

From Conflict to Peacebuilding:
The Role of Natural Resources and Environment

A PBSO Briefing Paper prepared in cooperation with UNEP

Executive Summary

Humans depend on the environment and natural resour

more willing to provide incentives for good environment and natural resource management as a key peacebuilding component. For example, as the Kimberley process became the primary tool to deal with conflict diamonds, expectations have grown that other certification mechanisms, such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, EITI, will prove to be valuable tools to combat the ‘resource curse’.

Through its various configurations and proper leveraging of the Peacebuilding Fund, the Peacebuilding Commission can ensure that environment and natural resource considerations are mainstreamed within its deliberations. In particular, the PBC could promote the need for environmental stress assessments and incorporate the relevant findings into the integrated peacebuilding strategies developed with countries on its agenda. Finally, as research and practice related to the environment, natural resources, and peacebuilding develop further, the PBC should deepen its understanding through future thematic discussion and other knowledge-sharing forums.

1 The role of natural resources and the environment in fueling conflict

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- i. Contributing to the outbreak of conflict: attempts to control or gain access to scarce or extractive natural resources can contribute to the outbreak of conflict;
- ii. Financing and sustaining conflict: Once a conflict has broken out, extractive resources may be exploited to finance arms and armies, or become a strategic consideration in gaining territory. In such cases, the duration of the conflict is extended due to the new sources of financing or in an effort to gain control over a resource rich territory.
- iii. Spoiling the prospects for peace: The prospect of peace may be undermined by individuals or factions that will lose access to revenues gained from resource exploitation. In such cases, they may actively undermine peace processes in order to benefit from conflict conditions.

The last twenty years has witnessed seventeen intra-state conflicts fuelled by the trade in natural resources. Resources such as diamonds, timber, minerals and cocoa have been exploited by armed groups in several countries, including Angola, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Sierra Leone, thereby contributing to conflict and undermining peace efforts.

Indeed, the existence of easily captured and exploited natural resources not only makes insurgency economically feasible² (and, therefore, war more likely); it may also alter the dynamics of conflict itself, as natural resource revenues allow combatants to fight longer and encourage them to orient their activities towards gaining tangible assets like diamond mines. Thus, revenues and riches can alter the mindset of combatants, turning war and insurgency from a purely political activity to an economic one, with conflicts becoming less about grievance and more about greed³.

In other cases, local-level conflict over natural r

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By illustrating how natural resource revenues can m

determining factor for lasting peace. The transparent, equitable, and legitimate definition and realization of property rights and land and resource tenure can have profound positive impacts on a country's environmental, social, and economic prospects, helping to prevent conflict and

As problems of desertification and resource sharing have contributed to conflict in the region, it is essential that humanitarian and early recovery activities are designed to limit or eliminate adverse effects on the environment. If planned and managed badly, urgent life-saving operations could end up exacerbating conflict in the longer term, and undermining livelihoods in host communities.

2.3 Developing sustainable livelihoods

Case Study: Haiti

The UN currently has a force of 7,000 peacekeeping troops and almost 1,000 police officers stationed in Haiti, with a mandate to 'stabilize' the country

Adelphi Research on environmental peacebuilding:

http://www.adelphi-research.de/ECC/PDF/Carius_Environmental_Peacemaking_06-07-02.pdf

German Advisory Council on Global Change:

World in Transition: Climate change as a Security Risk

http://www.wbgu.de/wbgu_jg2007_engl.pdf

IISD and IUCN

Conflict sensitive trade policy: http://www.iisd.org/pdf/2005/tas_objectives.pdf

Conserving the peace: Resources, Livelihoods and Security:

<http://www.iisd.org/publications/pub.aspx?id=477>

WorldWatch Institute

Beyond Disasters: Creating Opportunities for Peace by Michael Renner and Zoe Chafe

<http://www.worldwatch.org/node/5111>

OECD issue briefs

Overview on environment, conflict and peace: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/26/49/35785489.pdf>

Land and conflict: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/26/50/35785480.pdf>

Forests: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/26/47/35785528.pdf>

Water: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/26/5/35785565.pdf>

Valuable minerals: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/26/46/35785546.pdf>

USAID

On minerals:

http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/CMM_Minerals_and_Conflict_2004.pdf

Land and conflict:

http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/CMM_Land_and_Conflict_Toolkit_April_2005.pdf

Forest and conflict:

http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/CMM_Forests_and_Conflict_2005.pdf

Land coalition, North South Institute: Transforming land-related conflict:

http://www.landcoalition.org/pdf/06_pub_nsi_book_full.pdf

DFID, [Management and protection of environment in humanitarian crises](#)

