
Effectiveness of current policy frameworks in mitigating climate-induced risks relating to human security and conflict – case study on the United Nations

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Abstract

The wide scope of the United Nations system permits coverage of a wide range of issues, but encounters challenges with institutional coordination, conflicting state interests and limited control over national or sub-national developments. Cross-sectoral work on climate, water, human security and conflict is limited, but improving. Overall, initiatives focusing on information collection and sharing, capacity-building and promoting cooperation are considered to have the highest potential for addressing climate and water-related human insecurity and conflict.



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Abbreviations

CCDARE	Climate Change Adaptation and Development Initiative
COP	Conference of the Parties
DaO	Delivering as One
DEWA	Division of Early Warning and Assessment
DRR	Disaster risk reduction
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ENVSEC	Environment and Security Initiative
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
FRIEND	Flow Regimes from International Experimental and Network Data
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GRAPHIC	Groundwater Resources Assessment under the Pressures of Humanity and Climate Change
HSU	Human Security Unit
IHP	International Hydrological Programme
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LDCF	Least Developed Countries Fund
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
NAPA	National Adaptation Programmes of Action
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PBC	Peacebuilding Commission
PCCP	Potential Conflict to Cooperation Potential
PEI	Poverty-Environment Initiative



SCCF	Special Climate Change Fund
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNTFHS	United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security
WHO	World Health Organisation
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation

1. Introduction

The purpose of this case study is to provide a review of the effectiveness of and stakeholder demands for the current policy framework of the United Nations (UN) for addressing climate and water-related risks to human security¹ and potential conflicts² over water that may be caused or exacerbated by climate change. The case study builds on desk research and interviews carried out with nine interviewees³ including a selection of civil servants at UN institutions and representatives from academia who currently or had previously worked for or with the UN.⁴

The study broadly describes current UN policies, initiatives and programmes that address different aspects of the nexus between climate change, water and their impacts on human security and conflict. The term “policy framework” is used here as broader than “policy”. It seeks to capture if and how different policies are adopted, as well if and how they are coordinated or integrated, thus leading to a more comprehensive assessment of how the issues of climate, water, human security, cooperation and conflict are addressed. The study utilises a policy cycle lens to examine the framework in relation to agenda setting, policy formulation and implementation. This enables insights into where the strengths and weaknesses of the UN policy framework lie and at which stages it might prove useful for national policy frameworks tackling these issues.⁵

The study highlights gaps, based upon interviewee input, where the connections between climate change, water, human security and conflict are not adequately addressed through current policy measures. Suggestions for improvements to address these gaps are made, cataloguing interviewees’ expectations for what will happen and

¹ “Human security” was famously defined by UNDP in 1994 in the following way: “Human security can be said to have two main aspects. It means, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, in jobs or in communities. Such threats can exist at all levels of national income and development.” UNDP, *New Dimensions of Human Security*, Human Development Report (UNDP: New York, 1994), 23, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr1994/> Human security has sub-dimensions such as water security and food security that can be defined as a situation where an individual consistently has access to water/food in a sufficient quality and quantity.

² For “conflict” we use the definition by Marisa Goulden, Declan Conaway, and Aurelie Persechino, “Adaptation to Climate Change in International River Basins in Africa: a Review / Adaptation Au Changement Climatique Dans Les Bassins Fluviaux Internationaux En Afrique: Une Revue,” *Hydrological Sciences Journal* 54, no. 5 (2009): 806 according to which conflict does not just encompass armed conflict between nations, but also involves “a range (of) negative interactions that encompass mild verbally-expressed discord and cold interstate relationships, as well as hostile acts or declarations of war”.

³ Interviewees responded in a personal capacity and not on behalf of the institutions to which they are affiliated. The views expressed in this report as a whole are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the interviewees.

⁴ See the Annex for full details of the interviews. Due to resource constraints this report was unable to cover all UN institutions and bodies. Furthermore, a lack of response from some interview partners identified meant that certain key bodies were not represented within the opinions of interviewees.

⁵ For a full description of the methodology of this study, see the main report to which this case study is annexed: Gerstetter, C., McGlade, K., Vidaurre, R., and Tedsen, E, *Current Policy Frameworks for Addressing Climate-induced Risks to Human Security and Conflict – an Assessment of Their Effectiveness and Future Perspectives*, CLICO (Ecologic Institute, 2012).



demands for what further action and measures interviewees would desire. The case study concludes by presenting additional insights on the relationships between climate change, water and human security and between climate change and hydro-conflict.

2. United Nations context

The UN is an international organisation with membership from the majority of the world's nations. Its numerous bodies and mechanisms address a wide range of global concerns that include both directly and indirectly and separately or in conjunction, climate change, water resources management, food security, health, disaster risk reduction and conflict. Encompassing member states from 193 nations, the UN is the world's only truly global organisation with offices, programs and personnel operating around the world.⁶

The mandate of the UN is based upon four basic principles: to maintain international peace and security; develop friendly relations among nations; achieve international cooperation in solving global problems in economic, social, cultural or humanitarian areas and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms; and be a centre for harmonising national efforts to achieve common ends in these areas.⁷

The UN Charter establishes six principle organs: the General Assembly, Security Council, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Trusteeship Council, International Court of Justice and the Secretariat. Of these, the General Assembly, Security Council and ECOSOC are the principle decision-making bodies.⁸ The General Assembly is the UN's chief deliberative body to which all member states belong and most decisions are made with a simple majority.⁹ The Security Council has fifteen members, five of which are permanent (China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom and United States) and ten of which are elected by the General Assembly for two-year, regionally distributed terms; its powers include authorisation of peacekeeping forces, economic sanctions and collective military action. ECOSOC, geographically represented by 54 member states with three to four-year terms, coordinates the economic and social work of the UN system.

UN programmes (such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)) are considered subsidiary organs of the General Assembly and funded through the UN general budget and voluntary contributions.¹⁰ UN specialised agencies (including the Food and Agriculture

⁶ Wolfgang H. and Francis M. Deng, *Critical Choices: The United Nations, Networks and the Future of Global Governance*; Linda M Fasulo, *An Insider's Guide to the UN*; Jussi M. Hanhimäki, *The United Nations: A Very Short Introduction*.

⁷ United Nations Charter (1945).

⁸ Sidhu, *Intergovernmental Negotiations and Decision Making at the United Nations: A Guide*.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Consultative Group of Ministers or High-level Representatives on Broader International Environmental Governance Reform, *United Nations Specialised Agencies Versus United Nations Programmes*.

Organisation (FAO), World Health Organisation (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the World Bank) are autonomous intergovernmental organisations created through independent legal instruments and are generally financed through assessed funding.¹¹

The UN's wide scope results in frequently overlapping competencies between these bodies. For example, the current distribution of UN environmental competencies has spread out among UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and a variety of other UN programmes, specialised agencies, commissions and multilateral environmental agreements, such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).¹²

Conflict is naturally considered under the mandate of the Security Council, however the UN has helped bring less traditional notions of development, economic, environmental and other issues into security work.¹³ Since the UN's founding, the recognised causes of conflict and insecurity have changed to include new challenges, such as climate change, adding complexity to the UN's already extensive mandate.¹⁴ The concept of human security was introduced in the UN in the 1994 UNDP Development Report, seen as a first major articulation of the concept, and the UN has been instrumental in moving it forward.¹⁵ This new conceptualisation of human security went from preventing state conflict to protecting individuals.¹⁶

The UN's agenda is ultimately determined by its member states; as a result, setting or blocking an agenda can rest upon the interests of a select number of nations. Interviewees introduced a number of examples where the interests of countries helped shape programme and policy development, such as Japan driving the creation of the UN Trust Fund on Human Security or Canada initiating the Human Security Unit. One interviewee mentioned how large donor countries had a particular influence over UNEP's agenda and had pushed for movement to emphasise science-based assessments¹⁷; he noted, "It's very important in any UN agency to get governments on board because they determine your work plan. If you can't get them on board, you're really in trouble."¹⁸ Along these lines, having a particular "champion" country or representative may be responsible for driving or supporting in pushing an issue forward on the agenda. Said one interviewee, "I think that's what it takes, you get a champion in

¹¹ Ibid.; *Intergovernmental Negotiations and Decision Making at the United Nations: A Guide*.

¹² Pelletier, "Of Laws and Limits: An Ecological Economic Perspective on Redressing the Failure of Contemporary Global Environmental Governance," 224.

¹³ MacFarlane and Khong, *Indiana University Press*.

¹⁴ Caldwell and Williams, *Seeking Security in an Insecure World*.

¹⁵ Matlary, "Much Ado About Little: The EU and Human Security," 235; Martin and Owen, "The Second Generation of Human Security: Lessons from the UN and EU Experience," 213.

¹⁶ MacFarlane and Khong, *Indiana University Press*.

¹⁷ Personal communication, Steve Lonergan, (former) UNEP-DEWA.

¹⁸ Ibid.



these places and they can then move the agency into these directions.”¹⁹ Champions may also come from within an agency, where workers help to drive issues forward, as was described by interviewees as the case for the creation of the PCCP programme or integrating environmental security concerns into UNEP’s portfolio. One interviewee also noted how former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan was as an important advocate of water as a tool for peacemaking as a tool for regional stability.²⁰

Although only member states formally make decisions at the UN, the decision-making process has been increasingly influenced by non-state actors, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academics, think tanks, foundations and the private sector.²¹

3. Overview of the policy framework

The nature of the UN system means that there is not a “policy framework” that can be analysed *per se*. We refer to the policy framework in this context as the broad range of programmes, activities and measures carried out by the various organisations at the UN. This section seeks to give an overview of the current policy framework for addressing climate change, water resource management, conflict and human security challenges. The programmes, initiatives and institutions listed here do not comprehensively represent all work being done on these issues within the UN system, but instead focus on key initiatives of relevance, particularly for supporting country-level efforts.²²

Climate change has been mainstreamed into the work of many organisations and programmes within the UN system. The cornerstone of the UN’s work on climate change is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)²³ which, alongside mitigation goals, commits Parties to preparing for and facilitating climate change adaptation and helping to meet developing countries’ adaptation needs.²⁴ The UNFCCC’s Adaptation Framework²⁵ was established at the COP 16 in Cancun in December 2010 to help reduce vulnerability and build resilience in developing countries through technical and non-technical support mechanisms, financing and the creation of new global, regional and national institutions, including an Adaptation Committee.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Personal communication, Aaron Wolf, Oregon State University.

²¹ Sidhu, *Intergovernmental Negotiations and Decision Making at the United Nations: A Guide*.

²² For a more comprehensive view of relevant efforts, see Tedsen, CLICO Working Paper: Climate Adaptation, Water and Security at the International Level: Overview of European Union and United Nations Initiatives.

²³ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. 1771 UNTS 107; S. Treaty Doc No. 102-38; U.N. Doc. A/AC.237/18 (Part II)/Add.1; 31 ILM 849 (1992).

²⁴ UNFCCC art.4,1, 4.4, 4.8 and 4.9.

²⁵ Cancun Adaptation Framework. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

http://unfccc.int/adaptation/cancun_adaptation_framework/adaptation_committee/items/6053.php. Accessed 28 February 2012.



Under the Adaptation Framework, Least Developed Countries (LDCs) develop National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) to assess and communicate their vulnerabilities and adaptation needs and identify priorities. The Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change under the UNFCCC's Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice is aimed at assisting Parties in improving climate impact assessment and decision-making through a structured framework for knowledge-sharing and collaboration.²⁶ This, like the NAPAs, focuses on LDCs, as well as small island states.

The UN has established several funding schemes for financing climate change adaptation initiatives in developing countries. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) Trust Fund is the UNFCCC's financial mechanism and includes the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF)²⁷ to support NAPAs and the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF)²⁸ for management, education, policy and capacity-building initiatives. The Adaptation Fund, under the UNFCCC's Kyoto Protocol, began funding adaptation in developing countries and small island states in 2010. Finally, the UNFCCC's Green Climate Fund²⁹ is under development for use as a mechanism to transfer money from the developed to the developing world and assist with both adaptation and mitigation. The Green Climate Fund has the goal of raising \$100 billion a year by 2020.

Water operates as a cross-cutting issue throughout the UN, where nearly 30 programmes and agencies work on water.³⁰ UN-Water endeavours to strengthen coordination and coherence among UN entities dealing with freshwater and sanitation and provides an umbrella for UN member bodies which participate and contribute to programmes concerning the full range of water policy and programming. The intersection between water and climate is coordinated and strengthened under the Thematic Priority Area on Water and Climate Change.³¹ The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO) International Hydrological Programme has also developed a Potential Conflict to Cooperation Potential (PCCP) programme which facilitates research, capacity-building and dialogues to help achieve peace and cooperation in development and management of transboundary waters.³² Other relevance UNESCO programmes include the Flow Regimes from International

²⁶Nairobi work programme on impacts, vulnerability and adaptation to climate change. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. http://unfccc.int/adaptation/nairobi_work_programme/items/3633.php. Accessed 28 February 2012.

²⁷ Least Developed Countries Fund.

http://unfccc.int/cooperation_support/least_developed_countries_portal/ldc_fund/items/4723.php

²⁸ The Special Climate Change Fund.

http://unfccc.int/cooperation_and_support/financial_mechanism/special_climate_change_fund/items/3657.php

²⁹ Green Climate Fund.

http://unfccc.int/cooperation_and_support/financial_mechanism/special_climate_change_fund/items/3657.php

³⁰ UN-Water Members & Partners. <http://www.unwater.org/members.html>. Accessed 27 April 2012.

³¹ UN-Water Activities – Thematic Priority Area on Water and Climate Change.

<http://www.unwater.org/TFclimate.html>. Accessed 28 February 2012.

³² <http://webworld.unesco.org/water/wwap/pccp/>



Experimental and Network Data program (FRIEND) hydrological database and the Groundwater Resources Assessment under the Pressures of Humanity and Climate Change (GRAPHIC) project, which assesses the evolving status and use of the world's groundwater and simulates where potential conflicts could arise over shared resources.

The 1992 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's (UNECE) Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes addresses transboundary water uses, pollution and cooperative management.³³ In 2009, the Convention developed Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change³⁴ and in 2010, began a programme of pilot projects to support countries, especially those in economic transition, with development of adaptation strategies and measures in transboundary basins.³⁵ The 1997 UN Convention on the Non-Navigable Uses of International Water Courses³⁶, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly but has yet to enter force, deals with cross-boundary human security issues, taking into account the principle of do no harm when acting in river basins.³⁷

The main thrust of the UN's work on international development and poverty reduction is coordinated by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and is focused on achieving the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. The MDGs are used as a framework for programmes and policies worldwide, many of which are relevant to ensuring human security, including promoting water security and reversing the loss of environmental resources. UNDP supports the integration of climate risks into national planning and poverty reduction efforts through a number of programmes, guidance documents and toolkits for practitioners.³⁸ In addition, the Adaptation Learning Mechanism was launched by the UNDP and partners, to share adaptation information and knowledge with stakeholders, focusing on best practices, capacity-building and integration of climate risks and adaptation into development policies.³⁹

UNDP also works with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) on programmes covering the development-environment nexus. The joint UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI) assists with integration of the nexus between development

³³ UN Economic Commission for Europe Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. 1936 UNTS 269; 31 ILM 1312 (1992).

³⁴ Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change. Economic Commission for Europe Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. ECE/MP.WAT/30. 2009.

³⁵ Transboundary pilot projects on climate change adaptation. Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes. <http://www1.unece.org/ehlm/platform/display/ClimateChange/Welcome;jsessionid=F750A8538407C443E00A31DD04FAFB06>. Accessed 28 February 2012.

³⁶ Convention on the Law of Non-navigable Uses of International Watercourses, G.A. Res. 51/229, U.N. GAOR, 51st Sess., U.N. Doc. A/RES/51/229 (1997), *reprinted in* 36 I.L.M. 700 (1997).

³⁷ http://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXVII-12&chapter=27&lang=en

³⁸ Environment and Energy – Adaptation to Climate Change. United Nations Development Fund.

<http://www.undp.org/climatechange/adapt/>. Accessed 28 February 2012.

³⁹ Adaptation Learning Mechanism. <http://www.adaptationlearning.net/about>. Accessed 28 February 2012.



and environment into plans and policies, including mainstreaming climate change adaptation.⁴⁰ UNDP and UNEP's joint Climate Change Adaptation and Development Initiative (CCDARE) provides technical and financial support for flexible and targeted actions that integrate climate change adaptation into national development frameworks.⁴¹

The UN supports the integration of climate adaptation into a number of agricultural and food programmes. The International Fund for Agricultural Development, for instance, aims to build up the climate resilience of smallholder farmers. The Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO) focus is on food security and builds in considerations of adaptation through its framework programme FAO-Adapt.⁴²

The security implications of climate change have been debated on several occasions at the UN Security Council, notably for the first time in 2007 and again in 2009 after which the UN General Assembly adopted a draft resolution on climate change and its possible security implications (A/63/281). Despite the subject being raised again in 2011⁴³, climate change has thus far not been added to the Security Council's mandate. Efforts have largely been promoted by European member states, but met resistance by others that feel the issue instead falls more appropriately under the remit of the UNFCCC.⁴⁴

In general, the UN has developed programmes to address nexuses not specifically between climate change, water, human security or conflict *per se*, but rather for a broader spectrum of interlinkages between the environment (including natural and man-made disasters), human security and conflict. The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC) is a partnership between UNDP, UNEP, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe and UNECE whose objective is to produce an integrated approach that reduces the likelihood of environmental change exacerbating threats to human security.⁴⁵ Its specific goals are to identify environment and conflict hotspots, raise awareness, build capacities and support action for security-relevant environmental problems. The UNEP Disasters and Conflicts sub-programme is delivered by ENVSEC and other key actors such as the Joint UNEP/OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) Environment Unit.

⁴⁰ UNDP – UNEP Poverty Environment Initiative. <http://www.unpei.depiweb.org/who-we-are/pe-initiative.html>. Accessed 28 February 2012; *Mainstreaming Adaptation to Climate Change into Development Planning: A Guidance Note for Practitioners*. UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative. 2010.

⁴¹ CC DARE: Climate Change Adaptation and Development Initiative. <http://www.ccdare.org/CCDAREStructure/tabid/6775/Default.aspx>. Accessed 28 February 2012.

⁴² Climate Change. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. <http://www.fao.org/climatechange/fao-adapt/en/->. Accessed 28 February 2012.

⁴³ Macfarquhar, "U.N. Deadlock on Addressing Climate Shift."

⁴⁴ Security Council, 5663rd Meeting, (2007): "Security Council Holds First-Ever Debate On Impact Of Climate Change: On Peace, Security, Hearing," Department of Public Information, News and Media Division, New York, available online at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2007/sc9000.doc.htm>.

⁴⁵ Timeus, "The Environment and Security Initiative (ENVSEC)."



This programme aims to understand and reduce the impacts of environmental degradation, emphasising the role of resource management in reducing conflict risks. UNEP has other programmes in this area such as the UNEP Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA), focusing on identifying emerging environmental threats and vulnerabilities, including climate change⁴⁶, and the Disaster Risk Reduction sub-programme, covering the integration of climate change considerations into disaster risk assessment.⁴⁷

The UN's Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) assists states in the transition from immediate post-conflict to long-term reconstruction and development. The PBC's work focuses on country-level priorities that include environmental management and adaptation to climate change but tend to focus on security sector reform, governance and economic recovery activities.⁴⁸

UNEP also coordinates the global level forum, the Partnership on Environment for Disaster Risk Reduction⁴⁹, a Platform of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR)⁵⁰ which advances an integrated approach to disaster risk reduction (DRR), climate change adaptation, ecosystem management and livelihoods. ISDR supports the Working Group on International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change, coordinated by UNDP and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) to share information between climate change and disaster risk reduction communities. The Hyogo Framework for Action Plan (2005-2015)⁵¹ also addresses DRR, aiming to support countries and reduce underlying disaster risk factors including from climate variability in sector development planning and programmes as well as in post-disaster situations.⁵²

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) considers how climate change may act as a driver for accelerated global migration, reducing human security. It works to reduce vulnerability of populations exposed to environmental risk factors, assist populations migrating due to climate and environmental causes, facilitate migration as an adaptation strategy where it does occur and build governmental capacities. The interviewee from the IOM noted that within the MENA (Middle East and North Africa)

⁴⁶ DEWA: Division of Early Warning and Assessment. United Nations Environment Programme.

<http://www.unep.org/dewa/EarlyWarning/tabid/4435/Default.aspx>. Accessed 28 February 2012.

⁴⁷ Disasters and Conflicts – RiVamp: Integrating Ecosystem and Climate Change Factors in Disaster Risk Assessments. <http://www.unep.org/disastersandconflicts/Introduction/DisasterRiskReduction/RiVamp/tabid/55004/Default.aspx>. Accessed 28 February 2012.

⁴⁸ McGlade, "United Nations Peacebuilding."

⁴⁹ PEDRR-Partnership for Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction. <http://www.pedrr.net/>. Accessed 28 February 2012.

⁵⁰ Climate Change. United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/risk-reduction/climate-change/climate-change.html>. Accessed 28 February 2012.

⁵¹ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly [on the report of the Second Committee (A/58/484/Add.5)] 58/214. International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. Fifty-eighth session. Agenda item 94 (e). 27 February 2004.

⁵² Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA). <http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/hfa>. Accessed 28 February 2012.



region, policy work on disaster risk reduction and climate issues has been expanded significantly.

The Human Security Unit (HSU) was established in 2004 in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) with the overall objective of integrating human security into all UN activities.⁵³ The definition used by the HSU is broad and defines human security as the fundamental freedom from fear and want. The HSU highlights the added value of a programmatic human security approach and framework, and manages the UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS), which provides support to projects that translate the concept of human security into concrete activities.⁵⁴ The General Assembly held informal thematic debates on human security in 2008 and 2010, and the Secretary-General has issued reports on the concept.⁵⁵

4. Effectiveness of the current policy framework

Given the large size and scope of the UN system, interviewees did not provide assessments for all areas of the UN's work, but focused their insights on specific areas of the policy framework – usually within the interviewees' own areas of work – as well as providing broader perspectives on the UN system that contributed to an analysis of institutional effectiveness in addressing the issues of climate, water, human security and conflict. This section considers both the effectiveness of the UN's programmes and activities and the effectiveness of the UN's internal organisation, and is organised according to the areas highlighted in interviewee responses.

Overall, interviewees felt that evaluating progress on climate-related policies was difficult, as many policies are new and impacts are often slow to onset. Thus, long-term effectiveness cannot be clearly judged at this stage. In this way, interviewee comments were largely focused on broader institutional issues and policymaking in this area.

Climate change adaptation work was recognised as being widespread throughout UN institutions and all interviewees discussed integration of it into their respective organisations' work. As climate change adaptation is a relatively recent topic to be taken up by policymakers, much of this work was seen as still evolving and attention on the issues still growing. One interviewee noted that the climate change impacts of drought have been recognised, and progress made towards an integrated drought

⁵³ Takasu, "Mainstreaming Human Security in the Global Agenda," 3.

⁵⁴ Human Security Unit –United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security.

<http://ochaonline.un.org/HumanSecurityUnit/tabid/2212/language/en-US/Default.aspx>. Accessed 29 February 2012.

⁵⁵ Report of the Secretary-General (2012): Follow-up to General Assembly resolution 64/291 on human security. (A/66/763). April 2012; Informal Thematic Debate on Human Security.

<http://www.un.org/en/ga/president/65/initiatives/HumanSecurity.html>.

management, but that policies for climate-related drought and sea level rise in the UN are still weak.⁵⁶

Interviewees stated that the UN's policy framework for addressing climate and water-related human security and conflict is improving, as policies and the policy agenda increasingly integrate cross-sectoral concerns and impacts. Many UN bodies currently consider interlinkages between climate, water and human security within their work, but cross-sectoral work is still developing, as is interagency coordination on cross-cutting issues. Some interviewees observed that a human security framework, as offered by the HSU, has potential as an integrating mechanism; but generally, concerns regarding conflict or hard security and state sovereignty were felt to outweigh the benefits of using the term directly.

4.1 Institutional strengths

Areas of the UN's work that interviewees found could be most effective were information and data-sharing and gathering and capacity-building. Providing information and strategic guidance and resources, rather than narrow policy suggestions, was suggested as often less political and better tailored to national or regional needs. Programmes and policies covering scientific analyses, assessments and modelling also provide critical information to policymakers, aiding in agenda setting and policy formulation. Focusing on technical aspects was additionally seen as a way of promoting collaboration and cooperation over resources. Generally, the UN can play a key role in promoting cooperative efforts among stakeholders and countries due to its international reach, which also enables a platform for raising awareness.

4.1.1 Information collection and sharing

A frequent theme of interviewees' assessments was that some of the most robust and effective UN programmes are those where activities focus on provision of scientific and technical information and data. The UN is able to gather and distribute information both to and from member states, sharing data and reports on emerging global issues and providing policymakers with indications of relevant trends. For example, the 183 member countries of the WMO contribute through open exchange of observations and information in collaboration with other UN organisations, aiming to provide climate information for various sectors (e.g. tourism, health, agriculture, water) in order to provide information for experts and decision-makers on climate impacts. Interviewees gave examples where such data can aid early warning to tackle extreme events and assist in adapting to and managing climate variability in the long-term.⁵⁷ In another

⁵⁶ Personal communication, anonymous interviewee, UN organisation.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

example, UNEP-DEWA uses global assessments and scientific to highlight emerging trends and issues on a three to five-year horizon, work that was identified as particularly effective in addressing climate, water and human security linkages.⁵⁸

Efforts which focus on technical aspects and information-gathering and sharing, like FRIEND, were described as effective avenues for improving cooperation among states as these measures are less likely to face potentially fatal politicisation. Data-sharing and trust-building at a lower level, such as a river basin commission, can create a foundation for action that meets fewer fixed obstacles. An interviewee from the UNECE commented, “You have to start somewhere and the place to start is the technical discussions on the technical issues.” Nonetheless, political interests may still block policy implementation: An interviewee from UNESCO-IHP described how modelling and data-sharing programmes could be obstructed where “upstream countries do not want to share their data and the downstream countries do not trust the upstream countries because they don’t share their data.”⁵⁹ In addition, the former director of UNEP-DEWA noted that although “it makes sense intuitively that if you build trust at technical levels and lower levels, this would permeate up to higher level politics” he did not feel that there enough cases of this have been in evidence.”⁶⁰

Data-driven efforts were also described as non-political, highly influential mechanisms for policymakers. Solid research and data provides a feeling of certainty in decision-making, allowing consideration and movement of an issue onto the policy agenda. One interviewee described how as the science on climate change and water scarcity progressed, aided by IPCC reports, policymakers became more willing to address it.⁶¹ An interviewee suggested that a problem in moving consideration of sea level rise onto the political agenda is that science is not yet precise exact levels of rise and thus not yet within the “confidence limits of the decision-makers.”⁶² Another noted, “You have to be careful about being an advocate beyond the scientific boundaries . . . we had to make sure that everything was very evidenced-based, that we were credible in our assessments.”⁶³ In this way, the UN’s contributions to improving development and exchange of scientific evidence can help to increase credibility and support for action on contentious issues

4.1.2 Capacity-building

Other principal areas of work considered to be successful were capacity-building programmes. Programmes focused on sharing guidance, awareness-building and

⁵⁸ Personal communication, Aaron Wolf, Oregon State University.

⁵⁹ Personal communication, Andras Szöllösi-Nagy, UNESCO-IHP.

⁶⁰ Personal communication, Steve Lonergan, (former) UNEP-DEWA.

⁶¹ Personal communication, Sonja Koeppel, UNECE.

⁶² Personal communication, anonymous interviewee, UN organisation.

⁶³ Personal communication, Sonja Koeppel, UNECE.

education, particularly in the context of shared water bodies, were seen as highly effective form of UN-level action. According to interviewees, sharing information, such as best practices, case studies and methodologies, assists actors at the country, regional and local levels in climate and water action and cooperative management. An interviewee from UNESCO-IHP pointed out how long-term educational programmes promoting cooperative understanding are immensely beneficial in preventing resources-based conflicts, and the involvement of young people in such programmes could only benefit cooperation in the longer term.⁶⁴

An interviewee from UNECE remarked that “What people often want to hear is the experience of other basins and that is what we try to do through our platform for exchanging experiences, but also having some concrete examples through our own pilot projects for managing water in a transboundary context”.⁶⁵ She described success under UNECE’s National Policy Dialogues, which support water sector reforms in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia through assistance in development and implementation of water strategies and legislation, strengthening cross-sectoral cooperation, implementing targets and developing national policies for transboundary water management.⁶⁶

It was suggested that capacity-building programs may, like information-based efforts, face less political resistance. The PCCP programme, for example, was initially met with opposition from certain member states where water was an existing source of conflict and who felt the UN was intruding and intending to act as an arbitrator.⁶⁷ In response, the initiative was placed under the Water Assessment Programme and not proposed as a full intergovernmental programme, thus not requiring formal government approval. The focus of the programme was placed on information gathering and building tools and capacity for governments to use at will, helping to extinguish remaining opposition.

4.1.3 Cooperation

The UN’s global nature places it in a unique position to promote cooperation between a broad range of countries and stakeholders. As one illustration of such cooperation, interviewees discussed how UN programmes that support, promote or provide a forum for regional and local cooperation, such as at the river basin level, are more effective in addressing water management cooperation, as opposed to higher-level international policy efforts that are more susceptible to politicisation and resulting obstruction. River basin committees and joint institutions for management of transboundary waters can help countries address prospective water-related human security issues and a trusted

⁶⁴ Personal communication, Andras Szöllösi-Nagy, UNESCO-IHP.

⁶⁵ Personal communication, Sonja Koeppel, UNECE.

⁶⁶ About the National Policy Dialogues. <http://www.unece.org/env/water/npd>. Accessed 19 June 2012.

⁶⁷ Personal communication, Andras Szöllösi-Nagy, UNESCO-IHP.

coordinating body or facilitator encourages collaboration. More than policy frameworks, what appeared most valuable were shared institutions which provide space for cooperation on the implementation of transboundary management measures at a regional or local level.

4.1.4 Raising awareness

As a globally influential organisation, the UN provides a natural platform for drawing attention and raising issues on the policy agenda. Interviewees noted how global awareness of climate change grew substantially for both the public and policymakers over the last decade, with the rise in interest from policymakers in part resulting from influential publications such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports. An interviewee from the IOM described how a 1992 publication on environmental migration from the organisation had been “too early” as awareness was generally still limited; it was only later when the issue gained momentum through the UNFCCC that it rose on the organisation’s policy agenda.⁶⁸ Debates within the Security Council have also increased awareness of the connections between environmental and climatic factors with conflict and human security.

High-level meetings, such as the World Water Forum, can help raise low awareness and corresponding political will, suggested an interviewee from UNESCO-IHP. Although this interviewee embraced high-profile forums for the ability to raise attention for water-related issues, another commented that the amount of time, funds and attention spent on large meetings did not always correspond with the actual policy results produced.⁶⁹

4.2 Institutional challenges

Rather than identify problems with individual programmes and measures, interviewees broadly described challenges and barriers to an effective UN policy framework within all stages of the policy cycle. Poor consideration of short-term versus longer-term impacts and planning was highlighted during the agenda-setting, policy formulation and implementation stages. Insufficient institutional and cross-sectoral coordination was also seen to negatively affect formulation and implementation. Reliance on national-level policies and institutions can produce difficulties implementation of UN-level policies and programmes. Lastly, insufficient funding for implementation can present a stumbling block for effectively implementing policy measures.

4.2.1 Time frames

⁶⁸ Personal communication, Patrice Quesada, IOM.

⁶⁹ Personal communication, Aaron Wolf, Oregon State University

Long-term problems and policy measures to address them often fail to compete with issues of short-term visibility and higher impact. Many interviewees noticed how policymakers (alongside the press, public and NGOs) tend to favour tackling crisis events with observable impacts, such as floods or famines, over taking up issues of a continuing nature and slower onset, such as drought or sea-level rise. This diversion of attention away from new preventive measures and maintenance of existing measures is reflected later in the policy cycle in terms of lack of funding for implementation and monitoring. An interviewee noted that, “Preventative measures do not get proper attention from politicians because they are more looking at things that can be visible, that can be shown to be actions they have taken . . . that’s where our main weakness lies in the political system as well as our economic system. We tend by nature to be only reactive, not proactive.”⁷⁰ Non-environmental issues, too, may affect the level of consideration given to environmental matters. The recent global economic downturn was cited by interviewees as divesting attention and funding away from the environment, and one interviewee noted how attention in the MENA region had been somewhat diverted since the Arab spring.⁷¹

As far as formulating climate adaptation measures, this dynamic can hinder decision-making that takes a longer-term approach or provides for sustained action measures. “Even when you have taken certain measures, in developing countries mostly, e.g. embankments for flood prevention, there is no maintenance of them. Putting money into development plans is fine, but maintaining them is not as attractive and people don’t like to put money there. So they get degraded. That is where we need to try to find a way out, to take preventative action and give as much attention and priority to proactive action as to reactive.”⁷² Subject to the fickle concerns of politicians and the public, agendas may change before issues have received sufficient attention, implementation and communication. One interviewee described a need for prolonged reflection in order to strengthen sustainable development and allow time for measure to develop, particularly in developing countries that are slower to implement and build capacities, calling for patience to allow countries working at a slower pace to fully address the issues.⁷³

4.2.2 Institutional coordination

Interviewees expressed broad consensus that better coordination was needed between UN bodies, particularly in terms of cross-sectoral coordination for addressing interlinkages between the thematic issues of climate, water, human security and conflict. Given the vast number of UN agencies and programmes, coordination is an especially

⁷⁰ Personal communication, anonymous interviewee, UN organization.

⁷¹ Personal communication, Patrice Quesada, IOM.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Personal communication, anonymous interviewee, UN organization.

critical component of effective policy formulation and implementation. Working cross-sectorally encounters challenges, as institutions at both the UN and national levels remain “siloes” according to major sectors to a large extent. Due to this separation, it can prove difficult to integrate issues in order to work in coordination towards the same goals. The UN “has traditionally worked within silos and when you talk about water resources climate change and human dimensions all in one breath, you’re talking about an awful lot of silos having to work together. If left alone, that doesn’t happen. It really takes somebody to see the potential linkages between different disciplines, agencies or programmes to be willing to take, sometimes the political or career risk, to move beyond these individual silos.”⁷⁴ It was also noted that among UN agencies, a certain degree of competition has tended to exist, which may impede collaborative efforts.⁷⁵

Interviewees here and for other studies⁷⁶ confirmed the difficulty of integrating environmental issues (related to climate, water or otherwise) into non-traditionally environmental UN work, such as development and peacebuilding, which are more closely related to the UN’s core activities. While challenging, such integration is slowly progressing. An interviewee who had worked in UNEP spoke of success in incorporating environment and natural resources into a broader development discussion and post-conflict efforts. After what he saw as successful efforts in pushing this nexus forward, “now you have environmental officers as part of peacebuilding and peacekeeping missions which is new. UNEP for the first time is also able to do work on the ground and trying to get natural resource management into the overall development strategy of countries.”⁷⁷

There is movement within the UN towards increasing coordination between agencies through processes such as ‘Delivering as One’ initiative (see Box 1) to ensure that UN agencies avoid duplicating efforts. However, this was deemed by some interviewees to be rather basic and with little real impact.

While the majority of interviewees felt coordination could be improved in some manner, the interviewee from the HSU felt that interagency efforts were progressing, offering the human security framework as a way for further increasing interagency work and getting out of traditional “silos.” Another example of improved cross-sectoral coordination is UN-Water, where the water-related efforts of nearly 30 UN programmes and agencies are now coordinated. Cross-cutting efforts to make the UNFCCC aware of the need for using water as a medium for adaptation were highlighted in this work as a means of promoting human security issues.

⁷⁴ Personal communication, Aaron Wolf, Oregon State University.

⁷⁵ Personal communication, Steve Lonergan, (former) UNEP-DEWA.

⁷⁶ Gerstetter et al., *Review of International and National Policies and Institutional Frameworks*.

⁷⁷ Personal communication, Steve Lonergan, UNEP-DEWA.

Box 1: Delivering as One

In recent years, the UN has become increasingly aware of the need for internal coordination and strives to “deliver as one” organisation when operating in the field. “Delivering as One” (DaO) is a 2007 UN initiative to reform its interagency work at the country level with more effective use of resources and greater coherence. The initiative is built on the idea of having one leader in each country coordinating all agencies, one budgetary framework and through one operational support system.⁷⁸

Reports published by the UN observed that the DaO had successful elements, but needed improvements as well.⁷⁹ Central to the strategy is the idea that development programmes and strategies should be tailored to the specific country and not top-down; development needs to achieve a level of national ownership. One suggestion was to increase the inclusivity of operating organisations beyond the UN, capitalising on local organisations and knowledge. Governments did find the more singular approach helpful in increasing visibility of specific work undertaken by different organisations, creating a clearer development framework and making UN expertise more accessible to country-level planners. Another improvement noted was reduced competition between agencies working on similar or overlapping issues. Support for the publication of a single country document was commended for providing a more clear and comprehensive analysis of development initiatives.⁸⁰ Critics, however, point out that DaO has not downsized and streamlined UN bureaucracy sufficiently, as offices remaining large, departments have not merged and programs have not been removed, even as levels of UN aid decrease.⁸¹ Whether DaO achieves substantive reform for delivering UN development-related assistance remains a test for the future.

4.2.3 National frameworks

In order for many international level policies to be effective, complementary policies may need to be formulated at the national or sub-national levels. Processes such as the UNFCCC can have a wide influence, but must be accompanied by country action. In this way, limitations at the international level result from limited power to compel implementation of non-binding measures or programmes and compliance mechanisms are often weak or non-existent – perhaps an added rationale for why many interviewees perceived UN policies focusing on information and data, capacity-building and guidance as most effective.

⁷⁸ United Nations (2006). Delivering as One. Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on UN System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Environment.

⁷⁹ United Nations (2009). Lessons Learned From Pilot Countries. Prepared by the Coordination Officers from Albania, Cape Verde, Mozambique, Pakistan, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uruguay and Viet Nam. Available online: <http://www.undg.org/docs/11117/091008-Lessons-Learned-from-Pilot-Countries.pdf>

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Sequeira, Sandra and Christian Schornich. Is “Delivering as one” failing to deliver? The case for a market-based approach to UN reform. AID WATCH. 17 December 17 2009 Available at: <http://aidwatchers.com/2009/12/is-%E2%80%9Ddelivering-as-one%E2%80%9D-failing-to-deliver-the-case-for-a-market-based-approach-to-un-reform/>

For some countries, the “environmental ministries tend to be fairly weak, if they exist at all.”⁸² This not only reduces the capacity to implement environmental measures, but can leave cross-cutting issues like water to be dealt with by a separate entity or it may be lumped under another ministry.”⁸³ In such cases, identifying decision-making powers and responsibilities and collecting and standardising data can be significantly impaired.⁸⁴ Both the willingness and capacity of national or sub-national actors can block intended action by UN-level agencies, s observed regarding formulation of multi-sectoral policies at the country level. An interviewee mentioned that some countries do not take implementation as seriously as one might hope.⁸⁵ Another noted that “If at the level of the government there is no such capacity to integrate or work in a multidisciplinary way then it’s more difficult to act.”⁸⁶

While his organisation focused on field level work, an interviewee described how it was simultaneously investing into global policy formulation so as to better influence actions at the local level.⁸⁷ He described it as something of a balancing act: “At the same time you need to ensure that there is some peer pressure on the global level, and then you need to identify countries that are committed to this issue and work with them at the country level. The two are complementary.” This dynamic was mirrored in the work mentioned by other interviewees, which also sought to join high-level policy work with ground-level efforts.

Covering the majority of the world’s nations, the UN encompasses both developed and developing nations and a range of needs and capacities. One interviewee contrasted efforts to develop policies in the UN versus the European Union (EU).⁸⁸ Due to the EU’s higher level of development and technological and financial capacities, compared to many of the developing countries that the UN deals with, policies that have been successful for the EU cannot be directly transposed at the UN level. “We as UN experts do take a lot of research that comes out of various EU programmes and we make use of that in our policies. But we cannot really take them as they are and transfer them to a different place or just adopt it as a UN system policy because the economic situation of the audience to which the UN has to cater is quite different from the one the EU is catering to.”⁸⁹ Another interviewee explained how while policies like the Water Framework Directive may have been successful for the EU, alternative models may better address the divergent needs of other regions.

⁸² Personal communication, Aaron Wolf, Oregon State University.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Personal communication, Sonja Koeppel, UNECE.

⁸⁶ Personal communication, anonymous interviewee, UN organisation.

⁸⁷ Personal communication, Patrice Quesada, IOM.

⁸⁸ Personal communication, anonymous interviewee, UN organisation.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

4.2.4 Funding

A primary obstacle against successful policy implementation noted was insufficient financing. Policy implementation and monitoring often suffer from a lack of funding, an issue that has become more acute with the recent economic crisis.⁹⁰

The term “climate change” was viewed as having a positive effect on this aspect of policy success and a number of interviewees commented that highlighting climate change aspects of a policy or programme helped to increase funding and attention. Nonetheless, while much is being done on the ground under the heading of climate change, this framing is not always straightforward. For example, one interviewee found that much of the work being performed under the auspices of climate change is the same work on empowering communities and building livelihoods, albeit under a different label.⁹¹ In a related case, another interviewee said that, until recent efforts to improve inter-agency programming and understanding of the human security concept, country-level teams implementing UNHSTF projects had not always been fully aware of what the human security concept means, and used the money to “do their own thing”⁹², suggesting that the policies can be and are formulated to address underlying concerns that are not dependent upon a “label” or specific term. In this way it is necessary to monitor and follow up on funding to ensure that activities which genuinely contribute to climate change adaptation, conflict prevention or human security genuinely do so.

5. Expectations and demands

Parallel to their assessment of the effectiveness of the current framework and policy cycle analysis, interviewees articulated what they hoped for and expected to see in the UN’s future work. Generally, interviewees found that cross-sectoral measures can be improved upon in, particularly at the formulation and implementation stages.

5.1 Information collection and sharing

As one of the most effective areas of UN policy, programmes focusing on technical information and data were a central demand for future efforts. Interviewees requested both more and improved data, to inform policy formulation and implementation, and to gain support in moving issues on to the policy agenda. Increased facilitation of data sharing, an area where the UN has particular capacity to connect country-level observations and monitoring, was also called for.

Better data and modelling was demanded for local and regional impacts and effects. A lack of available information was perceived for the localised impacts of sea level rise,

⁹⁰ Personal communication, anonymous interviewee, UN organisation.

⁹¹ Personal communication, anonymous interviewee, UN organisation.

⁹² Personal communication, Huw Beynon, HSU, OCHA.

groundwater recharge and water use. Information was seen as particularly deficient in developing countries which have less technological capacity and historical data available. From a policy perspective, “if we don’t know what the local impacts of sea level rise will be, we will not be able to take any action.”⁹³ Where a lack of data persists, one interviewee noted that decision-makers can choose to implement “no regrets” policies, where projects are designed to yield positive benefits even if the precise outcome is uncertain.⁹⁴

Modelling capabilities have improved tremendously over the past fifteen years and challenges now lie in improving application and access. For the former, interviewees identified a need to integrate modelling data on water and climate with socioeconomic information, such as population, in order to improve application for human security concerns.⁹⁵ Regarding the latter, one problem cited was making data accessible for non-scientific audiences. Here, it was suggested that the UN should promote placing information to be put into the public domain, without restrictions on exchange.⁹⁶

One interviewee noted how GIS and related technology will have an important role to play in the dynamics of disputes between upstream and downstream countries: In the past, upstream countries have been able to withhold information on water resources to strengthen their negotiating positions with regards to allocation agreements.⁹⁷ However, remote sensing will make it increasingly possible for previously privileged information to be made available in the public domain.

5.2 Capacity-building

Viewed as a strength of the UN policy framework, interviewees broadly supported continuance and expansion of capacity-building programs and measures on guidance, awareness-building, education, best practices, case studies and methodologies. Such measures were supported for their capacity in reducing climate and water-related human insecurity and conflict.

5.3 Cooperation

Due to restrictions in the UN’s mandate, scope and member states’ interests, it can be difficult to work with and across the many agencies, and it was remarked that often individuals are more progressive than the system. With these considerations in mind, interviewees suggested that cooperating with external parties may be essential in moving the future debate forward on interlinkages between climate change, water,

⁹³ Personal communication, anonymous interviewee, UN organisation.

⁹⁴ Personal communication, Saliha Dobardzic, GEF.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Personal communication, anonymous interviewee, UN organisation.

⁹⁷ Personal communication, Andras Szöllösi-Nagy, UNESCO-IHP.

human security and conflict. Interviewees felt that future efforts should promote more open dialogue, coordination and cooperation between national and sub-national actors, fostering collaboration and information-sharing in “safe”, confidential forums. The UN and its member states can help foster such cooperation and dialogue, however interviewees pointed out that actors outside of the UN, such as from NGOs, academia or public-private partnerships, may be considered more neutral and authoritative to certain audiences, and may be better equipped to take this forward by demonstrating the urgency of issues and bringing key players to the table. Indeed, some of what has been considered as the UN’s most effective work in the field has been undertaken in partnership with local NGOs that have proven more capable of promoting international norms espoused at the UN level without obstructing notions of sovereignty.⁹⁸

5.4 Institutional coordination

One approach offered by the HSU for improving institutional coordination on interlinking issues is applying a human security framework. The framework emphasises the integration (rather than parallel coordination) of different agencies’ efforts: “Interagency cooperation is a big thing, not just coordination, but interagency meaning that different agencies don’t simply split the pot of money and then implement the project “parallel”. We push for genuine integration working in the same regions with the same groups of beneficiaries, to address multiple insecurities that a group might be facing. This is integrated rather than just a ‘coordinated’ approach.”⁹⁹ According to initial responses from UN agencies that have used this framework, it has been helpful in improving cost and project effectiveness. Most interviewees, whether or not they favoured a human security framework in theory, did not expect that the concept would take a leading role in the near future. The HSU interviewee, however, was hopeful that the upcoming plenary discussion on human security at the General Assembly in June 2012 could be a “pivotal moment” and turning point for future implementation of human security.

6. Insights on human security, climate change and water

Throughout the UN, there is no consistent usage of or position on the term on “human security”. Usage varies between UN institutions and programs, often reflecting respective interests and areas of work. One interviewee noted how “with certain parts of the UN, we will discuss much more human security related aspects, where they see the softer aspects of it through human security as being very important . . . so it also depends which part of the UN we’re talking about. If you look at the development, they will look

⁹⁸ Hobe, “Global Challenges to Statehood: The Increasingly Important Role of Nongovernmental Organizations”; Clark, Friedman, and Hochstetler, “The Sovereign Limits of Global Civil Society: A Comparison of NGO Participation in UN World Conferences on the Environment, Human Rights, and Women.”

⁹⁹ Personal communication, Huw Beynon, OCHA-HSU.

more at livelihood. If you look more at the political agencies, they will look more at the conflict and human security aspects of it.”¹⁰⁰ UN member states may have different understandings of human security, too, and interest in the topic seemed to initially stem from a handful of member states, notably Canada, Germany, Finland, Japan and also the EU.

The concept of human security is not yet thoroughly integrated into the UN’s current policy framework, although the HSU is actively working to promote the concept and its use as an organising concept. Within the UN framework, the HSU and UNTFHS play the primary role in carrying the concept forward. The interviewee from the HSU explained how the organisation encourages UN country teams to perform human security analyses looking at economic, environmental and health security, and is developing guidance for integration and application of human security in UN work on climate change, peace building, sustainable development and health. He felt that UNTFHS’s work with the concept of human security was helping to “address things in a more holistic way that helped address root causes” of vulnerabilities, and mentioned current projects on climate-related drought.¹⁰¹ The interviewee mentioned regional workshops to train UN country teams on the concept that helped improve understanding and what human security analyses and programs can provide.

Despite these efforts, however, only one other interviewee referenced the UNTFHS or HSU’s work. This may point to a lack of interest in human security, the relative scope of the HSUs work, its effectiveness or to a lack of awareness by interviewees of the HSU’s role in projects. Indeed, the HSU representative pointed out that visibility is a problem in the organisation’s work and efforts are underway to increase awareness that “this project is a human security project,” and not just regular agency work, thereby promoting the concept’s added value. Some interviewees were sceptical about the application of a human security framework, having found the term “ ” due to a lack of understanding and use of the word “security” ” to be controversial and subject to political sensitivities and sovereignty concerns. Because of these concerns, some organisations backed away from the concept, even where considered effective. A label of human security, or even climate change, can be controversial, and it was suggested that the more neutral terminology of “livelihoods” and “development” can be preferable, especially for attracting sensitive donors. An interviewee from the IOM noted “that’s one issue with the human security concept: it has the word security in it.”

The interviewee explained how, although the organisation eventually backed away from the approach due to such concerns, using a human security approach had been helpful: “Basically what we see is that if we are able to use an assessment based on human

¹⁰⁰ Personal communication, Patrice Quesada, IOM.

¹⁰¹ Personal communication, Huw Beynon, HSU-OCHA.

security, it's usually very solid for developing programs in response. We tested that in Darfur where we worked with early warning tool systems plus on the ground assessment to detect areas where tensions were rising or could potentially rise over available water resources or other resources. That has worked very well. So whenever when we have been able to have programmes, especially Japanese or Canadian funded, with this human security angle, we have been very satisfied with the result.”¹⁰² He continued, “We have to be a bit more careful in the way we use the words human security, which I find a pity because I think the framework is very adequate. A substitute we found that was more politically correct was to move to the vulnerability framework, or climate vulnerability, also very much within the livelihood framework.”

Unsurprisingly, human security was viewed by the HSU interviewee as a programmatic lens and tool that can aid analysis and cooperation in interlinkages with, among other cross-sectoral issues, climate and water. Contrasting the views of the other interviewees, he saw a “larger movement” towards understanding and using the human security concept.

In general, the absence of widespread agreement on the use of the *term* human security as a guiding concept or framework does not indicate a lack of support on human security *issues* as innumerable UN programmes address food, health, economic, environmental and political security through other methods. While describing previous cross-sectoral cooperative efforts covering water, food security and health as affected by climate change, one interviewee reflected, “So we are not directly talking about human security, but all of our activities, particularly those related to water, ultimately affect human security. There we find that there is a need to cooperate among various agencies, [but] frankly, we have never considered human security directly.”¹⁰³ An interviewee from the IOM remarked that initially, when the organisation began to examine interlinkages between climate change and migration, it was within a human security framework. While the use of the term “human security” has decreased, the IOM’s work on the issue itself has not and has not been impeded.

An interviewee from the GEF discussed how at a programmatic scale, the GEF’s work with the LDCF and SCCF follows decisions and guidance from the UNFCCC, and although the entire issue of adaptation to climate change is essentially a human security problematic, the climate change policy debate seldom refers to it as such.¹⁰⁴ At the project level, however, processes are country-driven and focus is placed on outcomes that will be beneficial even where data is limited or subject to interpretation. “When a climate change adaptation project is submitted to us, we do a technical review and the main concern for us is if it leads to adaptation and a potential change in climatic

¹⁰²Personal communication, Patrice Quesada, IOM.

¹⁰³ Personal communication, anonymous interviewee, UN organization.

¹⁰⁴ Personal communication, Saliha Dobardzic, GEF.

conditions. If the project also happens to improve the economic well being or human security, as a result, then that is an added bonus.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, even where UNFCCC policy processes may not directly consider a human security framework, consideration of human security issues can nonetheless be incorporated broadly and into project decision-making.

7. Insights on conflict, climate change and water

Whether due to programmatic focus within UN or to interviewees’ personal experience, discussions tended to highlight transboundary water cooperation over conflict. There was consensus that while water scarcity and conflict may be connected, there are no clear linear links. Interviewees also held the view that climate change is not or will not be the singular contributing factor to resources-related conflicts. Population growth was also considered a major stressor and “conflict material”, in addition to factors such as wealth distribution, development, ethnic tensions and more. Because of the high number of related causal factors, a direct link between conflict and resources is difficult to understand or prove, and “it would be too easy to put the blame on the environment.”¹⁰⁶ Said an interviewee from the IOM, who felt scares of a “tsunami of climate refugees” exaggerated concerns over climate-induced migration: “I think the strong or automatic link that is made with conflict is not true. It’s more complex than that.”¹⁰⁷

A corresponding theme running throughout some areas of the UN system is that regardless of causality, environmental stresses can be used to induce cooperation. Most action in this regard is water-related, although it was said to be gaining wider interest from policymakers in other areas also. At the same time, highlighting conflict potential can be seen as “useful, especially to get countries on board that are otherwise reluctant to be engaged [with environmental issues].”¹⁰⁸ For climate change, the Security Council has unsuccessfully attempted to take up security implications at a higher level, but lower profile efforts such as through the PBC or ENVSEC have progressed further.

Interviewees suggested that the debate on climate and hydro-conflict misguidedly concentrates on the international level, when greatest relevance is at a smaller scale. One felt especially strongly that, “as you move away from the international level to the community level you will find more conflict over water. At the international level there is far more cooperation and agreement over water. So much time is spent on the international agreements but we should be looking more at the community level.”¹⁰⁹ It can also be important to work on a national-level, bilateral basis, too, especially where

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Personal communication, Patrice Quesada, IOM.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Personal communication, Steve Lonergan, (former) UNEP-DEWA.

there is a history of conflict over shared water resources.¹¹⁰ Successful basin cooperation between Spain and Portugal and over the Sava River, in the post-conflict Balkans, were cited as positive examples of cooperation. However, the lessons of one basin may not translate for another “it really depends on the particular cases and situations, like in Central Asia, there is not much flexibility.”¹¹¹

One interviewee felt that, from a political standpoint, emphasising the hard security and conflict implications of climate change “is useful, especially to get countries on board that are otherwise reluctant to be engaged.”¹¹² Another mentioned that while usually preferring to highlight cooperation over conflict and security, “[t]he security dimension is more something we might argue for with donors.”¹¹³

8. Conclusions

Although challenged by institutional fragmentation, cross-sectoral and interagency coordination, limited power to compel implementation of non-binding measures, politicisation between member states and more, the UN system’s policy framework as a whole has many positive, cross-sectoral efforts underway for addressing climate and water-related impacts to human security and conflict. The UN’s immense scope and varied agenda can generate institutional weaknesses, but also present considerable opportunities for covering global and cross-cutting issues. More visible, high-level UN policy efforts may meet greater obstacles by encountering political interests of member states, but interviewees seemed to feel that lower profile UN efforts, when supported by sustained institutional interest and funding, were able to effectively address climate and water-related human security and conflict concerns.

The UN’s programmes on research, modelling, assessment and other data and science-driven initiatives were among those interviewees saw as most effective and wished to see more of in the future. Other particularly effective policies focused attention on capacity-building and regional collaboration. With these types of measures and more broadly, the UN can maximise its role as a global institution through promoting cooperation and raising awareness of critical issues with policymakers and the public. A common thread between these was a perceived lack of politicisation that often bars effective results. In this way, sensitive political subjects may also be better managed by working at a local or regional level, rather than focusing on international cooperation. Focusing on technical issues as well as educational and capacity-building programs may help find common ground and be some of the most effective mechanisms for approaching resource- and hydro-conflict and for avoiding political concerns which may

¹¹⁰ Personal communication, Sonja Koeppel, UNECE.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Personal communication, Sonja Koeppel, UNECE



block efforts. Interviewees also suggested that human security and conflict impacts are often more evident and can be better addressed at the sub-national level.

For climate change adaptation policies, most being relatively new and with impacts unable not fully observable, effectiveness is difficult to evaluate at this stage. Here, and for other policies, interviewees cautioned against rushing to add new items to the policy agenda before allowing sufficient implementation time for past policies and programmes. Policymakers have a tendency to favour short-term relief efforts over preventative measures, a dynamic reflected in a lack of funding for implementation, monitoring and maintenance of existing programs.

The HSU is actively advocating for the concept of human security to be used in an overarching UN framework. This approach appears to have had limited success so far, as different institutions have varying usages of and opinions on the term. While the term human security is not consistently used by UN actors, this does not equate with a lack of attention on human security issues which are frequently addressed under a different name or structure, such as a livelihoods framework. Efforts to push human security onto the policy agenda have historically been lead by a somewhat select group of states, serving as “champions” of the concept. Many interviewees described how having such a champion state or institutional actor is needed for issues to move forward.

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Annex: List of interviewees

Huw Beynon: Human Security Unit, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Saliha Dobardzic: Global Environmental Facility

Sonja Koeppel: Environment Division, United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

Steve Lonergan: (former) Division on Early Warning and Assessment, United Nations Environment Programme

Jean Marc Faures: Land and Water Division, Food and Agriculture Organization

Patrice Quesada: International Organization for Migration

Andras Szöllösi-Nagy: International Hydrological Programme, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Avinash Tyagi: World Meteorological Organisation/coordinator UN-Water Thematic Priority Area on Climate Change and Water

Aaron Wolf: Oregon State University