, Ukraine and its international partners must organise a rapid economic recovery and, moreover, create the conditions for breaking old dependencies and preventing new ones from emerging.

A prerequisite for the green reconstruction of Ukraine is not only international integration and support. Against the background of the colonial past and the risk of new asymmetries, the role of local initiatives is particularly significant. In this context, the inclusion of research findings on environmental peacebuilding is particularly valuable. Civil society initiatives play a special role in the translation and implementation of sustainable standards that also have a positive influence on long-term peace. Empowering civil society groups fosters local roots and legitimacy. At the same time, the capacities and resources of local initiatives are limited, which makes them vulnerable to instrumentalisation by state and international donors. One specific area in which this conflict exists is the planned exploitation of mineral raw materials such as lithium and rare earth elements in Ukraine for the European decarbonisation and future energy security of the continent. (Conflict and Environment Observatory 2024). The EU and Ukraine signed a memorandum of understanding on critical raw materials as early as 2021. European investors, the Ukrainian central government and local authorities have a common strategic economic interest in realising such raw material extraction as part of a green reconstruction, although the local population has little say in the matter, especially under the current martial law. An important lesson of environmental peacebuilding, particularly for the European Union and European investors, is therefore to ensure and strengthen the independent role and capacity of local environmental initiatives in reconstruction.

5 Cross-sectoral cooperation and conflict sensitivity

„It's time to go together" (proverb of unknown origin)

"Overcoming silos, working across sectors": In view of the current multiple crises, this demand is on everyone's lips. Better cooperation and coordination between state actors was also emphasised at the annual Berlin Peace Dialogue[15] conference of the Advisory Board for Civilian Crisis Prevention and Peacebuilding and at the Berlin Climate and Security Conference 2023.[16] However, cooperation is rarely successful (see, for example, Schnabel & Witt 2022). A number of different players would have to cooperate closely to make a just transformation possible: local stakeholders and civil society, environmental, agricultural, climate, peace and human rights experts, the various internationally active departments[17] of the German government and comparable actors in the respective partner countries, and in some cases the private sector and financial institutions.

The following section discusses obstacles to cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder cooperation and to the multi-level approach. It also considers ways of systematically linking environmental protection and climate initiatives with peacebuilding efforts, and peace engagement with approaches to tackling the climate crisis.

Access to information and joint context analyses

Peacebuilding experts, both at home and abroad, often lack knowledge of initiatives in the field of climate and the environment. For example, on the basis of interviews with employees in 2023, the Civil Peace Service found that its personnel and partner organisations in Kenya and Colombia, which are made up of proven experts in peace and security, are poorly informed about the climate and development partnerships that the German government has established with both countries. Publicly available information on accountability, participation and governance instruments in relation to these partnerships is limited. Information on the federal government's commitment and multilateral initiatives in the field of peacebuilding, as well as climate and the environment, should be proactively disseminated across sectors. Key individuals who have an overview of the portfolio, such as country divisions in the ministries and various advisors at the German missions abroad, could play an important role in this communication. For example, the climate representatives in German embassies established as part of the climate foreign policy strategy in contexts of violence such as Kinshasa, Addis Ababa, Baghdad and Mexico City. The climate focal representations can invite climate and peace actors from different sectors to information events and contribute to networking. They can also call on local expertise for joint conflict analyses and programmes.

Context analyses are still too rarely conducted across sectors. For example, conflict analyses should also include climate risk analyses as standard, and environmental and climate analyses should be required to take into account potential (violent) conflicts that may arise or be exacerbated as a result of them. Broader analyses are important not only to improve the quality of their content, but also because the process itself and the way it is designed can be crucial: when different stakeholders analyse together, a foundation for cooperation can be laid. Those affected locally are the ones who know best the context, such as what impact climate change or land-use changes, such as deforestation, environmentally harmful agricultural practices or large-scale land concessions to companies, have already brought about.

[15] Berlin Peace Dialogue 2023 – Beirat Zivile Krisenprävention und Friedensförderung (beirat-zivile-krisenpraevention.org)

[16] https://climate-diplomacy.org/magazine/cooperation/berlin-climate-and-security-conference-2023-event-summary

[17] Foreign Office, Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action, Ministry of Defence, Ministry for the Environment and Consumer Protection, Ministry of Food and Agriculture

They can define what peace and conflict is about and what they need to survive. The inclusion of local communities, especially women and marginalised groups, in analysis, planning and monitoring is therefore essential. Their participation must be planned, designed and provided with resources, but all too often this remains mere lip service. For example, it has not yet been clarified to what extent civil society will be involved in designing the programmes for climate debt conversion measures (debt-for-climate swaps), for which the German government plans to provide at least 5 billion euros by 2030. Germany is one of the few countries worldwide with an established bilateral swap programme. In this programme, a debtor country swaps a portion of its debt for a commitment to invest in climate change mitigation and adaptation and a socio-ecological transformation in the same amount (BMZ 2023).

Design of activities that is sensitive to power

To be successful, cross-sectoral and cross-stakeholder cooperation must recognise the extreme power asymmetries that often prevent an equal dialogue on climate change, the environment and resources. An example is when the private sector and affected communities work together to find solutions through multi-stakeholder dialogue. These obstacles are intensified when local stakeholders and marginalised groups get the impression that their participation is intended to fulfil a goal in a very superficial manner ('tick-the-box' mechanism), under time pressure, in a manner that is not very inclusive, or they are regarded as a mere implementing instrument. One-off consultations with local civil society, without it being clear what will follow from the exchange, appear ineffective to local experts and can have a disempowering effect on them. Participation formats can have a positive impact if they are appropriate to the respective context. For the participation of women, climate activists and marginalised groups, it is important to create safe spaces in which they can speak freely and express their needs (Brot für die Welt 2024).

For indigenous groups, an important prerequisite for their co-decision-making and participation is the right to free, prior and informed consent (FPIC, ILO Convention 169) when measures or projects affect the land and resources they use. This also means that they have the right to reject measures without subsequently being exposed to threats and pressure from powerful actors. It makes sense to apply this right to other marginalised local groups as well. If consent has been obtained from the local stakeholders, they should be continuously involved in the analyses, planning steps and also in the implementation. Furthermore, the inclusion of those affected in a regular monitoring of the effects, including the unintended ones, and the possibility of filing complaints, is of great advantage for sustainability and for the prevention of violence. Dealing sensitively with power relations also means recognising that the risks of climate change have so far been borne primarily by those population groups that have contributed least to their cause. In line with the principles of "do no harm" and "the polluter pays", this also means that the main polluters – industrialised countries and some emerging economies – have a particular responsibility to work towards climate justice and resource justice.[18]

From add-on to mainstream

So far, networking and cooperation with other sectors and interest groups has mostly been an add-on that is too often deprioritised in the face of the enormous pressure that local stakeholders in particular face in the face of violence, fragility and the climate and environmental crises. Climate and environmental projects should always be planned and implemented in a conflict-sensitive manner, across

[18] See the UNFCCC principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities" (UN 1992).

the board. The extensive safeguards of the International Climate Initiative (IKI) include important provisions on environmental and social standards, but conflict sensitivity is not anchored in them.

Joint context analyses that take into account climate and environmental conditions, as well as conflicts and conflict participants, and, above all, reflection on which conflict dynamics a project could trigger or exacerbate and how it should be dealt with, would increase the effectiveness and sustainability of the measures. The introduction of the quality criterion of conflict sensitivity at the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, which was considered during the last legislative period, would be a step towards the comprehensive and mandatory introduction of conflict-sensitive approaches for all thematic areas.

The Financing Locally-Led Climate Action (FLLOCA) programme, which is supported by several donors through the World Bank, is an example of a climate programme that could benefit from the integration of conflict-sensitive approaches to climate finance. International Alert, a peace organisation, is advising various levels of government (local and national) on the conflict-sensitive design and implementation of climate adaptation plans in Kenya. They have supported this integration in some county and municipal plans developed under the FLLOCA programme. The adaptation plans were designed to go beyond climate risks and stressors and adaptation strategies to also focus on gender and conflict dynamics in these contexts. Understanding the context through an actor/conflict analysis is the most important pillar of their work to identify possible risks and also to include marginalised people in the process (Annex 2, B1).

On the other hand, projects in the area of peacebuilding, stabilisation and security must be climate-sensitive and climate-resilient. The global private sector must also be obliged to commit to climate neutrality and at the same time to act in a manner that is sensitive to conflict, thereby fulfilling its corporate responsibility in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Such mainstreaming must also mean, for example, that complaints procedures are taken seriously, remedial action is taken and compensation for damage resulting from unintentional negative side effects is planned and fulfilled.

To ensure that mainstreaming is not limited to the formulation of a corresponding paragraph in programme strategy documents, capacities are needed for cross-sectoral and cross-stakeholder work. Experts from the various sectors and at the various levels must have sufficient resources to work together. In particular, sufficient resources and support must be provided on a long-term and flexible basis for those affected locally in order to enable their participation at all. One problem is the fragmentation and lack of cooperation within and between German departments. It would be helpful if the constructive cooperation and coordination between Berlin/Bonn and the respective places of work, the cooperation between the various departments within and between the ministries, were improved.

The importance of a multi-level approach

While environmental peacebuilding in the 1990s was still primarily state-centred, it is now common sense that local solutions and transformation options are just as relevant (Ide et al. 2021a). This is another reason why financing models are needed in both the peacebuilding and climate, environment and resources sectors that facilitate direct access for those affected locally and financing through small grants. For example, it seems obvious that the International Climate Initiative (IKI), a joint programme of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, should increasingly promote cross-project and cross-border approaches over the

An overview of the deforestation in the forest at the rural area of Puerto Rico, Caqueta, Colombia on March 04, 2023. Deforestation and conflict have been two of the most significant issues plaguing the Colombian region of Caqueta for decades.
©picture alliance / GFFO | Juancho Torres

years, but this has made it more difficult for local and smaller organisations to gain access. Structures for cooperation must be fostered and created in which local experiences can be incorporated into processes that can then also achieve something at the regional and national level (Track II and I). This requires regional and global cooperation: national, but also multilateral stakeholders must be involved. A good example of this is the appointment of a UN climate security advisor[19] in Somalia. It has been shown that such cross-sectoral advisory capacities can fulfil important bridging functions, contribute expertise and perspectives from different sides, and advance dialogues and concerns. In addition to the dialogues at the political level, this example shows that networking with local key persons and actors achieves important and positive effects. Furthermore, it is crucial to link these local initiatives in turn with the political processes and to multiply them.

Good experiences and results have also been achieved through the Green Central Asia Initiative (Federal Foreign Office 2020) (Annex 2, B2). This initiative was launched in 2020 to develop and strengthen a joint climate adaptation strategy with the Central Asian republics and to support a cross-border dialogue. The initiative was complemented by research and dialogue components, which are intended to expand knowledge and promote peace at the same time. The Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) was commissioned to carry out accompanying research projects; for example, transnational dialogues on joint analyses and problems are organised to publicise and discuss research results and develop joint solutions. To continue the initiative, an expansion and application of the components for climate adaptation and peacebuilding for all departments of the German government is planned, which would require sectoral and multi-level cooperation and can contribute to sustainability and peace.

[19] Christopher Hodder is the first UN advisor to the United Nations on climate security and the environment in Somalia (Climate Diplomacy, undated).

Promoting integrators at all levels

There are always people or organisations working across the divides at all levels. Their convening power, i.e. their potential to bring influential actors together for dialogue and exchange on peacebuilding, should be systematically promoted. In particular, local and grassroots peace activists have a wealth of experience in how to develop and strengthen the capacity for analysis, alliance-building and dialogue. There are positive examples of international and national platforms at the political level that involve civil society actors and rights organisations, enabling them to participate in decision-making and implementation processes. At the international level, for example, the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS)[20] is a forum in which representatives of fragile and conflict-affected states meet regularly with development partners and civil society actors for political exchange and cross-sectoral cooperation. At the national level, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations and the International Land Coalition (ILC), for example, have been working together with international development actors and local civil society networks in various countries for several years in the land sector. For example, in Sierra Leone, the FAO is promoting multi-stakeholder platforms at the national, municipal and district levels for the transformation of national land policy, the greater involvement of women and the recognition of collective land rights as important approaches to the prevention of violence through inclusive land governance. (FAO 2021, 2024).

For this integrative, multi-sectoral work, it is important to ensure the protection and safety of all those involved. And it requires appropriate spaces and structures of cooperation within and between institutions that promote and support this work. On the one hand, incentives that promote this cooperation are helpful for this. On the other hand, additional resources are needed to enable this cooperation. However, it should be kept in mind that the (follow-up) costs of violent conflicts are always higher than those of prevention (FriEnt 2019). In addition, a positive basic attitude and approach to multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches is also advantageous at the individual level.

In the long term, these multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches and the use of the necessary resources will pay off, as more sustainable processes will emerge that can better adapt to fluid and constantly changing contexts, thus contributing to the achievement of the sustainability goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Climate financing: the potential of climate finance for environmental peacebuilding

Developing countries affected by conflict and fragility that are also suffering from severe climate impacts are currently marginalised in international climate finance. A lack of risk appetite on the part of funds and implementing agencies, complicated and costly access and financing criteria, a lack of data and weak institutions in such recipient countries mean that, on average, they receive only around a third of the funds per capita of developing countries without conflicts. The most severely affected countries receive only around a fifth (International Crisis Group 2022). Furthermore, a large proportion of the funds are provided only as loans, and often not on a concessional basis, which can drive these countries deeper and deeper into the debt trap (Reeve & Walsh 2023; Zucker-Marques et al. 2024).

[20] https://www.pbsbdialogue.org/.

This makes it more difficult or even impossible to invest in sustainable livelihoods, including social security and adaptation measures to protect the population, which are often the basis for peacekeeping and conflict resolution (Johnson et al. 2021).

Climate funds and climate finance mechanisms have the potential to make a positive contribution to conflict resolution and fragility, for example through environmental peacebuilding. To this end, funds for climate-relevant investments in the context of fragility must be used in a targeted manner and the relevant award procedures and funding guidelines must be adapted. In view of the overall lack of climate financing, the limited concessional public funds available for climate investments should be used in a more targeted manner with a view to multiple benefits (e.g. in the climate-development-peace nexus), rather than focusing primarily on climate goals to which welcome positive but often unclaimed, limited side effects (co-benefits) are hierarchically subordinated. This requires an adaptation of risk analysis methods, including the filling of data gaps through the better integration of indigenous and local knowledge, and of investment criteria in climate financing mechanisms.

The keys to fairer and sustainable climate financing include: a stronger focus on human rights, particularly indigenous rights (UNDRIP) and gender equality; greater involvement and support for local communities; a focus on the contribution and needs of marginalised population groups; and inclusive, participatory, peacebuilding bottom-up processes. This doesn't apply exclusively to developing countries particularly affected by conflict and fragility. In particular, simplified and unbureaucratic access to small and medium-sized financing is needed, which should primarily benefit subnational, local stakeholders. These could be better placed to involve marginalised groups, such as indigenous people, women and LGBTQI individuals, directly as implementing partners in the climate projects of international actors, in line with the principle of subsidiarity. This requires political will and a new kind of willingness to take risks on the part of the boards of trustees of the climate funds, as well as a departure from a misconceived and overrated cost-effectiveness in relation to the effectiveness of supporting those affected. Furthermore, it is necessary to sustainably anchor the funded measures in national and local systems and communities.

The new Loss and Damage Fund agreed at the climate summit in Dubai (COP28) offers an opportunity and has the potential to foster peace in this sense, provided that its operationalisation is successful through forward-looking and innovative statutes and processes. Although its founding document lacks a strong human rights basis, it is the first climate fund to have had a mandate from the outset to establish small grants as an important access modality for local communities affected by loss and damage, indigenous peoples and marginalised and vulnerable groups. It is also the first climate fund to explicitly list climate migrants as relevant stakeholders whose participation in the fund process must be supported. It recognises not only economic but also non-economic losses and damages, such as the loss of biodiversity or culture, as well as psychological effects on those affected. Cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation, for example with humanitarian actors and development aid institutions, is enshrined in the founding document. The statutes also emphasise the strengthening and support of national and sub-national institutions and processes that are necessary to cope with loss and damage, such as social security and disaster risk reduction systems. The statutes of the fund thus underscore the envisaged multiple benefits of the financing as a basis for improved, fairer and more sustainable financial support, also with regard to conflict-sensitive project funding and distribution.

6 Outlook and recommendations: from negative to positive nexus – environmental peacebuilding and conflict transformation for sustainable peace

The structures of growth, power, violence and inequality that emerged with the colonial and fossil fuel eras combine today in a vicious circle of diverse crises that can lead to wars, disasters and ecocides (Buhaug & von Uexkull 2021; Pfaff 2023). To break the negative nexus of climate crisis, violent conflicts and forced displacement, a socio-ecological transformation is needed to achieve a positive nexus of sustainability, development and peace (Scheffran 2016; Nadiruzzaman et al. 2023). Integrated strategies avoid global risk amplifiers, negative tipping points and cascades, and seek positive tipping points in which synergies between different fields of action are strengthened (see Eker et al. 2023).

These include improving the resilience and adaptive capacity of human societies and critical infrastructures for energy, water, food, health, transport, communication, etc. to threats, a conflict-sensitive environmental and climate policy, migration policy as a transformative force (Adger et al. 2024), structures for cooperative security in the context of a peace logic, and the promotion of a sustainable, solidarity-based economy and way of life.

In order to ensure that the socio-ecological transformation is also a peace project, civilian conflict resolution and conflict transformation can mitigate destructive conflicts in the agricultural, transport and energy transitions and promote a peaceful transition to a sustainable world (Pastoors et al. 2022). Thus, the double transformation for a peaceful and sustainable coexistence on planet earth is a joint future programme for environmental and conflict research. Following the words of UN Secretary-General António Guterres, to move from a “war against nature” to a “peace with nature” (UNEP 2021), we must also consider “peace among people”.

A man rides horseback into a sandstorm from the violence plagued Darfur region of Sudan into eastern Chad.
@picture-alliance/ dpa | epa Stephen Morrison

Peace and sustainable development both encompass the need for sustaining (natural resources and human livelihoods) and the opportunities for nurturing (well-being and development) of life. The concept of 'sustainable peace' concerns the aim of shaping sustained nurturing (Froese et al. 2024). Such connections can be found in various cultural beliefs and knowledge contexts, for example among indigenous groups, and point to possible synergies between socio-ecological transformation and conflict transformation.

The challenge is to find concrete measures for the sustainable development of peace that encompasses the equitable conservation and use of resources as well as risk prevention and resilience, efficiency and sufficiency (Scheffran 1998). Environmental peacebuilding can also play a constructive role (Hardt & Scheffran 2019). To facilitate a transformation, effective levers must be found for joint action: through institutions, negotiation processes and governance structures. While damage control is concerned with limited spaces for action, preventive risk avoidance creates new scope for design.

Recommendations

A socio-ecological transformation from the local to the global level encompasses the resilient, efficient, sufficient and just use of natural resources. It requires adaptive societies and infrastructures as well as environmental cooperation. Environmental peacebuilding addresses precisely these challenges and therefore plays a central role in the design of sustainable solutions. Against the background of the further development of the German government's guidelines "Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace", we make the following recommendations for action:

Support for capacity building and knowledge transfer

- Environmental peacebuilding should be established as a fixed component in the toolbox of civilian crisis prevention. This includes expanding the funding of specific environmental peacebuilding projects and integrating climate information and environment-related measures into existing peacebuilding projects. Conversely, peace policy concerns should also be taken into account in climate projects, such as in the area of adaptation in fragile states. Conflict analyses that take environmental factors into account should be more firmly established as part of Germany's crisis management and as part of a comprehensive assessment of the situation, for example in UN missions.

- The implementation of integrative solutions also requires concrete improvements in the data situation. For example, a gender-sensitive breakdown of the effects of climate change on different social groups is needed.

- The partnership projects need to be strengthened, pursuing a transdisciplinary approach and combining social science findings from peace and conflict research with natural science perspectives. Many environmental peacebuilding projects require scientific and sometimes technical expertise, for example in the area of climate adaptation. In particular, the inclusion of climate projections can be useful to increase medium-term effectiveness.

- The exchange of knowledge between existing projects should be promoted through joint training and other measures.

- In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of conflict dynamics and identify potential solutions with an environmental dimension, there is a need for improved access to climate information, further training for German personnel (e.g. in peace operations) and certain experts on climate change and security, and the potential of environmental peacebuilding needs to be recognised. For example, more climate security seminars and training courses are needed for the training of police and military personnel in order to adequately identify and assess new risk landscapes, especially during international missions.

- Civilian and development policy projects should be geared towards training local key stakeholders in dispute resolution techniques, with a focus on traditional approaches confidence-building measures between citizens, communities, local authorities and security forces should be supported. In conflict situations over land rights, this can be done through “agro-pastoral hubs” between the farming population and pastoralist communities.

Integrative governance approaches

- Integrated solution strategies and governance measures avoid the risk amplifiers in the negative nexus of environmental crises, violent conflicts and social inequality and promote synergies for a positive nexus of sustainability, development and peace. They should therefore be more widely applied. More holistic projects that follow an integrated approach should, for example, link conflict analyses with gender and intersectional perspectives, as otherwise discrimination could potentially be reinforced.

- Cross-sector collaboration should be established in a binding manner by means of interdepartmental structures, systematic inclusion of interest groups from civil society and incentives for collaboration across sectors and (intra-)institutional boundaries. Sustainable results with positive effects for both climate and peace policy do not come about by chance, but are possible only as a result of targeted measures that consciously promote multidisciplinary approaches. This should be considered from the outset and implemented in all projects at the climate and peace interface. Time and financial resources should be planned for this in the respective processes and project cycles to enable the various stakeholders to participate. In addition, local partner organisations should be provided with sufficient financial and human resources to set up and support multi-stakeholder dialogues. Their autonomy and security, as well as sufficient room for manoeuvre, must be maintained. Only in this way can local approaches be given sufficient consideration.

- The obligation for conflict sensitivity should be expanded and applied more widely, for example in the international funding lines of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action or the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture. Conflict analyses and the design of the programmes should be planned and carried out continuously with those affected.

- Environmental peacebuilding programmes should be established in the area of integration in immigration societies, such as in Germany, to strengthen social cohesion between residents and newcomers. These projects should be geared towards achieving various development goals, such as renaturation or strengthening the resilience of cities to extreme weather events.

- The protection of environmental and climate activists should be strengthened, as civil society spaces are shrinking in many industrialised and developing countries. Germany could put this topic on the agenda in international forums, among others, and should advocate for the inclusion of specific protection mechanisms in international agreements. This protection should also be strengthened domestically (Climate Rights International 2024).

Partnerships and international cooperation

- In resource-limited contexts, international support for bottom-up environmental peacebuilding can be important. A deep understanding of local dynamics, a flexible view of traditions and consideration of the potential risks associated with these approaches are crucial to the success of such hybrid approaches. Furthermore, it is important that local actors play a central role and are fully involved in the analysis, implementation and financing of these processes. The international promotion of bottom-up environmental peacebuilding processes can also have negative consequences, such as reduced effectiveness, if these factors are not taken into account.

- The German government should expand its support for resilience projects, such as Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) and other effective afforestation projects, especially in very poor areas that will be severely affected by climate change, such as the Sahel. In addition to reforestation, funding for the renaturation of soils and agricultural land should be particularly ensured. Smallholder farmers play a crucial role. For example, one study by the University of Bonn points to particular potential in this area in Nigeria (Mirzabaev et al. 2022). The mobilisation and alignment of the Loss and Damage Fund can be crucial in this regard, in order to focus more on climate-related security risks.

- The German government should address structural causes (such as corruption, marginalisation, climate change) in conflict resolution and in its exchange with partner governments, and pursue a strict “do no harm” policy.

- Especially in fragile and conflict-affected states, there is a need for more flexible project financing options. In particular, changing environmental conditions and the onset of extreme events, such as droughts or flooding, can quickly alter the framework conditions for projects. This may also mean facilitating longer-term and adaptable project planning that takes into account developments in the conflict. Successful projects that jointly develop conflict transformation mechanisms between parties to a conflict in peace dialogues often require additional funds to implement the agreed activities.

Communication and public relations

- The links between climate change and security, as well as possible solutions in the field of environmental peacebuilding, should be explained through extensive public relations work at home and abroad. In particular, best practices should be highlighted and at the same time information provided about the risks that are looming, in order to put the options for action that still exist up for debate. This could also strengthen the support of the population.

A prerequisite for the success of environmental peacebuilding remains compliance with the temperature limits set out in the Paris Agreement. Only by radically reducing emissions can spaces of opportunity be created for the cooperation needed to deal with the consequences of climate change that can no longer be avoided. Environmental peacebuilding can then be used to peacefully address and mitigate environmental problems. The fastest possible phase-out of fossil fuels requires the creation of a just, human rights-based, and conflict-sensitive transition. To ensure this, it is essential that the German government is committed to achieving the climate targets of the Paris Agreement, and this requires a further increase in ambition in the coming years.

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8 Annexes

Annex 1: Selection of current environmental peacebuilding projects (as of July 2024)

Project name	Organisation	Location	Duration · period[21]	Internet presence (if applicable)
Bay of Bengal maritime dialogue	Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD)	Bay of Bengal	2022–present	https://climate-diplomacy.org/peace-pillar-bay-bengal-maritime-dialogue
Konflikte um Ressourcen gemeinsam konstruktiv verhandeln	GIZ/ZFD Project partner: Cercle de réflexion et d'action pour un dèveloppement locale innovant (CercleDev), Développment pour un Mieux-Etre (Demi-E), Fédération des Unions de Groupements Paysans du Niger Mooriben (FUGPN Mooriben), Fédération Nationale des Eleveurs du Niger (FNEN Daddo), Groupe d'Echange et de Recherche pour la promotion de la Mutualité et de la Micro Entreprise (Germe), Groupe d'Etudes et de Recherches sur l'Environnement et de Développment (GERED), Potal Men	Benin, Niger, Sahel	2022–2024, follow-up project approved	https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/de/projekt/konflikte-um-ressourcen-gemeinsam-konstruktiv-verhandeln
Dialog schafft Aus- und Mitsprache	GIZ/ZFD Project partner: Apoyo para el campesino-indígena del Oriente boliviano (APCOB), Asociación de los Entes de Participación y Control Social del Departamento de Santa Cruz (ACOVICRUZ), Fundación Construir, Fundación Instituto Radiofónico Fe y Alegría (IRFA), Fundación para la Conservación del Bosque Chiquitano (FCBC), Fundación UNIR Bolivia, Instituto para el desarrollo rural de Sudamérica (IPDRS), Proceso Servicios Educativos, Universidad Núr	Bolivien	2023–2026	https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/de/projekt/dialog-schafft-aus-und-mitsprache
Programme to strengthen the resilience of pastoral and agro-pastoral households to climate crises and insecurity (RESILIA) Phase 1	Netherlands Development Organization (SNV)	Burkina Faso	2021–2024	https://climate-diplomacy.org/programme-strengthen-resilience-pastoral-and-agro-pastoral-households-climate-crises-and-insecurity

[21] Many of the projects are designed for the long term and include the strategic planning and implementation of follow-up projects.

Project name	Organisation	Location	Duration · period[21]	Internet presence (if applicable)
Im Dialog Polarisierung überwinden und Konflikte bearbeiten	GIZ/ZFD Project partner: Alianza de Medios Comunicando a Honduras (AMCH), Asociación de Prensa Hondureña (APH), Comisión de Acción Social Menonita (CASM), Comisionado Nacional de los Derechos Humanos (CONADEH), Foro Social de la Deuda Externa y Desarrollo de Honduras (FOSDEH), La Voz de Zacate Grande, Play FM Honduras, Radio Cholula Triunfeña, Radio Exclusiva, Radio Marcala, Radio Morazanista, Radio ODECO, Radio Suyuguare	Honduras	2022–2024, follow-up project approved	https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/de/projekt/im-dialog-polarisierung-ueberwinden-und-konflikte-bearbeiten
Climate-focused mediation and Peacebuilding in Iraq	Berghof Foundation	Iraq	June 2022–March 2025	https://berghof-foundation.org/work/projects/iraq-climate-conflict
Birds Know No Boundaries	BirdLife Israel	Israel	1980–present	https://www.birds.org.il/en/article/BirdLife-Israel
Arava Institute for Environmental Studies	Arava Institute for Environmental Studies	Israel	1996–present (Environmental studies since 2012)	https://arava.org/
Environmental pathways for reconciliation Yemen	European Institute of Peace, adelphi	Yemen	2022–present	https://climate-diplomacy.org/peace-pillar-environmental-pathways-reconciliation-yemen
Good Water Neighbors	EcoPeace Middle East	in the territories of Jordan, Palestine and Israel	2001–present	https://ecopeaceme.org/
Zivil ist der Weg: Konflikte konstruktiv angehen	Weltfriedensdienst/ZFD Project partner: Children Peace Initiative Kenya (CPI), Indigenous Movement for Peace Advancement and Conflict Transformation (IMPACT), Regional Pastoralist Peace Link (RPPL)	Kenya	2020–2024, follow-up project approved	https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/de/projekt/zivil-ist-der-weg-konflikte-konstruktiv-angehen

Project name	Organisation	Location	Duration · period[21]	Internet presence (if applicable)
Dialog zwischen den Religionen und Bearbeitung von Ressourcenkonflikten	AGIAMONDO/ZFD Project partner: Association of Sisterhoods of Kenya (AOSK), Coast Interfaith Council of Clerics Trust (CICC), Institut „Interreligious Dialogue and Islamic Studies" (IRDIS) am Tangaza University College, IRD-Kommission der Diözese Malindi, JPD Kakamega, Kenyanische Bischofskonferenz (Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops, KCCB): Kommission für lnterreligiösen Dialog und Ökumene (CIRDE) sowie NJPD, Missionaries of Africa (MAfr), Sisters of St Joseph of Tarbes	Kenya	2022–2025	https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/de/projekt/dialog-zwischen-den-religionen-und-bearbeitung-von-ressourcenkonflikten
Powering peace through climate action	International Alert und lokale Partner (UNOY)	Kenya and Nigeria	2022–2024	https://climate-diplomacy.org/powering-peace-through- climate-action https://unoy.org/powering-peace-through-climate-action-a-project-from-angel-support-foundation/

Project name	Organisation	Location	Duration · period[21]	Internet presence (if applicable)
Perspektiven für den Frieden	Brot für die Welt/ZFD Project partner: Center for Justice and Peace Studies (CJPS), Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), Council of Churches in Sierra Leone (CCSL), Culture Radio, Freetong Players International (FPI), Future in Our Hands (FIOH), Liberia Opportunities Industrialization Centers (LOIC), Liberian Council of Churches (LCC), Lutheran Church in Liberia – Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Program (LCL-THRP), Lutheran Development Service (LDS), Mankind's Activities for Development Accreditation Movement (MADAM), Men's Association for Gender Equality-Sierrra Leone (MAGE-SL), New African Research and Development Agency (NARDA), Sierra Leone Adult Education Organisation (SLADEA), Sierra Leone Network on the Right to Food (SiLNoRF), Sierra Leone Opportunities Industrialization Centres (SLOIC), Young Men's Christian Association Liberia (YMCA-Liberia), Young Men's Christian Association Sierra Leone (YMCA-Sierra Leone), Young Women's Christian Association Sierra Leone (YWCA SL)	Liberia, Sierra Leone, Mano-River region	2024–2027	https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/de/projekt/perspektiven-fuer-den-frieden
Water, peace and security (WPS) in Mali	IHE Delft, World Resources Institute, Deltares, The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, Wetlands International, International Alert	Mali	2018–present	https://climate-diplomacy.org/water-peace-and-security-wps-partnership-mali
Gender-transformative and Equitable Natural Resource Management (GENRE) for Resilience, Social Cohesion and Peace (Phase II)	Care UK, Care Mali, Association Malienne pour la Promotion du Sahel (AMAPROS)	Mali	Februaryy 2023 – December 2025	https://climate-diplomacy.org/gender-transformative-and-equitable-natural-resource-management-genre-resilience-social-cohesion
Justice and Stability in the Sahel (JASS)	Mercy Corps, Adam Smith International	Mali, Niger	August 2021 – March 2026	https://devtracker.fcdo.gov.uk/programme/GB-GOV-1-301252/summary#

Project name	Organisation	Location	Duration · period[21]	Internet presence (if applicable)
North West climate-peace hubs: A climate security approach to conflict prevention	TBA	Nigeria	2022–2025	https://climate-diplomacy.org/north-west-climate-peace-hubs-climate-security-approach-conflict-prevention
Environmental cooperation as a pathway to resolve Nigeria's deadly farmer-herder conflicts	Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD)	Nigeria	2022–present	https://climate-diplomacy.org/peace-pillar-multi-level-approaches-sustainable-peace-nigerias-middle-belt-benue-plateau-and
Water, peace and security (WPS) partnership: Ethiopia	HE Delft, World Resources Institute, Deltares, The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, Wetlands International and International Alert, Ethiopia Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy (MoWIE)	Omo-Gibe Basin, Ethiopia	2018–present	https://climate-diplomacy.org/water-peace-and-security-wps-partnership-ethiopia
Tara Bandu	Local practice	The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste	present	

Project name	Organisation	Location	Duration · period[21]	Internet presence (if applicable)
Zivilgesellschaft stärken, um Frieden voranzubringen	Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst Project partner: Ateneo de Davao University (AdDU), Balay Mindanaw Foundation, Inc. (Balay Mindanaw), Bangsamoro Youth Commission (BYC), Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Regional Office XI, Confederated Descendants of Rajah Mamalu (CDORM), Davao del Norte State College (DNSC), Department of Education (DepEd), Father Saturnino Urios University (FSUU), Kutawato Multimedia Network (KuMuNet), Learned Kagan Muslim Foundation Inc. (LKMFI), Local Government Units in Caraga, MARIKA, MAMASANSISU, Media Educators Network Inc. (MEM), Mindanao Histories and Studies Advocacy Group, Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Foundation Inc. (MPI), Ministry of Indigenous Peoples Affairs (MIPA), Ministry of Public Order and Safety (MPOS), Moro Women Development and Cultural Center (MWDECC), National Commission on Indigenous People, Panaghiusa Alang sa Kaugalingnan ug Kalingkawasan, Inc. (PASAKK), PAGTUKUSAN, Provinzregierung von Surigao del Norte, Responsible Young Leaders Organisation (RYLO), Samal Island Muslim Communities Development Center (SIMCDC), University of Mindanao-main (UM main), University of Mindanao Digos College (UM Digos), University of Mindanao-Tagum College (UM Tagum), Youth Formation Division (YFD) of the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS)	Philippines	2020–2024, follow-up project approved	https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/de/projekt/zivilgesellschaft-staerken-um-frieden-voranzubringen
Konstruktiver Umgang mit Ressourcenkonflikten	Weltfriedensdienst/ZFD Project partner: Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation (CCMT), Chikukwa Ecological Land Use Community Trust (CELUCT), Community Tolerance, Reconciliation and Development Trust (COTRAD), Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights)	Simbabwe	2020–2025	https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/de/projekt/konstruktiver-umgang-mit-ressourcenkonflikten
Infrastructures for peace and environmental Peacebuilding in Galmudug and Hirshabelle State, Somalia	Berghof Foundation	Somalia	2023–2025	https://berghof-foundation.org/work/projects/infrastructures-for-peace-and-environmental-Peacebuilding-in-galmudug-and-hirshabelle-state-somalia

Project name	Organisation	Location	Duration · period[21]	Internet presence (if applicable)
Forging a Greener Peace in the Hirshabelle State of Somalia	IOM, UNEP, Berghof Foundation	Somalia	2023–2026	https://openaid.um.dk/project/XM-DAC-3-1-288365?appBasePath=projects
Water, Peace and Security Partnership with Sudan	Hope and Friendship for Development (HOPE), Agriculture and Forestry Institute Nova Gorica, Radog Ltd., Geolab and Oliver Pavc IC	Sudan	2021–present	https://climate-diplomacy.org/water-peace-and-security-partnership-sudan
Honig für den Frieden	ZFD/Agiamondo mit FAPAD	Uganda	2020–2024, follow-up project approved	https://www.agiamondo.de/detail/honig-fuer-den-frieden/ https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/de/aktuelles/uganda-honig-fuer-den-frieden https://fapaduganda.org/blog-main.html
Im Interesse aller: Landkonflikte im Dialog schlichten	GIZ/ZFD Project partner: Acholi Large Scale Investment Interest Group (ALSIIG), Ateker Women Land Rights Partners (AWOLARIP), Formal Land Management (FLM), Interest Group on Environment and Protected Areas (EPA), Interest Group Protected Areas (IGPA), Karamoja Integrated Peace Initiative (KIPI), Karamoja Mining Interest Group (KAMIG), LANDnet Uganda, Teso Land Institutional Peace Actors (TOLIPA), Teso Land Management Advocates (TELAMA), Teso Natural Resources Interest Group (TENARIG), Teso Network on Conflicts on Boarders and Settlements (TENCOBS), Traditional Land Management Systems (TraIaMs), Women Land Rights – Intra and Inter Clan Conflicts Interest Group (WOLRIC) [22]	Uganda	unclear	https://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org/de/projekt/im-interesse-aller-landkonflikte-im-dialog-schlichten

[22] Another partner organisation is to be added in the third quarter of the year to cover the Dealing with the Past component.

Annex 2: Interview overview

Interview no.	Date	Location	Role/name of the interviewee	Duration
A1	06.03.2024	Berlin	Weathering Risk Peace Pillar employee	01:05:50
A2	07.03.2024	Online	Sebastian Kratzer, HD Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD)	58:01
A3	12.03.2024	Online	Weathering Risk Peace Pillar employee	46:23
A4	18.03.2024	Berlin	Weathering Risk Peace Pillar employee	01:06:51
A5	17.04.2024	Berlin	Weathering Risk Peace Pillar employee	55:43
A6	17.04.2024	Berlin	Weathering Risk Peace Pillar employee	44:59
A7	23.04.2024	Online	Weathering Risk Peace Pillar employee	46:47
B1	28.11.2023	Nairobi	Emmy Auma/ Samson Swailwa, International Alert Kenya	53:51
B2	19.02.2024	Online	Stefanie Wesch, PIK	60:00
C1	22.03.2024	(Vienna - Abuja)	Chris Ngwodo, Generaldirektor OSPRE	22:00

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The Advisory Board brings together civil society and academic expertise on crisis prevention and peacebuilding and advises the German government on these topics. It is appointed for four years and comprises 20 experts from academia, foundations and civil society organisations. It supports the implementation of the Guidelines "Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace" adopted by the German government in 2017. The Advisory Board fosters constant exchange between the Federal Government and civil society. It publishes positions on overarching strategic questions. In addition, it develops contributions on pertinent issues.

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