



OCTOBER 2020

# Is the Dutch Security & Rule of Law Theory of Change ‘climate proof’?

## **Executive summary**

The apparent influences of climate change on conflict and legitimate stability are increasingly salient politically, and in policy making, to Security & Rule of Law (SRoL) policy. This paper explores whether – and how – climate change leads to violent conflict in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS), and to what extent Dutch SRoL Theory of Change (ToC) is ‘climate proof’.

## **Direct and indirect impacts of climate change in the academic literature**

- There is no strong evidence of a major direct relationship between climate change and conflict.
- Climate change may act as a ‘threat multiplier’, meaning that climate change exacerbates or worsens existing political, economic and ecological vulnerabilities, which can increase the risk of conflict and fuel the escalation of violence in some contexts but may have less effect in others.
- Climate change impacts are diffuse: Climate change impacts in one area may be different in other areas, with diverse impacts on populations across different gender, age and socioeconomic groups.

## **Climate change and conflict in policy and practice**

- Climate change is a global phenomenon, but unfolds with uneven impacts across the world. While mitigation efforts to limit average temperature rise need to be made globally, different states and localities need to adapt in varying degrees to the impact of climate change in ways that may differ significantly in content and scope.
- As climate change does not respect geographic, socioeconomic or administrative boundaries, integrated analysis and responses across levels (global, regional, national, local) are imperative.
- Climate adaptation policies may serve as a potential driver of conflict, necessitating both conflict-sensitive climate programming and climate-sensitive conflict programming. Yet, resource governance could also provide an entry point to address other aspects of (inclusive) governance.

### **Department for Stability and Humanitarian Affairs Theory of Change**

- The scope of work and ambition of the Department for Stability and Humanitarian Affairs (DSH) does not directly address the impacts of climate change.
- Indirect connections between climate change and conflict make climate change relevant to DSH.
- Strong institutions, trust between social groups, and inclusive processes (governance) are important for addressing rising tensions due to changing environmental pressures on different social groups.
- The human security approach taken by the DSH might provide an entry point that could serve as an additional bulwark against the securitisation of a climate change response.
- DSH's analysis-based approach creates an opportunity to adapt programming to climate change-induced variation in conflict drivers across locations and time, particularly in the realm of peacebuilding.
- There are a number of considerations relevant to climate change in the DSH Theory of Change (ToC), but few are strongly enshrined in its Results Framework.
- As climate change-related effects may contribute to changes in conflict drivers over time, considering the impact of relevant climate change related factors on conflict drivers over time might improve the effectiveness and sustainability of programming in face of climate change.
- Adequately recognising socioeconomically marginalised groups and corresponding socioeconomic conflict drivers is essential in programming that aims to address the impact of climate change.

### **Recommendations to improve the DSH ToC's climate sensitivity**

- **Knowledge and learning:** To be effective, programming aiming to address climate change impacts on conflict requires deep context-specific knowledge of the impact of climate change on conflict and the effectiveness of different types of programming, as well as integrating climate-specific questions into conflict analysis.
- **Long-term inequality and livelihoods:** The impacts of climate change on conflict are in large part mediated by longer-term changes in inequality, resource governance and livelihoods. Working on climate conflict risks should be embedded in a wider strategy and portfolio covering long-term livelihoods and socioeconomic conflict drivers. Different ways of cooperating with DSH, IGG (Inclusive Green Growth) and DDE (Sustainable Economic Development) may be required.
- **Operationalisation within the SRoL ToC:** In order to operationalise climate considerations in the DSH portfolio, the Department should consider the positive and actionable framing of the role of climate in SRoL. It should engage with opportunities in multilateral institutions to influence climate policies for FCAS currently being developed, and explore practical points of collaboration with other entities in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, such as quality at entry, 4D and broader support for conflict-sensitivity practices.
- **Lessons from COVID-19:** COVID-19 puts at risk progress on a range of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets, aggravates negative coping strategies and exacerbates marginalisation and vulnerability. Understanding how some areas have coped with the challenges may be key to understanding what mitigation strategies have been effective. While recovery and maintaining current programming is important in the short term, COVID-19 underlines the need for longer-term investments in resilience against epidemics and natural disasters.