Factsheet
Transforming environmental and natural resource conflicts

Introduction

Competition over land use and access to natural resources is one of the main drivers – but rarely the sole cause – of violent conflict worldwide. According to the Pathways for Peace report published by the United Nations and the World Bank Group, between 40% and 60% of domestic armed conflicts over the past 60 years have been triggered, funded or sustained by exploitation of natural resources. With global population growth, rising living standards, urbanisation, land degradation, displacement, and climate change, the demand for natural resources continues to increase, creating potential for even more conflicts of interest.

This paper briefly outlines the major challenges in this context and aims to complement the GIZ advisory service in the field of peacebuilding, which is closely interlinked with advisory services in areas including resource and land governance, natural resource management, political participation, anti-corruption, and rural and economic development.

Background and challenges

Conflicts over natural resources can often be categorised in terms of scarcity (supply, demand or structurally induced scarcity), abundance (including issues of ownership, access and environmental damage) or weak and inequitable resource governance (such as a lack of clarity including gender-based inequalities of rights and obligations, corruption, unfair benefit-sharing, a lack of participation, and a lack of transparency and accountability). Such conflicts can occur at multiple levels – local, provincial, national and cross-border – and on different scales. Natural resources can trigger, fund or prolong violent conflicts, but they are never the only driver of conflict: they interact with other socio-economic, political and security tensions and are also influenced by institutional and social capacity for conflict management and transformation.

Conflict drivers are as many and varied as the resources and interests involved and are often difficult to disentangle. Conflict drivers of relevance to extractive resources, such as oil, gas, minerals, commercial timber and gemstones, include market volatility, inequitable benefit-sharing, extensive environmental and social damage, and significant infringements of human rights. The situation is different for conflicts over land for farming, grazing or settlement, which may arise or escalate over issues such as access (livelihoods and revenue), clashing cultural and spiritual values (group identities) or (customary or historical) tenure of land, in particular with regard to equal rights for women and the collective rights of indigenous peoples. Similar drivers may give rise to conflicts over regenerative resources such as water, timber, fisheries or wildlife.

Climate change can increase security risks. It can also increase scarcity, the frequency and intensity of climate-related hazards and food insecurity (e.g. through shifts in growing seasons), and migration and competition between groups.

The stakeholder landscape usually includes resident and indigenous peoples, (national and international) migrant workers and accompanying settlers, national interest groups (civil and military), civil society, the private sector and international companies. Power asymmetries between these actors differ widely, especially when it comes to international companies.

Rights, obligations and the degree of affectedness also vary according to age, ethnic affiliation and gender-based constraints caused by traditional (gender) norms and discriminatory legislation (e.g. with regard to land ownership, access and control). Women are often the primary providers of water, food and energy at household and community levels, especially in rural areas. They are therefore highly dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods. At the same time, they often face specific constraints on

equal participation in decision-making and the management of natural resources. Children are among the most vulnerable groups, as they work in stone quarrying, small-scale gold- and salt mining or in agriculture. They are at high physical and psychological risk and have very limited opportunities for individual development.

Natural resource issues in fragile and violent conflict settings

The challenges are complex, particularly in fragile, conflict-affected and post-conflict contexts where, typically, governance performance (e.g. service delivery, legitimacy and the rule of law) and security are poor, at least in certain geographical areas, and inclusive structures for equal participation and space for civil society engagement are limited.

There is often a complex pattern of structural and direct violence as a result of cross-border organised crime and/or regional, social, economic or political discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion. Corruption, nepotism and war economies are widespread. In some contexts, armed groups rely on the legal or illegal exploitation of, or trade in, natural resources, blurring the boundaries between the formal, informal and criminal economy and sectors.

Social polarisation and fragmentation are accompanied by a lack of trust between communities or between state and society. Civilian and military security actors and government representatives are often perceived as parties to the conflict.

Private sector actors are often, and in different ways, part of the fragile or war economy system, because they rely on natural resources and/or security provisions.

In post-conflict contexts, the environment may have been badly damaged by toxic hazards, hostilities (including unexploded ordnance) and scorched earth policies. In response to the conflict, or during post-conflict recovery, the coping strategies adopted by survivors, the breakdown of institutions, the impact of humanitarian operations and the legacy of war economies can also cause secondary environmental damage, creating additional pressure and tensions over land and natural resources. The new roles that women may have assumed in natural resource management during a conflict (for example, by taking over traditionally male-dominated roles) may then be challenged.

This poses particularly serious challenges in contexts where capacities and mechanisms for non-violent conflict transformation and management are weak or absent. Societies lacking these capacities are at higher risk of being drawn into protracted cycles of conflict and violence.

Effective conflict transformation in the field of natural resource management as a driver of peaceful development

Effective, gender-sensitive and inclusive conflict transformation, dialogue and mediation mechanisms, in combination with good and inclusive natural resource governance, can provide a framework for preventing and reducing the risk of violence and unrest. As the German Government's 2017 Guidelines on Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace state, 'Social cohesion and the sustainable use of our natural resources are indispensable for peaceful social development.'

This also meets the goals and principles set out in Agenda 2030. In accordance with its pledge to 'Leave no one behind', including women, men, young and older people, migrants and displaced persons, and other marginalised and excluded groups, the Agenda calls for the strengthening of just, peaceful and inclusive processes and institutions for the wellbeing of all the world's population while also seeking to protect the planet's ecosystem functions. Trade-offs are evident, so it is important to show how state and society can negotiate and deal with conflicting interests.

Ensuring women's meaningful participation at all stages of peacebuilding and mediation efforts – in line with UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security – increases the chance of more sustainable and lasting peace agreements.

Our approach

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH is engaged in

many fragile, conflict-affected or post-conflict contexts where disputes over environmental or natural resources are a major factor. Projects implemented by GIZ give consideration to environmental and natural resource conflicts throughout the project cycle, particularly in context analyses, programme design and implementation. GIZ makes it a priority to analyse the multiple causes, drivers, dynamics, actors and stakeholders in the given context and their relationship to the relevant natural resource on an ongoing basis. 'Leave no one behind' underpins GIZ's work in this sector, as it supports and promotes a holistic view of all members of the society, including minority and disadvantaged groups, young and older persons, persons with disabilities and different gender groups.

At the core of our approach are human rights, and context-, conflict-, culture- and gender-sensitivity. It also includes environmental and climate safeguards. GIZ's Safeguards and Gender Management System provides the framework for identifying and managing possible unintended negative impacts as well as potential for promoting gender equality, to ensure that projects and programmes are in line with the above-mentioned standards.

GIZ approaches serve to prevent crisis and transform conflict peacefully at multiple levels (local, regional, national and cross-border). It is important to take an integrated and multidimensional approach that takes account of the connectivity and interdependence with other sectors or fields of action, such as resource governance, natural resource management, political participation, security sector reform, private sector promotion, women's empowerment, anti-corruption, transparency mechanisms or the fight against illicit financial flows. Compliance with human rights and with the principles of impartiality, inclusivity, stakeholder participation, ownership, transparency and reliability is a priority, particularly in fragile, conflict-affected or post-conflict contexts and in local conflicts over use of resources. GIZ's approach also encompasses self-care and staff support measures.

There is no one size fits all solution to environmental and natural resource conflicts, as each situation is unique in terms of its needs, options and challenges. Each context therefore requires its own tailor-made approach, encompassing a combination of proven methods and tools adapted to the specific local context.

Our aspirations and services

As part of peacebuilding advisory services, GIZ seeks to:

- contribute to inclusive and gender-responsive dispute resolution mechanisms and make conflict management and transformation integral to the governance of natural resources;

- support the building of trust between state and non-state actors, including using land or natural resource management (e.g. multi-stakeholder approaches) as a basis for collaboration;

- strengthen the capacities of governments and civil society, and particularly women, to engage in inclusive dialogue, mediation and non-violent conflict transformation to support the prevention or management of environmental conflicts or conflicts over natural resources;

- support the implementation of peace agreements in the aftermath of armed conflict, with a focus on the multiple interests of diverse stakeholders, including returnees, host communities and governments, in the use of land and other natural resources for housing, livelihoods and revenue generation, and by considering the special needs and interests of women, men and young people;

- help create an enabling environment for peaceful and inclusive natural resource governance and local management involving affected communities and supporting the involvement of vulnerable and often excluded groups, including women.

GIZ advises and supports partner organisations at local, regional and national level. The expertise of the Civil Peace Service within GIZ is

a particular important resource here. Civil Peace Service experts support people on the ground in their commitment to dialogue, human rights and sustainable peace.

It is important to start each activity with an in-depth understanding of the context, including conflict lines and dynamics, (gender-based) inequalities and constraints, grievances and existing large- and small-scale corruption mechanisms and structures. It is also important to identify actors as drivers of conflict as well as the individuals and initiatives who are able to connect and bridge divides and a positive force for conflict transformation. In some situations, a participatory conflict and stakeholder analysis is conducted during the initial phase of the programme to strengthen trust and ownership.

Depending on the specific context, GIZ services focusing on the transformation or management of environmental or natural resource conflicts may include a combination of the following measures:

Support mediation, dialogue and conflict transformation processes and capacities to manage disputes over natural resources

- capacity building in mediation, dialogue, and conflict management and transformation, with a specific focus on conflicts over natural resource (including training of trainers);
- advice on the preparation and implementation of inclusive mediation and dialogue processes (tracks 1.5 to 3);
- administrative, logistical and financial support;
- capacity development assistance for associations, networks, training/education providers and government institutions;
- support for accompanying measures for stakeholders or government institutions, the private sector, (social) media or other actors involved in (political) communication;
- support for empowering women and less powerful stakeholders (e.g. young people, civil society) by means of building capacity and raising awareness to facilitate their participation in decision-making processes and economic activities.

Strengthening of multi-level and multi-stakeholder dialogue on critical issues of environmental and natural resources

- promotion of, and support for, (the establishment of) local, regional and national multi-stakeholder dialogue processes;
- support for the participation of marginalised and vulnerable groups in dialogue processes, including women and young people;
- strengthening stakeholder capacity to participate in dialogue processes on a fair and equal basis;
- support for free, fair, transparent and equitable access to relevant information about the issues underpinning conflict;
- promotion of an enabling environment for dialogue and conflict transformation through stakeholder networking activities (government, civil society, security actors, business, the media) and/or other relevant sectors.

Conflict-sensitive resource management

- support to explore and design options to address resource conflicts and prevent violence (e.g. legal framework, resource management activities, dispute resolution, oversight, grievance management mechanisms and transparency mechanisms), including gender-based violence;
- support for the establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system, including monitoring of integrity, performance, transparency, sustainability and conflict dynamics (including 'do no harm' checks and gender-disaggregated data);
- measures to build the capacity of stakeholders (government, civil society and the private sector, including women and young people) to engage in meaningful consultation processes on natural resource management;

- support for an enabling environment through stakeholder awareness raising measures (government, including the security sector, national human rights Institutions, civil society and the private sector).

Example: Conflict-sensitive resource and asset management programme (COSERAM) in the Philippines

For decades, the island of Mindanao in the Philippines has been experiencing political and social unrest, often in the form of armed violence. The conflict-affected areas possess a wealth of natural resources, including rich mineral deposits, extensive water and forest resources, and extensive biodiversity. Warring interests over land and resources and monopolistic land ownership and poor governance contribute to the exploitative use of these resources.

Through the BMZ-funded Conflict-Sensitive Resource and Asset Management (COSERAM) programme (2011-2019), GIZ advised the authorities in the Philippines on promoting the peaceful and long-term resolution of conflicts over land use and land rights and helping marginalised people to gain lawful access to natural resources. The programme promoted dialogue between the diverse interest groups at all levels and assisted them in reaching agreements. All project activities were based on the results of a participatory peace and conflict assessment.

The programme's positive outcomes include:

Forging regional peace agendas including peacebuilding needs in development planning: the first `Regional Road Map for Peace', based on a comprehensive participatory context and conflict analysis, was launched in 2016 in Caraga. The neighbouring region of Northern Mindanao followed with its Peacebuilding and Development Framework and Agenda. Other Regional Peace and Order Councils followed, in coordination with the Development Councils in conflict affected areas.

Mainstreaming conflict sensitivity and peace promoting (CSPP) land use and development

planning: bottom-up and inclusive planning processes have been mainstreamed in 109 local government units (*barangays* , municipalities and provinces) in Caraga and Northern Mindanao. More than 200 communities have seen their skills to deal with land and resource conflicts improved.

The prospects of more than 600 people (50% of them women) have improved. Links have been created to profitable and stable niche markets, providing a sustainable source of income and greater trust between communities and governmental service providers.

Ancestral domain land titles and sustainable development planning: ancestral domains covering 400,000 hectares have been supported in order to achieve seven ancestral domain titles and 12 ancestral domain sustainable development and protection plans. The Guidelines of the National Commission for Indigenous Peoples have been amended on the basis of the lessons learned.

Management of overlapping protected areas and ancestral domains: 47 protected areas covering 1.5 million hectares are now under active improved management, with the involvement of indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples have become involved in the management of the Agusan Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary. Three teams of indigenous researchers have been trained to document the indigenous knowledge systems and practices (IKSPs) of the local Manobo people. Several have been recognised and adopted by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources as proven measures for biodiversity conservation and management. Around 20 indigenous peoples in the Agusan Marsh and Mount Apo protected areas have received capacity development and been appointed as law enforcement officers and are now included in the protected area governance structure.

Access to legal services: three universities have incorporated a conflict-sensitive legal aid programme in their law schools. 470 law students have been trained in conflict sensitivity, conflict transformation and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. One programme has been recognised by the Supreme Court as an accredited legal aid clinic. Efforts are now under way to mainstream the

concepts in a national model law curriculum and bar exam.

28 communities have access to improved legal and paralegal aid services through the barangay-based legal system through cooperation with the law schools.

Further information

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Contact:

Sonja Vorwerk-Halve
Competence Centre Reconstruction and Peace

E sonja.vorwerk-halve@giz.de
T +49 228 4460 3497

Published by:

| Feldfunktion geändert |