

Using a Socio-Political framework to counter climate insecurities in Africa.

Climate insecurity refers to a situation in which the consequences of climate variability and/or change are regarded as being detrimental to a group of people. As we experience scarcity of resources and shifting of land and maritime borders due to rising sea levels, the international community has come to believe that climate change poses a new set of security challenges. Such actions are unusual in history and call into question traditional ideas of citizenship and statehood. However, when it comes to the effects of climate change on violent conflict in the region, the evidence is inconsistent. Initial research indicates that climate-related security risks also impact the efficacy of peacebuilding efforts. That is because, as a systemic risk factor, climate-related security risks hinder the implementation of peace processes and undermine efforts to strengthen governance and justice as well as social and economic development. (Eklöw, K. and Krampe, F, 2019). Many UN country teams (UNCTs) and some peace operations are actively searching for means to respond to the new challenges that emerge from climate change and the ensuing climate-related security risks. (United Nations, Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace., 2020)

Evidently, Africa is one of the most vulnerable continents to climate change, partially due to geography and partly due to many African countries' inadequate adaptive capacity. If this is not effectively controlled, it can lead to polarization of societies, which can lead to social tension and violence. Because of a lack of reliable data, a narrow focus on conflict as the only security outcome of interest, and insufficient attention to variations in vulnerability at the subnational level, much of the current discussion on Africa, climate change, and security is of

limited practical use to policymakers. However, almost no efforts have been made so far to integrate the realms of climate action and peacebuilding. (Richard, 2014)

The importance of having an alternative conceptual framework can be shown by highlighting the limitations of narrow terms in specific contexts. (Bednarek, 2020). Considerable attention has been given to the role of both climate change and variability in migration and conflict, as warmer temperatures and more extreme rainfall events significantly increase the frequency of both interpersonal and intergroup violence. While science demonstrates that climate change will have a significant influence on human livelihoods in Africa, the extent to which climate change will contribute to violent conflict is unknown. Increased border tensions and conflicts over food and water could be an effect of global warming.

Climate insecurity in Africa has become a chronic problem which requires a socio-political framework that will be authorized and mandated to take several actions to address and solve its associated challenges. The following paragraphs explore the actions that can be executed to address these challenges.,

Firstly, strengthening threat minimizers can be an effective approach in countering climate insecurity. According to the United Nations Secretary-General Report of 2009 on Climate Change and Security, it has identified that climate change acts as a threat multiplier, posing a significant challenge to the earth's sustainability. The report goes further to outline five channels that link climate change and security, which are vulnerability, development, coping and security, statelessness, and international conflicts. Uncoordinated coping, loss of territory, and statelessness, as well as international cooperation in managing shared resources, are examples of threats that must be reduced since their dimensions have expanded and cut across economic progress and human well-being. As a result, several critical approaches must

be used to prevent and respond to these threats, including mitigation, adaptation, economic growth, sustainable development, as well as an effective governance framework.

(United Nations, Climate change and its possible security implications; Report of the Secretary-General, 2009) There must be a structure which addresses political and social issues that cut across climate insecurities, and this structure should be given a mandate to act as an authorized framework within the African region, of which progress should be assessed, and all threats managed to ensure a peaceful Africa. In best practice examples, participatory approaches have been shown to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, build resilience, and adapt to the effects of a changing climate. "All of these examples have one thing in common: the poor are empowered as "solution owners." (Patrick Huntjens and Katharina Nachbar, 2015)

Furthermore, climate change affects people from all walks of life and knows no boundaries. There is therefore the need to **initiate stakeholders' dialogues and involve diverse actors from the community**. It is vital to coordinate and communicate within and between countries and communities, **especially with internationally shared natural resources**. To illustrate, Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria are four African countries sharing a lake which has seen its water level drop steadily over the last four decades. As a result, aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, the quantity and quality of freshwater available, and the larger environment have all been impacted. Reduced fish stocks, siltation, vegetation loss, and grazing land depletion are some of the negative consequences. Although the local people have been dealing with these issues for many years and have developed means of dealing with them, albeit ineffectively, for the most part, climate change has worsened their scale and intensity of these issues by adding another layer of global water insecurity. (AMCEN, 2011), The AUPSC has 'stressed that natural disasters and climate change contribute to exacerbating

the existing tensions among communities' and emphasized the need for member states to reinforce measures to address effects of climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters, particularly in conflict-affected areas. (AU SPC, 2019) Among the measures that can be taken are the development of a framework that works regionally to cater the needs of civilians who are looking for mediation and consensus after being affected by political instabilities as a result of the impacts of climate change.

Thirdly, it is essential to **conduct further research on climate change models and their respective patterns**, since the majority of climate change models are global in scope. On a national or local scale, there are few scenarios. Most knowledge is accessible on the repercussions of climate change on industrialized countries, as their research facilities have the required capacities and resources to advance the frontiers of knowledge in this subject area. In this same vein, further research on sub-regional implications of climate change is important for most areas throughout the African continent to understand what these impacts would be and plan accordingly. "There are tentative claims, and the IPCC has since acknowledged that there is the need for more systematic research on the climate change-conflict nexus, including the more controversial thesis that climate change stresses may increase the risk of violent conflict" (R. Nordås and N. P. Gleditsch, 2013). Furthermore, education and research are critical for developing adaptive capacity, especially when they are linked to practice through extension. The relevance of linking research to policymaking, as well as the need to incorporate local information on coping mechanisms and behaviors, is being emphasized intensively.

By the same token, by reinforcing regional cooperation, to manage shared resources that are abundant on our African continent. Regional cooperation and coordination are critical, the water and wildlife sectors have the biggest number of disputes, and later research has proven that these two sectors had insufficient adaption strategies. (Ngaruiya et al., 2015) A vivid

example is River Niger which is shared by five countries, Benin, Guinea, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria. During low rainfall seasons, the scarcity of water resources can spark conflicts, and so regional cooperation is important and highly recommended to facilitate equal distribution of the resources amongst them. Water sharing agreements should be aligned with regional and international treaties, with the aim of achieving not only the 16th Sustainable Development Goal of *Peace, Justice and Strong institutions* but also to make sure that there is a synergy in the fight against climate change and unitary distribution of resources amidst the impacts of climate change.

In establishing conflict-sensitive adaptation frameworks in Natural resources governance, based on the nature of the conflict, there should be a robust framework to ensure effective implementation of policies that will help in resolving conflicts that have been triggered by competition for resources. For example, the Karamoja is a region northeast of Uganda which shares a border with Kenya in the East and South Sudan in the North. This region is prone to food shortages due to unpredictable weather patterns, but also illustrates how difficulties with food production and management can escalate into other coping mechanisms like cattle raiding and the proliferation of guns. Droughts that last for a long time have a destabilizing influence on culture. Raids are now carried out to generate cash, and can occur at any time for commercial gain. Raiding used to be regulated by the Council of Elders, who permitted the use of minor weapons such as spears, bows, and arrows, but nowadays, armed adolescent gangs use machine guns to control crowds and steal animals. (AMCEN, 2011). There is the need for a space to address common problems that Africans encounter, and an effective framework that cuts across social and political variables to address conflicts that are caused by the impacts of climate change. The first step to take is to advocate for regional policy reforms that pave the way for the establishment and operation of a framework

that can intervene in the ongoing challenges which cause civil unrest brought about by the impacts of climate change.

On the other hand, **identifying and stabilizing priority regions** that are likely to be vulnerable hotspots affected by the impacts of climate change and causing fragility situations to people and the resources is an indispensable approach towards averting conflicts and violence in our communities. Also, there are economic hubs and pivotal regions which are the epicenter to development in both social and political contexts that should be protected as they can ignite conflicts that might spread to other places causing instability and repercussions to people. For instance, the Sahel region has a wide contribution to the economy of Northern, Central, and Western Africa whereby millions of traditional agriculturalists (both pastoralists and farmers) live, relying on livestock herding and subsistence cultivation to survive. The Sahel environment has become significantly drier in recent decades, resulting in frequent droughts and desertification. To exacerbate the challenge, South Sudan hosts almost 250,000 refugees who have fled violence from Sudan. (Central Intelligence Agency, 2019) How climate events and climate change contributes to migration and conflict, including the current crises in South Sudan, is not well understood. To ensure a resilient, peaceful Africa with high adaptive capacity, efforts should be invested to protect and stabilize vulnerable hotspots like those with high numbers of climate migrants and other areas that are centers for the economic and social development of towns, cities, and countries, in assessing what has to be done to identify and help pivotal regions of Africa. And so, there must be a framework which will facilitate the conducting of research to explore potential mechanisms to secure Africa with its people and its resources.

Next, there is the need to **raise awareness** in our communities. As the adage goes, “to be informed is to be transformed.” The Late Nelson Mandela once said that “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” In line with his statement,

there is the need to spread the message of peace, solidarity, and unity among Africans. Creating awareness and spreading knowledge particularly in those communities that are the most vulnerable will be critical in responding to climate change threats. Aspiration number 4 of the AU's Agenda 2063, projects a vision of a peaceful and secure Africa, to be achieved through different mechanisms including resolution of conflicts to be functional at all levels (African Union Commission, 2015). The primary step is to educate our communities on how to build peace and avoid conflicts. Inculcating a spirit of nationalism among Africans can be achieved through education, capacity building, and initiating peace campaigns. Peacebuilding efforts should not only be limited to areas prone to violence and conflicts, it should be universal, inclusive to ensure that no African is left behind. Additionally, advocating for the inclusion of climate change and peace studies in our formal education curricula and syllabuses will help in imparting valuable knowledge to the younger generation. A framework to promote social agendas in the educational sector will facilitate the accomplishment of this action more effectively.

Lastly, regarding **climate financing**, The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Kyoto Protocol mandate financial and technological transfers from parties with more resources to those less well-endowed and more vulnerable. However, climate financing is still a challenge African countries face. We are obliged to provide enough resources to help those affected by the impacts of climate change, but there are insufficient funds allocated to support this. To scale up the provision of long-term financing for developing countries, the COP at its sixteenth session decided to establish a Green Climate Fund. The new fund will support projects, programmes, policies, and other activities in developing countries using thematic funding windows, including on adaptation. Developed country parties further committed themselves to a goal of mobilizing jointly USD 100 billion per year by 2020 to address the needs of developing countries (Averchenkova A et al, 2020).

Unfortunately in a number of cases, when funds are received, resources are not properly allocated to priority areas, like vulnerable hotspots. As a solution to this, a framework should be established that will facilitate appropriate planning and allocation of funds, firstly, to the sensitive areas which are prone to violence and conflicts amidst the occurrence of climate change impacts.

On the whole, in creating the Africa we want, this goal is to be achieved firstly by Africans themselves. National and regional policies should be integrated to allow the establishment of a framework that will protect people's wellbeing and safety, particularly by making sure that international strategies for climate mitigation and adaptation are executed effectively. The **African Union Peace and Security Council** (AUPSC) recommended that African institutions invest in analysis and early-warning capabilities to increase their adaptive capacity. Enhancing Africa's capacity to anticipate, prevent, and respond to rising climate-related risks, will strengthen societies' resilience to climatic impacts that are already unavoidable. This can be possible if we have a robust framework that will integrate climate and peace variables of Africa and address the current climate-risk related challenges affecting the tranquility of our continent. Together, we can join hands to build unshakable foundations of peace and resilience for our Africa and future generations!

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