

Climate Change, Health, and Conflict

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- Climate Change will contribute to new and varied risks to human health

- In fragile contexts which are unable to cope with health needs, these risks will place a further burden on already weak systems

- In certain circumstances, the additional burdens posed by Climate Change can interact with other factors to overwhelm coping capacity and can lead to an increased risk of political instability or violence

When it comes to looking at the implications of Climate Change, we can borrow the framework of the man scientists turn to in times of crisis, Donald Rumsfeld:

- The known knowns
- The known unknowns
- The unknown unknowns

What do we know?

- We know that Climate Change is upon us and that its impacts are already being felt across the world.

What do we know?

- We know that conflict is most likely to break out in places with a recent history of violent conflict because:

Peace is often built on unstable foundations

The underlying causal factors of the conflict remain unaddressed

What do we know?

- We also know that Climate Change is already putting pressure on some of these well known causal factors of violent conflict.

What do we know we don't know?

- Climate models are not perfect (maybe you've heard).
- They can only give us broad-brush predictions at a regional level.
- We don't know exactly what the physical impacts of Climate Change will look like at the national and sub-national level.

What do we not know that we don't know?

- We don't know how exactly existing stresses will interact with Climate Change impacts

But does this matter?

- The exact nature and scale matter less than the fact that the shock will certainly compound existing pressures and increase risk.

It is not the nature of the health hazard that ought to preoccupy us. What is certain is that climate impacts will be complex and varied. They will differ from those we've encountered in the past, and health systems will be left to cope with them.

How does Climate Change impact on the escalation of violence?

- Sea level rise threatens low-lying islands and coastal areas
- More severe and more frequent flooding
- More severe droughts
- Shorter growing seasons in some places, longer growing seasons in others

All of these things impact the political economy of already fragile communities.

- Failing Crops
- Inadequate food supplies
- Insecure livelihoods

Interlocking factors

From everything we know about how mutually interlocking factors such as poverty, bad governance and the legacy of past conflict generating risks of new violence, it is safe to predict that the consequences of Climate Change will combine with other factors to put additional strain on already fragile social and political systems

Key Risks

- Political instability – weak governance structures are one of the key links in the chain of consequences. When basic state functions are under pressure, the state itself is under threat.
- Economic weakness – economic development is threatened, especially in agrarian states

What can be done?

Focus on **good governance** and **integrated planning for adaptation**

- Should lead to **Risk Reduction** and **Peacebuilding**
- Helping to ensure **sustainable and non-violent adaptation** to consequences of Climate Change

Thank you.