

Winning the Peace:

# Peacebuilding and Climate Change in Mali and Somalia

DanChurchAid, Norwegian Church Aid and ACT Alliance

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## Foreword

Climate change is a reality, and it is happening now. For millions of people, living in poor and vulnerable countries the effects of global warming are a daily challenge. In some countries these effects may also become drivers of conflict, which may escalate into violence and war.

As development NGOs, with a presence in many of the world's conflict zones, we are concerned not only about the conflicts themselves, but also about the drivers, which may unleash or fuel the conflicts. To end the conflicts, and to win the peace, the drivers must be addressed.

We commissioned this study to learn more about the links between climate change and conflicts, and more importantly, to explore if efforts to adapt to the effects of climate change, can contribute to peace building.

We selected two countries, Mali and Somalia, where there is a documented effect of climate change, and where people and communities have been facing violent conflicts for many years. We focused on the concerns, and advice coming from people on the ground, people who face both the effects of climate change, and the horror of conflicts.

Their message is clear. There is a need for adaptation, and especially conflict-sensitive adaptation measures on the ground, involving women and youth, as well as those in authority. Governments, donors, and implementing agencies should all listen to their advice. We can win the peace!

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Photo: Håvard Bjelland



## Summary for policy makers

In our research in Mali and Somalia, we set out to explore how ordinary people are experiencing the combined effects of climate change and conflict. **The situation for men and women in Somalia and Mali, right now, is dire.** In Somalia, we were told: *We used to farm and till the land for ages, now we no longer farm throughout, we depend on relief food and food aid by agencies, recurring droughts and floods have devastated our crop fields.* Millions of people in Mali and Somalia have been displaced from their homes, by climate disasters or by conflict. Others struggle to survive on the land.

As temperatures continue to rise, even worse catastrophes will occur. **Climate change adaptation measures are urgently needed.** Not only will the environmental disasters continue apace, but where there is weak governance, a lack of resources, and a lack of legitimate and peaceful decision making mechanisms, **climate change will contribute significantly to further violence.**

And yet, **our respondents reported few adaptation measures in their communities** – and ‘softer’ measures, such as community education or awareness creation, were far more likely to be reported than more concrete measures such as early warning systems, or systems for managing water, grazing, or other resource rights. Where systems for the protection of natural resources did exist, participants often commented that they were either not fully functional, or lacking in sufficient resources to be effective. And frequently, they did not seem to be linked to inclusive decision making mechanisms which could prevent them from becoming a further source of conflict.

This points to the need to better align and integrate peacebuilding and climate adaptation measures. *Can climate change adaptation become a tool for peace?* Our study sought to explore this at local community level, asking people about their experience with adaptation measures, and what had worked well, or what could work well, in reconciling different groups of people. **The conclusion was that, provided the right conditions were met, adaptation measures could have the potential to further peace and reconciliation.** Some of the conditions which respondents told us were necessary for adaptation measures to prevent conflict and promote peace included: widespread awareness and understanding of each measure put in place; local ownership of the system; the involvement of each group in society and a fair distribution of resources. *‘We need to sit together, to meet and to have the opinion and agreement of the whole population,’* said one focus group member in Mali.

On the basis of this research, we have four principal recommendations:



1. Governments and donors need to urgently prioritise conflict sensitive climate change adaptation measures for the most vulnerable, especially in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

**We are asking for help from all the great powers of the world to fight against climate change, which has arrived at a point when we can no longer cope with it ourselves.**

Focus group member, Djenné, Mopti region, Mali

There is still a tendency in the global North to talk about the ‘threat’ of climate change, as if it were a future catastrophe which was still in our power to avert. It is painfully clear from our respondents, however, that the catastrophe is taking place right now. For example, in late 2019 and early 2020 in Somalia, extended drought gave way to torrential floods, which in turn created the conditions for an unprecedented outbreak of desert locusts. The absence of climate change adaptation measures was pointed to by some of our internally displaced respondents as contributing to these recent disasters. These climate disasters compound with violent conflict, to put huge pressure on an already fragile state.

Only about a fourth of climate finance flows to developing countries goes to adaptation measures and of this, only a fraction goes to conflict affected contexts.<sup>1</sup> Donors need to look at utilising both climate change funding streams, and peacebuilding funding streams, to tackle climate change adaptation in a way which not only is conflict sensitive and does no harm, but includes decision making structures which can resolve conflicts peacefully.



2. Climate change adaptation should be locally led, with decision-making devolved to local committees where possible. Donors can contribute to this by allowing for greater decentralisation of funding streams for climate change and peacebuilding, and greater interplay between the two. Implementing organisations, including local authorities, should strive to involve the community in an inclusive manner.

**The initiative should come from the community, we should build inclusive dialogue in the community.** Interviewee, Mali

Evidently, there is a need for overarching adaptation plans at national and regional level. However, where there is implementation at local level, climate change adaptation should be locally planned and managed for a number of reasons. Firstly, adaptation measures must be context-specific – what works in one area will not necessarily work in another, and so local expertise is required. Secondly, local ownership and management of climate action can help to mitigate against the loss of agency experienced by people who suffer climate related shocks, such as drought and floods. And thirdly, conflict is also context-specific – it requires local knowledge to understand where disputes over proposed management of resources are likely to arise.

It is particularly important that responsibility for such measures should not fall on local authorities alone. A large number of respondents in both Mali and Somalia emphasised the importance of community leaders and volunteers in leading on climate adaptation, and resolving disputes over natural resources.





### 3. Implementers should ensure the involvement of women, youth and vulnerable people in decision-making, using locally appropriate strategies to overcome discrimination.

**[Our] community can do nothing, [we are] internally displaced people.**

Focus group member, Somalia

We asked our respondents about which groups might be particularly affected by climate change and violent conflict. For example, where men have joined armed groups or fallen victim to violence, women are increasingly likely to find themselves in sole charge of providing for a family; but are often excluded from access to land. Young men, due to high unemployment and landlessness are particularly susceptible to joining armed groups, but our respondents highlighted that some climate change adaptation activities, such as reforestation, could provide gainful employment to young people. For both youth and internally displaced persons, inclusion in decision-making processes could serve to mitigate the frustration at the voicelessness that they experience.

Various forms of discrimination are systemic in conflict zones, and planned interventions need to be fully aware of the potential for entrenching discrimination through adaptation measures.<sup>2</sup> It is crucial, therefore, that all groups are not only included, but empowered to become active members of the decision-making process. For example, previous programming by NCA in Mali acted to counter barriers to female participation in local peacebuilding structures, using female-only groupings as a starting point in some areas, and introducing a fusion of literacy and peacebuilding training for women and youth in NCA's larger peacebuilding programme.<sup>3</sup>



### 4. Implementing partners should strive to ensure that all groups, including the most vulnerable, understand more clearly their role in the process.

**Me and my family are displaced from Beledweyne after the floods destroyed our houses and farming land....I moved with family to Mogadishu to access help from organizations and other well-wishers.** Focus group member, Somalia

The loss of control brought on by climate events and loss of livelihood can leave people feeling they have less to lose by participating in violence or joined armed groups.<sup>4</sup> This loss of agency can be mitigated not only by a sense of control through local ownership of climate solutions, but a sense that one's actions have the power for much greater impact.

When asked what actions should be taken to manage natural resources and climate threats, and how they should be managed, a large number of respondents in our research referred to promoting understanding of each group and individual's role in the process. This encompassed not only the rights of each group and individual, but also their specific responsibilities, and understanding of how their efforts contribute to the greater good, in terms of both local and wider climate management.

As one respondent put it: *[Everyone] should understand that to take an interest in climate change, is to save humanity.'*

Photo: Thomas White



## Introduction

In late 2019 and early 2020, DanChurchAid, Norwegian Church Aid and ACT Alliance commissioned local research in Mali in Western Africa, and Somalia, in the Horn of Africa. In our research, we set out to explore how ordinary people are experiencing the combined effects of climate change and conflict. The situation for men and women, right now, is dire. In Somalia, we were told: *We used to farm and till the land for ages, now we no longer farm throughout, we depend on relief food and food aid by agencies, recurring droughts and floods have devastated our crop fields.* Millions of people in Mali and Somalia have been displaced from their homes, by climate disasters or by conflict. Others struggle to survive on the land.

Yet, despite the suffering, there is hope. In spite of the unthinkable circumstances in which they live, hundreds of people took the time to engage with us. They talked to us about what needs to be done to build resilience in

their area, and how adaptation measures are creating, or could create, a better understanding between groups of people.

Of course, undertaking climate change measures in violent contexts is extremely challenging. However, within the larger body of work exploring the links between climate change and conflict, there is growing interest in exploring how peacebuilding and climate change action could be better combined.<sup>5</sup> Through our research, we explored this question: *how can we make climate action a tool for peace?*

Below is a synthesis of the key findings which emerged from our research. We then present a chapter on our research in Mali, followed by our research in Somalia. Finally, we conclude with some recommendations arising.

Photo: Harvard Bjelland



## Key findings

### In Mali and Somalia, as in other countries, climate change and conflict are presenting increasingly intractable challenges

Climate change does not inevitably lead to conflict.<sup>6</sup> But where there is weak governance, a lack of resources, and lack of legitimate and peaceful decision making mechanisms, climate change can be a significant driver of violence.

In many conflict zones, the effects of climate change, climate disasters and resource scarcity are clearly exacerbated. Officials and aid agencies may struggle to get relief to those who need it. Conflict may prevent

farmers and herders from accessing their land or traditional routes, and traditional or official systems for the maintenance of natural resources may fail, leading to over-use by opportunistic or desperate actors. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence by civilians and armed men, as they have to go further for water or firewood, or are easy targets for perpetrators in overcrowded camps for internally displaced people.

A more useful question than ‘does climate change cause conflict’ may be, as one report puts it, to explore under what circumstances climate change might contribute

to violent conflict.<sup>7</sup> Our research suggests that the existence of protracted and widespread conflict does make it more likely that resource scarcity or extreme weather may become drivers of violence. For example, in Mali, where our research was conducted in conflict-affected Mopti region and the comparatively more peaceful Ségou region, disputes over natural resources were more likely to be cited by respondents in Ségou region, but less than half as likely to end in fatalities as in Mopti region. In Somalia, respondents were more likely to report conflict in years and regions where droughts and floods had been reported. The absence of strong institutions, and the widespread availability of small arms, were two of the principal reasons cited by respondents for increasingly violent conflict over natural resources. There is rarely a single factor which leads to violence on its own, but climate change is clearly an increasingly important contributing element.

### Climate change adaptation measures, while urgently needed, are few and far between

Both Somalia in the Horn of Africa and Mali in the Western Sahel, are already experiencing devastating effects of climate change, and will suffer even worse catastrophes as temperatures continue to rise. Climate change adaptation measures are urgently needed, now, if we are to avert some of the worst consequences. And yet, our respondents reported few adaptation measures in their communities, and those that were reported tended to be ‘softer’ rather than more concrete measures. In Somalia, the most commonly reported measure undertaken was community education or awareness creation. Less than one in five respondents mentioned the presence of early warning systems, and mechanisms for managing water, grazing or other resource rights were even more rare, although many respondents acknowledged the importance of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.

In Mali, four out of five respondents (in Segou and Mopti region) said that there was some form of conflict resolution for natural resource management in their community. Many of these respondents felt that conflict over natural resources had actually diminished, despite a perceived worsening of the effects of climate change, and an increase in violence in Mopti region. However, only just over half of respondents said that any sort of system for the protection or maintenance of

natural resources was in place, or that any measures for prevention or adaptation to climate change were being taken. Even where such systems and measures existed, participants often commented that they were either not fully functional, or lacking in sufficient resources to be truly effective.

This failure to provide functioning systems for adaptation or protection of natural resources, even while conflict resolution systems are present is alarming in that it seems to tackle the problem without addressing the underlying cause.

### This points to the need to better align and integrate peacebuilding and climate adaptation measures

There is an increasing call for better integration of peacebuilding and climate change adaptation. Those same studies also point out, however, that despite heightened awareness, this integration is not yet taking place in any systematic fashion.<sup>8</sup> Our study sought to explore this at local community level, asking people about their experience with adaptation measures, and what had worked well, or what could work well, in reconciling different groups of people. The conclusion was that, provided the right conditions were met, adaptation measures could have the potential to further peace and reconciliation.

We asked our research participants about their experience with adaptation measures, and what had worked well in bringing together different groups of people. While some participants cited examples of adaptation measures causing further conflict- for example, with regard to the placing of key resources, or the proposed division of land usage – most felt that, properly planned, adaptation measures could be a tool for peace. Some of the conditions which respondents told us were necessary for adaptation measures to prevent conflict and promote peace included: widespread awareness and understanding of each measure put in place; local ownership of the system; the involvement of each group in society and a fair distribution of resources. To achieve these conditions requires an inclusive, transparent, locally-led and peaceful decision making process. Some considerations for achieving such processes are presented in the recommendations, with which our report concludes.



## Mali<sup>9</sup>

**Fragile States Index:**

21st most fragile state in the world

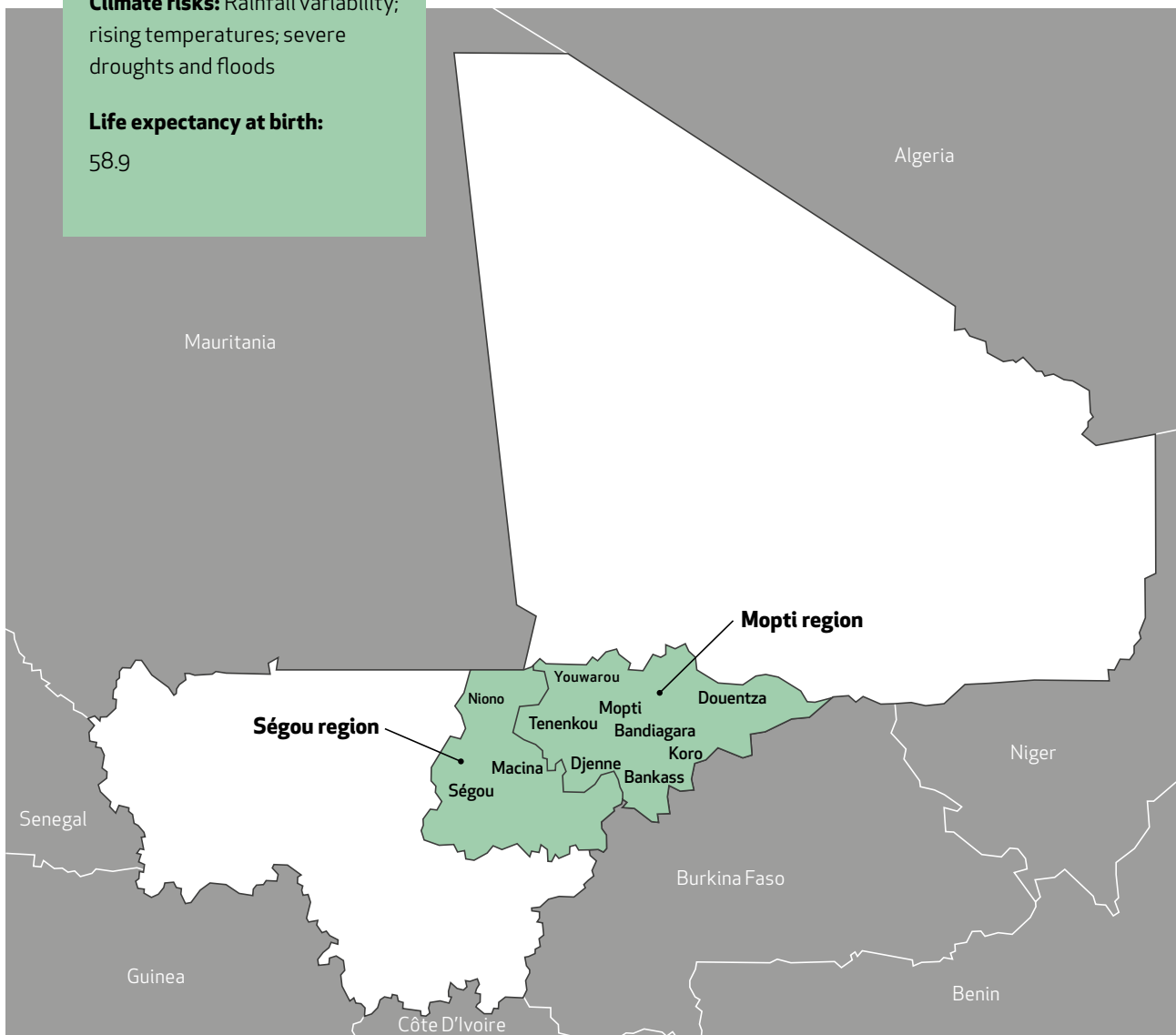
**Deaths in armed conflict:**

2,279 in past twelve months

**Climate risks:** Rainfall variability; rising temperatures; severe droughts and floods

**Life expectancy at birth:**

58.9



# Mali

## Background: climate and conflict

A large and landlocked country in Western Africa, Mali's northern regions are in the Sahara Desert, with central Mali in the western Sahel and Bamako, the capital, in the Sudanian Savanna in the South. Our research took place in Ségou region and Mopti region, in central Mali.

With approximately 80% of the population relying on pastoral or farming subsistence livelihoods, Mali is hugely reliant on natural resources, and the population very susceptible to weather shocks. The region experienced devastating drought in the 1970s and 80s which resulted in hunger, diseases and massive displacement of people. Since the mid 1990s, rainfall has recovered and increased. Models differ as to whether that rainfall will continue to increase, or whether the Sahel region as a whole may become drier.<sup>10</sup> What is certain, however, is that temperatures will continue to rise as a result of global warming. Mali is already one of the hottest countries in the world, with temperatures frequently rising in excess of 40°C. Mean annual temperatures across Mali have increased by 0.7°C since 1960, and are projected to increase by 1.2 to 3.6°C by the 2060's, and by 1.8 to 5.9°C by the 2090's.<sup>12</sup> These higher temperatures, and unpredictable rain patterns will leave the Malian people even more vulnerable in the future to disasters and food insecurity.

Until 2012, Mali was considered a relatively strong and stable democracy, better placed than many to tackle the threat of climate change. In 2007, a well-researched global study of climate change and conflict compared Mali to neighbouring Chad, and concluded that Mali's strong institutions and stable governance put it in a much stronger position to respond effectively to climate change, and to handle natural resource conflicts through traditional mediation.<sup>13</sup> In 2012, however, the Tuareg uprising in the North, and a short-lived military coup in the capital Bamako, shattered the illusion of a stable democracy. While a peace accord was signed with northern separatist rebels in 2015, much of the north remains under the control of signatory armed groups.

Violence, meanwhile, has surged in the previously relatively peaceful central regions of Mali, where our research was carried out. In June 2019, the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was extended for another year, adding a second strategic priority (its first being upholding the 2015 northern peace accord) of addressing the deteriorating security situation in central Mali.<sup>14</sup> While some of this violence is committed or supported by Islamist extremist groups, intercommunal violence now accounts for the greater part of it, and it is increasingly directed towards civilians.<sup>15</sup>

Photo: Thomas White



### Our research

Our local research was carried out in Mopti region, in all eight administrative districts (*cercles*), and in three of the seven *cercles* of Ségou region (Niono, Ségou and Macina). In the past year, of 2,047 fatalities in Mali recorded by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data (ACLED) Project, approximately two-thirds of fatalities (1,364) occurred in the region of Mopti. Ségou region was more peaceful, but still recorded 155 deaths as a result of armed conflict.<sup>15</sup> While as a result of their local knowledge, the local researchers were able to safely

carry out interviews in all the *cercles* planned, certain areas had to be avoided because of militia attacks.<sup>16</sup>

Mopti region is roughly the size of Ireland, with a population of 2.8 million. Ségou is about 80% the size of Mopti, and with 1.7 million people is somewhat less densely populated. Central Mali is relatively prosperous and rich in natural resources. However, both regions have seen their populations grow by as much as a third in the last ten years<sup>17</sup>, putting a massive strain on



natural resources and traditional ways of life. There are three principal groups of natural resource users: Fulani (Peulh) herders; Dogon and Bambara farmers, and Bozo and Somono fishers. The subsistence systems used by these groups coexist and sometimes overlap, depending on the season.

However, our research suggests that while conflict over natural resources is common and increasing, **whether or not this conflict results in violence is dependent on external factors.** Those in Ségou region were more likely (91%) report conflict over natural resources than those in Mopti region (65%). However, fatalities as a result of these conflicts were twice as likely to occur in Mopti region as in Ségou region.<sup>18</sup>

This points to the fact that, in the absence of strong institutions, and in the presence of armed conflict, disputes over natural resources are more likely to become violent. In a 2012 study conducted in Mopti region, Benjaminsen et al. identified three structural factors as the most compelling drivers of violent conflict: agricultural encroachment leading to reduced mobility of herders; corruption and rent-seeking among government officials; and opportunistic behaviour of rural actors in an increasing political vacuum.<sup>19</sup> Weakened political control in the north and increasingly in Mopti region also allows for easier access to arms, which clearly plays a part in escalating natural resource conflict into fatal violence.<sup>20</sup>

Heightened conflict is clearly leading to greater food insecurity, too, and the two are mutually reinforcing. UNOHCA has estimated that almost 20% of villages of Mopti region were not able to carry out any, or very little, cultivation in 2019, leading to continuous food insecurity.<sup>21</sup> Both regions also have seen huge numbers of internally displaced people. Of those interviewed,

most were displaced within their own region, or into the neighbouring region, thus putting increasing pressure on already scarce resources. For the majority of those interviewed, the cause of this displacement was inter-communal violence, rather than specific weather-related events. However, some respondents pointed to the role that repeated cycles of drought and heavy rains played in contributing to conflict. *'The immediate cause [of our displacement] was the war; but it is linked to climate change' said one focus group participant. He went on to explain: 'the irregular and uneven rainfall has destroyed the vegetation and allowed the extension of farming land into pasture land; as a result, conflict between farmers and herders.'*

While official statistics in the two regions show that cereal production remained relatively constant, or even grew<sup>22</sup>, this does not keep pace with the rapidly rising population. 88% of our respondents indicated that yields in their villages have dropped over the past five years. Fishing yields have fallen<sup>23</sup>, with key informants citing the diversion of water for agriculture and electricity as factors.

Overall, two-thirds of our respondents felt that hardship due to natural resources (drought, flooding, lack of land and so on) had increased over the past five years. The increasing pressure on natural resources is having a disproportionate impact on **women**, according to research participants. Large numbers of participants mentioned that women were having to go further and further to access water points, and to search for firewood, exposing them to the threat of physical and sexual violence when far from home. Several women mentioned that they were being denied land on the grounds of tradition: *Because we are women, it is believed that tradition does not give us land rights.*

### What is being done to respond to challenges, and what more can be done?

Overall, 72% of those interviewed indicated that there had been some conflict over natural resources in their area. Conflicts were particularly common between herders and farmers, but also prevalent between different groups of farmers. Conflicts with fishers were less commonly cited.

88% of those interviewed said that there was some form of conflict resolution system available in their region. These systems were almost universally available in Ségou region (98%), but were also relatively common in Mopti region (83%). One member of a local conflict management committee defined the systems as falling into three categories: traditional conflict resolutions mechanisms; state systems, including rule of law and local courts; and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, largely introduced by NGOs. A majority of respondents reporting that conflict over natural resources had diminished in their area over the past five years. While we acknowledge that survey data with regard to perspectives on conflict can be flawed, this suggests that these systems are relatively functional – although, as noted above, disputes were twice as likely to end in fatalities in Mopti region where armed conflict is increasingly rife, than in relatively more peaceful Segou region.

However, far fewer respondents feel that there is a functioning system for the protection and maintenance. Only 54% of respondents said that there was a system for maintenance and protection of natural resources in place, and 52% that measures for prevention or adaptation to climate change were in place. Even where such systems and measures existed, participants often commented that they were either not fully functional, or lacking in sufficient resources to be truly effective.

There is major pressure on forests for firewood, and little in the way of reforestation. The head of forestry and water in Ségou region explained that illicit harvesting is widespread in each of the six major forests of the region, and that if this cannot be brought under control, the forests will slowly disappear.

One interviewee told us: *Because of the instability (in central Mali), the officials in charge of water, forestry and natural resources are no longer present (in our town) to protect the environmental and people. Therefore, various users are abusing natural resources.*

While it is encouraging that systems are in place to resolve conflicts over natural resources, the absence of systems to protect natural resources, or to adapt to climate change, reveals a gap in addressing the underlying issues, and underscores the need to better integrate climate adaptation, natural resource management and peacebuilding measures, as outlined in our recommendations. Some of our participants reported that climate change adaptation measures themselves had caused conflict in their communities. For example, participants mentioned disputes over proposed land usage or geographic limitations, disputes over reforestation projects on arable land or arguments over who is responsible for watering and maintaining the trees. Many of them, however, had concrete suggestions for preventing or resolving these disputes, usually involving a decision making process which includes all parties, and practical measures such as easier access to water, and more clearly defined rights to pasture.

Furthermore, the majority of participants (70%) indicated that adaptation measures had in fact worked well, leading to a better understanding between people. They offered further suggestions for what measures should be taken, and how they should be pursued in order to promote greater peace.

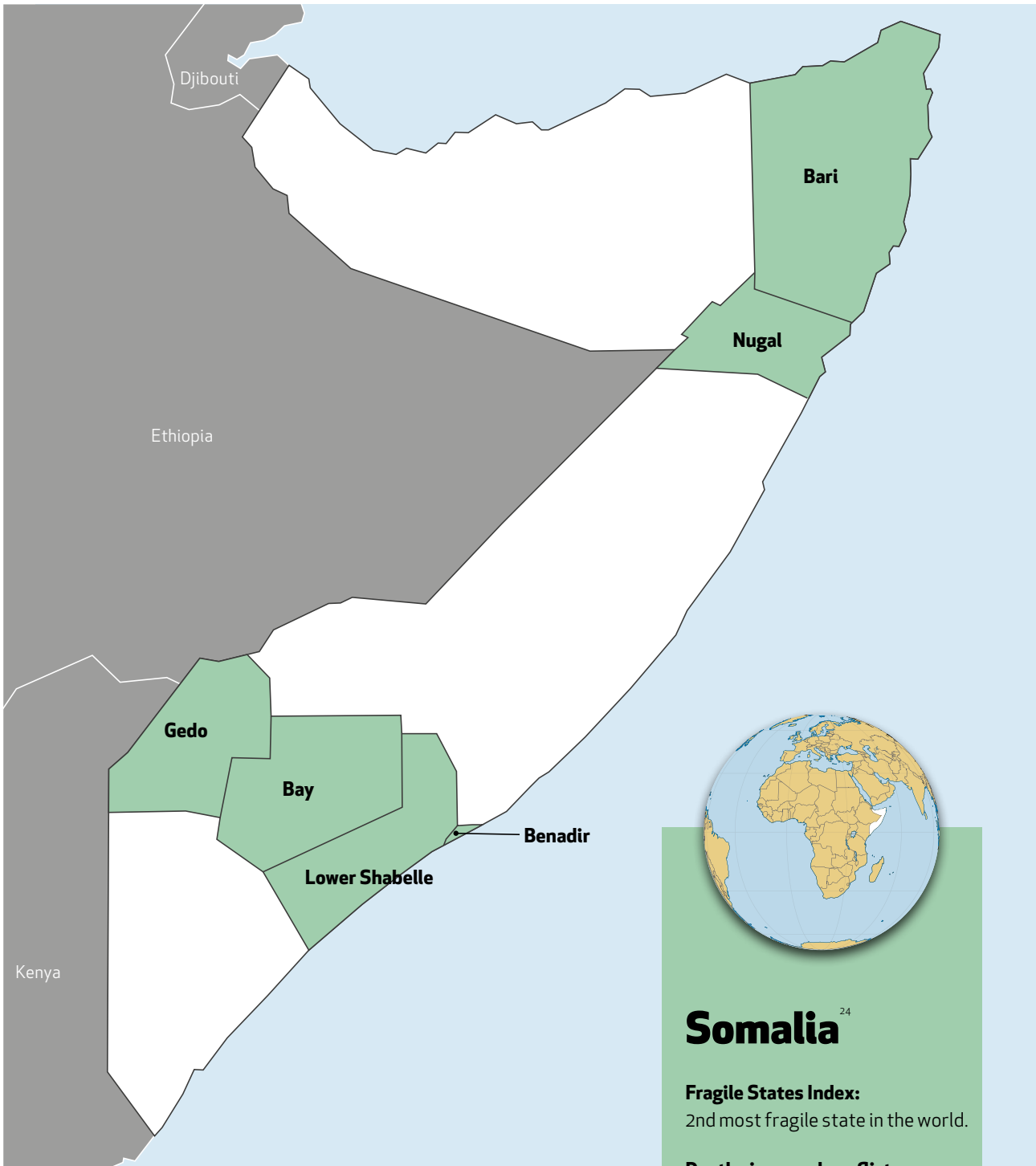
Several respondents pointed to the fact that measures should be managed locally, through a committee. Every group in society should be involved, and wide awareness campaigns should take place on each measure established. Participants felt that the role each person had to play should be clearly defined, and it was striking how often they referred to each person understanding the greater good of their actions, as well as their individual rights.

Photo: Thomas White



### Mali research: conclusion

As conflict, particularly intercommunal violence, continues to grip central Mali, it can be difficult to untangle conflict over natural resources with more politically motivated violence. As our research shows, however, climate- and resource-related conflict more frequently ends in violence in regions already experiencing armed conflict. The fact that just over half of respondents felt that there was a system in place to protect natural resources, or to adapt to climate change, is of particular concern, as without such systems, climate-related violence is even more likely to ensue. Our conversations with respondents on how to manage and put in place such systems, so that they do not cause further conflict but lead to greater understanding between groups of people, are reflected in our overall recommendations.



## Somalia<sup>24</sup>

**Fragile States Index:**  
2nd most fragile state in the world.

**Deaths in armed conflict:**  
3,720 in past twelve months

**Climate risks:** Prolonged droughts and flash floods; erratic rainfall, rising temperatures, cyclones, sandstorms and dust storms

**Life expectancy at birth:**  
57.1

# Somalia

## Background: climate and conflict

Somalia, situated in the Horn of Africa, is increasingly at the mercy of the compounded shocks of climate change and conflict. Always susceptible to extreme weather events, Somalia is being particularly badly hit by climate change. Catastrophic droughts that have struck Somalia several times over the past decade. In the drought of 2016-2017, 6.7 million people were affected and 92,000 people displaced.<sup>25</sup>

In 2019, the delayed onset of seasonal rains again exposed Somalia to drought. When the rains finally came, they fell in torrents, leading to catastrophic floods which displaced 370,000 people. Roads and farms were washed away while water bodies were contaminated, causing an increase in disease.<sup>26</sup> The hotter, wetter weather has also given rise to an unprecedented number of swarms of desert locusts since the beginning of 2020 in Somalia and across East Africa, causing catastrophic damage to crops which has led to Somalia declaring a national emergency in February 2020.

Climate change is clearly driving these catastrophes<sup>27</sup>, and such events will only increase in frequency and intensity. The IPCC predicts that the temperature will rise between 3.2 C and 4.3 C by the end of the century and the variability in rain pattern will increase.<sup>28</sup>

Aggravating the effects of these extreme weather events is Somalia's thirty years of armed conflict. Since the establishment of the Federal Government in 2012, efforts to rebuild a functioning state have been slow and subject to frequent setbacks,<sup>29</sup> and there are concerns that as the African Union peacekeeping mission, AMISOM, prepares for withdrawal, the Somali government will struggle to contain Al-Shabaab and

other armed opposition groups.<sup>30</sup> Somalia is still classified as the second most fragile state in the world, after Yemen, in the 2019 Fragile States Index.<sup>31</sup>

In 2018, the UN Security Council acknowledged for the first time the contribution of climate change to conflict in Somalia, noting: *the adverse effects of climate change, ecological changes and natural disasters among other factors on the stability of Somalia, including through drought, desertification, land degradation, and food insecurity.*<sup>32</sup>

The ongoing conflict has had a massive impact on the country's ability to cope with the effects of the climate emergency which are already being felt. A study by Brookings Institute in 2011, points out that, while the drought affected all of the Horn of Africa, it was only in Somalia that it led to widespread and deadly famine.<sup>33</sup> The longstanding violence had eroded Somali traditional coping mechanisms and aid agencies' efforts to provide famine relief and were further hampered by Al-Shabaab, which controlled the two regions where famine first struck.

Climate change has also had a detrimental effect on efforts to sustain peace. A recent study examined the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM), which is tasked with advising the Somali government on peacebuilding and state-building, and found that climate change has impeded UNSOM's progress in providing peace and security, and in helping to establish functioning institutions. However, the study also found that UNSOM is responding to these increasing challenges, learning by the failures of previous responses – in particular, the 2011 drought.<sup>34</sup>

## Our research

Our study was undertaken in six regions (*gobollada*) of Somalia: Bay, Bari, Benadir, Gedo, Lower Shabelle and Nugal regions. A total of 968 interviews were carried out, in addition to 18 focus groups and 35 key informant interviews.

Both conflict and climate shocks have led to widespread and prolonged **displacement** of people within Somalia, with approximately 17% of the population currently displaced.<sup>35</sup> Almost equal numbers of respondents in host communities, and in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) were interviewed.

Women were much more likely to be interviewed as head of their household in the IDP camps than in host communities. A personal story of how climate change and conflict can lead to catastrophe was recounted by one of our focus group participants: *[A] few years ago, we lost most of our livestock to drought in Bakool region of South West State and I then lost my husband. With 9 children to feed and given the Al-Shabaab restrictions on humanitarian aid to reach us, I moved to Mogadishu with my kids and now reside in IDP camp with no[t] much help. Every day I go out with my two youngest children to beg on the street of Mogadishu. That is how I put a meal on the table for my children”.*

Internally displaced women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence by armed men and civilians, with the UN Special Representative stressing that the cases are: “countless”, as victims are often invisible and inaccessible, with nowhere to report these crimes, and nowhere to turn.”<sup>36</sup>

We also asked participants to tell us what kind of extreme weather events they had experienced in recent years. Droughts and floods were the most commonly

cited climate related events experienced by participants, many noting that 2017 was particularly bad due to drought, and 2019 for floods. These events affected food productivity, with over 80% of participants reporting damage to farm yields as a result of changes in weather conditions. This impact on food security is compounded by damage to stored food crops – for example, one focus group highlighted the prevalence of aflatoxin contamination of poorly stored cereals in wet weather.

In the focus groups, most participants reported violent conflict in their area over the past five years, citing a long list of reasons, including climate events, intercommunal conflict and political conflict.

Access to water, and access to place of work (farmland or grazing grounds) were reported as the main causes of conflict over natural resources. These conflicts were more likely to be reported in years that experienced certain extreme weather events, specifically floods, droughts and landslides.

Focus group discussions cited particular instances where extreme weather events have exacerbated conflict. For example, focus groups in Puntland reported an increase in communal conflicts and insecurity in the coastal town of Eyl during the 2019 cyclone that led to a massive destruction of properties, farmlands, livestock and displacement of persons. Many respondents noted that the growing scarcity of natural resources, and increased displacement of people can cause local competition among local communities and lead to conflicts. They noted increased conflicts among herders and farmers in different locations due to a scarcity of pastures and water. For instance, violent conflict between two clans over the grazing land in Wanlaweyn district of Lower Shabelle region in South West State of Somalia led to



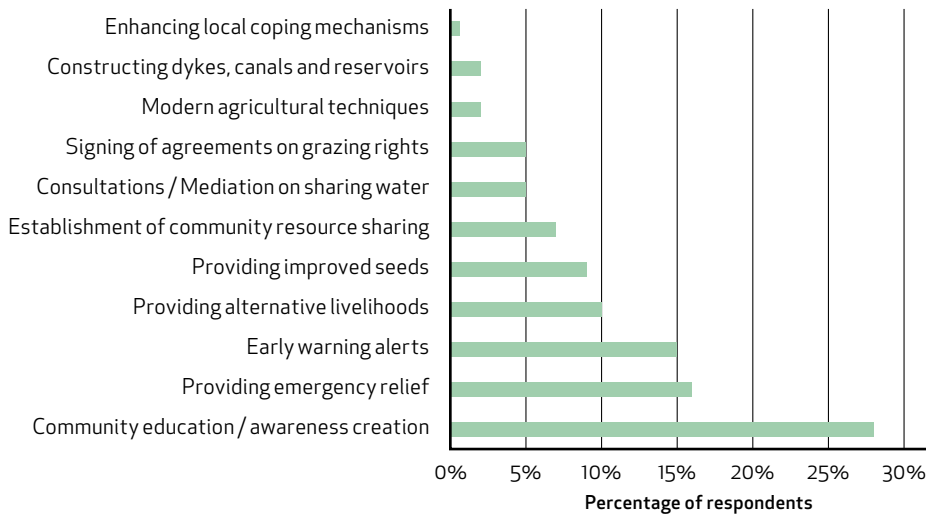
loss of lives and the massive displacement of people in mid-2018. This conflict has erupted again in late April 2020 and is ongoing. In Kismayo, violent conflict has also erupted between two clans in the outskirts of the town over land ownership. This conflict is currently ongoing and already a massive loss of lives and displacement has been reported.

Participants also cited the increased availability of small arms as exacerbating intercommunal conflict, as more armed clan groups encroach upon the land of other clans. One participant cited minority groups in Lower Shabelle who have lost their land to armed clan militias,

having to move to IDP camps in Afgoye and Mogadishu to seek humanitarian help.

Since the majority of the population are dependent on subsistence herding or farming, climate-related shocks leave most people without means to support themselves. Somali youth were cited as particularly vulnerable to recruitment into extremist groups, including Al-Shabaab, or into illicit activities including piracy. Over 70% of Somalia's population is under the age of thirty, and the unemployment rate for youth, at 67% is one of the highest in the world.<sup>37</sup>

### EFFORTS UNDERTAKEN TO ADDRESS WEATHER RELATED EVENTS



### What is being done to respond to challenges, and what more can be done?

Few of those interviewed reported systematic responses to address weather related events. One focus group respondent commented: *[Our] community can do nothing, [we are] IDPs*. Even among host communities, there were not many measures reported. The most commonly reported response was community education/awareness creation (28%), followed by emergency relief (16%) and early warning systems (15%). Systems which could resolve or prevent conflict over natural resources were rarer, only 7% of those interviewed reported community resource sharing committee, 5% reported mediation over water sharing, and 5% agreements over grazing rights. Only 0.6% of participants reported efforts to enhance local coping mechanisms (see graph above).

Focus groups and key informants confirmed the low level of climate action. They noted, in particular, that the lack of resources to establish climate forecasting infrastructure, and the lack of expertise amongst government officials has hindered their capacity to predict and mitigate climate related disasters. They also felt that federal and state governments are focusing primarily on security sector reform, reconstruction of government institutions, and establishment of local

government services, paying less attention to climate change action. As climate change related events are already hindering efforts to establish such institutions, and it is vitally important that measures to address climate change be considered as an integral part of government services and institutions, rather than as a second priority.

Some instances of climate action creating conflict were also reported by focus groups. For example, two focus groups in Baidoa, in South West State reported conflict between two groups of farmers, over the location of proposed construction of dykes and canals. The conflict was solved by the South West State Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with influential traditional elders.

In general, however, focus groups and key informants felt that most measures created a better understanding between different groups of people, rather than creating further conflict. An important condition for the success of intercommunal climate action measures was reported to be the extensive sharing of information and awareness with the communities involved.



Photo: Håvard Bjelland



### Somalia research: conclusion

Our research clearly corresponded with the increasingly acknowledged view that the challenges of climate change and conflict in Somalia are mutually exacerbating and difficult to combat. However, our participants are, as of yet, seeing few concrete measures to tackle climate change adaptation on the ground – measures which are urgently needed in order to avert some of the increasingly catastrophic climate events which threaten to destabilise an already fragile governance and infrastructure. How can we begin to tackle these compounded problems? Some recommendations arising from our research are offered in the following section.

Photo: Thomas White



## Conclusion

An early draft of this report began with the words: ‘Climate change is the defining challenge of our times’. Now, with the coronavirus pandemic sweeping the world, it seems that our times are defined by not one, but two major crises and threats to human security.

As pandemic restrictions drive down emissions, however, dreams of ‘building back better’ are beginning to multiply.<sup>38</sup> With the struggle against COVID 19 being compared to a war, UN climate envoy Mark Carney has said we must also ‘win the peace’, by addressing the equally serious threat of climate change.<sup>39</sup> Nowhere is this more urgent than in conflict affected countries such as Mali and Somalia, where conflict and climate change disasters exacerbate and mutually reinforce each other.

During our research, we asked people ‘What would you like to say to the governments of the world?’ One interviewee responded: *‘that those who have power think of the less strong’*.

There are no simple solutions to tackling the twin challenges of climate change and conflict. However, ‘those who have the power’ are also those who are principally responsible, through carbon emissions, for so much of the additional suffering as a result of climate change disasters in the global South. It is incumbent upon us, therefore, to do everything we can to alleviate this suffering.

Photo: Håvard Bjelland



## Recommendations

### 1. Governments and donors need to urgently prioritise climate change adaptation for the most vulnerable, especially in fragile and conflict-affected countries.

There is still a tendency in the global North to talk about the ‘threat’ of climate change, as if it were a future catastrophe which was still in our power to avert. It is painfully clear from our respondents, however, that the catastrophe is taking place right now. As one interviewee told us: *‘Climate change is a reality and we are living it. We have neither the means to prevent it, nor appropriate solutions to adapt to it.’* For example, in late 2019 and early 2020 in Somalia, extended drought gave way to torrential floods, which in turn created the conditions for an unprecedented outbreak of desert locusts. The absence of climate change adaptation measures was pointed to by some of our internally displaced respondents as contributing to these disasters. These climate disasters compound with violent conflict, to put huge pressure on an already fragile state.

Only about a fourth of climate finance flows to developing countries goes to adaptation measures and of this, only a fraction goes to conflict-affected contexts.<sup>40</sup> Donors need to look at utilising both climate change funding streams, and peacebuilding funding streams, to tackle climate change adaptation in a way which not only is conflict sensitive and does no harm, but includes decision making structures which can resolve conflicts peacefully.

### 2. Climate change adaptation should be locally led, with decision-making devolved to local committees where possible. Donors can contribute to this by allowing for greater decentralisation of climate change and peacebuilding funding streams, and greater interplay between the two. Implementing organisations, including local authorities, should strive to involve the community in an inclusive manner.

Evidently, there is a need for overarching adaptation plans at national and regional level. However, where there is implementation at local level, climate change adaptation should be locally planned and managed for a number of reasons. Firstly,

adaptation measures must be context-specific – what works in one area will not necessarily work in another, and so local expertise is required. Secondly, local ownership and management of climate action can help to mitigate against the loss of agency experienced by people who suffer climate related shocks, such as drought and floods. And thirdly, conflict is also context-specific – it requires local knowledge to understand where disputes over proposed management of resources are likely to arise.

A certain amount of caution needs to be exercised here. Several respondents in Mali referred to corruption and self-interest among local officials, and previous work has also identified this as a strong contributing factor to conflict in central Mali.<sup>41</sup> *‘There should be more surprise controls [of] local authorities who are supposed to protect natural resources instead of contributing to their degradation in their own interests’* suggested one focus group member in Mali. However, a large number of respondents in both Mali and Somalia emphasised the importance of community leaders and volunteers in leading on climate adaptation, and resolving disputes over natural resources. As one interviewee told us: *‘The initiative should come from the community, we should build inclusive dialogue in the community’*

If local authorities can work together with community committees to make decisions, this may help to build trust and accountability. For example, IIED are currently working with governments in Kenya, Mali, Senegal and Tanzania to support local climate adaptation planning through decentralised funding. In Mali, local adaptation committees embedded within the existing commune-level planning system have been established. These are composed of both local government representatives and community representatives with the latter chosen by villages through a public vetting system.<sup>42</sup>

### 3. Implementers should ensure the involvement of women, youth and vulnerable people in decision-making, using locally appropriate strategies to overcome discrimination.

We asked our respondents about which groups might be particularly affected by climate change and violent conflict. For example, where men have joined armed groups or fallen victim to violence, women are increasingly likely to find themselves in sole charge of providing for a family; but are often excluded from access to land. One woman in Mopti region, Mali told us: *‘There is not much land, so the officials hide behind custom to say that women don’t have the right to land’*. Some non-state armed actors are also actively discouraging public participation by women in certain areas, a fact mentioned by some of our interviewees, but which also contributed to a poor gender balance in our own research in Mali.

In both Somalia and Mali, high unemployment and land scarcity not only leave youth with little to do, and few options, particularly when harvests fail, but also often preclude them being treated as full adults well into their majority. To borrow a quote from another report, Mercy Corps’ study of youth in Mali quoted one young man as saying: *‘The elderly are included in decision-making first, and they inform us afterwards. They think that we are children and that we must listen to our elders first.’*<sup>43</sup>

This high unemployment and lack of agency makes young men particularly susceptible to recruitment by armed groups. Our respondents highlighted that some climate change adaptation activities, such as reforestation, could provide gainful employment to young people.

For both youth and internally displaced persons, inclusion in decision-making processes could serve to mitigate the frustration at the voicelessness that they experience. The frustration amongst internally displaced persons was palpable: *[Our] community can do nothing, [we are] internally displaced people, we were told by one focus group member in Somalia.*

Various forms of discrimination are systemic in conflict zones, and planned interventions need to be fully aware of the potential for entrenching discrimination through adaptation measures.<sup>44</sup> It is crucial, therefore, that all groups are not only included, but empowered to become active members of the decision-making process. For example, previous programming by NCA in Mali acted to counter barriers to female participation in local peacebuilding structures, using female-only groupings as a starting point in some areas, and introducing a fusion of literacy and peacebuilding training for women and youth in NCA's larger peacebuilding programme.<sup>45</sup>

#### 4. Implementing partners should strive to ensure that all groups, including the most vulnerable, understand more clearly their role in the process.

Interviews with internally displaced persons revealed the loss of agency and move to dependency on others which climate related disasters can provide. One focus group member in Somalia told us: *Me and my family are displaced from Beledweyne after the floods destroyed our houses and farming land....I moved with family to Mogadishu to access help from organizations and other well-wishers.*

While interviewing members of armed groups was beyond the scope of this research, other research has shown that the loss of control brought on by climate events and loss of livelihood can leave people feeling they have less to lose by participating in violence or joining armed groups.<sup>46</sup> This loss of agency can be mitigated not only by a sense of control through local ownership of climate solutions, but a sense that one's actions have the power for much greater impact.

When asked what actions should be taken to manage natural resources and climate threats, and how they should be managed, a large number of respondents in our research referred to promoting understanding of each group and individual's role in the process. This encompassed not only the rights of each group and individual, but also their specific responsibilities, and understanding of how their efforts contribute to the greater good, in terms of both local and wider climate management.

As one respondent put it: *[Everyone] should understand that to take an interest in climate change, is to save humanity.'*

## Appendix 1: Methodology

This report is based on original research commissioned by DanChurchAid, Norwegian Church Aid and ACT Alliance in Mali and Somalia, supported by an extensive review of the literature on climate change and conflict.

Research in Mali and Somalia was carried out by local consultants responding to a call for tenders. While the call for tenders contained the same guiding questions, the methods and tools were determined by local circumstances, differing needs at field office level, and the expertise and capacity of the respective consultants.

In both cases, a larger scale, mostly quantitative household survey was conducted, together with a smaller number of focus groups and key informant interviews. Statistics cited from the research are produced on the basis of the household surveys, with the focus groups and key informant interviews providing qualitative information and context. The household survey was 2.5 times larger in Somalia than Mali, and covered a greater number of regions. The methodology in Mali, however, allowed for some qualitative material to be gathered during the interview process.

Limitations of the report include not being able to visit certain areas in both countries as planned, because of security risks. While this was necessary to protect our teams, it meant that the views of those who perhaps were most affected were not included. Secondly, we acknowledge the difficulties of carrying out a report on perceptions of conflict and peace in conflict affected areas, where participants may not feel empowered to voice their thoughts openly.

### Mali

Research in Mali was carried by Yoli Consulting, led by director Sidi Guindo. A team of five enumerators were trained and deployed, carrying out research between 21st January and 10th March 2020. The data was collected by tablet, and sent directly to the lead consultant and a data analyst.

A total of 369 interviews were carried out, 240 in Mopti region, and 129 in Ségou region. Interviews were carried

out in all of the eight administrative cercles of Mopti region, and in three of the seven cercles of Ségou region (Niono, Ségou and Macina). A total of 234 men and 135 women were interviewed, and the age profile ranged from 18 to 77.

35 focus groups were conducted with specific groups of people with 260 persons participating in total. These groups included: village, community and religious leaders; women's and youth groups; internally displaced persons and peasant organisations. 25 focus groups were carried out in Mopti region and 10 in Ségou region. Key informant interviews were also carried out with village and community leaders, national officials and international organisations.

### Somalia

Research in Somalia was carried out by Beemark Consulting, led by executive director Abdullahi Rashid Abdullahi. A total of 29 enumerators, including seven supervisors, were employed, carrying out field research between 18th February - 9th March 2020.

The study was undertaken in Bay, Bari, Benadir, Gedo, Lower Shabelle and Nugal regions of Somalia Republic. A total of 968 interviews were carried out. 510 interviews were conducted in the host community and 458 from the IDP camps. While almost exactly as many men as women participated in interviews in the host communities, female respondents accounted for 78% of responses amongst internally displaced people, leading to an overall gender balance of 63% female, 37% male. The average age of female respondents was very similar among host communities and IDPs (39 years), but was considerably younger for male IDPs (36 years) as against male host community members (44 years).

18 focus groups were also conducted and 35 key informants from various government agencies, United Nations, INGOs and local national agencies directly dealing with climate change impact, conflict, and peace and mitigation mechanism.



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