

ADDRESSING CLIMATE-CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN THE IGAD REGION

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Understanding distinctive climate security risks in the IGAD region is vital for developing effective policies to address the impact of climate change in the region.



Closing policy gaps at national and IGAD levels is imperative for tackling climate-related conflict risks through comprehensive policies that target their root causes.



Managing climate-related security risks in the region effectively demands collaboration between communities, government bodies, civil society, and regional entities.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Climate change and the security risks connected to it pose a severe threat to both human and state security in Africa. Climate crises do not recognize borders, they cross territorial boundaries and create socioeconomic and security problems. Despite Africa's relatively low contribution to the world's greenhouse emissions – merely 3.8 percent¹ – the negative effects of climate change threaten the food security and livelihoods of people on the continent. This causes economic tensions, and displacement trends, and exacerbates resource conflicts. As a result, climate change is stalling development and peacebuilding efforts across the continent.

The term “climate security” refers to both the direct and indirect socio-economic, environmental, and physical impacts of climate change on human, national, and international security that disrupt critical resources, ecosystems, economies, and infrastructure.² For example, extreme climate events can lead to resource scarcity (water, food, and land), and this can contribute to inter-communal and cross-border resource conflicts.

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States that are considered “fragile”, for example, due to a history of violent conflict and weak existing measures to adapt to climate change, are especially exposed to climate-related security risks. The vulnerability of their economies, governance systems, and community resilience expose them to climate shocks.³ The latter can then pose a serious threat to the effective governance of these states. These dynamics hold true for countries in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)⁴ region, which currently face a range of peace and security challenges, including intra and inter-state conflict, ethnic and communal conflicts, and climate disasters. IGAD countries have also been rated low in terms of their capacity to adapt to, and effectively address, the consequences of climate change.⁵

Hence, it is important that affected countries collaborate with sub-regional and regional organizations to address climate-related security challenges and vulnerabilities. Moreover, it is essential to invest in climate-sensitive conflict risk assessment and peacebuilding measures to strengthen the resilience and adaptive capacity and to mitigate the conflict vulnerability, of affected communities.

This policy brief highlights the climate-related peace and security risks in Eastern Africa, outlines IGAD responses to climate-related security challenges, and formulates recommendations to help mitigate climate-related security risks in the IGAD region.

II. CLIMATE-RELATED SECURITY RISKS IN THE IGAD REGION

In the IGAD region, people's livelihoods and economies rely heavily on natural resources, i.e. primarily rain-fed agriculture and livestock. However, climate-related risks are affecting these livelihoods negatively. The region is exposed and vulnerable to climate-related dangers like droughts, floods, and heat waves.

Since 2020, the region has experienced five failed rainy seasons and intensified drought. This has pushed millions of people in the Horn of Africa into a food insecurity crisis.⁶ About 31 million people from Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda were reported as being food insecure in mid-2022, with drought as one of the main causes.⁷

1 CDP. 2020. Benchmarking Progress Towards Climate Safe Cities, States, and Regions. Africa Report, p. 2.

2 The Center for Climate & Security. 2015. Climate Security 101, p. 2.

3 Destrijcker et al. 2023. Mapping Exercise: Key Climate Security Actors and Frameworks in Eastern Africa. ICPALD & Adelphi, p. 4.

4 The IGAD member states are Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda.

5 IGAD ICPAC. 2022. IGAD Regional Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (2023-2030), p. 3.

6 FSIN, FNAFC and IGAD. 2023. Regional Focus on IGAD Member States. Global Report on Food Crisis, p. 7.

7 IGAD ICPAC & UNOISE. 2022. Report on State of Climate, Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa, p. 37.



About **31 million people** from Djibouti, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, and Uganda were reported as being food insecure in mid-2022, with drought as one of the main causes affecting peoples' livelihood.

Moreover, recurrent floods affect, on average, 2 million people in the Greater Horn of Africa every year.⁸ Among these, nearly 1.34 million people are thought to be displaced because they have lost their livelihoods and means of subsistence.⁹

These environmental factors, among other things, are causing people's loss of livelihoods, food insecurity, the destruction of infrastructure, and an increase in population displacement and cross-border migration.

The following factors influence climate-related conflict dynamics within the region:

- **Resource scarcity:** The consequences of climate change, which include droughts, land degradation, and desertification, can lead to "unproductive" land, reduced grazing areas, and insufficient water resources. Consequently, pastoralists and farmers are forced to migrate in search of fertile land and pastures, as well as access to water sources. Competition over these limited resources can then exacerbate or escalate conflicts between those groups that are forced to migrate and their host communities.

- **Loss of livelihood:** Prolonged drought leads to the death of livestock and crop failure, which are the livelihoods of many in the region. This economic vulnerability then drives individuals to seek alternative

income sources. They may, for example, join non-state armed groups such as Al-Shabaab in Somalia,¹⁰ or rely on traditional practices like cattle rustling to restock their livestock.¹¹

- **Migration and food insecurity:** A decrease in available agricultural products or a loss of livestock that is caused by irregular rainfall patterns can result in food shortages and spikes in food prices. This compels people to migrate in search of better prospects elsewhere, which in turn can contribute to social tensions and competition over available resources.

- **Weak resilience:** Climate change affects vulnerable communities, such as low-income and marginalized groups, disproportionately. These groups often lack the resources to address the consequences of climate change. Their limited or non-existent access to social services (education, health services, job assistance, and social protection), for example, limits their capacity to cope when their livelihoods are threatened by climate-related developments. This situation contributes to social discontent.

- **Political fragility and instability:** Increased instability and armed conflict undermine the capacity of states to respond to climate disasters.¹² This state of affairs then further heightens communities' vulnerability to climate crises.

While the factors highlighted here are significant for understanding climate-related security risks and conflicts in the IGAD region, there is only limited evidence that supports a direct causal link between climate change and violent conflict. It is contended that climate variability increases the risk of armed conflict.¹³ Climate change is thus viewed as a "threat multiplier" that can exacerbate instances of conflict and intensify pre-existing socio-economic and political vulnerabilities that increase the risk of conflict.¹⁴

A study conducted by the IGAD Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) has explored the impact of weather variability on pastoralist conflict incidents. This study demonstrates that there is a correlation between climate factors and conflict incidents in the IGAD region.

8 Ibid., p. 38.

9 ICPAC. 2023. Addressing Drivers and Facilitating Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Context of Disasters and Climate Change in the IGAD Region. Flood Displacement Risk Profile, p. 15.

10 Abshir, S. 2020. Climate Change and Security in the Horn of Africa: Can Europe Help to Reduce the Risks? Climate-Fragility Policy Paper, CSEN & eip, p. 4.

11 IGAD. 2022. Addressing Climate Change, Peace and Security in the Horn of Africa. Policy Brief.

12 Abshir, S. (See n10), p. 9.

13 Abshir, S. (See n10).

14 ACCORD. 2015. Silencing the Guns, Owning the Future: Realizing a conflict-free Africa. A report on the proceedings of the Fifth AU High-Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa, p. 27.

It implies that healthy vegetation and pasture play a significant role in reducing pastoral conflicts in the IGAD region.¹⁵ A decline in the quality of grasslands raises the probability of resource competition and conflicts.¹⁶

In essence, then, the relationship between climate change and conflict is complex, the two are intertwined. This highlights the need to examine in more detail how they interact and impact each other. Such in-depth analysis is crucial for crafting informed policies and strategies to manage conflict risks that are connected to climate change more effectively.

III. IGAD'S POLICY, INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES, AND CHALLENGES

Institutional Frameworks

IGAD is one of eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa. Established in 1996, it replaced the Inter-Governmental Authority against Drought and Desertification (IGADD). IGAD was given a broader mandate than its predecessor, which would enable it to focus on fostering regional collaboration to address issues related to environmental sustainability, socio-economic development, and peace and security concerns.

The IGAD CEWARN mechanism, the IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC), and the IGAD Centre for Pastoral Areas and Livestock Development (ICPALD) play a leading role in assessing and mitigating threats to peace and security, including climate-related risks, in the sub-region. These specialized institutions provide support to IGAD member states. CEWARN, for example, shares early warning information on conflicts, provides analyses, reads signals, and gives response options, including climate-related security risks.¹⁷

ICPAC was established to provide climate-related services, which cover climate information-sharing, climate forecasting, and early warnings in vital areas like agriculture, food security, water, and disaster risk management.¹⁸ It provides these climate-related services to IGAD and non-IGAD members and serves as a World Meteorological

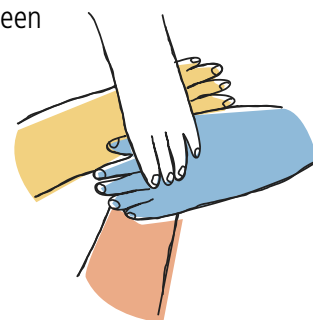
Organization (WMO) Regional Climate Centre (RCC) for the Eastern Africa region.¹⁹

ICPALD, IGAD's specialized Centre for Pastoral Areas and Livestock Development, is mandated to promote and facilitate sustainable and equitable drylands and livestock within the region.²⁰ In its initiatives, the center takes climate change into consideration. It focuses on building resilience, for example by supporting member states in formulating climate change adaptation strategies for the livestock sector.²¹

Policy Frameworks

Apart from establishing institutional frameworks, IGAD has formulated several policy and strategy documents that address climate-related security risks in the region. The 2016-2030 Regional Climate Change Security Strategy, for example, was developed to serve as a unified framework that can guide collaborations between member states and at the regional level, in order to implement initiatives that address climate-related security challenges. With regard to the need to mitigate the effects of climate change, and adapt to the latter, the strategy identifies security and displacement as a key priority area and outlines strategies to minimize conflicts triggered by climate change. However, while it includes important ways to mitigate the impact of climate-related conflicts, the strategy still requires a more specific set of guidelines that focus on the root causes of these conflicts and how to address them.

The 2016-2030 Regional Climate Change Security Strategy, for example, was developed to serve as a unified framework that can guide collaborations between member states and at the regional level, in order to implement initiatives that address climate-related security challenges.



15 IGAD CEWARN. 2022. Climate-Conflict Nexus in the IGAD Region: A Study of CEWARN's Behavioral & ICPAC's Environmental Data as Predictors of Conflict Incidents, 2003-2015, pp. 6-10.

16 Ibid.

17 Available at <https://cewarn.org>.

18 Available at <https://www.icpac.net>.

19 Ibid.

20 Available at <https://icpald.org>.

21 Ibid.

It also needs to give direction on a comprehensive assessment of the drivers of climate-related conflict, early warning systems, and response actions to effectively deal with the complex relationship between climate change and conflict.

The first regional technical consultation between IGAD and the United Nations Office of the Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa (UN OSE-HoA) on the topic of climate, peace, and security took place in July 2022. This meeting highlighted that policies to address the connection between climate change, peace, and security are largely non-existent in the region and that there is a lack of clarity in terms of the terminology.²²

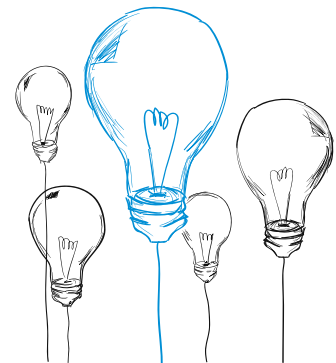
However, the consultation also analyzed the available data on climate-related risks to peace and security in the region and identified four pathways that illustrate how these risks are interlinked, as perceived by IGAD member states. These key risk drivers include (i) threats to food and water security; (ii) climate-induced mobility; (iii) historical grievances and cultural practices; and (iv) governance and fragility. In November 2022, a high-level ministerial meeting then took place at the margins of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of Parties 27 (COP 27) in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. It endorsed the outcomes of the IGAD technical consultation in a communiqué, which underscored the imperative of establishing a shared understanding of climate-related risks to peace and security.²³

In a new development, IGAD published a Climate Adaptation Strategy for 2023-2030 in November 2023. By doing so, it sought to address the concerns and priorities of its member states and provide them with a framework for coordinated action to address climate-related risks and enhance resilience and adaptive capacities.²⁴ The advantage of the IGAD Climate Adaptation Strategy is that it explicitly recognizes the climate-peace-security nexus by acknowledging that climate change exacerbates the risk of violence, conflict, and insecurity.²⁵ The strategy further emphasizes the need to improve early warning systems, information sharing, and the development of community-based systems to anticipate, mitigate, and reduce the vulnerability of communities to climate-induced conflicts, as a way to address climate, peace, and security concerns.²⁶

While this strategy outlines a broad strategic direction and priority areas, it lacks detail when it comes to how it should be implemented. Furthermore, the strategy does not address the root causes or drivers of climate conflicts sufficiently, focusing instead on technical adaptation measures like early warning systems and climate-smart agriculture. It falls short in that it does not address some important systemic issues that exacerbate communities' vulnerability to the impact of climate change and crises, like social inequality and weak governance.

A recent study by Schapendonk and others has also examined climate security policies in Eastern Africa. It, too, indicates that existing policy documents pay little attention to how climate change influences regional conflict dynamics and that climate adaptation and mitigation actions are not perceived as an entry point for peacebuilding interventions.²⁷ The study further demonstrates that although regional policies acknowledge factors that contribute to climate-related security risks, they are ineffective in addressing the crucial link between climate, peace, and security. It remains a persistent challenge to translate this awareness into practical policy measures, to tackle the root causes of climate vulnerability and conflict.²⁸

A recent study by Schapendonk and others has also examined climate security policies in Eastern Africa that indicates the existing policy documents **pay little attention** to how climate change influences regional conflict dynamics and that climate adaptation and mitigation actions are not perceived as an entry point for peacebuilding interventions.



22 IGAD. (See n11).

23 Communiqué of IGAD and UN OSE-HoA High-Level Inter-Ministerial Event on Climate Change, Peace and Security at the Margins of the 27th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 27). November 7, 2022. Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

24 IGAD Center of Excellence for Climate Adaptation and Environmental Protection (ICAD CAEP). November 2023. The IGAD Climate Adaptation Strategy (2023-2030), p. 7.

25 Ibid., p. 17.

26 IGAD CAEP. (See n24), pp. 104-105.

27 Schapendonk, F. et al. 2022. Climate Security Policy Coherence and Awareness Analysis report: East Africa and Kenya. CGIAR, pp. 34-35.

28 Ibid., pp. 4-5.

While countries in the region have published National Determined Contributions (NDCs)²⁹ and some have finalized National Adaptation Plans (NAPs),³⁰ these national climate policies do not explicitly address the climate-security nexus.³¹ This highlights the need to strengthen these policy frameworks' responsiveness to the intersectionality of climate adaptation, peace, and security.

To deal with climate-related conflicts effectively, it is crucial to bridge the policy gap at both the country and IGAD levels. There is a clear need for comprehensive climate security policy frameworks that can address the complex relationship between climate change, peace, and security, and the root causes that drive climate conflicts.

Collaboration and Coordination

IGAD has also entered partnerships with other multilateral and international organizations that work on climate, peace, and security. These partners include the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), and other bilateral partners. As one of the building blocks of the AUC, IGAD works in collaboration with the AUC to accomplish the commission's objectives. The IGAD CEWARN mechanism has, for example, cooperated with the AU's Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), which was tasked to anticipate and prevent conflicts on the continent by collecting and analyzing data on conflict risks, including environmental and climate-related risk factors. However, this early warning unit disappeared from the organizational chart of the AU during the reform processes. Its tasks are now scattered across regional desks under the Conflict Management Division of the AU Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) Department, which limits the AU's ability to monitor early signs of conflict.

IGAD also benefits from technical assistance via the AU's Continental Structural Conflict Prevention Framework (CSCPF), which provides a model for the AU and RECs to address structural conflict causes collaboratively, including climate change, and incorporates conflict prevention into programmatic interventions.³²

While these collaborative efforts are commendable, the region faces challenges when it comes to coordinating multiple stakeholders effectively. These challenges include inadequate cross-sectoral coordination, a lack of a common framework for addressing climate-related security concerns, and communication barriers.³³ This is evident in instances where the mandates of climate actors in the region overlap and their efforts are duplicated.³⁴ Furthermore, while IGAD recognizes the important role that non-state actors, such as Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), play in advocating, formulating, and implementing climate policies, it tends to maintain a state-centric approach and its engagement with non-state actors to address climate security risks is very limited.³⁵ As established, climate-related conflicts are complex and climate change creates profound and multi-faceted security risks that can threaten national security and affect transboundary contexts as well. It is therefore imperative to foster collaborative and integrated efforts that involve communities, governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, and regional entities, to effectively address climate-related security risks.

In a recent development, the 14th Assembly of IGAD Heads of State issued a communiqué that sets out measures to tackle coordination challenges in the regional response to climate-related conflicts. To this end, it endorsed the formation of a "Climate Security Coordination Mechanism" and encouraged AU and UN collaboration to strengthen IGAD member states' capacity to anticipate, prevent, and mitigate the onset of climate-induced conflicts and displacement.³⁶ The mechanism is currently in the early stages of development and will be hosted by ICPAC. It is also intended that ICPAC will work hand in hand with the UN Climate Security Mechanism (CSM). The CSM is a collaborative platform that aims to strengthen the UN's capacity to analyze and systematically address the intricate effects of climate change on peace and security. Key components of the CSM include climate-related risk analysis; advocacy to consider climate-related security risks in policy formulation and programming; capacity building to improve assessment and response capacity; the support of peacebuilding efforts in affected regions; and efforts to strengthen partnerships and knowledge generation to improve the understanding of climate-security linkages

29 National pledges under the Paris Agreement that outline commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

30 Country-driven plans that outline actions to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

31 IGAD CAEP. (See n24), p. 131.

32 Aminga, V. 2020. Policy Responses to Climate-Related Security Risks: the African Union. Background Paper, SIPRI, p. 16.

33 IGAD ICPAC & UNOSE. (See n7), p. 49.

34 Destrijcker et al. (See n3), p. 14.

35 Gobena, M. 2023. Climate Security in The Horn: Crafting a Broader Role for Non-State Actors in IGAD. New Security Beat, The Blog of the Environmental Change and Security Program, available at <https://www.newsecuritybeat.org>.

36 Communiqué of the 14th Ordinary Session of the IGAD Assembly of Heads of State and Government. June 12, 2023. Djibouti, Republic of Djibouti.

and response strategies.³⁷ The mechanism also seeks to provide targeted and tailored support to affected regions, which would take their specific needs and local conditions into account, and assist UN field missions in their climate-related risk prevention and management efforts.³⁸ It also promotes joint actions and collaborations with partners around the globe.

Likewise, with the implementation of IGAD's regional Climate Security Coordination Mechanism, it is anticipated that instances of fragmented responses and duplication of efforts in tackling the transnational impacts of climate change will be effectively addressed. Such collaborative efforts are also needed to make information sharing more efficient and to facilitate joint actions among member states. Additionally, the coordination mechanism should facilitate tailored responses to climate-related conflicts that can take the specific needs, capacities, and vulnerabilities of affected communities into account, as well as their local context, including security developments and cultural dynamics.

IV. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing the interconnected nature of climate change, conflict and security in the IGAD region requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach. While IGAD has taken positive steps towards this by introducing different institutional and policy frameworks, obstacles remain. To enhance the effectiveness of these efforts, the following policy recommendations are proposed for IGAD, its member states, and non-state actors.

Climate Policy

- Advocate for comprehensive climate, peace, and security policies that are conflict and gender-sensitive, and are informed by migration trends, which can guide context-specific actions to address the root causes of climate-related conflicts.
- Regional institutions and governments should provide more support to civil society organizations (CSOs) and other non-state actors so that they can participate in policy-making processes.

Investment

- Invest more in both climate and conflict early warning systems and develop applicable indicators.
- Invest more in civil society and communities so that they can be a source of primary data for conflict early warning and prevention efforts.
- Increase investment in research and analytical capabilities to enable a better understanding of the complex interaction between climate change, peace, and security.

Data Sharing and Coordination

- Encourage climate security data and information sharing and institutionalized communication mechanisms across the region.
- Persuade governments to facilitate coordination, and collaborations, between CSOs and regional and national governments on matters related to climate security.
- Improve collaborations between governments and other partners so that information from global and national organizations can reach communities in time, and vice versa.
- Structure IGAD's Climate Security Coordination Mechanism in a way that promotes harmonious and sustained inter-state and multi-stakeholder collaborations, which are capable of facilitating tailored responses to climate conflicts that consider the needs and perspectives of affected communities.

Capacity for Response

- Increase IGAD's capacity to improve its analysis, in order to provide concise information to decision-makers.
- Reduce the response time to bridge the gap between early warnings and responses.

³⁷ UNEP, UNDP, DPPA. 2012. United Nations Climate Security Mechanism. Progress Report, p. 9.

³⁸ Security Council Report (SCR). 2022. The UN Security Council and Climate Change: Tracking the Agenda after the 2021 Veto. Research Report, p. 9.

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ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Africa Union Cooperation Office (FES AU), established in 2015, was founded to facilitate and co-ordinate FES' collaboration with the AU, focusing on the areas of Peace and Security, Regional Economic Integration, and Governance, among others. Based in Ethiopia, the FES AU Office is dedicated to establishing and nurturing partnerships with an extensive network of partners. They include the AU, EU, various multilateral and international organizations, civil society, academia and think tanks. The FES AU Office is, furthermore, committed to delivering policy research and analysis, as well as fostering policy dialogues on issues relevant to the AU and Africa. These efforts collectively serve to provide valuable support to FES' partners, both regionally and globally.

The Life & Peace Institute (LPI) is an international center that supports and promotes nonviolent approaches to conflict transformation. It does so through a combination of research and action that entails strengthening existing local capacities and enhancing the preconditions for building peace. For almost 40 years now, LPI has carried out conflict transformation programs in the Horn of

Africa and Great Lakes region. These programs focus on inclusive engagement for peace, policy engagement, and collaborative learning to enhance practice. The Institute works closely with civil society partners and academia. It also contributes to learning and reflection among the peacebuilding community of practice at the global level.

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Policy Recommendations



Recognizing the multifaceted and distinctive climate security risks in the IGAD region is essential to develop informed policies and strategies that can mitigate and help adapt to the effects of climate change.



Bridging the policy gap at both national and IGAD levels is imperative to address climate-related conflict risks efficiently through comprehensive climate security policies that address root causes.



Effective climate security risk management in the region requires collaborative and integrated efforts that involve affected communities, governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, and regional entities.

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