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Conflict considerations in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's National Adaptation Plans

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ABSTRACT

Many places affected by violent conflict are also those with the lowest capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change and, therefore, some the most vulnerable. Consequently, it is here where climate change most likely results in social tensions that could escalate into or sustain conflicts. This double burden of compounding conflict and climate risks suggests an urgent need for climate adaptation interventions. However, so far adaptation agendas are often poorly aligned with those reducing conflict risk. Seeking to overcome this gap, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process has been highlighted as an important opportunity to align adaptation and peacebuilding agendas. Based on qualitative analysis of the ten least peaceful countries' NAPs (submitted by November 2022), and developing a novel analytical framework on climate, conflict and adaptation interactions, the paper examines whether and to what extent countries bring conflict considerations into their NAPs, and account for interactions between climate change, conflict and adaptation. Findings suggest that by and large, conflict considerations are not systematically brought into adaptation planning – an omission that might ultimately prove irresponsible, highly costly and dangerous. The paper concludes with recommendations that countries faced by the double-burden of climate change and fragility, and international actors supporting them in their NAP process, could employ.

KEYWORDS

Climate adaptation; conflict-affected states; conflict-sensitivity; maladaptation; UNFCCC National Adaptation Plans

1. Introduction

Research indicates that many places affected by violent conflict are also those with the lowest capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change and, therefore, some of the most vulnerable (Moran et al., 2018). Consequently, this may be where climate change is most likely to result in social tensions that could escalate into or sustain violent conflicts (Mobjörk et al., 2016). This double-burden of compounding conflict and climate risks suggests an urgent need for effective climate adaptation interventions in these places – efforts that aim at reducing people's exposure and vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change (Möller et al., 2022) – and for this adaptation to be attuned to the wider conflict context.

So far, however, adaptation agendas are often poorly aligned with those reducing conflict risk and promoting peace (Matthew, 2014). At the same time, research has found that places affected by violent conflict and fragility receive significantly lower amounts of climate finance, leaving them ill-prepared to address climate impacts and build long-term resilience (Cao et al., 2021; UNDP, 2021). This presents a missed opportunity to support sustainable peace and prevent conflicts through targeted adaptation activities in conflict-affected and climate-vulnerable countries. While often implemented with the best intentions, poorly planned,

designed or managed adaptation interventions (maladaptation) can also aggravate conflict dynamics as well as negatively impact conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts (Dabelko et al., 2022). In addition, a failure to integrate conflict-sensitivity and peacebuilding agendas into climate adaptation and vice versa can not only undermine the viability of both (Peters et al., 2019), but in the long-term even have negative effects for neighbouring countries and the international community by hampering overall collective progress towards achieving the Global Goal on Adaptation outlined in Article 7.1 of the Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, 2015a).

Seeking to overcome this gap, previous research has argued that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) National Adaptation Plan (NAP) process presents an important opportunity to better align adaptation and conflict prevention/peacebuilding agendas (Crawford & Church, 2020; Cao et al., 2021; UNDP, 2021). An assessment of climate finance flows to conflict-affected and fragile contexts by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), for example, suggests (UNDP, 2021, p. 36) that NAPs 'represent a foundational element for all climate change adaptation action and strategies in-country and offers a critical opportunity to integrate conflict considerations in climate change vulnerability and adaptation to support for the development of

NAPs'. And as far back as 2013, a workshop held in Addis Ababa concluded that the principle of 'Doing No Harm' (DNH) should be incorporated into NAP processes (Tadesse, 2013).

While NAPs are not formally intended or required to address conflict prevention and peacebuilding, the UNFCCC guidance clearly outlines that the NAP process should follow an 'integrated' approach to development and adaptation planning (UNFCCC, 2012). Such integration requires addressing the different compounding risks that hamper development and undermine climate resilience. Planners need to cast their nets wide when assessing the relevant context, looking not just at physical exposure to climate hazards but also at the social and political context. In contexts affected by conflict, this must include conflict dynamics. Embracing the importance of conflict prevention and peacebuilding for adaptation in NAPs may help countries integrate these agendas better and raise much needed (financial) support for projects. With NAPs being important country level programming documents that represent key entry points for external engagement, particularly for future climate finance, this is crucial.

Against this background and expanding on an earlier study on the NAP process and peacebuilding efforts (Crawford & Church, 2020), this paper offers an examination of *whether and to what extent countries affected by violent conflict bring conflict considerations into their National Adaptation Planning processes, and further, whether they account for the interactions between climate change, conflict and adaptation.*¹ Specifically, we ask *whether and how conflict-affected countries in their NAPs:*

1. *address violent conflict;*
2. *refer to the interactions of climate change and adaptation action with violent conflict; and*
3. *seek to align adaptation and peacebuilding efforts.*

To operationalise conflict considerations for NAPs and adaptation programming, we adapt Africa Peace Forum's (2004, p. 1) conflict-sensitivity framework.² We consider NAPs to be conflict-sensitive if they: (1) take conflict considerations into account when discussing the broader development and vulnerability context relevant for adaptation; (2) discuss the two-way interactions between conflict dynamics and proposed adaptation activities, including any potential conflict risk of maladaptation; and (3) act upon this understanding to avoid negative and maximise positive impacts, by planning adaptation actions that deliberately aim to DNH or even contribute to peace (what has been described as 'minimalist' and 'maximalist' positions on a spectrum of engagement with conflict, see CDA, 2016) or have monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems in place that monitor for interactions with conflict dynamics.

The paper is based on a qualitative analysis of ten NAPs from the least peaceful countries of the 40 that had submitted NAP documentation to the UNFCCC by November 2022 (see Table 1). The selection of countries' conflict-affectedness is based on the Global Peace Index (GPI) ranking (Vision of Humanity, 2022) for each country in the respective year of

its NAP publication, which captures both intra and interstate conflict.³

Filling a knowledge gap on how conflict and security implications of adaptation activities can be better considered in practice, the analysis and accompanying policy brief (Meijer & Remling, 2023) identify concrete recommendations for improving NAPs going forward, that countries faced by the double-burden of climate change and fragility, and international actors supporting them, could employ.

In the following section we provide some background to the NAP process, before developing our analytical framework on the possible interactions between climate change, adaptation and violent conflict in Section 3. Section 4 outlines our methodological strategy. Section 5 presents the qualitative analysis of the ten NAPs, following the research questions outlined above, before discussing the findings' implications and factors influencing the variation in conflict-considerations across the ten NAPs in Section 6. Section 7 concludes.

2. The role and mandate of the UNFCCC NAP process

The NAP process was formally established by the UNFCCC in 2010 under the Cancun Adaptation Framework (decision 5/CP.17) (UNFCCC, 2012). NAPs are one of the means by which developing countries' governments communicate their adaptation needs to the Parties to the UNFCCC and are part of the adaptation-related reporting relayed to the convention.⁴ The continuous, iterative and country-owned NAP process includes the development of a strategic document (or set of documents), called NAP documents, which are the focus of this study.

The aim of the NAP process is to enable especially Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to identify and address their medium- and long-term priorities for adapting to climate change. NAPs have two primary objectives,

'(1) to reduce vulnerability to the impacts of climate change by building adaptive capacity and resilience; and (2) to facilitate the integration of climate change adaptation into relevant new and existing policies, programmes, and activities and in particular, development planning processes and strategies, within all relevant sectors and at different levels, as appropriate' (UNFCCC Secretariat, 2012, p. 11).

Conflict considerations are important in relation to the first objective, because if adaptation results in a redistribution of resources that potentially increases competition or accentuates inequalities between groups, this can exacerbate tensions and increase vulnerability (see section 3.5 on maladaptation). The second objective calls for adaptation to become integrated with other development agendas in the respective country, which, we argue, creates an imperative in conflict-affected countries to consider conflict dynamics as well as plans to build and sustain peace.

Initial guidelines for the NAP process were given in decision 5/CP.17, annex (UNFCCC, 2012). The UNFCCC Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG) was then tasked with developing more specific Technical Guidelines, targeting national policy-makers in LDCs and other developing countries, which were published in 2012 and 2015 (LEG,

Table 1. Snapshot of peacefulness and climate vulnerability in the 40 countries that had submitted their NAP to the UNFCCC Secretariat as of 30 November 2022 (sorted based on Global Peace Index rank from the least to the most peaceful country, in bold are the ten countries in focus here).

	Country	Year of NAP publication ^a	GPI rank in year of NAP publication ^b		ND-GAIN Country Index 2020 ^c Rank of 182 countries
			Rank of 163 countries	State of peace	
1	South Sudan	2021	160 (2021)	Very low	not ranked
2	DRC	2021	158 (2021)	Very low	178
3	Sudan	2016	156 (2016)	Very low	181
4	CAR	2022	154 (2022)	Very low	177
5	Colombia	2018	146 (2018)	Low	161
6	State of Palestine	2016	142 (2016)	Low	161
7	Niger	2022	140 (2022)	Low	91
8	Chad	2022	137 (2022)	Low	146
9	Kenya	2016	136 (2016)	Low	182
10	Ethiopia	2019	134 (2019)	Low	176
11	Cameroon	2015	129 (2015)	Medium	not ranked
12	South Africa	2021	126 (2021)	Medium	91
13	Brazil	2016	115 (2016)	Medium	149
14	Guatemala	2019	112 (2019)	Medium	96
15	Benin	2022	111 (2022)	Medium	119
16	Sri Lanka	2016	100 (2016)	Medium	129
17	Togo	2018	91 (2018)	Medium	152
18	Peru	2021	90 (2021)	Medium	86
19	Nepal	2021	89 (2021)	Medium	52
20	Cambodia	2021	83 (2021)	Medium	126
21	Paraguay	2020, 2022	80 (2022)	Medium	93
22	Armenia	2021	72 (2021)	Medium	104
23	Liberia	2021	70 (2021)	Medium	173
24	Madagascar	2022	55 (2022)	Medium	167
25	Burkina Faso	2015	75 (2015)	High	149
26	Timor-Leste	2021	47 (2021)	High	30
27	Sierra Leone	2022	47 (2022)	High	117
28	Albania	2021	43 (2021)	High	155
29	Costa Rica	2022	41 (2022)	High	79
30	Kuwait	2021	38 (2021)	High	51
31	Uruguay	2019	36 (2019)	High	60
32	Chile	2017	26 (2017)	High	61
33	Kiribati	2020	not ranked	not ranked	not ranked
34	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	2019	not ranked	not ranked	not ranked
35	Tonga	2021	not ranked	not ranked	not ranked
36	Suriname	2020	not ranked	not ranked	128
37	Fiji	2018	not ranked	not ranked	102
38	Grenada	2019	not ranked	not ranked	71
39	Saint Lucia	2018	not ranked	not ranked	62
40	Cabo Verde	2022	not ranked	not ranked	59

Source: Own table based on data from; ^a = UNFCCC NAP Central, 2022; ^b = Vision of Humanity, 2022 (a larger score indicates less peacefulness); ^c = ND Gain Country Index 2022 (scores for 2020; a larger score indicates greater vulnerability to climate change); DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo, CAR = Central African Republic. Eight countries (Kiribati, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Tonga, Suriname, Fiji, Grenada, Saint Lucia, Cabo Verde) are not ranked within the GPI.

2012, 2015). According to the UNFCCC (UNFCCC NAP Central, 2022), 40 NAPs had been submitted to the Secretariat as per 30 November 2022 (see Table 1). Half of these were submitted during 2021 and 2022. 129 countries had a NAP process ongoing in August 2022, hence more NAP documents are expected to be forthcoming in the near future (NAP Global Network, 2022a).

There is some expectation that the NAPs will serve as a guide for countries' investment priorities in adaptation through domestic channels but also to attract international climate finance, through the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and other bilateral and multilateral donors, for the implementation of adaptation actions prioritized through the NAP process (NAP Global Network, 2017).

3. Analytical framework: interactions between climate change, adaptation and violent conflict

Conflict considerations are relevant to the NAP process as the impacts of climate change, adaptation and conflict dynamics

can influence each other in a number of ways. Drawing on an earlier literature review conducted by one of the authors (Dabelko et al., 2022), this section outlines six ways in which violent conflict, climate change, and action taken to adapt to climate change can interact.⁵ Together, these modes of interaction (or modes for short) form the analytical framework for our analysis of conflict considerations in the NAPs (see Figure 1). This is not an exhaustive list and will likely need to be expanded over time, as the knowledge base about these dynamics grows. Nevertheless, it suggests that planning for adaptation in places affected by conflict requires an approach that is sensitive to conflict-dynamics to DNH, and ideally builds peace (Ide et al., 2021).

Importantly, the numbering of the modes (1 to 6, which corresponds to sections 3.1 to 3.6) is meant for aiding description only, it does not suggest a specific order or hierarchy between them. While all of these are important to consider when planning adaptation, modes 4, 5 and 6 especially relate to adaptation activities. The impact of mode 4 on conflict is indirect through the extent to which adaptation reduces the

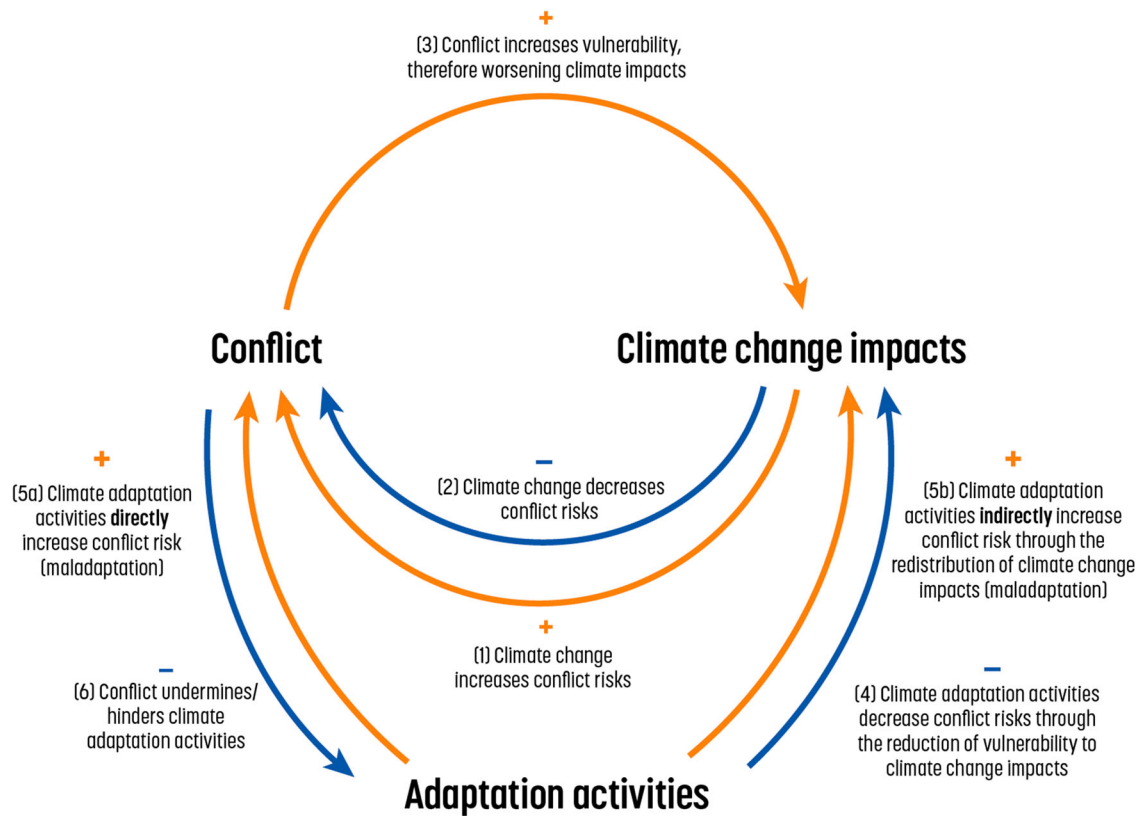


Figure 1. Six modes of interaction between climate change, adaptation activities and violent conflict. *Source:* Own figure.

impacts of climate change, interacting with conflict dynamics through modes 1 and 2. Mode 5 can be either *direct* (5a) or *indirect* (5b), which is further detailed below.

Because of these interactions, it is important that NAPs from countries affected by violent conflict explicitly aim to be conflict-sensitive and connect to wider agendas on development and peacebuilding. Working ‘around’ or omitting conflict dynamics can be detrimental to the effectiveness of adaptation, by increasing the risk of maladaptive adaptation outcomes and even the occurrence of conflict. It is therefore important to ‘proactively tackle’ rather than ignore or minimize the potential interactions between conflict dynamics and adaptation efforts (Dabelko et al., 2022). Making NAP documents sensitive to conflict should improve the NAP process’ overall impact on building adaptive capacity and resilience, as well as on decreasing violent conflict in places affected by it.

3.1 Mode 1: conflict resulting from climate impacts

Academic and policy debate around the adverse effects of climate change on peace and security has surged in recent years, suggesting that under certain conditions, climate change can, because it affects people’s vulnerability, affect conflict dynamics (Busby, 2021; von Uexkull & Buhaug, 2021). We understand such *climate-related security risks* as the risks emerging from climate change related events (directly, indirectly, or as a result of adverse consequences of mitigation and adaptation responses) to people’s wellbeing and livelihoods that may have implications for societal, economic or

political stability at local, national, regional or international levels (Remling & Causevic, 2021).

It is important to acknowledge that the linking of climate change and environmental pressures to insecurity is complex, context-specific and never causal, and that the knowledge base around it is constantly evolving (O’Neill et al., 2022). Mobjörk et al. (2020) show that worsening livelihood conditions, increasing migration and changing mobility patterns, tactical considerations by armed groups, and elite exploitation and resource mismanagement can, in specific instances, act as risk pathways to increased climate insecurity including violent conflict. Research also highlights that while climate-related security risks are influenced by climate variability and change, they always arise within specific social-political-economic contexts and power structures. Thus, the importance of intervening factors, specifically the role of governance, in mitigating these pathways is critical, in that ‘weak governance increases the risk of insecurity; harmful governance accentuates vulnerability; and nonstate or informal governance can offer an alternative’ (Tarif, 2022, p. 12).

For countries to comprehensively capture the direct and indirect climate impacts for their area, NAPs should consider possible implications for societal, economic or political stability and violent conflict.

3.2 Mode 2: climate change reducing conflict risks

In contrast to the possible tension-aggravating impacts of climate change introduced in the first mode of interaction, it has been suggested that climate extremes, which likely become

more frequent or more severe as a result of climate change, may increase incentives for cooperation and at least temporarily reduce conflict risks, leading to de-escalation of conflicts (Ide, 2023). While the empirical evidence for this remains weak, climate extremes may weaken both government and rebel groups (Kreutz, 2012; Walch, 2018), increase government and international presence in areas where insurgents operate (Walch, 2018), or alternatively reduce government support if their disaster response is inadequate (Nemeth & Lai, 2022). This in turn can form an opportunity to initiate peace negotiations.

As yet, there is no robust analysis of the extent to which climate-related events can provide opportunities to enhance sustained peace. However, we include this linkage here to provide a comprehensive overview of possible interactions, although we do not go into detail on this in the analysis.

3.3 Mode 3: conflict as a contributing factor to climate vulnerability

Violent conflict often reduces people's coping capacity, making them more vulnerable to climate shocks. It is not necessarily the areas with highest exposure to climatic changes that are impacted the most, but the places where the capacity to anticipate and cope with these changes is lowest (Ribot, 2010; Taylor, 2013). Groups and communities with relative wealth, privilege, power or influence tend to be less affected, raising fundamental moral questions about equity, justice and power relations (Mobjörk et al., 2016, 2020). In other words, the vulnerability to the impacts of climate change is determined by a number of interrelated factors, including physical, socio-economic and political – not by the physical climate hazard alone (Pörtner et al., 2022). Hampering people's ability to cope, violent conflict significantly increases people's intersectional vulnerability to the impacts of climate change (Sitati et al., 2021). For example, conflict and insecurity can make it more difficult for people to bring produce to markets or to travel in search of pastures, water sources, or alternative employment (ICRC, 2020), or push populations into areas with higher risk of climate-related events. Conflict thus limits the possibilities people have to autonomously adapt to the impacts of climate change, and at the same time increases the need for adaptation. Hence, violent conflict forms part of the wider social conditions of vulnerability and needs to be factored in when assessing vulnerability and planning adaptation actions (Peters et al., 2020). By reducing the impacts of climate change on vulnerable people, adaptation actions can support the prevention or reduction of social tensions and violence (see also 3.4).

3.4 Mode 4: adaptation as a tool for conflict prevention or peacebuilding through conflict-sensitive adaptation

Climate adaptation projects that aim to increase people's resilience to climate shocks can support the reduction of climate-related security risks. Going beyond the minimum ambition of preventing maladaptive outcomes and therefore DNH (see following section 3.5), adaptation can have a positive effect on the conflict context, by mediating or intervening in some of the

known risk pathways (discussed in section 3.1) and supporting peacebuilding (Sayne, 2011; Babicky, 2013; Froese & Schilling, 2019).⁶ It can do this, for example, by clarifying land tenure and resource management agreements or by creating spaces for social dialogue and improved social relations (Neaverson et al., 2019). To this end, different guidelines have been developed over the past ten years so that adaptation can be planned in conflict-sensitive ways to avoid increased conflict risks and contribute positively to peace (Tadesse, 2013; Bob & Bronkhorst, 2014; Tänzler & Scherer, 2019).⁷ At its most basic, conflict-sensitivity requires two moves: Firstly, carefully analysing existing conflict dynamics to understand the nature, actor groups and source of conflict (i.e. conflict-sensitive planning), and, secondly, evaluating how a proposed intervention will interact with these conflict dynamics (i.e. conflict-sensitive implementation and monitoring) (Froese & Schilling, 2019).

3.5 Mode 5: conflict resulting from adaptation responses

Adaptation activities, however, do not automatically have such positive impact and are never 'socially neutral'. Power structures within countries can result in a lack of access to adaptation benefits by groups already marginalized by a country's government. If poorly designed or implemented, or ignorant of local context, adaptation can have adverse unintended outcomes and redistribute rather than reduce climate change risks. Largely discussed in the literature as maladaptation (Barnett & O'Neill, 2010; Juhola et al., 2016; Magnan et al., 2016; Atteridge & Remling, 2018; Schipper, 2020), such maladaptive outcomes can potentially increase inequalities, tensions and grievances, in turn deepening existing or fuelling new conflicts and negatively impacting conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts (Dabelko et al., 2022). For example, adaptation may accentuate local resource competition, when changing livelihoods or redistributing resources, by generating differential impacts for different social groups, reinforcing existing social tensions and/or inadvertently fuelling intergroup competition. Research increasingly points to maladaptation being a common challenge (Eriksen et al., 2021) and therefore one that requires greater attention if seeking to minimize these risks up front, especially in contexts affected by violent conflict.

There is no universal way in which adaptation actions impact on conflict dynamics. Yet, there is some indication to suggest certain types of actions carry a higher risk of fuelling existing or generating new grievances than others. These are actions that impact on land and land use (e.g. altering or privatizing access to forests, water, land or other resources including food), focus on infrastructure projects (specifically around water, such as dams and irrigation), forcibly relocate or displace populations, and prioritise external benefits and central priorities over local ones (Babicky, 2013; Mohamed-Katerere, 2014; Froese & Schilling, 2019; Dabelko et al., 2022). Equally, processes of 'elite capture' can result in adaptation activities disproportionately benefitting powerful rather than disempowered communities, thereby reinforcing existing power relations (Eriksen et al., 2021). These examples show that the impact of adaptation on conflict can be *direct* (mode #5a in Figure 1), through the implementation of the measure itself

(e.g. if it entails forced relocation), or *indirect* (mode #5b), by redistributing climate impacts (e.g. if a dam improves water access for some people, but reduces access for others).

The risk of adaptation avertedly impacting on the conflict context is not the same everywhere, as a history of conflict is the most important predictor of conflict (Gilmore & Buhaug, 2021). Considering the wider socio-political factors and marginalization processes that feed into existing conflict dynamics is crucial in settings with a history of conflict (Dabelko et al., 2022) – such as the ten countries examined here. Hence, understanding how climate change and adaptation activities interact with the broader context, including conflict dynamics, is essential in guiding, designing, and implementing effective interventions (Schipper, 2020; Eriksen et al., 2021; Glover & Granberg, 2021).

3.6 Mode 6: conflict preventing, undermining or derailing adaptation

As the last of the six modes, violent conflicts – the presence of armed groups in particular – can prevent adaptation action from being undertaken at all, disrupt ongoing efforts, or lead to actions being left unfinished. Governments and others may choose not to invest in such areas due to both security concerns during project implementation, and the long-term risks that equipment or infrastructure invested in will be appropriated or damaged by armed groups (Quevedo & Cao, 2022). Echoing this reality, initial analysis on climate finance flows suggests that much less climate finance is available from international donors for conflict-affected and fragile places (Cao et al., 2021; UNDP, 2021). In terms of derailing adaptation, anecdotal evidence reported from Mali suggests that ongoing conflict prevented adaptation actions from being concluded by the implementing entities (Tänzler et al., 2018; Neaverson et al., 2019). This creates a dilemma, since not implementing adaptation projects in conflict-prone areas means the most vulnerable people do not receive support, creating ‘zones of communities left behind’ (Cao et al., 2021, p. 43). When formulating NAPs, this risk implies a need to consider the real operative risks from conflict for adaptation activities.

4. Methodological strategy

Building on the above framework, the qualitative analysis of NAP documents proceeded as follows. First, the 40 countries that had submitted a NAP to the UNFCCC by 30 November 2022 (UNFCCC NAP Central, 2022) were ranked based on their peacefulness at the time of NAP publication, drawing on the GPI (Vision of Humanity, 2022) (Table 1).⁸ Second, the content of ten least peaceful countries’ plans available in English, Spanish and French was qualitatively analysed with the aid of qualitative data analysis software MAXQDA. They include the NAPs from the Central African Republic (CAR) (Government of the CAR, 2022), Chad (Government of Chad, 2022), Colombia (Government of the Republic of Colombia, 2018), the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Government of the DRC, 2021), Ethiopia (Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2019), Kenya

(Government of the Republic of Kenya, 2016), Niger (Government of the Republic of Niger, 2022), South Sudan (Government of the Republic of South Sudan, 2021), the State of Palestine (Government of the State of Palestine, 2016) and Sudan (Government of the Republic of the Sudan, 2016).

It is important to acknowledge that the ten countries are affected very differently by conflict dynamics in terms of the scope, scale, severity of conflict and the type of actors involved (Table 2). Five countries (CAR, DRC, Niger, South Sudan, Sudan) are considered extremely fragile, meaning they are places that experience a very high exposure to different kinds of risks where the state and/or communities lack the coping capacities to manage, absorb and mitigate those risks (OECD, 2022).

The coding process was iterative, an initial coding protocol focusing on identifying how conflict was referred to in the NAPs based on an earlier analysis of conflict-considerations in UNFCCC Nationally Determined Contributions (Remling & Causevic, 2021) was pre-tested on two NAPs, after which the codes were further refined. All documents were read from front to back. In addition, a word search was conducted with the English search terms peace; conflict; violen*; dispute; tension; tense; competition; war; resolution; instab*; arm*; securit*, and the French and Spanish equivalents for the NAPs of CAR, Colombia and Niger. Importantly, the documents were read with the view to *explicit* mentions of peace, conflict and security concerns. The authors made no inferences on potential or implicit references to conflict, for example in the context of adaptation actions potentially contributing to conflict reduction. References in the NAPs to terms such as ‘water security’ or ‘food security’, with no direct link to conflict or violence, were not considered. The first author coded seven NAPs (Chad, Colombia, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, State of Palestine), the second author coded two (CAR and Niger), and one NAP (South Sudan) was coded by both researchers to ensure consistency in coding.

The ten NAPs analysed differ in length, from 68 pages (Kenya) to 283 (Colombia), were issued at different points in time from 2016 until 2022 (effectively spanning seven years during which debate around climate-related security risks has become a lot more prominent in policy circles, see Ide et al., 2023), and with varying degrees of external partner involvement. While the format of the documents varies greatly, following the rough guidance from the LEG, they generally contain some form of introduction/general background section, a vulnerability assessment and a section that lays out the prioritised adaptation priorities/actions.

5. Analysing conflict considerations in NAPs of conflict-affected countries

5.1 Conflict-considerations in NAPs

To examine how violent conflict is addressed in the NAPs, we first assessed how central of a theme conflict is by identifying whether it is mentioned frequently or only briefly touched upon. Second, we looked at where in the NAP document conflict is addressed, distinguishing between the *general background* (e.g. where conflict might be framed as general context), the

Table 2. Conflict dynamics in the ten countries analysed.

	CAR	Chad	Colombia	DRC	Ethiopia	Kenya	Niger	South Sudan	State of Palestine	Sudan
Year of NAP publication	2022	2022	2018	2021	2019	2016	2022	2021	2016	2016
GPI ranking (of 163) in NAP publication year^a	154	137	146	158	134	136	140	160	142	156
Conflict-related deaths in the five years preceding NAP publication^b	4359*	1428*	664	19145	13660	1453	2792*	4769	no data	10515
Displaced population (total number of IDPs) in year of NAP publication^c	691,791**	391,725**	5.8m	5.3m	1.4m	138.4k	224,016**	1.4m	193.3k	3.3m
Peace agreements signed in the five years preceding and including NAP publication year^d	✓ (41)	✓ (1)	✓ (30)	✓ (10)	✓ (5)	✓ (9)	✓ (2)	✓ (33)	✓ (5)	✓ (33)

Source: Own table, with data from ^a = Vision of Humanity (2022); ^b = UCDP (2022); ^c = IDMC (2023); and ^d = Bell et al., 2022, search settings: peace agreements for country with agreement/conflict level *Interstate/interstate conflict* or *Interstate/intrastate conflict(s)* or *Intrastate/intrastate conflict* or *Intrastate/local conflict* (UCDP defined conflict or *Intrastate/local (other)*, the search was set to include the five calendar years prior to and including the NAP publication year; IDPs = Internally displaced persons; DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo, CAR = Central African Republic; * UCDP data only goes to 2021, hence, data displayed is for the period 2017-2021, **IDMC data only goes to 2021, hence, displayed data is for the year 2021.

vulnerability assessment (e.g. where conflict might be framed as a concrete risk driver) and sections that *review and appraise adaptation options* (e.g. to assess whether potential actions might have a positive or negative impact on the conflict context).

All ten NAPs examined bring up concerns around violent conflict and security, but the degree to which this is addressed varies significantly. Conflict is frequently mentioned in the NAPs of seven countries; CAR, Chad, DRC, Niger, South Sudan, State of Palestine and Sudan, while it only gets a brief mention in the other three; Colombia, Ethiopia and Kenya.

Specifically, there are differences between *where* in the document conflict is brought up, and with what *level of detail* (Table 3 below). For example, in eight NAPs (CAR, Chad, DRC, Ethiopia, Niger, South Sudan, State of Palestine, Sudan), conflict-considerations feed into the overall vulnerability assessment.⁹ In Colombia's NAP, conflict is mentioned once in the general background section (2018, p. 30) and once when assessing criteria for adaptation site selection (2018, p. 16), but nowhere else. In the Kenyan NAP, conflict is not discussed in the broader background or the vulnerability assessment but gets mentioned in the section on sectoral adaptation actions and when discussing the intersections between the NAP and the county's medium-term development plan (2016, p. 42). The part of the document where least countries refer to conflict is when setting adaptation priorities, suggesting conflict is not considered when appraising suitable adaptation activities.

Table 3. Conflict considerations in different parts of the NAP documents.

	General background	Vulnerability assessment	Adaptation priorities/actions
CAR	●	●	●
Chad	●	●●	○
Colombia	●	○	●
DRC	●●	●●	○
Ethiopia	○	●●	○
Kenya	○	○	●●
Niger	●	●	●●
South Sudan	●●	●●	●●
State of Palestine	●●	●●	○
Sudan	●●	●●	●

Source: Table based on own analysis; ○ = conflict dynamics not mentioned, ● = conflict dynamics mentioned, ●● = conflict dynamics mentioned frequently; DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo, CAR = Central African Republic.

In general, the ten NAPs present very little background on the conflict in terms of the history, nature and structural causes, or the parties involved. The countries that provide most detail on the conflict situation in our sample are Chad and the State of Palestine.

In addition to providing little background on the conflict, the NAPs do not consider conflict *systematically*. This is to say, while they might discuss conflict in some sections of the document, they do not methodically integrate the identified conflict risks into subsequent sections on vulnerability and adaptation action priorities and are, therefore, internally inconsistent. For example, the DRC's NAP discusses both the current conflict situation as well as potential future security risks arising from climate change, however the section laying out national adaptation priorities (2021, p. 44ff) contains not a single mention of conflict dynamics. As another example, the Kenyan NAP does not discuss conflict at all, yet it mentions 'peace and security' (2016, p. 42) as one of six pillars in an ongoing programme deemed relevant for the NAP implementation. Apart from a brief mention of the security situation as explanation for low development rates, Niger's NAP (2022, pp. 149–201) does not discuss the security situation in the introductory background sections, however, it frequently mentions conflict in the description of 22 proposed adaptation programs.

To illustrate this, Table 3 shows the apparent dissonance in NAPs between the factors identified as contributing to the country's overall vulnerability – where conflict dynamics feature in many documents – and the absence of commensurate adaptation priorities addressing these underlying risk factors (see also section 5.3). One NAP where a more consistent effort to include conflict considerations is evident, is South Sudan. This NAP systematically addresses the links between climate and conflict in the different parts of the document, showing awareness of the links and translating this into action. The CAR's NAP also addresses conflict throughout, and explicitly connects the prevention of resource use conflicts through climate adaptation, to the country's strategy for peacebuilding.

5.2 The framing of climate-related security risks in NAPs

To assess whether and how conflict-affected countries refer to the interactions of climate change and adaptation with violent

conflict, drawing on the framework outlined in section 3, we assess which of the six identified linkages are recognized in the NAPs. In addition, we consider through which (path)ways climate change is understood to influence conflict dynamics.

It is important to note that while all ten NAPs mention conflict in one way or another, this does not automatically mean they raise possible conflict implications of *climate change*. For instance, while discussing conflict at length, the Palestinian NAP does not draw a link between climate change and conflict risk.¹⁰ The other nine NAPs (CAR, Chad, Colombia, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger, South Sudan, Sudan) mention a possible relation between climate change and conflict risks, but to varying degrees, showing similar inconsistencies as highlighted in the previous section. For example, the Ethiopian NAP identifies conflict as a climate change-related risk for many of its regions in tables included in the documents' annex (2019, p. 53ff), but does not discuss this (or the pathways that may lead to increased conflict risk) conceptually in the main text. In the case of the Colombian NAP, the potential impact of climate change on conflict is mentioned in one instance (2018, p. 30), but this is not discussed in any detail anywhere else or considered in terms of its relevance for adaptation planning.

On the other hand, some NAPs, such as Chad's are very explicit about the linkages (2022, p. 48): 'In the Lake Chad region, climate change and conflict dynamics create a loop in which the impacts of climate change create additional pressures, while conflict undermines the communities' ability to cope. The people of Lake Chad are trapped in conflict. [...] Climate change exacerbates these difficulties'. Similar statements can be found in the NAPs of DRC, South Sudan and Sudan. Although Niger's NAP (2022, p. 84) states that a focus on *human security* is more 'instructive and constructive' than a focus on *political security/peace and security*, reduction of conflicts between different resource users is frequently mentioned as an envisaged result of proposed adaptation activities. The NAP from CAR (2022) frequently refers to the country's National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan (Government of CAR, 2016), and specifies that a number of identified strategic objectives of that plan are of particular relevance for adaptation, including ensuring food security and resilience, reviving and developing the productive sectors (including agriculture and livestock rearing), and rehabilitating and constructing infrastructure.

In terms of the six possible interactions between climate change, adaptation and violent conflict identified earlier (Section 3, Figure 1), eight countries (CAR, Chad, Colombia, DRC, Ethiopia, Niger, South Sudan, Sudan) frame conflict as a potential impact of climate change (mode 1) and six (CAR, Chad, DRC, South Sudan, State of Palestine, Sudan) as a contributing factor to overall vulnerability (mode 3) (Table 4). For example, the vulnerability assessments for the different states of Sudan (2016, p. 71ff) contain numerous references to civil and tribal conflict, and 'civil war' as a non-climatic factors shaping the country's vulnerability. Six countries (CAR, Chad, DRC, Niger, South Sudan, Sudan) see adaptation as a potential tool for conflict prevention (mode 4) and, therefore, suggest it ought to be conducted in a conflict-sensitive way. Yet only four NAPs (CAR, Kenya, Niger, South Sudan and Sudan)

reference adaptation priorities/projects that explicitly relate to conflict (see also section 5.3). Only the NAPs of Palestine and Niger (and Colombia indirectly) acknowledge that conflict can undermine, restrict, or derail adaptation efforts (mode 6). None of the countries expect climate change to impact favourably on conflict dynamics (mode 2). Finally, despite all ten NAPs discussing conflict dynamics in one way or another, only South Sudan's NAP considers that proposed adaptation activities might exacerbate, or at least affect the conflict situation in some way (mode 5) (Table 4).

Maladaptation – as an indication of general awareness that adaptation activities can have unintended adverse effects and, in a way, conceptually a precondition for considering potential negative impacts of adaptation at all – is mentioned as a risk, or as justification for not including certain actions, in five NAPs (Kenya, Niger, South Sudan, State of Palestine, Sudan). For example, Niger's NAP (2022, p. xvii) states that from an initial list of possible adaptation options, four were considered potentially resulting in maladaptation and therefore excluded. Despite the important consideration of adverse outcomes from adaptation in general, only the South Sudanese NAP 'closes the loop' to consider potential risks for the conflict situation through ill-designed or badly implemented adaptation measures. The example provided (Government of the Republic of South Sudan, 2021, p. 65) is a potential increase in conflicts over water resources between different sectors and stakeholders if large investments in hydropower generation capacity are made without taking into consideration future climate scenarios. In sum, whether proposed actions might negatively impact *on* conflict (mode #5) is not a consideration for nine (CAR, Chad, Colombia, DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Niger, State of Palestine, Sudan) of the ten countries.

Specific pathways (Mobjörk et al., 2020) through which climate change is understood to increase conflict risks are discussed in seven NAPs (CAR, Chad, Colombia, DRC, Niger, South Sudan, Sudan) (Table 5). These refer mainly to worsening livelihood conditions and increasing competition, migration and changing mobility patterns of transhumant herders. Increased conflict risk as a result of climate change is mainly discussed at the community and local level, around land management and water access as a result of worsening livelihood conditions. In addition, the DRC's NAP (2021) mentions the potential for increased household level conflicts and domestic violence as a result of growing pressures due to climate change. Colombia's is the only NAP (2018) referring to tensions between the population and entities responsible for water management. South Sudan's is the only NAP (2021, p. 42) that mentions the potential for transnational tensions, 'between neighbouring countries that serve as sources and sinks for migrants, [thereby] complicating relations between states'. No NAP discusses the possible consequences of how livelihood deterioration and community level conflict could feed into larger conflicts, through the role of armed groups or grievances against the state.

5.3 Alignment of NAPs with peacebuilding agendas

To assess the alignment of adaptation and peacebuilding efforts, we assessed first, whether NAPs make explicit reference

Table 4. Reference in NAPs to the six modes of interaction between climate change, adaptation and violent conflict (see Figure 1).

	CAR	Chad	Colombia	DRC	Ethiopia	Kenya	Niger	South Sudan	State of Palestine	Sudan
Conflict resulting from climate impacts (mode 1)	●	●	●	●	(●)	○	●	●	○	●
Climate change reducing conflict risk (mode 2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Conflict as a contributing factor to climate vulnerability (mode 3)	●	●	○	●	○	○	○	●	●	●
Adaptation as a tool for conflict prevention or peacebuilding (i.e. pos. impact of adaptation on conflict context) (mode 4)	●	●	○	●	○	○	●	●	○	●
Mention of maladaptation (as a precondition for mode 5)	○	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	●	●
Conflict resulting directly or indirectly from adaptation responses (i.e. neg. impact of adaptation on conflict context via maladaptation) (mode 5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○
Inclusion of concrete adaptation actions/priorities that relate to conflict (as a logical consequence of mode 5)	●	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	○	●
Conflict can undermine/derail adaptation (mode 6)	○	○	(●)	○	○	○	●	○	●	○

Source: Table based on own analysis; ○ = linkage not mentioned; ● = linkages mentioned; (●) = implicit acknowledgement only; DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo, CAR = Central African Republic.

to peace agreements, policies or ongoing peace processes; second, whether NAPs express ambition for adaptation to be conflict-sensitive; and third, if proposed adaptation priorities link to conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts.

First, while all ten countries had peace agreements in place at the time of NAP development (Bell et al., 2022), this important context does not appear to have a significant effect on the NAP policy formulation. Only two countries (CAR and South Sudan) make explicit reference to peace agreements in their NAPs. This seems an important oversight, given the explicit mandate of NAPs to integrate with relevant development planning processes and strategies (UNFCCC Secretariat, 2012).

Second, there are stark differences in how deliberate adaptation is aligned with peacebuilding agendas across the ten NAPs, generally falling into four groups (Table 6). First, NAPs that *do not* seek any alignment between adaptation efforts and conflict-prevention (Colombia, Ethiopia, State of Palestine). Second, NAPs that state adaptation *ought* to be aligned with conflict-sensitivity but provide *no evidence* of a clear alignment in practice (Chad, DRC). Third, NAPs that declare ambition for adaptation efforts to be conflict-sensitive *and* have specific adaptation interventions/priorities that are aligned with peacebuilding efforts (CAR, South Sudan, Sudan). Finally and oddly, Kenya and Niger's NAPs *do not*

express the ambition to align adaptation with conflict prevention but contain adaptation actions/priorities that relate to peace and conflict. For example, Niger's NAP (2022) discusses the security context as part of the background for some of the projects as well as a potential implementation risk. These notions imply some level of ambition to be conflict-sensitive.

Third, in terms of linking proposed adaptation priorities to conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts, the five NAPs of CAR, Kenya, Niger, South Sudan and Sudan identify different types of adaptation actions/priorities that explicitly draw a relation to conflict dynamics (in some but not all cases can these be connected to the specific climate-conflict pathways identified by the same countries, see Table 5). The strengthening of traditional (South Sudan) and the development of new land dispute mechanisms (Sudan) are priorities in three NAPs (also CAR). The rehabilitation and better management of pastoralist migration routes are priorities for CAR and Sudan. CAR and Niger's NAPs propose projects to reduce conflict risks by increasing the resilience of the livestock herding sector, through the sustainable management of pastures. Research and knowledge development on climate and conflict links is identified as a priority in the South Sudanese and Chad's NAPs, as well as the development of a toolkit for integrating conflict resolution/peacebuilding and adaptation, and improving conflict analysis. Finally, the Sudanese NAP

Table 5. Climate-related security risks and their pathways discussed in the NAPs.

	CAR	Chad	Colombia	DRC	Ethiopia	Kenya	Niger	South Sudan	State of Palestine	Sudan
Mention of conflict risks resulting from climate change	●	●	●	●	(●)	○	●	●	○	●
Climate change increasing pressures on natural resources (esp. water and land), resulting in conflicts between resource users	●●	●	●	●	○	○	●●	●●	○	●●
Climate change reducing water resources, leading to conflict between the population and entities in charge of managing water resources	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Climate change increasing pressures on households , leading to household-level conflict and gender-based violence	○	○	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
Climate-change related migration , potentially increasing tensions between neighbouring countries	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○
Adaptation action resulting in further environmental degradation, over-exploitation or other negative consequences for some actors (maladaptation), potentially increasing conflict risk	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○

Source: Table based on own analysis; ○ = risk not identified, ● = risk identified, ●● = risk identified, and specific adaptation measures proposed in response; (●) = no reference in the main text but two listed adaptation actions briefly mention conflict; DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo, CAR = Central African Republic. Note that not all conflict-related adaptation priorities in the NAPs correspond directly to the identified pathways here.

mentions the revision of property right laws as a priority in the agricultural sector. As a proposed long-term action in the environment sector, the Kenyan NAP (2016, p. 31) suggest integrating ‘ecosystem and community based [sic] approaches in sector strategies in support of adaptation to reduce natural resource based conflicts’.¹¹

Finally, while five NAPs (Chad, DRC, South Sudan, Sudan) express ambition to DNH, only the CAR’s NAP aims to actively contribute to peace by putting at a central position the alignment of adaptation actions and peace policies, including through a project that focuses on increasing climate resilience of the cattle raising sector and on reducing conflicts between herders and farmers. This is an area where NAPs could become stronger.

6. Discussion: how conflict-sensitive are NAPs?

The analysis demonstrates that the ten NAPs refer to conflict, but do not systematically consider the possible links between climate change, adaptation action and conflict, leaving significant room for improvement. In line with earlier studies (NAP Global Network, 2022b), we find that NAPs generally mention conflict as part of the context, and that various NAPs refer to the impacts of climate change on conflict, of conflict on climate vulnerability, and to adaptation as a tool for conflict prevention or peacebuilding. Looking further, however, our analysis shows large variations regarding the attention paid to conflict, how systematically it is considered and how it translates into concrete adaptation actions/priorities. So far, the South Sudanese and CAR’s NAPs seem the most comprehensive in terms of conflict-sensitivity, in that the documents mention the need for aligning peace processes and adaptation, make reference to peacebuilding policies and strategies, and outline specific actions aligned with peacebuilding. In addition, South Sudan’s NAP brings up risks from maladaptation for peace. On the other side of the spectrum, Ethiopia and Kenya’s NAPs appear the most ‘conflict-blind’, but, as discussed earlier, Ethiopia’s NAPs preceded the recent increase in domestic conflict. Palestine’s NAP covers conflict dynamics extensively, but not interactions between climate change, conflict and adaptation. Colombia is quite silent on interlinkages in general.

Where information on conflict exists in NAPs, this is mainly as a background factor. Less attention is paid to the potential two-way interactions of conflict impacting on adaptation actions or of adaptation actions impacting on conflict. The lack of attention to potential impacts of adaptation on conflict dynamics in nine of ten NAPs, while in line with findings from other studies (Cao et al., 2021), is alarming

and a significant gap that needs addressing for adaptation to DNH, preventing further conflict or even contributing to peace. At the same time, some NAPs include relevant measures to increase knowledge on climate-conflict links (Chad and South Sudan), on improving property rights (Sudan) and integrating ecosystem-based approaches (Kenya) that have the potential to limit natural resources conflict. These are promising efforts that other conflict-affected countries might want to consider in their adaptation planning.

Where the impacts of climate change on conflict are discussed, this largely concerns conflicts over access to resources, particularly water and pastures, between different social groups such as farmers and herders. In addition, DRC’s NAP mentions violence against women. The possibility of broader societal consequences that could feed into larger scale conflicts and violence (including affecting neighboring countries) is not considered.

In light of the findings presented, and returning to Africa Peace Forum’s (2004) three criteria of conflict-sensitivity, it is evident that the ten NAPs score reasonably well on the first criteria (taking conflict considerations into account), but that there are stark variations when it comes to the second (two-way interactions) and third (deliberate actions and monitoring for interactions) criteria (Table 7). Part of the third criterion, having a MEL system in place for interactions with conflict dynamics, is not even remotely met by any NAP, which means countries are not monitoring for actual impacts of projects on conflict dynamics, nor learning from adverse conflict outcomes for future adaptation activities. This is an area with a clear need for further support and development, with existing MEL frameworks adapted for programming in fragile and conflict-affected settings that could serve as inspiration (e.g. Africa Peace Forum et al., 2004 Chapter 3 Module 3; OECD DAC, 2012; Chigas et al., 2014).

As to the reasons for why conflict considerations are not addressed more systematically in NAPs, the technical guidance of the LDC Expert Group, which does not call for analysis of social tensions or conflict dynamics, might play a central role (LEG, 2012). Given that out of 46 LDCs (the group of countries for which the guidance is primarily for), 24 are affected by conflict (UN-OHRLS, 2022), the LEG could expand its existing guidance to recommend that conflict-affected countries supplement their NAP vulnerability assessment with a conflict analysis. The LEG could also suggest countries, when assessing the appropriateness of adaptation actions, consider not only established criteria such as effectiveness, feasibility and costs, but how proposed actions might affect conflict dynamics.

Table 6. Alignment of NAPs with peacebuilding agendas.

	CAR	Chad	Colombia	DRC	Ethiopia	Kenya	Niger	South Sudan	State of Palestine	Sudan
NAP makes reference to ongoing peacebuilding efforts, incl. peace agreements and policies	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○	○
NAP declares need for adaptation to be conflict-sensitive (minimum ambition)	○	●	○	●	○	○	○	●	○	●
NAP contains adaptation actions/priorities that explicitly mention peace/conflict prevention	●	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	○	●

Source: Table based on own analysis; ○ = does not apply, ● = applies; DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo, CAR = Central African Republic.

Table 7. Meeting the three criteria for conflict-sensitivity in the ten NAPs.

The NAP takes conflict considerations into account when discussing the broader development and vulnerability context relevant for adaptation.	... discusses the two-way interactions between conflict dynamics and the proposed adaptation actions, specifically that:				... plans adaptation actions that deliberately ...	
		Conflict can undermine or derail adaptation (mode 6)	Adaptation can have a positive impact on conflict (as tool for conflict prevention) (mode 4)	Adaptation can have a negative impact on conflict (via maladaptation) (mode 5)	Considers all three dimensions of possible interactions	... aim to do no harm (min. ambition) or even contribute to peace (max. ambition)	... has an MEL system that monitors for interactions with conflict dynamics
CAR	●	○	●	○	○	●	○
Chad	●	○	●	○	○	○	○
Colombia	○	(●)	○	○	○	○	○
DRC	●	○	●	○	○	○	○
Ethiopia	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
Kenya	○	○	○	○	○	(●)	○
Niger	●	●	●	○	○	●	○
South Sudan	●	○	●	●	○	●	○
State of Palestine	●	●	○	○	○	○	○
Sudan	●	○	●	○	○	●	○

Source: Table based on own analysis; ○ = does not apply, ● = applies; (●) = implicit acknowledgement only; DRC = Democratic Republic of the Congo, CAR = Central African Republic.

Earlier analysis of 38 NAPs found great variation in the overall quality of NAPs, with multi-agency teams producing significantly higher quality plans than single agencies (Woodruff & Regan, 2019). Consequently, it might be interesting for future research to assess what impact the diversity of actors involved (including international), and processes of public engagement have had on the degree of conflict-considerations in NAPs. While not a general rule, we note that several of the NAPs that are more attuned to conflict dynamics were published in more recent years *and* received funding from the NAP-Global Support Programme via UNEP and UNDP. While the NAP process is the primary responsibility of country governments and country-driven, it is at least in some part influenced by actors external to the country. International organizations of the UN family (e.g. the GCF, UNEP, UNDP) and other multilateral and bilateral partners (e.g. the Global Environment Facility, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) and the US' Agency for International Development (USAID)) have played a role in supporting the country governments in our sample in the formulation of their NAPs by providing technical and/or financial assistance. This suggests external partners likely contribute to the shaping of NAPs and, in the absence of conflict-sensitive guidance from the LEG, their involvement may play a central role. Future research may examine the timing, as knowledge on climate-security linkages has developed significantly since the first NAPs were submitted in 2016, and external actor involvement in NAPs more specifically.

An alternative explanation could be that governments preparing NAPs have made a deliberate choice not to elaborate on conflict-related aspects, in order not to deviate from the focus on adaptation, or out of concern that this would scare off potential financiers of NAP implementation as funders might not want to operate in less secure areas. Conflict-affected countries are already receiving much less climate finance than other developing countries (Cao et al., 2021; UNDP, 2021). Further complicating the matter is that some multilateral climate funds such as the GCF have not awarded funding to projects focused on broader development agendas beyond a narrow and technical interpretation of adaptation (Raman, 2012), therefore creating disincentives for conflict-affected states to seek integration of these policy agendas and address the interconnected risks posed by climate change and conflict. Hence the lack of focus on integrating peace and adaptation among the donor communities may also play a key role (see Neaverson et al., 2019; Cao et al., 2021).

7. Conclusion and recommendations: towards more integrated NAP processes

Addressing climate adaptation effectively requires a comprehensive understanding and assessment of the broader societal factors that make countries vulnerable to climate impacts. In places affected by conflict this must include conflict dynamics. As a history of or ongoing conflict is one important factor in predicting future conflict (Gilmore & Buhaug, 2021), adaptation efforts in these places need to be conflict-sensitive.

However, drawing on the six modes of interaction between climate change, adaptation and conflict in the NAP analysis,

our findings suggest that by and large, the ten countries most significantly affected by conflict that have submitted NAPs to the UNFCCC do not yet bring conflict considerations systematically into their adaptation planning – an omission that might ultimately prove highly costly, irresponsible and dangerous. A conflict analysis that provides a basic understanding of the history, drivers, causes and consequences of the conflict situation (even reference to such analysis) as part of the vulnerability analysis and conflict-sensitive design of adaptation actions is lacking from all ten NAPs examined. Given the declared objective (UNFCCC Secretariat, 2012) to facilitate the integration of adaptation into relevant existing development planning processes through NAPs, it is important to devote further research to the question of why there has not been more systematic integration of conflict into the NAP process.

Better understanding what factors explain both the lack of systematic consideration of conflict aspects within NAPs, and the variation in how conflict is considered among NAPs is a topic that deserves further investigation. Future research should delve more specifically into these questions and whether the overlooking of conflict dynamics in NAPs is a deliberate choice by governments wishing to entice potential financiers of the NAP implementation or a 'blind spot' because of missing policy guidance and lack of knowledge. As policy debate around the security implications of climate change is relatively recent, and conversations conflict-sensitive climate adaptation even more so, it will be interesting to see whether forthcoming NAPs from conflict-affected countries draw on these growing insights.

Finally, another question that deserves looking into, is how the level at which conflict is addressed in NAPs influences the funding and implementation of adaptation activities. Will insights in climate-conflict links translate into more conflict-sensitive adaptation and development projects? Will the lack of insights in climate-conflict links translate into less conflict-sensitive projects? Or is the degree of conflict-sensitiveness in adaptation projects the result of attention among donor and project implementers, independent of the level of attention paid to this aspect in the NAPs? In other words, what role do NAP documents play in the actual funding and implementation of projects and in how conflict-sensitive they are? Future research may want to investigate more specifically, including through interviews with the responsible government agencies, why countries have chosen to put little emphasis on this in their NAPs and why others, such as South Sudan and CAR, have made a concerted effort to do so. UN peacekeeping missions to both countries, the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA), have focused on climate-sensitive peacebuilding for a while and it would be interesting to see whether this has impacted on the domestic policy debate and efforts to integrate adaptation and peacebuilding agendas. Finding answers to these questions is important to ensure that adaptation efforts can support longer-term development priorities that can help reduce conflict risks.

Notes

1. We focus on explicit reference to *violent conflict*, a situation of open hostility where one conflict actor uses physical or

psychological force to resolve a disagreement or to directly harm another actor, although we acknowledge that conflict is a 'multi-dimensional social phenomena' central to social change and can take many forms (Africa Peace Forum, 2004, p. 1).

2. Originally formulated by the Africa Peace Forum in 2004, this framework was later adopted, integrated into and made more widely popular by European-based organisations such as International Alert, Saferworld (2008) and the Conflict Sensitivity Consortium (2012).
3. The GPI is a composite index of 23 indicators that measures a country's level of Negative Peace using three domains of peacefulness: the level of societal safety and security, the extent of ongoing domestic and international conflict and the degree of militarisation (Vision of Humanity, 2022).
4. NAPs are not to be confused with National Action Plans of Action (NAPAs), which are focused on short-term adaptation needs and priorities by Least Developed Countries *only*. The NAP process seeks to identify and address medium- and long-term adaptation needs in LDCs and Developing Countries party to the UNFCCC. It is also worth noting that NAPs pre-date the Paris Agreement (which established the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)), so NAPs and NDCs are not strictly related. However, Article 7 of the Paris Agreement mentions the NAP process (UNFCCC, 2015b). Ideally, the NAP process and the adaptation component of NDCs should be aligned (GIZ, 2017).
5. While developed independently, also through our earlier work (Dabelko et al., 2022) we acknowledge that the six categories partly overlap with the assessment on peace and conflict conducted by the NAP Global Network (2022b).
6. Most empirical evidence to date suggests that adaptation activities decrease conflict risk *indirectly* by reducing climate change impacts. While adaptation could also include targeted peacebuilding measures that decrease conflict risk *directly*, we have not found practical examples of this.
7. Some of these recent guidelines rely heavily on the publication by the Africa Peace Forum (2004).
8. We opted for this choice instead of using 2022 as the standard GPI score for all countries, as we wanted to assess the prevalence of conflict at the time when the NAPs were developed. Had we selected the 2022 GPI scores, the top 10 countries would look somewhat different (e.g. Burkina Faso and Cameroon would have been included in the sample). Also in Ethiopia, peacefulness deteriorated significantly since the country's 2019 NAP publication. While there has been ongoing conflict in the country, violence increased dramatically since 2019/2020, placing it 149th (of 163) in the 2022 GPI compared to 133rd in 2019 (Vision of Humanity, 2022). As a result of this change, we expected conflict to feature less prominently in Ethiopia's NAPs, even though by today's measure the country is considered severely conflict affected.
9. The Ethiopian NAP is unique in the sense that in its annex, conflict is referred to frequently as a potential risk for its different regions, but conflict appears nowhere in the main text of the NAP.
10. Interestingly, the Palestinian NAP in its 'Appendix 3: Future-climate scenarios for the State of Palestine' (2016, p. 115ff) includes brief summaries of five academic publications on conflict-climate linkages, but these are nowhere referred to elsewhere in the document.
11. The Kenyan NAP (2016, p. 42) also makes reference to an existing, ten-year programme related to the country's long-term development strategy, one of whose six pillars is on 'peace and security'. However, the NAP does not provide any further detail and it is unclear whether this programme is specifically about adaptation.

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