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# Environmental Conflict and Peacebuilding Toolkit

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The growing risk of environmental conflict is a threat to democracy and peace worldwide. In fragile contexts, climate-driven events, such as droughts and flooding, can increase social tensions, overburden public agencies and reduce access to scarce resources. In turn, this can drive displacement, enable the proliferation of armed groups, disempower certain groups such as Indigenous populations, youth, women, and ethnic and racial minorities, and break down the democratic social contract.

To address these increasingly pressing threats, this toolkit is a comprehensive resource for policymakers and practitioners designing or implementing democracy, rights and governance (DRG) policies and programs in contexts affected by environmental conflict, with an emphasis on natural resources that do not require large-scale infrastructure or investment to use or obtain. It is meant to provide users with a deeper understanding of resource-based environmental conflict and its various manifestations, as well as corresponding DRG strategies that can support peacebuilding. Given that many environmental conflicts are rooted in weak or ineffective governance structures, improving the capacity of democratic systems to address the drivers of tensions over natural resources is paramount to achieving stability and peace.

The toolkit begins with an overview of the link between the environment and conflict. The document examines the types, drivers, and cross-cutting issues related to environmental conflict. The toolkit then covers a series of programming strategies and “do no harm” considerations that can be used to address environmental conflict. The evidence-based programming options presented in this toolkit include the following strategies:

- **Jointly-managed sustainable land use projects:** Unsustainable land use practices are frequently a driver of conflict, as they result in deforestation, desertification, resource scarcity, pollution, and other similar environmental consequences, incentivizing intercommunal conflict over shared resources. In these contexts, the implementation of a jointly-managed sustainable land use project can foster intercommunal relationships conducive to resolving conflict and managing resources. This programming strategy seeks to build productive economic and environmental strategies that are created by, and for, local populations. For example, a program that supports the sustainable local economic development of a forest or river would allow citizens to connect their livelihoods to the project, so they receive economic value from it. This can disrupt conflict economies. Similarly, local ownership is a crucial element of this strategy, as it is most successful when conducted through existing structures and with community support.
- **Dialogue and peace messaging:** Dialogue among stakeholders in an environmental conflict can be an effective way of addressing grievances and conflict drivers locally, including when tension arises over resources. Additionally, peace messaging, or campaigns and narratives that promote tolerance, nonviolent conflict resolution mechanisms and constructive dialogue, can be tailored to address natural resource conflict issues. When implementing dialogue and peace messaging activities, it is important to consider a variety of contextual factors. For example, power dynamics such as influential spoilers, severe gender imbalances, or the presence of authority figures can drastically reduce the effectiveness of discussions. Successful dialogue requires participants who are willing to engage with one another in a respectful and honest manner within a safe environment; without these elements, dialogues can instead exacerbate the conflict.

- **Women's role in natural resource management and environmental peacebuilding:** Inclusion helps build more sustainable peace by ensuring representation for a variety of stakeholders, as environmental conflict usually affects segments of the population in different ways and to varying degrees. Women and minorities often play a key role in natural resource management, yet they are often the most vulnerable to environmental conflicts and are just as frequently excluded from the conflict management and peacebuilding processes. While overcoming barriers for inclusion can be challenging, strategies such as increasing women's leadership in local governance and civil society, emphasizing and building on women's traditional leadership roles, improving social cohesion among women, and amplifying women's roles in conflict prevention and resource management can help to overcome many structural challenges.
- **Strengthening local governance structures to peacefully manage resources:** Frequently, natural resource governance falls victim to corruption or willful mismanagement, resulting in a lack of trust in formal or informal leadership structures. Programming that strengthens governance structures or improves their legitimacy can build citizens' trust in the system. This strategy focuses on whole-of-society transparency interventions and empowering citizens and civil society to advocate for clearer and more accessible policies. Local governance projects can also improve citizens' capacity to advocate for clear and transparent resource management policies. It can also support local governance structures to develop open and transparent resource administration and conflict management. This type of programming is flexible and can be adjusted to meet the needs and resources of each community.
- Finally, the toolkit makes the case for conducting an environmental conflict analysis before the implementation of activities. Such analysis will help ensure that the goals of a project are aligned with the context in which implementation will occur. Such an analysis will also aid in weighing the potential risks and benefits of each programming strategy.

These programming strategies and environmental conflict analyses draw on IRI's experience supporting programs in contexts susceptible to environmental conflict. In Kenya and Guatemala, IRI has supported environmental peacebuilding through trust-building by hosting dialogues, workshops, sports tournaments, and cultural events to strengthen social cohesion and raise awareness about relevant conflict drivers and related strategies. Additionally, IRI supported improved natural resource management in The Gambia by working with government officials, civil society organizations, and the media to strengthen accountability and transparency in the sector. In Ecuador and Colombia, IRI is strengthening the capacity of stakeholders to develop and advocate for policies that improve natural resource management. In Bolivia, IRI implemented discussions that focused on peacebuilding through sustainable water use practices, educating participants on responsible water usage and empowering them to act as environmental leaders in their communities. Evidence and experience show the efficacy of addressing increasingly pressing environmental issues by strengthening democratic governance.

## INTRODUCTION

Higher temperatures, unpredictable precipitation, and more frequent extreme weather are combining to create fragile conditions across the world.<sup>1</sup> There is a strong link between environmental fragility and conflict; about 70 percent of countries vulnerable to climate change also experience significant political and economic fragility. Furthermore, over half of the 20 countries most vulnerable to climate change are experiencing conflict.<sup>2</sup>

Poor environmental governance poses a significant threat to democracy and peace around the world. Changes in climate and weather patterns stress governance structures, overburdening public agencies that are ill-equipped to manage worsening droughts, famines, land disputes and conflict over access to resources such as water and livestock. Further, unsound resource management such as overfishing or unsustainable mining and farming can lead to deforestation, desertification, and resource scarcity, threatening people's livelihoods and further exacerbating tensions. These dynamics can worsen the drivers of conflict, lead to displacement, and enable armed groups to exploit tensions over resource competition.

The U.S. government has increasingly recognized how climate and environmental shocks have exacerbated governance and security dynamics. According to the Prologue to the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability, which was developed under the framework of the Global Fragility Act (GFA), environmental degradation and natural disasters will compound existing sociopolitical risks by indirectly driving conflict and straining governance structures.<sup>3</sup> The GFA offers an opportunity to assess and mitigate these risks by addressing the nexus of fragility, governance and the environment. Yet, there is a need to understand and identify effective, evidence-based DRG approaches to mitigate conflict compounded by environmental degradation and resource competition.

This resource draws on field research conducted on land conflicts in the Western Highlands of Guatemala and pastoralist conflicts in the communities between Garissa and Isiolo counties in Kenya. These two communities were selected for their experiences with resource-based environmental conflict. Both contexts involve communities in conflict over non-extractive resources (water, grazing, and livestock in Kenya, land and community ownership in Guatemala). They are also both localized conflicts with many stakeholders and leaders who are interested in peacebuilding. To provide generalizable data, IRI then supplemented field research with a desk review with a global focus.

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1 Department of Defense, Office of the Undersecretary for Policy (Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities). 2021. Department of Defense Climate Risk Analysis. Report Submitted to National Security Council. <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Oct/21/2002877353/-1/-1/O/DOD-CLIMATE-RISK-ANALYSIS-FINAL.PDF>.

2 Ahmadnia, Shaadee et al. "Defueling Conflict: Environment and Natural Resource Management as a Pathway to Peace." *World Bank*. 2022. [World Bank Document](#).

3 U.S. Department of State. 2022 Prologue to the United States Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability April 1, 2022. <https://www.state.gov/2022-prologue-to-the-united-states-strategy-to-prevent-conflict-and-promote-stability/>.

## IRI Research on Environmental Conflict in Kenya and Guatemala

To gain a better understanding of the links between environmental degradation, governance, and conflict, IRI conducted interviews and an analysis of social media content in both Kenya and Guatemala. In Kenya, research focused on existing tensions over resources between the Borana and Somali communities in Isiolo County. IRI's local research partner interviewed 30 men and women, youth, religious leaders, civil society members, businesspeople, and government officials. In Guatemala, IRI conducted interviews with 26 stakeholders, including young people, businesspeople, local government and religious leaders, students, academics, farmers, and lawyers in the Western Highlands on the border between Quetzaltenango and Totonicapán departments.

## Purpose of the toolkit

This toolkit aims to provide users with guidance on how to understand and address environmental conflict through DRG programs. Its main intended users are both international and domestic practitioners designing programs to empower local communities to deal with the challenges that environmental conflict poses. This toolkit was designed to help users better understand their specific environmental conflict context and to provide evidence-based programming options to enhance their effectiveness.

IRI's research in Garissa and Isiolo counties in Kenya and the Western Highlands in Guatemala showcased the challenges that accompany non-extractive resource conflict and the need for evidence-based programming strategies for these contexts. This toolkit was created to meet this need, focusing on programming strategies and considerations for projects operating in resource-based environmental conflict contexts.

## WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT AND WHAT ARE ITS DRIVERS?

Environmental conflict can take many forms, one of which is resource competition. Conflicts can center around resource ownership, access, management, distribution of revenues and benefits, or a combination of these factors.<sup>4</sup> Some common resources that are often the focus of conflict are land, diamonds, oil, timber, and water, although this toolkit will primarily focus on the non-extractive resources of land and water.

Natural resources become the focal point of intercommunal conflict when governing regimes fail to manage disputes nonviolently. Conflicts that center around one or more of these resources are particularly challenging to resolve, with research suggesting such conflicts are much more likely to recur than those that are not fought over resources. Further, when these conflicts do recur, the pace of recurrence is twice as fast as when compared to other types of conflicts.<sup>5</sup> Throughout this toolkit, IRI will primarily refer to this form of conflict as "environmental conflict."

Environmental conflicts are frequently complex because they can reinforce social cleavages. These

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, *Natural Resources and Conflict: A Guide for Mediation Practitioners*, February 2015. <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/natural-resources-and-conflict-guide-mediation-practitioners>.

<sup>5</sup> Independent Evaluation Office – Global Environment Facility, "Evaluation of GEF Support in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations," [Evaluation of GEF Support in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations | GEF Independent Evaluation Office - Basic \(gefio.org\)](#)

kinds of conflict are particularly likely to be more intractable and become part of a cycle of dispute and disagreement. As conflict becomes more entrenched, there is a risk that cycles of violence will continue.<sup>6</sup> Because control over the benefits of natural resources is, or is often perceived as, a zero-sum game, natural resources and the structures that govern them can polarize communities, reinforce in-group and out-group dynamics, and erode social trust. In the worst cases, this can produce cycles of violence which can be challenging to resolve.<sup>7</sup>

## Types of environmental conflict and common issues

Conflicts over natural resources are enormously diverse. The focus of this toolkit is on *non-extractive natural resources* as well as those *natural resources that do not require large scale infrastructure or investment to use or obtain*. Conflict surrounding extractive resources are very often extremely complex and often involve several international stakeholders, while conflict surrounding non-extractive resources tends to occur on a local scale. Extractive resource conflicts can involve governments, INGOs, and multinational corporations, and often require unique and specific peacebuilding strategies. This toolkit presents strategies that are useful at local, regional, and national levels, but they may be ineffective or inappropriate for interventions at the international level. This excludes natural resource conflicts involving large mining operations, oil and gas projects, dams and hydroelectric projects, and other capital-intensive natural resources.

Land and water conflicts are by far the most common type of environmental conflicts globally, with one estimate suggesting they represent just over 51 percent of natural resource disputes.<sup>8</sup> The following typology aims to shed light on the various manifestations of environmental conflict:

- ▶ *Pastoral conflicts*: conflicts between individuals or groups over grazing land for livestock, including cattle, sheep, goats, camels, or other animals. Pastoral conflicts often involve groups that are either nomadic or semi-nomadic and drive their livestock along transhumance corridors over the seasons. In cases when groups seeking pasture for their livestock clash with settled farm communities, this is often termed “herder-farmer conflict.” Pastoral conflict can also refer to livestock rustling, often focused on cattle, but could include any kind of livestock. This can include violent raids orchestrated by organized gangs, militias, or criminal organizations, as well as small-scale individual actions. Because livestock are easy to steal, rustling can produce tit-for-tat violence that can escalate.
- ▶ *Conflicts over farmland*: conflicts between individuals or groups over access to or control over land used for agricultural purposes. Oftentimes, access to quality farmland, such as areas with higher quality soils or better sources of irrigation, are key issues in conflicts over farmland.
- ▶ *Conflicts over forests*: can entail disputes between individuals or groups over access to, control over, and use of forest products, such as timber. Forests can also be spiritually or culturally significant and can provide significant ecosystem benefits to local communities.

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6 Gubler, Joshua R. and Joel Sawat Selway. “Horizontal Inequality, Crosscutting Cleavages, and Civil War.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 56, No. 2. April 2012, pp. 206–232. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23248495>; Brown, Oli and Michael Keating. “Addressing Natural Resource Conflicts: Working Towards More Effective Resolution of National and Sub-National Resource Disputes.” *Chatham House*. Jun. 2015. [20150619AddressingConflictResourcesBrownKeating.pdf \(chathamhouse.org\)](https://www.chathamhouse.org/2015/06/addressing-conflict-resources-brown-keating)

7 Metcalfe, Louis, “The Struggle for Pluralism and Peace: Legitimacy, Conflict and Governance in Two Kenyan Wards,” *International Republican Institute*, June 2022, <https://www.iri.org/resources/the-struggle-for-pluralism-and-peace-legitimacy-conflict-and-governance-in-two-kenyan-wards/>.

8 *Foreign Policy Analytics*, “Environment, Fragility & Conflict: Strengthening resilience to manage environmentally linked conflict,” January 12, 2022. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/12/environment-fragility-and-conflict/>.



- ▶ *Conflicts over water*: conflicts between individuals or groups over access to fresh water for drinking and household use. This can manifest itself in urban areas or between different neighborhoods, towns, or villages where natural resource governance questions can impact a community's ability to draw fresh water. In contexts where droughts, whether seasonal or long term, are common, water use can become especially contentious. When droughts cause shortages, the demand for water can become a matter of life and death for individuals and entire communities. Accordingly, during periods of drought, conflicts over water access and use can become more frequent, as well as more severe.

It is important to recognize that the conflicts described above are nonexclusive and frequently overlap. For example, one community may seek access to land for pasture for livestock, whereas a sedentary community may use land for growing crops. Meanwhile, a community's access to agricultural land that requires fresh water can impinge on another community's use of that water for household use or for an agribusiness like fisheries.

Oftentimes, these kinds of environmental conflicts interplay with specific sets of actors, including:

- ▶ *Migration* intersects with natural environmental conflicts in several ways. This can come in the form of seasonal migration (by pastoralists engaging in transhumance) or in the form of migration driven by environmental degradation. These trends and events can bring communities into contact—or conflict—with one another, and drive concerns about natural resource overuse or degradation.
- ▶ *Indigenous peoples and ethnic, religious, and racial minorities* are frequently affected by environmental conflicts. Indigenous, Aboriginal, and first nations peoples often have traditional and customary relationships to their natural environment that extend beyond economic uses, often including spiritual or religious relationships with the environment. Indigenous groups are often particularly vulnerable communities in the context of environmental conflicts, as they often face structural discrimination and lack formal documentation of their ownership of natural resources, and consequently are prone to exploitation. Religious, ethnic, and racial minorities also frequently face challenges such as discrimination and exploitation and, for legal and historical reasons, may be land tenure insecure.
- ▶ *Armed groups* play a prominent role in environmental conflicts around the world. These actors often control territory and exercise their own political influence, including over environmental resources. Frequently, they have the resources and capability to deny communities access to territory and, at times, their authority surpasses that of the local power of the state.
- ▶ *Youth* often face legal and social barriers to managing, acquiring, or using natural resources productively; for example, when inheriting land rights.<sup>9</sup> In some cases, they are locked out of natural resource management because traditional customary authorities dominate such roles. Environmental conflict affect youth disproportionately because they are most likely to commit violence and are also more likely to be the victims of violence. As such, supporting youth leadership in environmental peacebuilding is key; for example, IRI has supported social cohesion focused on pastoralist communities in the Sahel with discussions that incorporate the youngest members of conflict-vulnerable groups.

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9 <https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2023-03/USAID-Land-and-Conflict-Toolkit-Final.pdf>

This list is by no means comprehensive.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, these groups, and others, frequently overlap with one another and intersect with the different typologies of environmental conflict mentioned above. Accordingly, DRG practitioners should consider how these issues may intersect or combine, and the effects that this might have on an area affected by environmental conflict.

## Environmental conflict drivers

Factors that drive environmental conflict include corruption, weak institutions, deficient natural resource management, criminality, and a culture of impunity, among other issues. While there are sometimes local or traditional mechanisms that resolve environmental conflicts, these structures are often weak in fragile states and unable to adequately address ongoing conflict. In more severe cases, violence can spiral and claim the lives of traditional authorities, leaving communities without respected individuals to adjudicate claims.<sup>11</sup> Armed conflict can also create opportunities for criminal networks to bribe or capture the traditional and customary authorities who are meant to resolve issues, undermining their effectiveness in mediating disputes.<sup>12</sup> Several key cross-cutting drivers and themes are:

***Climate-driven events and hazards affect access to resources and often propel patterns of conflict.*** IRI research along the Garissa and Isiolo county border in northeastern Kenya found increased conflict intensity during the dry season, which is when pastoralist communities move their livestock from Garissa County to the more verdant pastures of Isiolo County. Seasonal migrations such as these often result in competition for resources and concerns from host communities that the migrants will decide to stay. Ultimately, this is a critical factor that shapes the conflict landscape and brings communities into competition with one another; it often results in violence.

"If there is no drought and there is plenty of pastures and water there would be no conflicts since everyone is confined in their place, moreover, sometimes you find one area receiving little or no rainfall at all compared to, let's say, Borana neighbors forcing our people to move with their livestock to the other side, thus leading to dispute among the two communities."

*-Somali Youth, Garissa County*

Seasonal differences are not the only challenge. Long term climactic changes can have an even greater effect on the conflict landscape. An IRI analysis of news and social media content from Kenya revealed how broader shifts in the natural environment, for example, prolonged drought across the Horn of Africa, is contributing to livestock deaths and crop failures. This makes competition between communities for good pasture and agricultural land even more intense. In this instance, unequal rainfall and a prolonged drought has led Somali herders in Kenya to cross borders and use Borana land more frequently and for longer periods than in the past. This leads to escalating grievances and retaliatory violence. At the same time, in Guatemala's Western Highlands, where intercommunal relationships have been more peaceful than in previous years,

<sup>10</sup> USAID, *Land and Conflict: A Toolkit for Intervention 2.0*, October 2022, <https://www.land-links.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/USAID-Land-and-Conflict-Toolkit-Final.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> International Crisis Group, Burkina Faso: Stopping the Cycle of Violence," No. 287, February 24, 2020. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/tr/node/12969>.

<sup>12</sup> Chapman, Chris and Alexander Kagaha, "Resolving conflicts using traditional mechanisms in the Karamoja and Teso regions of Uganda," Minority Rights Group International, August 25, 2009, <https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/old-site-downloads/download-674-Download-Full-Briefing.pdf>.

young people mentioned that climate change and drought could possibly disrupt relations between communities and cause conflict if water becomes a scarce resource.

***The lack of effective local systems or mutually agreed frameworks to manage environmental conflicts can trigger violent conflict over natural resources.*** Weak or corrupt governance can strain resource management and further marginalize at-risk groups.<sup>13</sup> Environmental conflicts escalate when weak institutions have limited capacity or legitimacy, leaving the antagonistic parties to manage on their own. For example, the government's perceived absence at the grassroots level in Guatemala has been recognized as enabling a rise in conflict. Without responsive policymaking and effective avenues for representation and conflict resolution, tensions over resources can escalate.

In other cases, the lack of a shared governance system can drive deeper fissures that lead to more intense violence. For example, in the case of the Garissa-Isiolo border in northeastern Kenya, IRI research suggests that the lack of a common land-use governance framework between the Borana communities in Isiolo county and the Somali community in Garissa County is an underlying driver of intercommunal conflicts.<sup>14</sup>

***Disagreement over boundaries between land and rights of access to land is an underlying driver of conflict.*** Disputes over the boundaries between properties and clear property lines are a common cause of conflict over natural resources. In northeastern Kenya, interviewees reported that different communities had different perceptions of who owned the land, with Somalis reportedly considering certain land to be all Kenyan citizens' public property, whereas in Borana, people considered certain parcels of land to belong exclusively to their own community.

When disputes take place in the context of weak enforcement, or in a context without shared norms of dispute resolution, they can easily escalate. Disagreements over boundaries between land is especially likely to lead to conflict in cases where individuals and communities may harbor perceptions that their tenure – either of the land or the resources that they use – is insecure.<sup>15</sup> Tenure insecurity can change the calculus that communities, individuals, or groups make regarding the efficacy of violence in a given scenario.

***The prevalence of criminal networks, protection economies, and small arms raise the risk that disputes will turn violent.*** In fragile contexts affected by environmental conflict, it is common for criminal economies, such as cattle rustling and land grabbing, to flourish. While these are challenges on their own, they also create incentives for communities to invest in the protection of their assets (such as territory, resources, and livestock), which can generate negative feedback loops that further worsen conflict.

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13 USAID, *Water & Conflict: A Toolkit for Programming*, 2014. [PNAEC948R.pdf \(usaid.gov\)](#).

14 Metcalfe, Louis, *The Struggle for Pluralism and Peace: Legitimacy, Conflict and Governance in Two Kenyan Wards*, International Republican Institute, June 2022, <https://www.iri.org/resources/the-struggle-for-pluralism-and-peace-legitimacy-conflict-and-governance-in-two-kenyan-wards/>.

15 Overseas Development Institute, "Why land is important in understanding violent conflict," April 1, 2021, <https://odi.org/en/insights/why-land-is-important-in-understanding-violent-conflict/>.

IRI's research on conflicts between the Borana and Somali communities show how insecurity has spiraled with the proliferation of and with armed actors increasingly utilized to protect livestock and territory.<sup>16</sup> Not only do these groups legitimize violence, but this practice can backfire when these they are idle or unpaid, sometimes pushing them into stealing livestock, the very criminal activity they were armed to prevent.

***Prejudice and discrimination can foster distrust and serve as a latent driver of environmental conflict between communities.*** Prejudice can lead to discrimination that perpetuates and escalates conflict. This can be the case even in contexts where intercommunal conflicts do not result in regular outbreaks of violence. In the Western Highlands of Guatemala, IRI's social media analysis revealed an undercurrent of intercommunal strife between two communities, in neighboring towns, that occasionally resulted in attacks like the burning of a school building. As shown in the quote below, a history of prejudice against a group can be a significant driver of environmental conflict, creating a feedback loop of discriminatory beliefs, which reinforces continued discrimination and future conflict.

"Surely it would be the donkeys\* who burned the school. They are used to fighting for lands that do not belong to them."

– *Social Media Post, non-indigenous individual*

\*referring to the K'iche Indigenous community

In northeastern Kenya, conflict between the Borana and Somali has revived histories of discrimination and animosity, despite recent intercommunal harmony. Importantly, divisive narratives exist among both communities, which creates an enabling environment for further deadly violence.

***Political entrepreneurs, elected officials, and other authorities stoke environmental conflicts that serve their own economic or political ends.*** Political incitement by elected authorities often sparks violence in fragile contexts where natural resources and environmental goods are contested. Politicians may feel pressured to respond to communities involved in, or affected by, local environmental conflicts in ways that exacerbate disputes. This can range from subtle coded appeals to deliberate exhortations to violence.

IRI analysis reveals how, in eastern Kenya, national political figures spread dueling narratives on social media regarding solutions to intercommunal violence. Some political figures advocated for expulsions of pastoralists, while others noted that the land was communal. Extreme rhetoric from local politicians can be a factor in confrontations over natural resources. Interviewees said that some politicians encourage their political base to "reclaim" contested territory and, in some cases, provide ammunition for this very purpose.

In summary, the many drivers of environmental conflict, political, economic, ecological, and socio-historical, underscore the potential of cross-sectoral approaches. Further, the connections between the environment, governance, and fragility highlight how prioritizing DRG strategies can improve social resilience, advancing conflict prevention and promoting peace.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Policy research on other communities in East Africa has long documented the risks that small arms proliferation poses to communities in areas affected by environmental conflict, see *Small Arms Survey*, *Evolving Traditional Practices Managing Small Arms in the Horn of Africa and Karamoja Cluster*, Issue Brief No. 3, 2014. [SAS-AA-IB3-Traditional-Practices.pdf \(smallarmssurvey.org\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> Krapme, Florian, Farah Hegazi, and Stacy D. VanDeveer, "Sustaining peace through better resource governance: Three potential mechanisms for

## PROGRAMMING STRATEGIES

Environmental conflicts often involve a range of actors and impact political, social, and economic issues. When designing programming, a thorough understanding of the context can make a difference in achieving program objectives. Based on those considerations, and to aid in program design and implementation, this section offers a series of DRG strategies that have proven effective in addressing the drivers of environmental conflict. They are divided into different focus areas, including local governance, communal discussion, and gender inclusion.

Each section describes a strategy and gives an overview of potential challenges and strengths. Effective programs can and should leverage the insights of these different strategies in combination or in parallel to maximize their potential impact in preventing conflict over natural resources and environmental goods.

### Jointly-managed sustainable land use projects

Poor land use practices are often a root cause of conflict. Unsustainable land use can create zero-sum, winner-take-all systems that foster intercommunal conflict over natural resources. In cases where valuable natural resources are rivalrous,<sup>18</sup> key actors are incentivized to compete or prevent the use of these natural resources. In turn, this can produce violent conflict.

Jointly-managed sustainable land use projects can be a potential remedy for these conflict dynamics. Sustainable land use systems provide a socio-technical approach to managing natural resources. These strategies take a whole-of-ecosystem perspective to ensure the long-term productive use of natural resources. The goal of this approach is to create productive economic and environmental strategies that respect the preferences of local populations and contribute to peacebuilding objectives. This programming strategy can reconcile differences over equitable uses of resources and generate a sense of belonging and confidence in managing fragile environmental and economic dynamics.

In Colombia, a forest conservation agreement called the Heritage Colombia Initiative compels local farmers to conserve forests and restore ecological functions on their farms; in return the farmers receive technical assistance.<sup>19</sup> In Niger, a similar framework supports communities to plant acacia gum Arabic trees, which have been shown to improve resilience against climate change by restoring degraded soils. The restored soil can be used for other farming purposes, creating revenue streams for local communities. This afforestation policy generated intercommunal social cohesion by providing a focal point for cooperation, around which communities, the government, international actors, and civil society collaborated to restore the environment and, in doing so, serve community peacebuilding goals.<sup>20</sup>

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environmental peacebuilding," *World Development* vol/ 144, August 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105508>.

<sup>18</sup> This refers to cases where a resource can only be consumed by one party, thus increasing competition.

<sup>19</sup> "Heritage Colombia (HECO): Resilient landscapes that maximizes contribution to Colombia's mitigation and adaptation goals." Interlace Hub. [Heritage Colombia \(HECO\): Resilient landscapes that maximizes contribution to Colombia's mitigation and adaptation goals | Interlace Hub \(interlace-hub.com\)](https://interlace-hub.com)

<sup>20</sup> Kalilou, Ousseyni, "Climate change and conflict in the Sahel: the acacia gum tree as a tool for environmental peacebuilding," *International Affairs*, vol. 97, no. 1, January 2021, pp. 201-218, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiaa178>.

When designing sustainable land use projects, consider the following evidence-based lessons:

- ▶ Sustainable land use systems should focus on local livelihoods and incorporate ways for local communities to derive economic value from the project. This can help break the cycle of violence by interrupting conflict economies. For example, in Caquetá, sustainable land use projects helped expand local livelihoods and were key to providing an alternative to illicit economies.
- ▶ Discussion and negotiation are a vital first steps in this process. This is because dialogue and intergroup engagement must be sustained over time in order to produce lasting governance reforms. Research has suggested that this kind of cooperation reduces violence. Such open dialogue spaces can provide a critical foundation in the long-term to build new institutions that yield durable peace. Accordingly, kickstarting the process of cooperation and negotiation can lay the groundwork for more effective sustainable land use projects, and can be vital for building the foundations of sustainable peace.<sup>21</sup>
- ▶ Sustainable land use systems must be designed with local communities and through existing structures, emphasizing their expertise by incorporating the priorities that they identify as most important.

## Dialogue and peace messaging

Dialogue and peace messaging are key strategies for strengthening trust, resolving conflict in a peaceful manner, increasing public participation, and creating collaborative action plans, all of which are necessary when mitigating environmental conflicts.<sup>22</sup> Peace messaging, or campaigns and narratives that promote tolerance, nonviolent conflict resolution mechanisms and constructive dialogue, can be tailored to address natural resource conflict issues.

For example, in Rwanda, a radio program aimed to promote peace, deepen understanding of land rights, and debunk false information. After a local bank confiscated land, there was increased concern about land ownership rights. Local radio broadcast a discussion with local government officials; in this way, community members learned about their ownership rights. Once they fully understood their rights, they were no longer fearful of arbitrary confiscations. Following the broadcast, participants felt empowered and were able to invest in their land with confidence.<sup>23</sup>

### | Leveraging participatory research to generate shared worldviews:

An Adaptive Learning and Deliberation approach is one way to evaluate the efficacy of shared discussions. This approach combines community members from social groups in conflict over natural resources so they can explore the underlying causes of the problem. This process of collaborative inquiry enables communities to develop a shared understanding of the causes and consequences of community conflicts, as well as the limits and solutions available to them. This yields better solutions and new ideas about natural resource governance.

21 Ide, Tobias, "The impact of environmental cooperation on peacemaking: definitions, mechanisms, and empirical evidence," *International Studies Review* vol. 21, no. 3, 2019. pp. 327–46. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isr/viy014>.

22 "Natural Resources and Conflict: A Guide for Mediation Practitioners." *UN Department of Political Affairs and UN Environment Programme*. 2015.

23 "Alleviating Land Conflict Through Transparent Dialogue." *USAID*. [USAID Telling our Story - Rwanda: Alleviating Land Conflict Through Transparent Dialogue](#)

This methodology was used effectively in two cases in Nepal. One case was a conflict over forest products. The other was over access to fresh water for farming and drinking in a peri-urban area. Both relied on adaptive learning and produced new institutional arrangements that reduced existing grievances. In the forest dispute, a group that was excluded from using the forest were permitted better access. In the peri-urban area, more people received access to fresh water. In both cases, adaptive learning reduced conflict.<sup>24</sup>

Two key lessons apply to dialogue and peace messaging:

- Account for contextual factors and power dynamics. For example, while discussions should be as inclusive as possible, it may be more effective to manage spoilers and determine their level of inclusion in dialogues or peace messaging. In some cases, it may not be effective to engage spoilers if there is a high risk of derailment. . Unequal power dynamics like gender imbalances or the presence of authority figures might make it useful to adopt a structured discussion session so that everyone has equal participation.
- Consider participants' openness to join dialogues and potentially reach agreement. Dialogues and other related activities should be tailored to the goals of a program, otherwise there is a risk of backlash or increasing awareness of grievances.

## Strengthening local governance structures to peacefully manage resources

A important challenge is a lack of trust in formal and informal governance mechanisms. Natural resource governance – even when resources are primarily not extractive, are often accused of corruption or willful mismanagement.

Accordingly, programmatic approaches that strengthen the legitimacy of governing institutions can increase trust. Programming to enhance or restore institutional legitimacy in natural resource governance can take a variety of different paths. One such strategy identifies existing or dormant institutions or actors with substantial legitimacy and then works to build the capacity of these institutions in areas where they are weak, such as financial management, strategic planning, and citizen engagement

For example, IRI research in Guatemala's Western Highlands identified two groups that have historically played a role in mediating disputes over resources. Community volunteers, selected via assemblies and known as *principales*, play an important role in mediating disputes.<sup>25</sup> Second, interviewees noted that community service work, known as "Joq" in the local *ki'iche* language, whereby people clean and maintain paths, agricultural areas, and the boundaries between communities, serves as a form of conflict prevention. Those leading these efforts were historically selected by local mayors, but this practice has gone extinct, especially in urban areas. Reinvigorating some of these customary roles can improve governing bodies' legitimacy. Indeed, these community volunteers, and local leaders' role in appointing them, strengthens the legitimacy of municipal governance. This improves the delivery of mediation and conflict resolution services to communities and boosts trust in the system.

24 Ohja, H.R., et. al., "Turning conflicts into cooperation? The role of adaptive learning and deliberation in managing natural resources conflicts in Nepal" Climate Policy, 2019, 19, 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14693062.2018.1556240>.

25 Internal IRI report, May 2023.

Programming strategies include whole-of-society interventions to support more transparent decision-making regarding natural resource governance. This can involve supporting citizens and civil society to advocate for transparency, as well as working with government bodies to adopt clearer and more accessible policies on natural resource governance. In The Gambia, IRI empowered government officials, civil society activists, and the media to engage citizens in budget decisions on natural resource management. Through training, conducted in collaboration with government officials, IRI built civil service organizations' understanding of the natural resource sector. IRI also trained journalists to cover resource management and publish stories about the sector. Citizens' and civil society's increased participation led to successful natural resource policy updates, minimizing clashes between residents and mining companies, a pressure point in the country.

Improving the legitimacy of local governments regarding natural resource governance in fragile and conflict-affected regions relies on the following lessons:

- ▶ Improve existing sources of conflict resolution that may be weak or become dormant by increasing their capacity to engage with local communities;
- ▶ Support local authorities to better integrate the advice and counsel of informal governance actors, such as religious leaders, indigenous authorities or traditional elders in consultative assemblies;
- ▶ Amplify citizen concerns to demand clearer and more transparent natural resource governance policies;
- ▶ Support governing authorities in developing more open and transparent processes in natural resource governance and dispute resolution.

## Women's leadership in natural resource management and environmental peacebuilding

Peacebuilding programs which fail to account for diverse perspectives lead to an incomplete understanding of the situation and often settle on exclusionary solutions.<sup>26</sup> Women, in particular, can have unique insights regarding environmental conflict and often play an integral role in managing resources like water and wood. However, sociopolitical barriers can prevent them from full participation in conflict management processes.<sup>27</sup> Structural and legal discrimination against women further exacerbates these challenges, especially in areas in which women do not have the same rights as men, such as land ownership. In these circumstances, women are at a disadvantage when they try to protect resources or push for a particular solution to environmental management.

Further, gender roles and norms have a significant impact on conflict dynamics. For example, in Kenya, conflict surrounding cattle rustling has been linked to "bride price," a cultural norm that requires the exchange of cattle as dowry.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, the risk of gender-based violence can be

26 Jobbins, Mike, Andrew McDonnell and Leif Brottem. "Pastoralism and Conflict: Tools for Prevention and Response in the Sudano-Sahel." *Search for Common Ground*. 2021. [Pastoralism-and-Conflict-Toolkit\\_v2\\_Search-for-Common-Ground-2021.pdf \(cnxus.org\)](#)

27 Jobbins, Mike, Andrew McDonnell and Leif Brottem. "Pastoralism and Conflict: Tools for Prevention and Response in the Sudano-Sahel." *Search for Common Ground*. 2021. [Pastoralism-and-Conflict-Toolkit\\_v2\\_Search-for-Common-Ground-2021.pdf \(cnxus.org\)](#)

28 Metcalfe, Louis. "The Struggle for Pluralism and Peace: Legitimacy, Conflict, and Governance in Two Kenyan Wards." *International Republican Institute*. June 2022. <https://www.iri.org/resources/the-struggle-for-pluralism-and-peace-legitimacy-conflict-and-governance-in-two-kenyan-wards/>



heightened by changes in access to resources. As climate change limits the availability of certain resources, such as water, firewood, and grazing land, women must travel further to get what they need to run their households and feed their families. This can put them at risk for violence.

Women's inclusion in environmental conflict management and resolution can ensure effective peacebuilding strategies. Women are often the first to note conflict over resources and can provide potential solutions early in a conflict cycle. This can be seen in Malawi where, until women were incorporated into a water resource committee, these committees failed to respond to community needs. Although men led the committees, women were the primary users of water, giving them valuable insights that were able to feed into the resource management process. Once women joined the committee, there were many improvements to the process, such as payments were collected regularly and communal taps were designed to better meet the needs of the people using them.<sup>29</sup>

In North Kordofan state, in Sudan, a drought sparked resource competition which became increasingly violent. In response, a United Nations program sought to increase women's leadership in natural resource management by raising awareness of the importance of women's contributions. Under this program, women also became more regularly involved in local conflict mediation processes.<sup>30</sup> A lesson was that local resource management and conflict resolution can offer opportunities for inclusion. As indicated by these examples, given that, in many contexts around the world, women play a key role in natural resource management, efforts to prevent resource-based conflict must engage women in order to be inclusive and responsive to community needs.

Efforts toward inclusion can face resistance when they are perceived to be replacing traditional norms and customs, and ideas promoted by women or for women may be viewed as irrelevant or suspect.<sup>31</sup> Below are some strategies and lessons to help maximize women's involvement while taking cultural pressures into account:

- ▶ Promoting women's engagement locally can offer more opportunities than including them at the national level, given that conflict is often highly localized and the prevalence of informal avenues to promote peace at the subnational level.<sup>32</sup>
- ▶ Emphasizing and building on women's traditional leadership roles can help build momentum. This involves consulting and integrating women into the design of environmental peacebuilding projects. Additionally, it is key to build buy-in among those stakeholders who may be resistant to gender inclusion.
- ▶ Increasing inclusion of women in conflict prevention and resource management is key to broadening the perception of women as agents of peace or conflict, beyond one of survivors.<sup>33</sup>

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29 Trivedi, Ayushi. "Women Are the Secret Weapon for Better Water Management." *World Resources Institute*. 18 Oct. 2018. [Women Are the Secret Weapon for Better Water Management | World Resources Institute \(wri.org\)](https://www.wri.org/publications/2018/10/women-are-the-secret-weapon-for-better-water-management/)

30 "Promoting Gender-Responsive Approaches to Natural Resource Management for Peace in North Kordofan, Sudan." *United Nations Environment Programme, UN Women, UNDP*. March 2019. [Gender\\_NRM.pdf \(unep.org\)](https://www.unep.org/gender-nrm/)

31 Jobbins, Mike, Andrew McDonnell and Leif Brottem. "Pastoralism and Conflict: Tools for Prevention and Response in the Sudano-Sahel." *Search for Common Ground*. 2021. [Pastoralism-and-Conflict-Toolkit\\_v2\\_Search-for-Common-Ground-2021.pdf \(cnxus.org\)](https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Pastoralism-and-Conflict-Toolkit_v2_Search-for-Common-Ground-2021.pdf)

32 "Promoting Gender-Responsive Approaches to Natural Resource Management for Peace in North Kordofan, Sudan." *United Nations Environment Programme, UN Women, UNDP*. March 2019. [Gender\\_NRM.pdf \(unep.org\)](https://www.unep.org/gender-nrm/)

33 Search's citation

## CONFLICT SENSITIVITY & “DO NO HARM”

Interventions staged without a deep a knowledge of the context and background of an environmental conflict can exacerbate tensions.<sup>34</sup> Conflict sensitivity and do no harm<sup>35</sup> are important principles to apply in order to mitigate the risk of inadvertently exacerbating tensions and violence, as well as develop more effective strategies to promote peace.<sup>36</sup>

When applying conflict sensitivity, implementors must conduct a thorough analysis to understand the relevant conflict drivers, peacebuilding opportunities, and stakeholders. Intervenor must also maintain robust monitoring and evaluation procedures that accurately measure the impact of the program and its impact on existing community dynamics. The “do no harm” principle supports program beneficiaries by protecting communities from negative consequences. Adhering to the “do no harm” principle can be challenging. It starts with engaging with the communities that will host an intervention or whom programming will seek to benefit. It should be incorporated throughout the programming cycle: in the design phase, in the implementation phase, as well as in the evaluation phase of a project or program.

### Questioning Assumptions and Engaging Local Communities

To apply the “do no harm” principle, it is important to rigorously interrogate the underlying assumptions about the sources of conflict and potential programming approaches. This is particularly true during environmental conflicts where interventions could alter communities’ relationships with their own environments. This involves validating programming approaches or potential activities with local communities even before the design stage.

For example, weak land tenure rules are a frequent challenge. It is often unclear who actually owns the land; titles to land may have been destroyed or never passed down, and customary land governance rules may have weakened or eroded over time. Such a situation can produce disputes between individuals or communities because it is unclear who has access to or a right to use certain territories. While promoting clear land tenure laws might seem like a simple solution, it can produce unintended consequences. Communities in Guatemala’s Western Highlands urged government leaders not to resolve ownership disputes by regularizing land tenure rights. IRI’s research participants greatly feared that such a policy would exacerbate underlying problems with structural inequality and discrimination. This is backed up by evidence that suggests that “clarifying” who owns a resource will not necessarily reduce disputes.

This is just one such example of how assumptions could result in unanticipated outcomes. However, every context is different, so it is important for implementors to question their assumptions and discuss their plans with those who will be most affected.

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34 “Conflict-sensitive approaches to development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding: A resource pack.” *International Alert*. Jan 2004. [Training-Development-Humanitarian-Assistance-Peacebuilding-EN-2004.pdf \(international-alert.org\)](https://www.international-alert.org/training-development-humanitarian-assistance-peacebuilding-en-2004.pdf)

35 Conflict sensitivity is defined as the ability to: “understand the context in which you operate; understand the interaction between your interventions and the context and act upon the understanding of this interaction, in order to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts.” CDA Collaborative. “Do No Harm: A Brief Introduction.” <https://www.cdacollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Do-No-Harm-A-Brief-Introduction-from-CDA.pdf>

36 Haider, Huma. “Breaking the Cycle of Violence: What is Conflict Sensitivity?” *Swisspeace*. 2017. [What is Conflict Sensitivity? \(jstor.org\)](https://www.swisspeace.ch/what-is-conflict-sensitivity/)

## Free, Prior, and Informed Consent

“Do no harm,” is critical in fragile and conflict-affected settings where disputes center on natural resources. It is imperative that implementors gather free, prior, and informed consent before they act. This is especially important in regard to Indigenous communities, who have the right to give or withhold consent to a project that may affect them or their territories. Once they have given their consent, they can withdraw it at any time.<sup>37</sup> This establishes buy-in from affected communities. It also informs implementors of local communities’ concerns and often challenges their assumptions. This information can help design better, more effective interventions.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT ANALYSIS

Conflict analysis is essential to understanding the elements, drivers, stakeholders, and relationships at play in a given context. Program implementors must use the information generated from this analysis to understand the local conflict landscape, generate theories of change, and map the potential impacts of their project. A detailed guide to understanding conflict analysis, which incorporates political legitimacy, can be found in IRI’s *Conflict, Governance, and Legitimacy Assessment Framework*.<sup>38</sup>

Environmental conflict interventions should be developed with the utmost care and attention. When engaging in contexts with resource conflicts, it is important to take the analysis one step further. Frequently, local communities have been excluded from decision-making about the environment or natural resources that they rely on. These are sensitive issues and they need to be fully considered in any conflict analysis.<sup>39</sup> Such consideration will ensure that an intervention is in keeping with local contexts, is likely to get buy-in and will yield durable long-term results.<sup>40</sup>

Below is a series of broad lines of inquiry that a conflict analysis should consider:

- ▶ Determine the environmental resources at the center of the conflict. This can be understood as deciding which conflict typology (referenced in a previous section) the issue in question best resembles. Is the conflict principally over agricultural land, pasture, or another natural resource?
- ▶ Determine which communities, individuals, and institutions are engaged in conflict and how these actors relate to their environment. This involves considering their relationships, interests, and the strategies they use to advance their agendas.
- ▶ Assess the current institutional and governing arrangements that contribute to the conflict in question. This may also involve identifying which actors can resolve disputes and which individuals or groups may be structurally disadvantaged, which can lead to grievances over governance.

<sup>37</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Free Prior and Informed Consent: An Indigenous Peoples’ Right and a Good Practice for Local Communities – Manual for Project Practitioners*, 2016, chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/<https://www.fao.org/3/i6190e/i6190e.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> Mooney, Lauren, et. al., *Conflict, Governance and Legitimacy Assessment Framework*, International Republican Institute, December 2021. <https://www.iri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/iri-conflict-governance-framework-120221.pdf>.

<sup>39</sup> Bauza, Vanessa, “When protecting nature helps build peace,” Conservation International, May 25, 2023. <https://www.conservation.org/blog/when-protecting-nature-helps-build-peace>.

<sup>40</sup> Arjoud, Brittany et al., “Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual,” Conservation International, October 2017.

- ▶ Assess the extent to which a changing environment or climate is affecting and/or is expected to affect the underlying environmental conflict. Climate change can affect the economic and sociocultural value of different natural resources. Desertification can restrict accessibility to grazing land, for example. Analysis that seeks to understand environmental conflict must factor in the reality of dynamic change. Changes can increase the likelihood of triggers or aggravate existing dynamics.
- ▶ Assess sources of resiliency related to the environment within the conflict context. Are there livelihoods that do not produce conflict? Are there examples of equitable natural resource sharing? When the goal is conflict prevention, it is important to examine whether existing institutions, actors, economic or cultural practices can be leveraged to improve intergroup relations. These sources of resiliency may be dormant, such as institutions that have fallen into disuse or traditional leaders whose role has diminished.

These questions can provide a starting point for implementors to better understand a specific conflict landscape disputes over land and water-based natural resource governance. Of course, for a finer-grained analysis, it is appropriate to ask detailed questions which will provide more explanatory leverage. Such questions can be related to human migration and mobility (whether permanent or seasonal), marginalization, urban and rural divides, land tenancy, violent extremism, and other issues.<sup>41</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Climate change, resource competition, and environmental degradation exacerbate preexisting vulnerabilities and drivers of conflict. Addressing the risks posed by environmental insecurity requires an updated toolkit for democracy, human rights, and peacebuilding, which touches on issues ranging from assessing environmental conflict risks to deploying evidence-based strategies. Providing support to local partners, whether through diplomacy or foreign assistance, is a vital part of strengthening governance and preventing or deescalating conflict. In so doing, it is key to reexamine approaches to environmental conflict and address the key drivers of these issues: predatory politics and ineffective governance.

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41 USAID, *Water and Conflict: A Toolkit for Programming*; USAID, *Land and Conflict: A Toolkit for Intervention 2.0*.

# ANNEX 1: ILLUSTRATIVE QUESTIONS FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT ANALYSIS

## *Legal and Institutional Questions*

- ▶ What are the institutional and legal arrangements that govern access to natural resources? Are these institutions formal or informal? Do these arrangements exacerbate or mitigate conflict drivers? To what extent?
  - Have the ways these institutional arrangements function changed over time? If so, over what time period? And are there factors that could continue to drive that change?
- ▶ Do the frameworks and policies that govern the access, use, ownership, and benefits of natural resources provide for effective distribution across different social groups (ethnicity, genders, classes, castes, age, or profession)?
  - Do these frameworks contain discriminatory provisions and, if yes, which groups face discrimination? Is this discrimination formal or informal? Does discrimination condone or provoke violence?
  - Do the frameworks sanction violence? In which cases?
- ▶ Which institutions have the capacity to mediate or resolve disputes over natural resources?
  - Are there competing regimes or institutions that mediate disputes over land or water resources?
- ▶ Which individuals or groups tend to control ownership rights of, access to, or the economic benefits of the natural resources in question? Are there grievances over issues of control, access, or benefits that lead to conflict?
  - Is control of the ownership rights of, access to, or the economic benefits of natural resources concentrated in the hands of a few?
  - Is control of the ownership rights of, access to, or the economic benefits of a natural resource considered corrupt? If so, which actors or institutions are implicated and which actors, groups, or institutions are affected by corruption?

## *Environmental Rights Questions*

- ▶ Do local communities, including members of different ethnic groups, castes, classes, and genders, understand the rights that the legal system offers them relating to natural resources?
  - Do different groups or different individuals have divergent understandings of which natural resource rights are afforded to them via the legal system? If yes, do these divergent understandings of rights result in conflict?
- ▶ Do local communities understand the customary or traditional governance mechanisms that govern rights relating to land and water-based natural resources?
  - Do different groups or different individuals have divergent understandings of which land and water resource rights are afforded to them relating to informal, customary, traditional, or Indigenous legal systems? If yes, do these divergent understandings result in conflict?

- ▶ Are there competing frameworks for the governance of land and water-based natural resource rights? Do traditional, customary, and Indigenous frameworks for natural resource governance align with, or compete against, formal laws governing land and water-based resource rights? If so, does this exacerbate conflict?
- ▶ Can communities and/or individuals negotiate and enforce informal access or use rights to natural resources based on customary law, traditional or Indigenous mechanisms, or other commonly-held social practices? If not, how are informal rights negotiated? Are such disputes resolved violently?

### *Environmental and Ecological Change Questions*

- ▶ Is environmental or climate change expected to continue to impact the landscape in question? If so, how?
  - Is this change expected to disproportionately impact one community more than another in a way that could exacerbate existing conflict dynamics?
- ▶ Are there existing social, economic, or cultural practices that represent adaptive strategies regarding environmental or climate change?
  - If yes, are these adaptive practices encouraged by existing governance mechanisms? Do these adaptive strategies mitigate or exacerbate conflict?
  - Are these adaptive practices benefiting one group more than another?
- ▶ Has environmental or climate change affected the productivity, value, or intensity of use of the natural resources in question? Do such changes exacerbate conflict issues?
  - If so, how? And are there mechanisms that could mitigate conflict to improve the long-term sustainability of such resources?
  - Have there been other pressures because of new natural resource users, habitat degradation, deforestation, drought, or other factors that lead or could lead to conflict?