

Climate change, Conflict, and Institutional Fragility in the Arab Region:
Deconstructing the complexity for effective policy responses.

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Item 10: Responding to the effects of climate change in institution building efforts in fragile countries and countries emerging from conflict.

While climate change affects all countries, fragile and conflict-affected countries are among the most exposed. The prevalence of conflict and fragility in the Arab region indicates potential low capacity to adapt to and cope with climate impacts and moderate the potential for increased risk of conflict. At the same time, the region is increasingly exposed to more severe, frequent, and intense climate hazards. Considering these compound challenges, investigating the different trends and projections that may fuel increased risk from the climate-conflict nexus is particularly relevant.

In fact, in recent years, the Arab Region has experienced increasing and more intense climate and extreme weather events. Climate hazards, such as prolonged droughts in Iraq, Syria and Somalia, extreme flooding in the Sudan, sea level rise in Egypt, and sand and dust storms in the Gulf states are some examples. At the same time, the region is suffering from protracted conflicts and fragility.

While the 2022 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report on Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability found no direct causal link between climate change and conflict, there are nevertheless different pathway dynamics linking one to the other.² A framework proposing such

¹ This presentation is based on the work by an ESCWA multi-disciplinary inter-division team led by the Governance and Conflict Prevention Division. The full report is forthcoming under the title: Trends and Impacts in Conflict Settings No. 7: Addressing climate security risks in the Arab region. 2023.

² IPCC (2022)

pathways between climate change and conflict was, for example, proposed in a report by the Secretary General in 2009.³ A recent joint publication between PRIO-Uppsala and ESCWA identifies specific transmission mechanisms from climate risk to conflict risk.⁴ At the same time, conflict may also exacerbate environmental degradation and increase vulnerability to climate impacts, as well as reduce the ability to adapt and cope with the impacts. The combined challenges may thus create “vicious vulnerability and conflict traps.”⁵

Whether or not climate risk translates to conflict risk depends on people and institutions. In other words, the resilience of people and society and the capacity, effectiveness, or quality of institutions to cope with the climate shocks figure prominently in reducing the risks associated with climate change and preventing such risk in exacerbating drivers of conflict. Indeed, countries that have limited economic, social, and institutional resources and capacities, are often also highly vulnerable with low adaptive capacity. States experiencing conflict are likely to be lacking in economic, social, and institutional resources, thus exposing them to greater climate risks with limited possibilities to adapt.

Arab states already suffer from severe and worsening structural water scarcity that leaves more than 392 million people in the region, nearly four times the population of Egypt, with less than 1,000 cubic meters of fresh water per person per year. At the same time, several conflicts in the region remain ongoing and protracted in nature. These conflicts impair the ability of member states in the region to respond to the challenge of climate change by consuming much needed financial and other resources and exacerbating environmental degradation.

Although the intensity of conflicts in the Arab region has been declining compared to the peak in 2014, the number of forcibly displaced people has continued to rise. This indicates that the conditions for return are unfavorable, potentially due to unresolved socio-economic and political ramifications of conflict, as well as the threat of violence and persecution. The Arab region hosts 31% of all conflict-induced internally displaced people globally, while it only represents 2% of

³ United Nations General Assembly (2009)

⁴ Uppsala-PRIO and ESCWA (2021)

⁵ UNDP [\(2022\)](#)

the world population.⁶ In Palestine, displaced people represent close to half of the population, while in Syria they represent over a third and in Jordan slightly less than a third. Lebanon, Somalia, Yemen, and the Sudan also have relatively high shares of displaced people.

As populations are displaced, they often lose their assets and livelihoods. In most cases they reside in poor areas, which in turn places further pressure on host communities that may be already struggling and who have limited if any access to basic services and infrastructure.⁷ Displaced people are particularly vulnerable, as they tend to be at high risk of physical attacks, are frequently deprived of shelter, food, and health services, and have reduced socio-economic opportunities, as they face barriers and obstacles in accessing labour markets.⁸ Relief agencies play an important role in providing such vulnerable communities with humanitarian aid.

Figure 1: Displaced People in Population in 2021 (%)

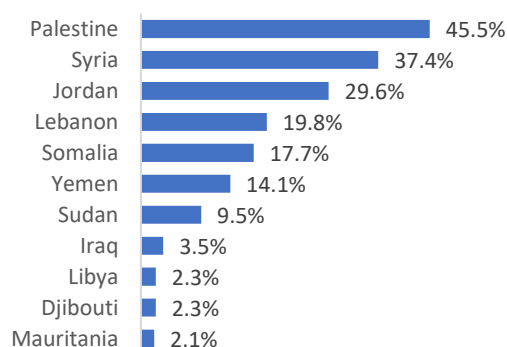
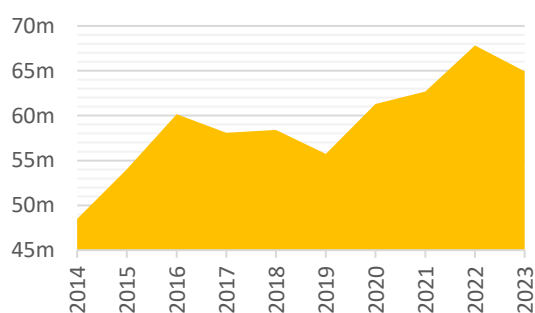


Figure 1: People in need of humanitarian aid in the Arab region (in millions)



Note: Countries included are Iraq (HRP 2014-2022), Lebanon (ERP 2020-2023), Libya (HRP 2015-2022), Palestine (HRP 2014-2023), Somalia (HRP 2014-2023), Sudan (HRP 2014-2015, 2017-2023), Syria (HRP 2014-2023), Yemen (HRP 2014-2023). Plans are published on a yearly basis; Regional Refugee Response Plans have not been included

Source: authors' calculations based on OCHA

⁶ ESCWA calculations based on data retrieved from UNFPA and IDMC (Stock conflict displacement variable used from dataset)

⁷ World Bank (n.d. c)

⁸ World Bank (2017); (OHCHR) (n.d.)

Note: Displaced people comprise of UNHCR and UNRWA refugees, and disaster- and conflict-induced IDPs. Countries where it is less than 0.5% have been excluded.

Source: authors' calculations based on refugee data from UNHCR's Refugee Data Finder (accessed in November 2022); IDP "stock" data from IDMC's Global Internal Displacement Database (accessed in November 2022), and population data from UNFPA's World Population Dashboard (accessed in November 2022).

As the Arab region is characterized by protracted conflicts, in addition to climate shocks, a significant number of people are in need of humanitarian aid. In 2023, about 65 million people are estimated to need humanitarian aid, the highest number in the last 10 years with the exception of 2022. Humanitarian response plans have been initiated in several Arab countries to save lives, alleviate human suffering, and maintain human dignity. Countries with such response plans include Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. Since the conflicts and crises in these countries remain protracted in nature, this ultimately creates a vulnerable population that is dependent on humanitarian assistance for survival. This dependency is likely to continue to increase in the future as more people are affected by climate-related impacts, as evidenced by the fact that the highest number of people in need of humanitarian aid are concentrated in Yemen, Syria, Sudan, and Somalia, which are also among the countries that are most vulnerable to climate change-related crisis.

Despite the decline in absolute fatalities compared to 2014, fragility and insecurity remains in much of the Arab region. Perceptions of the risk of political instability and politically motivated violence remain relatively negative in most of the Arab region, This indicates that there is a relatively negative perception in most Arab countries, though perceptions of political instability and violence are, unsurprisingly, particularly negative in countries suffering from conflict. Within the region, 11 countries are considered fragile either by the World Bank or OECD.⁹ In addition to the countries in conflict, this includes Lebanon, which is affected by nearby conflicts, as well as Comoros, Djibouti, and Mauritania, with the latter two only considered to be fragile contexts by the OECD. While definitions vary between the two, they both include a focus on institutional and social challenges. According to the World Bank, fragile countries are those with the weakest institutional and policy environment, or that have other indications of instability and insecurity, while the OECD also includes additional dimensions to determine fragility.¹⁰ That half of all Arab

⁹ OECD (2022); World Bank (n.d. a)

¹⁰ For the World Bank definition see World Bank (n.d. a); for the OECD see OECD (2022)

countries are considered to struggle with fragility according to at least one definition is indicative of the multitude of challenges facing the region, particularly related to governance, institutions, and insecurity.¹¹

Indeed, the Arab region has the highest governance challenges among different world regions according to ESCWA's World Development Challenges Report.¹² Around two thirds of Arab countries (15 out of 22) face high or very high challenges in terms of governance. Government effectiveness, regulatory quality and rule of law all provide indications about the state of governance and institutions. These are seen relatively negative in several Arab countries compared to other countries in the world, indicating remaining challenges in ensuring good governance and efficient institutions.

Structural vulnerabilities in the Arab region

Systems, Institutions, Governance:

Crisis of state institutions and erosion of trust in institutions form a dangerous dynamic in the Arab region. The presence of weak and ineffective institutional structures in the Arab region can be traced to a history of weak governance structures brought about by the inadequacies of the governance model that was prevalent pre-2011. The social movements initiated in 2011 held the promise of a wave of transitions to rule-of-law based polities throughout the region, however in some countries the breakdown of the old order led to chaos and protracted armed conflict: Libya, Iraq, Syria and Yemen. While in others the results are rather limited and at best consist of a limited set of reforms and constitutional amendments.

2011-2023: A difficult period for SDG 16 in the Arab Region. To compound the complexity of the situation of the region, conflict and violence have been exacerbated and fuelled by these factors, together with geopolitical factors, contributing to the high level of armed conflict and

¹¹ International Security Sector Advisory Team (ISSAT) (n.d.); Economic Research Forum (n.d.)

¹² ESCWA (2022c), p. 49-50

violence that the Arab region has experienced between the years 2010 and 2019. In analytic terms, causes of conflict in the region are wide and diverse; they include inter alia, democratic deficits, poor governance, weak institutions, human rights issues, chronic poor socio-economic development, youth unemployment, inequality among territories, global and regional geopolitical dynamics, etc. Many of the root causes of the 2011 uprisings have not been solved. Therefore, similar events are most likely to be repeated in the region if the root causes remain unaddressed.

Rising structural inequalities. The Arab region is arguably one of the most unequal regions in the world by computing distributional national accounts, where they combine household survey data, national accounts, income tax revenues and information on the highest earning percentiles. Inequality is observed at both within- and cross-country levels; the geographic distribution of oil resources and the skewness of income distribution toward its extremes are considered to be key cause and predictors of conflict and structural underdevelopment. High levels of inequality may further facilitate terrorist recruitment and mobilization, which poses long-term threats to the whole region.

Structural governance deficiencies severely constrain Arab states' capacities to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. By not addressing grievances, dysfunctional institutions have turned into drivers of instability and conflict because they undermined two fundamental attributes of a peace and stability: the vertical trust citizens have in the State and the horizontal trust citizens have between themselves. When institutions fail to uphold these two links, which represent the basis of the social contract and the foundation which sustains peace, conflict can ensue. As a matter of fact, structural governance deficiencies and the resulting conflicts and instability have severely reduced the capacities of Arab states to focus on achieving inclusive and sustainable development for their peoples. Worse yet, negative trends as well as regional spillovers and generational life-cycle negative impacts continue to represent a stumbling block for the realization of the 2030 Agenda in many countries of the Arab region.

COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing institutional deficiencies. The socio-economic consequences of COVID-19 has compounded existing challenges and threats to number of states in the region. The pandemic has laid bare structural weaknesses in institutions at the national and regional levels. Its economic effects have unleashed further contraction even as the health threats

receded, especially hitting the most vulnerable groups in the region, the poor, the working poor, women...etc. Besides those areas where the health infrastructure is weak and lacks sanitation and water, populations living in areas affected by protracted humanitarian crises and conflict, in which millions of people, migrants, refugees are on the move, are suffering the most. Self-quarantine and social distancing are not feasible options for these categories of population. Daily wage workers have lost their livelihoods due to the confinement and the closure of the economy.

As a result of all these compounded factors and the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Arab states will most likely face severe challenges in the coming decade, and as a result have a high degree of risk when it comes to political instability and due in large part to systemic socio-economic inequalities, exclusion and people's disenfranchisement, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic. These risks are less situated in the distant future than it seems, since all risks are linked directly to pre-existing structural problems. Issues related to institutional weakness, slow governance reforms, social justice, strengthening public institutions' role in socio-economic development, while ensuring their accountability frameworks, lacking long-term vision, and ad-hoc fragmented approaches to structural problems (e.g. to economic growth issues exclusively without inclusive sustainable development, with citizens at the center) are all likely to make matters worse in the medium- to long-term.

Climate trends in the Arab Region

The Arab region is seeing some of the highest temperature increases globally, rising by twice the global average since the 1990's.¹³ According to projections by ESCWA's Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR), projected temperature change for the region between 2016 and 2035, with a midpoint in 2025, shows an increase of approximately 0.5 – 0.75 °C compared to the reference period (1986-2005). Some areas within the Sudan, Iraq and Syria will see temperature increases as high as 1 to 1.25 °C .

¹³ Duenwald et al. (2022). Please note that the report refers to the Middle East and Central Asia, thus encompassing parts and not all of the Arab region, as well as extending beyond.

At the same time, extreme weather events have already become more common and destructive, and are expected to continue to increase in frequency, duration and intensity as a result of global warming.¹⁴ As presented in the last 10 years have seen the highest number of natural disasters in the Arab region compared to previous decades. This is similarly true for the number of people affected as shown in. 2021 was a record year in terms of the number of people affected by such disasters in the region, with a total of over 13 million people. This is almost double the amount of people affected compared to the previous highest year, 2015, with around 9.7 million affected.

During the past decade, the highest share of people impacted by natural disasters were concentrated in Somalia, Sudan, and Iraq, all of which struggle with weakened institutions, and significant numbers of forcibly displaced and humanitarian aid-dependent people due to protracted conflict. These fragile countries are facing the dual challenges of conflict and climate change, thus reducing their ability to respond or adapt to such climate hazards. Extreme temperatures, floods, and droughts are the climate hazards that tend to impact the most people in the region.¹⁵ As such, a deep dive into the trends and projected risks of these hazards is provided below.

Floods

Floods have historically been the hazard that causes the most displacement in the Arab region.¹⁶ In 2021, according to EM-DAT, 13 different flood disaster events occurred within the Arab region, with over 1 million people impacted.¹⁷ Flooding in the Sudan has been particularly severe in the last several years. As of September 2022, 349,000 people across the country have been affected by floods with at least 24,800 homes destroyed and 48,200 damaged in 16 out of 18 states.¹⁸ Flood risks vary significantly between countries. Egypt is one of the countries with the highest exposure to flood risk globally, both in terms of total number of people and share of population exposed. This is due to a significant portion of the population living in the Nile River basin and Delta area, which is particularly vulnerable to sea level rise and flooding. Several countries in the region that

¹⁴ IPCC (2021)

¹⁵ Data source: EM-DAT, Cred / UC Louvain

¹⁶ UNDRR (2021)

¹⁷ Authors' calculations based on EM-DAT / Cred, UC Louvain

¹⁸ <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/sudan/card/TjQEjK9aMe/>

suffer from protracted violence also have a large share of population exposed to high flood risk, particularly Iraq (36.8%), as well as the Sudan (20.6%), Somalia (16.6%) and Syria (13.4%).¹⁹

Looking into the future, RICCAR data projects areas where increased precipitation could lead to flooding. In comparison to a reference period of 1986-2005, by mid-century the number of days where daily precipitation will exceed the 90th percentile precipitation will increase in areas of Somalia during the dry season (April-September). While at the time of writing, Somalia was confronting a multi-year drought, it's important to note that floods can happen and can be particularly catastrophic during drought conditions due to the inability of the dry earth to absorb precipitation and thus high levels of runoffs. Somalia, as well as other countries in conflict and post conflict settings, faces a particularly concerning flood risk given the compound challenges of conflict and low adaptive capacity.

Droughts

In 2021 alone, three droughts in Iraq, Somalia and Syria affected 16.6 million people in the region and were the driver behind the record number of people impacted by natural disasters that year.²⁰ Through their ability to affect agricultural output and food supply, droughts have the potential to impact particularly large numbers of people and settlements. According to RICCAR projections, droughts are likely to worsen through the mid-century. Change in the maximum length of dry spell will increase by three to 12 days across the region during the dry season (April-September). In Iraq, Syria and the Arabian Peninsula, there will be increases in the length of dry spells in both the rainy and dry seasons. This will impact access to drinking water, irrigation and thus, growing seasons and livelihoods across the region.

Climate-related security risks

As the region is experiencing the dual challenges of climate change and conflict, it is particularly exposed to the compounded risks associated with the climate-conflict nexus. Building on the framework developed by Uppsala-PRIO and ESCWA,²¹ **four key channels for the transmission of climate-related security risks have been elaborated. These are loss of livelihoods, resource**

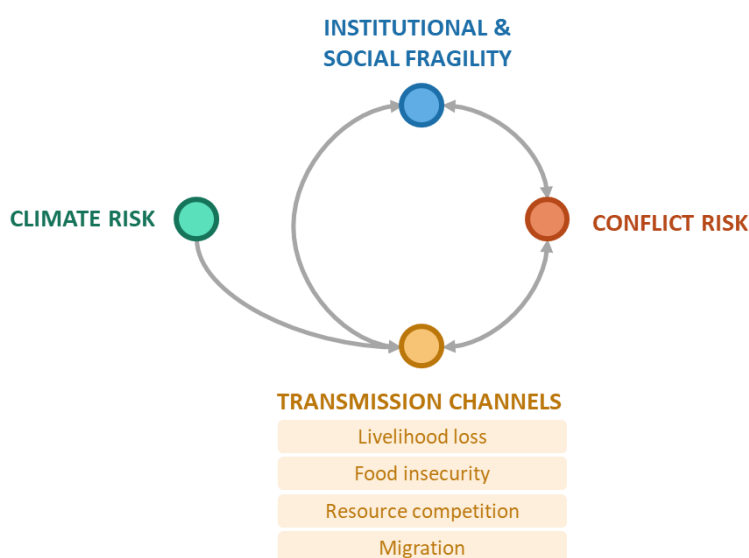
¹⁹ Rentschler et al. (2022a); Rentschler et al. (2022b)

²⁰ Authors calculations based on EM-DAT/UC Louvain

²¹ For further details on the framework, please see Uppsala-PRIO and ESCWA (2021)

competition, food insecurity, and migration, all of which are likely to be affected by climate change and may contribute to an increase in the risk of conflict. At the same time, conflict can also affect these transmission channels, as well as increase institutional and social fragility and increase vulnerability to climate impacts. The figure below illustrates this relationship between climate risk, which is a product of exposure and vulnerability to climate hazards, the four transmission channels, institutional and social fragility, and conflict risk. In conflict-affected and fragile contexts, negative feedback loops from climate-related security risks thus have the potential to trigger a downward spiral of climate disasters and conflict.²² However, an increased risk of conflict is not inevitable, but depends on people, institutions, and governance.

Figure 2: Potential linkages between climate and conflict risk



Source: Authors, adapted from Uppsala-PRIO & ESCWA (2021)

The importance of institutions and good governance

Governance and institutions affect the capacity to respond to, adapt to and cope with climate risk, and have the potential to moderate tensions arising through the different risk channel. Indeed, institutions can serve as the “immune system” of a society.²³ The 2022 IPCC report on Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability (AR6) finds that poor institutional planning and responses are key

²² UN DPPA et al. (2020)

²³ World Bank (2011)

determinants of violence and conflict in the context of climate impacts, with inequitable responses exacerbating known drivers such as marginalization, exclusion, and disenfranchisement of groups.²⁴ Institutions perform a variety of functions that determine a community's adaptive and coping capacity, including providing leadership, policy implementation, service delivery, resource mobilization and dissemination, and information gathering and dissemination. Moreover, good governance and institutions are also key to facilitate sustainable development and reduce fragility and vulnerability.

There are significant governance challenges in the Arab region, Institutions and governance have been weakened due to protracted conflict and may be characterised by corruption, weak rule of law, and limited capacity, challenging their ability to facilitate adaptation, alleviate the grievances faced by the population due to climate impacts, and reduce the risk of violence. While the breakdown of state institutions and the social contract between the state and citizens are common features in countries emerging from conflict, restoring them is critical. Indeed, “good governance and quality institutions significantly reduce the risk of conflict recurring.”²⁵ Thus, for the most fragile countries and those in conflict settings, the climate-conflict nexus as well as institution building should be addressed as part of a stabilization framework addressing the humanitarian and protection needs of the civilian population, as well as recovery, conflict resolution and peacebuilding – notably the triple nexus approach. Invariably in conflict-affected states, there are limited resources, policy space and institutional capacity. Planning horizons and institutional and community perspectives tend to be short and narrow, focusing on the most urgent needs and making it difficult to engage in mid to long term strategy development. Efforts must thus be made to anchor policies in the local context, ensure sensitivity to pre-existing or existing tensions, and to avoid widening social cleavages.

Other countries in the region, despite not suffering from conflict and fragility, may nevertheless struggle with wider governance and development challenges that affect their capacity to mitigate risks within the climate-conflict nexus. In such countries, policies, and strategies to mitigate risk may need to be placed within a framework of reform, where social, economic, and political

²⁴ IPCC (2022)

²⁵ Hanna et al. (2021)

transformation is tailored to accommodate climate and conflict risk, as well as wider efforts to improve governance and strengthen institutions. Building capacities is essential for effective governance. Institutions need sufficient expertise, resources, and tools to be able to perform their functions effectively.²⁶ This can be facilitated by strengthening the competence of the institutions. Training of public officials, ensuring meritocratic hiring, education, as well as investing in the institutional infrastructure needed for delivering public services and implementing policies can all contribute to increase capacities. Strengthening subnational institutions and governance systems may also be important, especially in contexts where these are weakened.

Improving transparency, inclusivity, and accountability is also important both to build trust in state institutions, improve their effectiveness, as well as to strengthen the social contract between state and citizens. Engaging and including the public at the municipal level or in parliamentary work is one opportunity for facilitating inclusivity and participation. This may include creating a culture of engagement where members interact with the community and processes are opened for more public involvement.²⁷ To avoid leaving anyone behind, it is important to eliminate barriers to participation, proactively seek to engage different groups and mainstream women's engagement.

Oversight is key to reduce corruption, promote transparency, accountability, and to ensure good governance. Both parliaments and Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) can provide such an oversight function.²⁸ Independent and capable SAIs may, for example, have the power to examine public processes and results, issue evaluations and recommendations. However, when subject to undue political influence and lack of resources, access to information, or ability to enforce compliance with findings, their ability to perform such key functions may be compromised.²⁹ Ensuring the independence and providing sufficient resources for SAIs can thus be an important aspect of promoting transparency, accountability, and good governance. The role and ability of parliaments to provide oversight varies between countries and depends on constitutional mandates, political space and processes, resources, time, conflicting incentives, and information gaps.³⁰ Other

²⁶ United Nations Economic and Social Council (2018)

²⁷ IPU and UNDP (2022)

²⁸ UN DESA (2019)

²⁹ World Bank (2021a)

³⁰ UN DESA (2019)

institutions can also have an important role to play, such as anti-corruption bodies, ombudsmen, and in the enforcement of anti-corruption strategies and laws.

Transparency and accountability can also be promoted through inclusive sharing of information, which may include proactive disclosure and publication of government data, depending on what, how and why it is released.³¹ Open access to information and public services can for example be provided online, though the inclusivity of this approach depends on internet access and ease of use of information provided. Civil society can also play an important role in this regard, by holding authorities and institutions to account. Promoting civic engagement and enabling civil society can be an important component of improving the quality of governance. Parliaments can play a role by actively engaging with civil society, for example through regular focus groups.³² Political will is, however, important to drive and facilitate such improvements to governance and institution building. In countries with significant divisions between groups that extend to the policy domain, potentially exacerbated by conflict, this may be particularly challenging. As such, consensus building among policymakers may be a necessary first step.

Recommendations

To reduce risk arising from the climate-conflict nexus, a number of recommendations have been identified around three key principles: **coordination, cooperation, and inclusion**. While these are essential to guide policy implementation and efforts to strengthen and improve governance in general, the focus here remains on their relation to the climate security nexus.

Cross-pillar coordination:

Coordination among actors at different levels, in different settings and with different capacities should be one of the main pillars for the implementation of climate security policies in the Arab region. Coordination among different stakeholders at different administrative level is scarce in the Arab region, especially within central governments where different ministers tend not to cooperate on cross-cutting topics such as climate security. In conflict and post-conflict settings there are

³¹ UN DESA (2019)

³² IPU and UNDP (2022)

additional challenges mainly related to the lack of human capital, resources, erosion of institutional capacity, and, finally, challenges related to fragmentation and political rivalries among parties and factions.

Adopt a nexus approach in policymaking:

The global community is increasingly committed to strengthen ties among humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts within the context of a humanitarian-development-peace approach or “triple nexus”. A nexus approach to tackle climate-related security risks will require national and local actors from different domains to work collaboratively, based on their comparative advantages, towards collective outcomes that reduce need, risk and vulnerability over multiple years and serve as progress towards the achievement of sustainable development and peace.

Conduct integrated analysis that considers the whole risk landscape:

Implementing an integrated risk analysis that considers the whole risk landscape at national, sub-national and local levels can provide an informed understanding of the complex interplay between climate and conflict, and the various pathways through which risk may be transmitted.

Mainstream climate security across policy:

Mainstreaming climate security across policy is key to properly address the associated risks. This helps ensure an integrated approach, where the interlinkages between the different areas are considered and siloed approaches avoided. As such, this will need to build upon an integrated analysis of the whole risk landscape,

Transboundary cooperation and regional institutions:

Climate change, and the threat it poses for peace and security, knows no borders. This renders purely national or subnational initiatives to address the challenge insufficient. Policies and practices to support transboundary cooperation play a quintessential role. Natural resources, particularly food and water resources, located in transboundary settings are already confronting scarcity. Limiting rivalry and fostering regional integration and cooperation around these resource

networks will help to maintain security and stability while promoting more effective climate adaptation.

Expand and enhance transboundary resource management:

There is a need to enhance and expand upon transboundary resource management, with cooperation around water resources being the most relevant issue in the Arab region. Water must be considered in a broad sense, including water supply and sanitation, irrigation, energy generation, etc.

Active inclusion and participation:

Lack of inclusion and participation, whether by policymakers or development entities (local, national, or multilateral), can both contribute to tensions and increase vulnerability to climate change. Groups that lack political representation or whose rights are unprotected may be more exposed to adverse climate impacts, find it more difficult to access disaster aid, and/or to advocate for their evolving needs. As such, climate impacts can expose or exacerbate already existing horizontal inequalities and thereby increase insecurity between groups and communities. For example, inter-communal tensions in Iraq have increased in certain governorates as a result of water scarcity and the accompanying competition over resources.³³

Enhance participation to strengthen social cohesion and trust:

Inclusive participation in policy processes, programming and decision-making is important to promote policies that are fair, effective, sustainable and address the needs of all people. As such, policymakers should work to ensure that different genders and vulnerable groups are represented in policymaking processes. While not a given, inclusive participation in governance and decision-making bodies can help ensure that gender and diversity concerns are considered in policy planning, development, and implementation. Ensuring inclusive participation in implementation of policies and projects is also essential to ensure the concerns, needs or grievances of different groups are addressed and may facilitate reduced tensions between groups. In North Darfur, an initiative seeking to strengthen local governance mechanisms for inclusive natural resource management established National Resource Management and Peacebuilding Committees

³³ NUPI and SIPRI (2022b)

(NRMPBC) in targeted villages, including farmers, pastoralists, and both women and men who were trained on conflict resolution.³⁴

Ensure transparency and inclusivity in resource management:

Just as insecure resource rights, lack of access or exclusion can contribute to increased tension and conflict between groups, the opposite can reduce such risks. It is thus important to establish clear rights to land and other resources that are inclusive, fair, and that recognize the rights of marginalized people.

³⁴ UNEP et al. (n.d.)