



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



#06 ISSUE

AGRICULTURE WORKING GROUP (AWG)

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2023



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Key highlights:

- ICRC’s recent focus on climate risks and environmental degradation stems from the recognition that conflict zones are highly vulnerable to climate change, with conflicts eroding societies’ resilience and exacerbating the impacts of growing climate risks on vulnerable communities.
- Research revealed the humanitarian consequences of converging climate risks and armed conflict, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive climate adaptation and finance in conflict settings to support vulnerable communities facing increasing destitution.
- Humanitarian organizations can strengthen community resilience in conflict settings, with promising results from low-tech solutions and meteorological information support.
- ICRC’s work in Cabo Delgado province, northern Mozambique, demonstrates its focus on climate impacts on people affected by armed conflict, recognizing the severe consequences of climate shocks exacerbated by ongoing conflict, displacement, and limited capacity of local authorities and international actors.
- The challenges in northern Mozambique including climate variability, conflict, and limited investment in development call for a comprehensive and collaborative response that combines humanitarian efforts with broader development strategies to build resilience and create lasting positive change.

The Agriculture Working Group (AWG) meeting took place on 20 June 2023. Catherine-Lune Grayson, Head of the Policy Team - Policy and Humanitarian Diplomacy Division, and Amir Khouzam, Policy Advisor, both from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), based in Geneva, Switzerland, presented the topic “Research on addressing climate risks in conflict settings: a case study in Mozambique.” The meeting was co-chaired by the government through the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Fisheries (DPAP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).



Research on addressing climate risks in conflict settings: a case study in Mozambique

Understanding the impact of climate change on conflict-affected communities

The case study carried out by Catherine-Lune and Amir in northern Mozambique is part of a broader piece of research. ICRC has long been adapting its agricultural support to communities; however, it is only recently that ICRC started focusing on the impacts of growing climate risks and environmental degradation on communities in a comprehensive manner.

This is because ICRC realized that communities living in conflict zones are among the most vulnerable to climate change. Countries in conflict are overrepresented in the list of countries considered the most vulnerable and the least ready to adapt to climate change by the [Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative Country Index](#) (more than half of the top 20 are experiencing conflict).

However, correlation does not mean causation, i.e., this correlation does not mean that climate change causes conflict. Countries in conflict are particularly vulnerable to climate change because of the effect of conflicts on societies. Conflicts not only cause deaths and injuries. They also erode the resilience of societies by harming their founda-

tions. They weaken institutions and essential services, disrupt the economy, and damage social cohesion. This makes people extremely vulnerable to shocks, including climate ones.

When Rain Turns to Dust: Understanding converging climate risks and armed conflict

In 2019, ICRC initiated research to understand the humanitarian consequences of converging climate risks and armed conflict - detailed in the report [When Rain Turns to Dust](#).

As part of this research, Catherine-Lune and Amir visited northern Mali, the interior of the Central African Republic, and southern Iraq.

In each location, they observed how converging risks affected people's safety, health, food and economic security, and water access. Farmers faced uncertainty due to changing weather, leading to tensions between communities in the Central African Republic and Iraq over water access. In Mali, pastoralists struggled with insecurity, affecting their mobility and access to pastureland and water.

Adequate support for adaptation was lacking in these conflict settings, as governments and humanitarian and development bodies' priorities usually address conflict consequences and root causes. This is a valid priority, however, as conflicts and fragility tend to last for decades, waiting for stability to address climate risks is not a viable option.

Comprehensive climate adaptation is intertwined with inclusive development, including clean water access, sanitation, roads, energy, and healthcare to cope with shocks. Despite commitments to leave no one behind, many places lacked infrastructure, relied heavily on unreliable rain-fed agriculture, and were unprepared for predictable shocks.

Communities in these locations tried to adapt within their means but faced greater destitution without safety nets. This highlighted the gap in climate action and finance in conflict settings, where more fragile countries receive less climate finance.

The question arose: *what can be done in these challenging environments?*

Enhancing community resilience to climate risks in conflict zones

This research on strengthening community resilience to climate risks in conflict settings led Catherine-Lune and Amir to two new locations: northern Mozambique and the Gaza Strip in the Middle East, with upcoming work in Niger.

Despite challenges in highly unstable settings, they found it possible to enhance people's resilience to short and long-term risks. Humanitarian organizations, including ICRC, play a crucial role in this effort, as demonstrated by the Climate and Environment Charter for Humanitarian Organizations co-developed with the International Federations of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Over 365 humanitarian organizations and 12 supporting states have signed this charter since 2021.

ICRC's humanitarian responses have shown promising results in improving resilience in conflict-affected areas. In northern Mali, ICRC collaborates with the National Meteorological Agency and local partners to provide meteorological information to people living in the conflict-affected areas, aiding their decision-making, especially farmers and

pastoralists.

In Gaza, ICRC focuses on low-tech solutions to enhance farmer resilience. By rehabilitating ponds for irrigation and providing shading for greenhouses, ICRC mitigates heat risks and optimizes water usage. Additionally, ICRC equips farmers with bio-traps to protect fruit trees from pests and test insulated beehives to bees from extreme temperatures.

An essential aspect of ICRC's programs is their local nature, working closely with community members and authorities, and sometimes involving local or national service providers. In unstable settings with weak governance, this approach becomes more feasible compared to large-scale centralized efforts.

While these localized efforts are not sufficient for comprehensive climate adaptation, they serve as a foundation for building greater climate resilience. These experiences can inform a broader development-led response, addressing the critical need for enhanced climate resilience.





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Climate risks and humanitarian challenges in Cabo Delgado: Observations

In Mozambique, Catherine-Lune and Amir witnessed various climate-related challenges and their impacts on communities. The changing planting season in Cabo Delgado has caused rain to come later, last for shorter periods, and arrive unpredictably. As rain-fed irrigation is the primary farming method, this variability poses severe risks to livelihoods and health, particularly for small-scale and subsistence farmers.

The displacement of people due to the conflict has led to dramatic decreases and variations in yields, exacerbating food security issues and economic hardships. Furthermore, weather extremes, such as floods, threaten crops planted near the banks of seasonal rivers, leading to potential wipeouts.

Apart from climate-related risks, the conflict has also disrupted agricultural activities, making some displaced individuals resort to unsuitable farming practices, leading to increased susceptibility to climate variations. In such situations, people may turn to charcoal production, thereby contributing to deforestation.

Humanitarian organizations like ICRC and others can assist farmers in adapting to climate change by distributing seeds adapted to dry spells and other variations. However, this support should be accompanied by appropriate training to ensure effective use of these seeds.

Climate impacts in conflict zones: a focus on Cabo Delgado province, northern Mozambique

ICRC's focus on climate impacts on people affected by armed conflict is demonstrated by Catherine-Lune and Amir's work in northern Mozambique, specifically in Cabo Delgado, where the ICRC has been active since 2019.

While central and southern provinces of Mozambique are typically labeled as most vulnerable to climate shocks, Cabo Delgado faces serious risks due to its unique circumstances. The region is constrained by the ongoing conflict, displacement, and the limited presence and capacity of the state, local authorities, and international actors. Consequently, the population's ability to adapt to climate shocks is severely limited. Despite not being a common path for cyclones, Cabo Delgado is not immune to climate-related threats.

It is crucial to recognize that the impacts of climate shocks in Cabo Delgado are far more severe than what the province's pure exposure to climate risks might indicate. ICRC's efforts in this area aim to address the intersection of armed conflict and climate vulnerability to support the affected population effectively.

In Cabo Delgado, some displaced individuals were previously fishermen rather than farmers, making it necessary to provide tailored support and training to adapt to new livelihoods. The lack of viable farming options and food insecurity may also drive people to return to unsafe areas in search of better opportunities.

Climate shocks also pose risks to health, safety, and essential services in various settings. Storms can destroy houses, contaminate drinking water sources, and damage transportation routes, affecting people's ability to find safety and income.

The ICRC's support in developing water infrastructure has been crucial in providing clean water access, but these systems are vulnerable to storms and power outages. Ensuring reliable water and health infrastructure through solar panels is crucial, especially in IDP settlements.

Addressing the challenges in Mozambique requires a comprehensive and scalable approach. Livelihood interventions and resources from humanitarian organizations are important but cannot replace broader development efforts, including water management, irrigation systems, livelihood support, and infrastructure.

To tackle these intersectional risks effectively, collaboration is vital. Humanitarian organizations must work together with development bodies, local, provincial, and national authorities, and the private sector.

In summary, the challenges in Mozambique stem from climate variability, conflict, and limited investment in development. A comprehensive and collaborative response that addresses the needs of affected communities and promotes sustainable solutions is essential. By combining humanitarian efforts with broader development strategies, we can build resilience to present and future shocks and create lasting positive change for the people of Mozambique.

For more information on ICRC's interventions in Mozambique: <https://www.icrc.org/en/where-we-work/africa/mozambique>



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AWG recommendations:

- It is essential to understand that climate change and agriculture are cross-cutting themes touching on food security, livelihoods, gender, the sustainable management of natural resources, and more. A holistic and systemic approach is required when examining the links between climate change and agriculture.
- When developing programmes, all government, humanitarian and development actors in a conflict setting, especially those highly prone to climate risks and disasters, should consider all the possible hazards that can be posed by climate change in association with the conflict situation.
- There is a need to integrate climate change considerations into provincial and national development plans.
- In unstable settings or in conflict situations such as Cabo Delgado, it is important to consider the implementation of smaller-scale interventions through centralized or national institutions that deal with climate change adaptation and coping mechanisms.
- Government national agencies such as the National Institute of Meteorology and National Institute for Risk Reduction and Disaster Management and local partners facilitate access to meteorological information for people living in conflict-affected areas and help farmers and pastoralists use forecasts to make timely decisions.



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AWG meeting attendance:

The meeting’s participants included representatives from the government (DPAP and Provincial Services of Economic Activities), United Nations agencies (FAO and World Food Programme), the Food Security Cluster, national and international non-governmental organizations, and the private sector, with a total of 31 participants.

List of acronyms:

- AWG** Agriculture Working Group
- DPAP** Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and Fisheries
- FAO** Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- ICRC** International Committee of the Red Cross

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