



# Bridging climate, conflict, and displacement in the Horn of Africa: Lessons from the Khartoum Process

Extreme weather, dwindling resources, and violent conflict are forcing millions in the Horn of Africa from their homes. This commentary delves into migration governance challenges, good practices, and gaps, providing recommendations for scalable solutions in the region and beyond, as highlighted during a recent Khartoum Process workshop on “Navigating the Nexus: Climate Change and Displacement in Conflict-Affected Settings.”

The Horn of Africa represents a stark example of how climate change and conflict are converging to exacerbate displacement. The region is grappling with severe and recurrent climate impacts, including prolonged droughts, devastating floods, desertification, and erratic weather patterns. These events have displaced millions, disrupted livelihoods, and heightened tensions over scarce resources. For example, Somalia’s recent drought has [impacted over 8 million people](#), leaving 4.4 million people acutely food insecure. The impacts of climate change are also fuelling competition over water, land, and energy, triggering intercommunal tensions and undermining peacebuilding efforts.

## Conflict a compounder of climate vulnerability and displacement

Conflict complicates these dynamics further, acting as both a driver and amplifier of displacement – but at the same time, it can also drive immobility. In fragile and conflict-affected areas, violence often limits mobility, trapping populations in unsafe conditions and environmentally degraded areas or compelling people to flee through dangerous migration routes. The dual vulnerability, that is displacement and immobility, is particularly acute for women, children, and marginalised groups, who face [additional risks](#) such as sexual

violence, disrupted access to health and education, and the loss of livelihoods. These intensified insecurities hinder their ability to contribute to local economies or invest in their socioeconomic development, deepening cycles of fragility.

Moreover, conflict undermines the effectiveness of climate adaptation and mitigation efforts. Damaged infrastructure, disrupted governance, and fragmented regional responses weaken the ability of states to address displacement proactively. Consequently, amid an urgent need for integrated, multi-sectoral approaches, the Khartoum Process workshop, “Navigating the Nexus: Climate Change and Displacement in Conflict-Affected Settings,” convened in early November 2024 to explore cross-border policies and community-driven solutions. Organised under the co-chairmanship of Egypt and Slovenia and scheduled one week before COP29, the workshop aimed to elevate regional insights into the global conversation on climate and mobility in conflict-affected and conflict-prone settings.

## Regional solutions

The Khartoum Process workshop highlighted several innovative and practical initiatives aimed at addressing the complex challenges of climate displacement in the Horn of Africa region as well as fostering resilience and stability.

The [Kampala Ministerial Declaration on Migration, Environment, and Climate Change](#) (KDMECC) is a pioneering regional framework that integrates human mobility into climate considerations. Originally signed by 11 East African countries in 2022, the KDMECC has since expanded to include 48 African nations. This enlargement reflects a growing commitment to addressing climate-induced displacement. These efforts emphasise inclusive governance and the [integration of human mobility into national adaptation plans \(NAPs\)](#).

Another notable example is the [Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Eastern Africa \(IGAD\) Free Movement Protocol](#), which enables cross-border migration as an adaptive response to climate impacts. While the protocol's implementation roadmap serves as a guideline for member states to progressively realise free movement rights, the full operationalisation of these provisions requires harmonisation of national laws and policies, which remains a work in progress. With legal and policy harmonisation and capacity support, such protocols can facilitate the movement of pastoral communities, helping them access critical resources such as water and grazing lands. A key regional asset supporting these frameworks is the [IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre \(ICPAC\)](#), which provides critical data for early warning systems. By delivering timely and accurate climate forecasts, ICPAC enhances the ability of governments and communities to prepare for and respond to extreme weather events.

However, conflict-related considerations stand to be better integrated into these frameworks, particularly to address the vulnerabilities of displaced populations in fragile contexts.

## Community-led solutions

Community-led resilience initiatives are essential for addressing climate-induced shocks and fostering recovery. In response to El Niño-induced challenges, projects in Somalia and Ethiopia have focused on improving water access and strengthening agricultural systems to mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events. For instance, the [UNDP's development of community-based climate security action plans](#) in Somalia incorporates conflict mediation and social cohesion efforts, helping to address disputes over dwindling resources while building climate resilience. In Ethiopia, [UNDP initiatives enhance communities' adaptive capacity](#) by scaling up innovative tools and tailored adaptation technologies. Often, the solutions already exist within communities themselves, as they possess traditional adaptation strategies that simply need bolstering to address current challenges.

These efforts underscore the transformative potential of localised, community-driven solutions, demonstrating how they can serve as blueprints for scaling effective models to address intertwined challenges of climate change, conflict, and displacement across vulnerable regions.

## Bridging gaps via policy and financing

Despite the promising practices highlighted above, significant gaps remain in terms of policy frameworks and

particularly in financing mechanisms. The [Loss and Damage Fund](#) was designed at COP27 to provide financial relief to countries bearing the brunt of climate impacts. At COP29, the [Loss and Damage Fund was fully operationalised](#), with total pledges exceeding \$730 million. However, this amount falls significantly short of the [estimated \\$580 billion in climate-related damages](#) that developing countries could face annually by 2030. This underscores the disconnect between global commitments and the financial resources needed to address the escalating challenges of climate-induced displacement.

While global funding lags, regional initiatives offer a glimpse of what targeted investments can achieve. The recently announced EU-funded €100 million [RE2CLID \(Regional Responses to Climate Displacement\)](#) programme offers a promising framework for addressing climate-induced displacement in Sub-Saharan Africa. Focusing on the Lake Tanganyika Basin and the South-West Indian Ocean tropical cyclone basin, this programme is directed towards improving resilience and capacity in displacement-affected communities through gender-responsive disaster management, sustainable natural resource governance, and durable solutions for forced displacement.

While initiatives like RE2CLID represent a step forward, their impact will be contingent on scaling them as well as replicating them in other regions. Programmes in the Horn of Africa, such as women-led cooperatives and Climate Peace Hubs, demonstrate the transformative potential of localised, community-driven solutions. However, these initiatives require sustained financial support to expand and deliver results. Breaking traditional funding silos, climate adaptation and peacebuilding efforts should receive integrated financing from international donors and regional organisations. This will support holistic interventions that address both immediate displacement needs and long-term stability. Fragmented funding mechanisms often lead to inefficiencies, with resources tied to narrow mandates rather than addressing the interconnected nature of these challenges. Overcoming this requires a coordinated global financing framework that aligns with regional and local priorities. Without significant and targeted investments, vulnerable populations will remain trapped in cycles of fragility, unable to adapt to the escalating challenges of climate change and displacement.

Moving forward, the international community must prioritise financing mechanisms that bridge this gap, ensuring resources reach displaced populations and the communities hosting them. Regional frameworks, such as the KDMECC and IGAD protocols, demonstrate the potential for collaboration, but their effectiveness depends on adequate funding and the integration of conflict-sensitive approaches.

## Conclusion

The Khartoum Process, alongside other regional and international migration dialogues, plays a critical role in fostering cross-border cooperation and addressing critical issues, including at the nexus of climate, conflict, and displacement. By providing a platform for policymakers, practitioners, and regional and local stakeholders to exchange ideas and align strategies, these dialogues not only enable necessary discussions but also catalyse coordinated action.

The principles outlined in the [Baku Call on Climate Action for Peace, Relief and Recovery](#) emphasise the need for integrated approaches to climate resilience and peacebuilding, aligning with the themes discussed at the regional level during the Khartoum Process workshop. However, the shortcomings of COP29, particularly the underfunding of the Loss and Damage Fund, underscore the persistent gap between global commitments and tangible action. For the Horn of Africa, this shortfall represents a missed opportunity to provide the critical resources needed to support the region's most vulnerable populations. A concerted effort to address climate-induced displacement must place vulnerable populations at its centre, fostering resilience and peace in regions disproportionately affected by climate change and conflict. Only through this alignment of resources, policies, and priorities can the global community strive to leave no one behind and rather bring everyone forward.

*Read more about the Khartoum Process workshop [here](#).*

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