

'Climate change, violence and young people'

Report Summary

This Unicef UK commissioned report, co-authored by the Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), a world-leading authority on global security, and International Alert, one of the world's leading peacebuilding organisations, adds to a growing body of research which emphasises the role of climate change and environmental stress as a 'threat multiplier' in terms of stability and security.

Key findings

The combined pressures of climate change and growing youth populations will influence security environments and affect already fragile contexts. Based on four case studies from Egypt, Kenya, Indonesia and Guatemala, the research illustrates the growing challenges these countries face: weak governance, low resilience to the impacts of climate change, significant youth cohorts, livelihoods that are vulnerable to environmental change, and fragile underlying security conditions. The timeframe for this study looks out to 2050, when the effects of climate change and demographic growth will be more pronounced.

Regions where large youth populations are projected to be present in the coming decades generally have low resilience to the impacts of climate change and are already experiencing poor governance and social and political instability.

The report finds that the combined effects of climate change and growing populations in these countries will place additional strain on already-stressed governments and social systems, compounding the risk of instability and fragility. Instability in turn impairs economic performance and erodes people's resilience and capacity to sustainably adapt to change, further increasing their vulnerability to climate change.

Without adequate planning and preparation in these vulnerable countries, pre-existing and underlying security risks are likely to be compounded and exacerbated by low resilience to climate change.

Key recommendations to inform appropriate responses and policies:

- **Tackling disaster risk** in a manner that is sensitive to the political context, especially specific dynamics of conflict or fragility, provides opportunities to reduce long-term disruption to youth education, livelihoods and well-being that can follow from disasters and potentially increase the risk of conflict;
- Forward-looking policies that **invest in education, secure employment opportunities and representation in governance** can avoid further marginalising youth, and instead harness their potential to boost growth and development;
- **Creating sustainable and inclusive economic growth that provides opportunities for young people and is resilient to future climate impacts** will be particularly important for countries that face concurrent demographic and climate risks.

The findings of this report will be particularly relevant for policy makers as Governments around the world negotiate the terms of two major global agreements in 2015: the Sustainable Development Goals that will be adopted in September in New York at the UN General Assembly and the Paris Climate Change Conference that will set out the international framework for tackling climate change in December 2015.