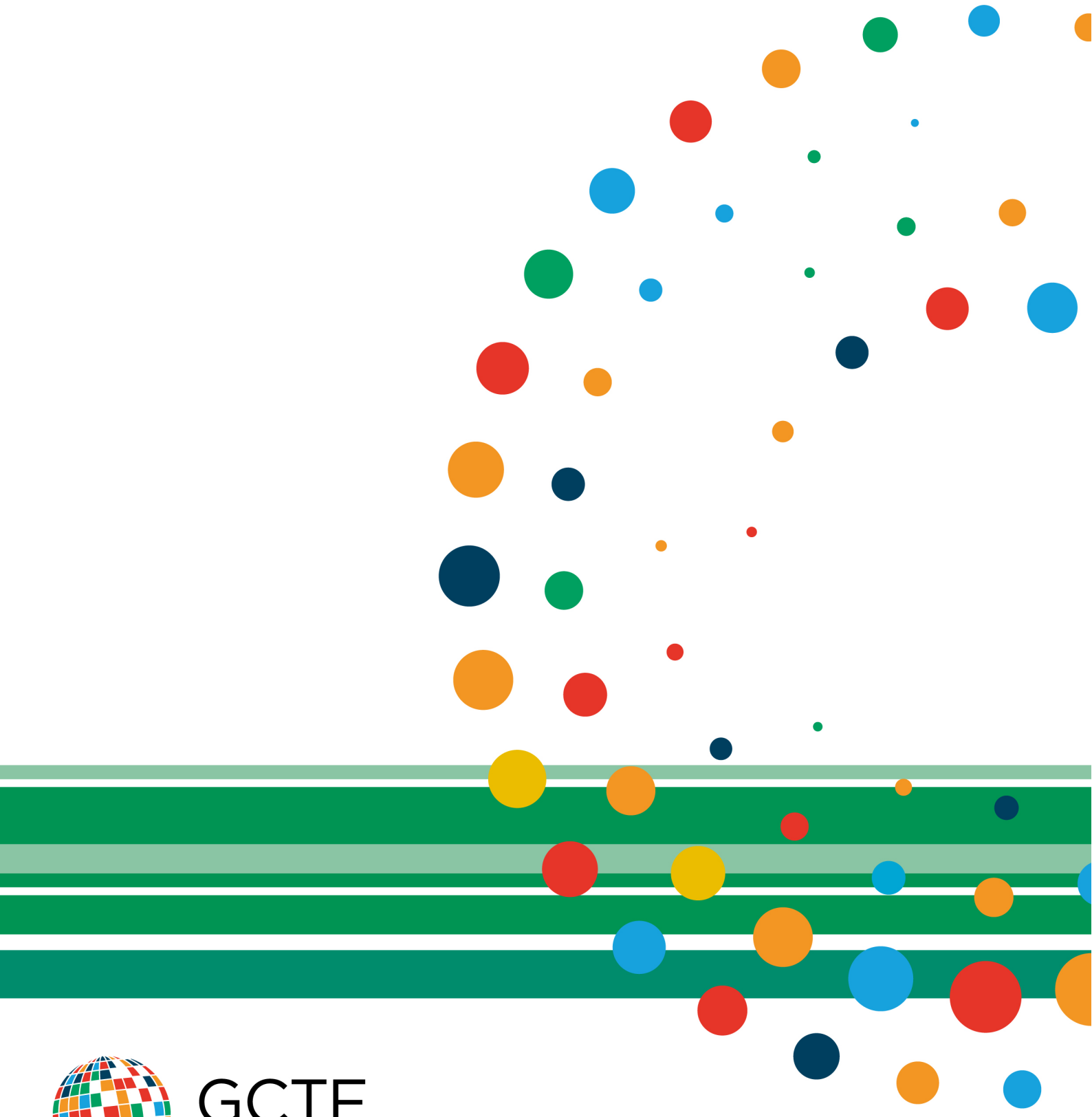
June 2026

THE NAIROBI TOOLKIT

ON ADDRESSING THE NEXUS BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM CONDUCIVE TO TERRORISM



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The Nairobi Toolkit on Addressing the Nexus between Climate Change and Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism

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Abbreviations

ASG	Abu Sayyaf Group
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
COP28	28th Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC)
CT	Counterterrorism
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism (conducive to Terrorism)
DPO	(UN) Department of Peace Operations
DPPA	(UN) Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs
EU	European Union
FCV	Fragility, Conflict and Violence
GCERF	Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund
GCTF	Global Counterterrorism Forum
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPAC	Institute for Policy Analysis of Conflict
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
ISIL /ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant / Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISWAP	Islamic State – West Africa Province
JNIM	Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin
M&E/MEL	Monitoring & Evaluation/ Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
NUPI	Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
P/CVE	Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (Conducive to Terrorism)
PIK	Potsdam-Institut für Klimafolgenforschung (Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research)
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RUSI	Royal United Services Institute
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNICRI	United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
VE	Violent Extremism (conducive to Terrorism)
WAP	W-Arly-Pendjari transboundary park complex (Burkina Faso / Benin / Niger)

I. Executive Summary

Purpose and Scope

This Toolkit was developed under the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) Initiative on Addressing the Nexus Between Climate Change and Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism, co-chaired by Germany and Kenya, with the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) as implementing partner. Drawing on seven expert workshops that brought together representatives from national governments, civil society, international and regional organizations, and practitioners from the preventing and countering violent extremism conducive to terrorism (P/CVE), security, development, and climate sectors, the Toolkit provides practical guidance for policymakers and practitioners seeking to understand and respond to this critical nexus.

The document builds upon and complements existing GCTF Framework Documents, including the Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism, the Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism, the Memorandum on Good Practices on Strengthening National-Local Cooperation, and the Recommendations for Funding and Enabling Community-Level P/CVE. Its recommendations are non-binding and intended to be adapted to diverse national and local contexts.

Understanding the Nexus

The Toolkit identifies five general pathways linking climate change and violent extremism (VE) conducive to terrorism:

1. **Climate change as a catalyst or threat multiplier:** Slow-onset and sudden-onset impacts (e.g., recurrent droughts, floods, desertification, and long-term rise in temperatures) can undermine livelihoods, erode food security, cause displacement, create a negative emotional environment, and weaken socio-economic stability. These conditions may create or reinforce grievances that VE terrorist groups can exploit for recruitment and radicalization. This is the most extensively documented pathway.
2. **Extreme weather events as tactical opportunities:** VE terrorist groups exploit the sudden instability caused by extreme weather events (which often affects the continuity of public services and humanitarian assistance delivery) to recruit vulnerable populations, raise funds, provide services to build legitimacy, damage relief efforts, and spread propaganda — including apocalyptic narratives.
3. **Unintended consequences of coping strategies:** Communities adapting to climate change may engage in activities, such as illicit economies, migration, or shifts in traditional livelihoods, that VE terrorist groups can exploit for revenue generation, recruitment, or the destabilization of social bonds.
4. **VE as an obstacle to climate action:** In regions where VE terrorist groups operate, their presence undermines the feasibility and sustainability of climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives, while also compounding the effects of climate crises through environmental degradation and obstruction of humanitarian access.

5. **Unintended consequences of climate action:** Climate interventions that are not conflict-sensitive may inadvertently disrupt local dynamics, exacerbate tensions between groups (e.g., herders and farmers), or empower state actors in ways that generate grievances exploitable by VE terrorist groups.

The nexus is indirect, complex, and context-specific. It is mediated by social, political, and economic factors and manifests differently across regions. The Toolkit emphasizes that climate change does not directly cause VE conducive to terrorism but exacerbates well-known drivers, while VE terrorist groups in turn undermine the resilience needed to cope with climate risks, creating a dangerous feedback loop.

Structure of the Recommendations

The Toolkit contains **25 recommendations**, organized across seven thematic areas:

- **Terminology and coordination** (Recommendations 1-3): Develop common terminology across the P/CVE and climate communities, using bridging concepts such as "resilience"; promote cross-sectoral and transboundary coordination and dialogue.
- **Gender** (Recommendation 4): Mainstream gender throughout assessments, policies, and interventions, recognizing that climate crises and VE conducive to terrorism affect women and men differently.
- **Research and needs assessments** (Recommendations 5-7): Incorporate climate risks into counterterrorism (CT) and P/CVE assessments; map the specific mechanisms linking climate change to recruitment and radicalization; employ diversified methodologies that include community perceptions and local knowledge.
- **National plans and strategies** (Recommendations 8-10): Integrate climate risks into national P/CVE strategies; engage environmental agencies in developing these strategies; and, conversely, integrate security considerations into national environmental plans.
- **Funding and outreach** (Recommendations 11-13): Open CT and P/CVE funding to projects integrating climate risks; increase climate and development financing for fragile settings; establish cross-sector pooled funding mechanisms.
- **Awareness-raising, capacity building, and trust** (Recommendations 14-15): Raise awareness on the nexus among governmental and community stakeholders; invest in analytical, data, and response capacities at national and local levels, including for armed forces and conservation personnel.
- **Programming and monitoring, evaluation, and learning** (Recommendations 16-25): Ensure interventions are conflict-sensitive, human rights-compliant, and inclusive; incorporate climate risks into counter-narratives; develop early warning systems; promote conflict-sensitive natural resource management and climate-resilient livelihoods; address the needs of displaced and mobile populations; adopt trauma-informed approaches; engage communities and integrate traditional knowledge; develop appropriate M&E tools; and embed sustainability from the outset.

Alignment with GCTF Architecture

Each group of recommendations is accompanied by a dedicated box demonstrating its alignment with existing GCTF good practices and Framework Documents. The Toolkit does not propose a parallel policy framework but rather shows how integrating climate considerations is fully consistent with and necessary for the effective implementation of the GCTF's established architecture for P/CVE and counterterrorism.

Case Studies

The Toolkit features illustrative case studies spanning diverse geographic and thematic contexts, including: livelihood collapse and militant recruitment in the Philippines and disaster exploitation in Indonesia (Southeast Asia); pastoralist displacement and VE conducive to terrorism exploitation in the Liptako Gourma region (Sahel); Al-Shabaab's tactical exploitation of drought in Somalia; opium cultivation as a climate coping mechanism in Afghanistan; gendered dimensions of climate-security risks in the Kenya-Somalia border region; Boko Haram and Islamic State – West Africa Province (ISWAP) in the Lake Chad Basin; conservation enforcement and VE terrorist group recruitment in West Africa; Islamic State of Iraq and Syria's (ISIS) weaponization of water in Syria and Iraq; climate change as a narrative amplifier for VE conducive to terrorism in Europe; and the mental health impacts of compounded climate and conflict exposure. It also offers examples of tools and resources already available that could be useful to practitioners, as well as programs addressing the nexus.

Conclusion

Addressing the nexus between climate change and VE conducive to terrorism requires an interdisciplinary, evidence-based, conflict-sensitive, and locally grounded approach. This Toolkit provides conceptual foundation, evidence, and practical recommendations to guide that effort. Effective implementation will depend on sustained cross-sectoral collaboration, expanded research, dedicated funding, and a commitment to integrating climate risks into the full cycle of CT and P/CVE policy and programming.

II. Introduction

Terrorism and VE conducive to terrorism are complex phenomena with both global and local dimensions. Addressing these threats requires a collaborative approach that engages multiple stakeholders at various levels. Within this context, climate change has been increasingly recognized as a threat to national, regional, and international security. The GCTF Initiative on Addressing the Nexus Between Climate Change and Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism was established to foster dialogue grounded in evidence and shared experiences on this critical nexus, and to make recommendations for policymakers and practitioners.

Climate change, characterized by long-term shifts in temperature and weather patterns and an increasing frequency of extreme weather events, exacerbates stressors, such as droughts, floods, and resource scarcity. These stressors can undermine livelihoods, strain state capacity, and create conditions that VE terrorist groups may exploit to recruit and radicalize. Conversely, conflict and VE conducive to terrorism can accelerate environmental degradation and impede climate action, creating a dangerous feedback loop.

Recognizing the urgency of understanding this nexus, Germany and Kenya established the GCTF Initiative on Addressing the Nexus Between Climate Change and Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism to advance discussions, particularly from the perspective of CT and P/CVE practitioners and policymakers. As the implementing partner of the Initiative, GCERF brought together a diverse range of stakeholders through seven workshops, examining the nexus at the global level and in selected geographic contexts. Participants included representatives from national governments, civil society, international and regional organizations, and sectors such as P/CVE, security, development, and the environment.

Effectively addressing the nexus between climate change and VE conducive to terrorism requires an interdisciplinary and pragmatic approach and understanding the complex causal pathways and feedback loops demands rigorous research. While the evidence base is expanding, particularly through research and policy initiatives, further investigation is needed to deepen understanding of specific mechanisms across diverse contexts.

This Toolkit outlines why integrating climate risks is necessary and how it is fully aligned with GCTF's existing good practices. It also provides recommendations to support the P/CVE community—and, to some extent, the climate community—in conceptualizing and responding to the nexus.

The document is divided into several sections. The first section provides an overview of how the nexus can be understood, presenting a concise explanation of the various pathways linking climate change, VE conducive to terrorism, and climate action. Its purpose is to provide a general and systemic understanding of the nexus that underpins subsequent recommendations.

The second section contains recommendations on how practitioners and policymakers should approach the nexus. Reflecting the GCTF's mandate, most of these recommendations are tailored for stakeholders in the P/CVE field. However, given the importance and urgency of addressing the nexus in an integrated manner, the document also includes key recommendations for other communities of

practice, such as the development and climate sectors. Recommendations are made in the context of GCTF's existing documents, demonstrating their relevance to GCTF's good practices and recommendations.

Case studies aim to provide a more grounded understanding of the nexus and the challenges it entails. These were selected to represent different contexts. Although the nexus manifests differently across regions, it presents common challenges for practitioners and policymakers.

The information presented in this Toolkit is drawn from dialogues conducted under the Initiative, supplemented by a review of relevant literature and case research. The document recommends ways to enhance understanding of the complex relationship between climate change and VE conducive to terrorism, identify key challenges, and propose actionable responses.

This Framework Document builds upon previous GCTF publications, such as the *Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism*, as well as thematic documents like *the Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism, Memorandum on Good Practices on Strengthening National-Local Cooperation in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism, and Recommendations for Funding and Enabling Community-Level P/CVE.*

The recommendations in this document are intended to complement rather than duplicate previous work undertaken by GCTF Working Groups and Initiatives, whether at the systemic or operational level. Issue-specific frameworks should provide more detailed guidance on program design, both in general and in thematic contexts. These recommendations are non-binding and may not be applicable to every regional, national, or local context. Their implementation should respect the principle of national sovereignty and consider diverse legal systems, histories, norms, and cultures, while remaining consistent with applicable international and national laws and regulations.

III. Understanding the Nexus

The relationship between climate change and conflict/instability is becoming increasingly relevant. Current evidence suggests that this relationship is indirect but significant. There is growing recognition in international forums of this relationship, such as the Declaration of Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace at the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Similarly, the United Nations Security Council has adopted several resolutions that stress the adverse effects of climate change on regional and national stability. These include resolutions concerning the Lake Chad Basin (UNSCR 2349), Somalia (UNSCR 2408), Mali (UNSCR 2423), and Darfur, Sudan (UNSCR 2429).

Discussions on the climate-conflict nexus offer a valuable framework for examining the link between climate change and VE conducive to terrorism. VE terrorist groups are among the most prevalent armed actors undermining the security of affected countries and regions. For example, their presence was at the forefront of concerns raised by UNSCR 2349 on the Lake Chad Basin, which explicitly acknowledged the adverse effects of climate and ecological changes on the region's stability. The Council called on governments to address multiple destabilizing factors, including "environmental" challenges while developing strategies *to "counter violent extremist narrative that can incite terrorist acts, and address the conditions conducive to the spread of violent extremism, which can be conducive to terrorism",* aiming to "*help address the conditions which have enabled the emergence and survival of Boko Haram and ISIL*".

Current evidence suggests that the relationship between climate change and VE conducive to terrorism is indirect and complex. It must be understood within specific contexts and in relation to a range of social, political, and economic factors. This relationship is not necessarily directly causal. Climate change manifests in different ways, ranging from extreme weather events (e.g., floods and droughts) to gradual environmental degradation. Those manifestations affect communities, but those effects are mediated by other factors, such as political dynamics and governance. Both resource scarcity and abundance can fuel cycles of dispute and violence, especially when met with governance failures or unequal effects across groups. Central to the challenge posed by climate change is the unpredictable pattern of environmental change, which, in general, undermines social structures and harms individuals, compounded by the mediation of context-specific conditions. Overall, it is valid to say that the disruptions create opportunities for VE terrorist groups to exploit and strengthen their influence.

Although climate change does not directly cause recruitment or radicalization and social, economic, and political factors often mediate its effects, evidence suggests that climate change exacerbates well-known drivers of VE conducive to terrorism. It does so both by reinforcing conditions that generate grievances between individuals, social groups, and the State, and by providing strategic and tactical opportunities for VE terrorist groups. These groups may draw individuals and groups into their sphere of influence by offering incentives, filling governance gaps, or manipulating the enabling environment in their favor.

However, not all VE terrorist groups are equally positioned to exploit climate-related risks. Their characteristics—such as organizational structure, strategic goals, and territorial control—significantly shape whether and how they interact with climate effects. Conceptually, these groups range from those that govern territory to those that function as decentralized networks without territorial control. Groups without territory, particularly in regions like Europe, are more likely to use climate change as a narrative tool rather than a material advantage. In contrast, groups that exercise territorial control, such as those operating in the Sahel or Somalia, have a broader range of options for exploiting climate-related insecurity. These may include controlling natural resource management, governance, or service provision. At the same time, these groups are not immune to the effects of climate change: their own revenues might be affected by environmental shocks if they are reliant on taxing agricultural output, for example.

The connection between climate change and VE conducive to terrorism goes beyond recruitment and radicalization. It also includes how VE conducive to terrorism can undermine the social and institutional resilience factors needed to cope with climate risks, which can lead, for example, to the breakdown of the social fabric and polarization among communities, especially when climate change affects different social groups differently, instead of having a uniform impact. In some cases, climate dynamics may lead communities to adopt coping strategies that VE terrorists exploit, even if community members are not recruited or radicalized. Finally, the characteristics of the State, such as its legitimacy, presence, ability to provide services, and support adaptation, also mediate the extent to which these climate risks can be exploited by VE terrorist group, and might be the difference between a climate shock-driving radicalization and recruitment and one that increases collaboration in the face of adversity amidst community groups.

This document identifies five general pathways linking VE conducive to terrorism, climate change, and climate action:

a. ***Climate change as a catalyst or threat multiplier****:* In various regions, climate change has started to create long-term disruption to socio-economic ecosystems, enhancing the different drivers of VE conducive to terrorism. Through several mechanisms, climate change affects long-term conditions that make individuals or communities more vulnerable or less resilient to VE terrorist propaganda, although these effects may materialize differently across settings or social groups (e.g., women).

   For example, climate change triggers loss of livelihoods, particularly in agriculture and pastoralism. These disruptions often undermine food security, lead to displacement and migration, and collectively weaken the social fabric and stability of the community. Climate change might also contribute to mental distress, loss of identity, or overburdening at the individual level, and to disputes over the use of natural resources and the breakdown of conflict-resolution mechanisms at the community level.

   Such effects generate or worsen known drivers of VE conducive to terrorism, such as trauma and significant loss, relative deprivation, disconnection between community and State, intergroup grievances, and such grievances or vulnerabilities among individuals. These factors affect

different groups in different ways (for example, women) and can be fully exploited by terrorist and VE terrorist groups within communities.

b. ***Extreme climate events as tactical opportunities for VE terrorist groups:*** Climate change has increased the frequency of extreme weather events. VE terrorist groups have exploited these crises to recruit and radicalize vulnerable populations and punish enemies. These groups exploit sudden instability resulting from climate events to further exploit communities (e.g., by imposing taxes on affected groups), or by seizing and damaging resources (e.g., by attacking relief efforts). In Iraq, ISIS's manipulation of water resources, amidst a context of water scarcity, was well documented as a means to further its objectives. Furthermore, these groups also position themselves as providers of social services (e.g., Al-Shabaab has provided social services and conflict resolution in Somalia; the same applies to some of these groups in the Sahel that provide conflict resolution to local communities).

   These situations also offer tactical opportunities for VE terrorist groups to spread propaganda, such as apocalyptic or "end-of-times" narratives, raise funds, and erode public trust in state institutions. In Southeast Asia, for example, VE terrorist groups have acted as first responders, using these opportunities to raise funds, gather community support, and frame climate disasters through a religious lens, portraying them as divine punishment for sins. The negative effects of climate change and environmental issues have been incorporated into violent extremist narratives across the political spectrum, even being used to justify attacks, as seen in the manifesto of the Christchurch terror attack perpetrator in 2019, or to legitimize the governance claims.

c. ***Unintended consequences of coping strategies to climate change:*** Community members in affected regions often actively react and adapt to climate change's long-term effects and short-term weather events, developing coping strategies. In some circumstances, such coping strategies might include engaging in new economic activities such as trade (especially for women), or even illicit activities, which might be exploited by VE terrorist groups for revenue generation (e.g., trade that requires passing through VE terrorist- controlled territory, or cultivation of climate-resistant crops such as opium poppy in Afghanistan, or trafficking and smuggling of weapons, drugs, and wildlife in the Sahel and the West African littoral States). Such coping strategies might also upend interdependence between groups that were previously specialized in specific economic activities, or the division of labor between men and women in the household. Finally, a well-known coping strategy is migration, for example, migration to other areas in search of resources for livestock (exposing these populations to VE terrorist groups) or migration to urban settings, where the sudden demand for resources, services, and opportunities is not met, leaving populations, especially youth, vulnerable to recruitment by VE terrorist groups.

BOX A: Climate change and violent extremism nexus in Southeast Asia

Philippines: Climate, Livelihood Collapse, and Militant Recruitment

In the Sulu Archipelago, seaweed farming (*Kappaphycus alvarezii*) accounted for a large share of aquaculture output and provided the primary source of income for coastal families in Sulu and Tawi-Tawi.[1] According to communities, the rising sea temperatures have accelerated "ice-ice" disease — a bacterial infection that destroys crops[2]- which aligns with recent research that found increased incidences of the disease associated with extreme changes in temperature, water salinity, as well as wind speed.[3] The incidence of "ice-ice" coincided with farmgate prices collapsing by approximately 77% between 2021 and 2023, from PHP 200 per kilogram to as low as PHP 35 per kilogram, against estimated break-even costs of PHP 100.[4] The Abu Sayyaf Group has moved directly into this gap. Interviews with former combatants conducted through participatory action research confirm that the industry's collapse is explicitly cited in recruitment conversations. The ASG offers sign-on bonuses of PHP 50,000, equivalent to 500 days of farming income at the current depressed rate, alongside auxiliary roles for maritime lookout work.[5]

Indonesia: Natural Disaster: tactical exploitation and end-of-times narratives

Indonesian VE terrorist groups have exploited natural disasters to bolster local legitimacy by filling humanitarian gaps left by the state. Groups linked to Jemaah Islamiyah and pro-ISIS networks utilize relief operations for floods and earthquakes to raise funds, often diverting a portion toward militant activities.[6] By arriving early to rebuild homes and mosques, these groups present themselves as responsive providers, winning community gratitude.[7] The most well-known cases were in the aftermath of Aceh in 2004 and later Palu in 2018[8], and more recently during extreme weather events such as floods in Jakarta and West Java in 2020.

In addition, some of these groups also used these events to push propaganda. For example, Hizbut Tahir Indonesia, which structured its message as anti-system and pro-establishment of the Caliphate, [9] pushed a narrative that the haze crises caused by forest fires in 2015 were divine punishment and a show of the government's moral decay; and only a Caliphate asserting Islamic land management would prevent such events.

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BOX B: Climate-Security Nexus and Violent Extremism in the Liptako Gourma Region

The Liptako Gourma region, which spans the borders of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, is facing a severe security crisis. Over the past decade, localized and transnational conflicts have escalated, worsened by climate change and environmental degradation.[1] It is in a region where average temperatures have risen 1.5 times the global average. In this volatile area, VE terrorist groups actively exploit local grievances caused by the effects of climate and weak state governance.[2]

One of the key pathways through which climate change affects communities is by disrupting traditional pastoralism. The region's rural population depends on rain-fed agriculture and livestock.[3] However, severe climate stressors, such as unpredictable rainfall and creeping desertification, have damaged the natural resource base. These environmental pressures force herders to move into new territories in search of water and pasture. This migration frequently encroaches on agricultural lands, sparking violent clashes between farming and herding communities. VE terrorist groups take advantage of resource conflicts. They offer communities protection and access to resources and often act to resolve conflicts between different groups. That is how these groups embed themselves in communities and use economic vulnerability as a direct recruitment tool.[4] These dynamics are consistent with sub-national evidence across Sahel, where land alienation driven by mining, and commercial agriculture, but also new conservation units, is associated with pastoral conflict and spatial spillovers beyond the immediate area.[5]

Past initiatives to fight desertification and protect wildlife — such as establishing natural parks — often ignored local socio-economic realities and are seldom discussed. State forestry and park officers restricted communities' (especially pastoralists) access to grazing lands and water sources inside these zones, enforcing the boundaries with fines or coercion.[6] VE terrorist groups often capitalize on the deep resentment pastoralists hold toward conservation officers. By attacking park rangers and breaching conservation boundaries (even across other countries such as Benin), VE terrorist groups frame themselves as liberators, granting communities access to such resources.[7]

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d. *VE conducive to terrorism as an obstacle to climate action:* There is considerable recognition that regions most affected by climate change and those facing persistent security challenges overlap to a great degree, but climate financing has not been able to address those needs, especially in developing countries. Countries in fragile settings still receive far less support per capita than their counterparts in more stable environments. In many of these areas, including the Sahel and Horn of Africa, VE terrorist groups are key contributors to ongoing instability, undermining the social factors that often mediate the effects of climate change, and compounding the effects of such crises. The presence of such groups also challenges the feasibility and sustainability of climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives, especially in areas under their territorial control. In addition, measures taken to counter the threat posed by VE terrorist groups might create new barriers for local populations to cope with an already-stressed environment, such as restricting access to waterways or land due to security risks.

e. *Unintended consequences of climate action:* Though less explored, this pathway emerged consistently during discussions. Climate action is often designed from a technical standpoint; however, like traditional development initiatives, it can produce unintended negative consequences if not implemented with a conflict-sensitive approach. Such interventions may inadvertently disrupt local dynamics, exacerbating tensions or grievances. For example, initiatives supporting "smart" agriculture might compromise the fragile balance between herders and farmers if they do not take social considerations into account, such as the timing of farming, the use of the same lands for grazing, and pastoralist migratory pathways. This could trigger a spiral of grievance between these groups that VE terrorist groups can exploit. The same also applies to conservation efforts, which could empower state actors to restrict community access to resources and even create wide latitude for arbitrary use of power. In the Sahel region, the grievances between communities and state actors are often exploited by VE terrorist groups, who promise communities unrestricted access to resources.

It is important to note that all these pathways and potential effects link climate change to VE conducive to terrorism and may ultimately affect social groups differently. For example, in some settings, climate change has increased the burden on women in food provisioning and water access. This can have a compound effect on their insecurity when several VE terrorist groups instrumentalize and control access to food and water sources.

In summary, the nexus between climate change and VE conducive to terrorism is not uniform. It is significantly shaped and mediated by local contexts, including political conditions, available resources, existing policies, and the specific characteristics of VE conducive to terrorism in each region. However, the impacts of climate change increasingly strain the social mechanisms that mediate this relationship, and in many regions, conflict and terrorism further compound this effect, especially in developing countries, further undermining stability, creating a vicious cycle of fragility.

BOX C: Al-Shabaab: Tactical exploitation, conflict resolution mechanisms, financing and recruitment

The Horn of Africa, and Somalia in particular, occupies a critical position at the intersection of climate vulnerability and terrorism. The Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) continues to contend with Al-Shabaab, which has leveraged the crisis to advance its operations,[1] through blockades, taxation, and control.[2] For example, between late 2020 and 2023, Somalia experienced a severe and prolonged drought. It devastated the country's agro-pastoral economy, displaced large rural populations towards urban centers, and created conditions that Al-Shabaab proved adept at exploiting.[3]

The group attempted to use humanitarian service delivery to project administrative competence and build local legitimacy. This involved a dual approach: first, providing services where the group sought compliance: for example, Al-Shabaab organized food and water distributions, leveraging its logistics networks to reach populations ahead of state or international responders. Second, using it to punish resistance, such as the group imposing severe restrictions on humanitarian access, destroying water infrastructure, and using resource control as a coercive tool. Notably, the group's harsh tactics in certain areas sparked a backlash that bolstered the government's counter-offensive in 2022.[4]

These climate events have also intensified competition over diminishing water and grazing resources,[5] straining traditional mechanisms for resolving inter-clan disputes. Al-Shabaab exploited it by positioning itself as an effective conflict-resolution / judicial-system alternative — sometimes referred to as "shadow courts".[6]

Furthermore, Al-Shabaab's financial model relied in part on a predatory relationship with natural resources, namely the illicit charcoal trade, and more often on coercive taxation of communities. The charcoal trade drives severe deforestation of Acacia forests, which, in turn, accelerates land degradation and reduces communities' resilience to future droughts.[7] The group also enforces a rigorous taxation regime, taking livestock and crops from agro-pastoral communities and seizing control of boreholes to tax access to water during peak drought conditions.[8]

Finally, Al-Shabaab also weaponizes such crises to recruit and radicalize individuals. Historically, former Al-Shabaab members have indicated adverse economic circumstances and Al-Shabaab as an "employer" as a reason to join the group. Youth and displaced populations (often displaced by a mix of climate shocks and violence) are particularly vulnerable to recruitment.[9]

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4. International Crisis Group "Fighting Climate Change in Somalia's Conflict Zones" Africa Report n 316, (2004); Funnemark, Anne, Asha Ali, Cedric de Coning, Elizabeth Rosvold, Florian Krampe, Emilie Broek, Katonga Seyuba, Kheira Tarif, and Farah Hegazi. "Climate, Peace and Security Fact Sheet Somalia." Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, NUPI (2022).
5. Hussein, A.O., 2021. Towards effective positive interventions in protracted Somali environmental conflicts: an hpd operationalization framework informed by socio-demographics, familiarity, and experience. International Journal of Developing Country Studies, 3(1), pp.27-57.

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8. International Crisis Group “Fighting Climate Change in Somalia’s Conflict Zones” Africa Report n 316, (2004).
9 . Abdullahi, Said, Radhika Singh, Joyce Takaindisa, Camilla Giacomelli, Niklas Sax, Bia Carneiro, and Grazia Pacillo. The nexus between climate change, mobility, and conflict in Somalia. 2025; and Abdulalahi, Shukri Mahad; Korio, Warsame and Ibrahim, Muzamil “Environment for Peace: Climate Change, Youth, and the need for Holistic Response, Afgoye, Lower-Shabelle region Southwest Administration”, in Resilience Rising: Youth Research Informing Global Climate and Conflict Responses, Koffi Annan Foundation (2024).

BOX D: Afghanistan: a tale of coping mechanisms

During the United States occupation throughout the 2000s and 2010s, Afghanistan provided the majority of the world’s illicit opium supply, despite extensive international counter-narcotic efforts.[1] The prevalence of poppy cultivation was driven by several factors, including weak governance and systemic instability.[2] Crucially, however, poppy farming requires significantly less water than traditional crops—approximately one-fifth to one-sixth the volume.[3] Consequently, it emerged as an effective coping mechanism for communities in a semi-arid nation enduring a prolonged drought, a trend consistent with climate change projections.[4] This illicit trade served as a primary funding source for the Taliban.[5]

Following the Taliban’s return to power in 2021, opium production plummeted due to a strictly enforced ban. However, deteriorating climatic conditions—which complicated the cultivation of fruits and other legal crops—combined with dire economic circumstances have triggered a small rebound in production in 2024 that slightly receded in 2025.[6] However, these pressures have also driven communities toward alternative sectors, such as mining, which has led to reported clashes (according to Afghanistan International, a London-based Afghan diaspora news channel).[7] Most concerning is the shift toward synthetic drugs; the production relies on the wild ephedra shrub which is a plant that is very adapted to arid settings without irrigation, and chemical precursors that are independent of rainfall or arable land.[8]

1. Parenti, Christian. "Flower of war: An environmental history of opium poppy in Afghanistan." SAIS Review of International Affairs 35, no. 1 (2015): 183-200.
2. UNODC “Afghanistan Opium Survey 2020”, (2021).
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7. Afghanistan International “Intra Taliban clashes over gold mine in Badakshan leave 10 dead” October, (2025).
8. UNODC “Understanding Illegal Methamphetamine Manufacture in Afghanistan” (2023), and UNODC, “Afghanistan Opium Survey 2025”, November (2025).

IV. Recommendations

Terminology and coordination

Recommendation 1: Relevant international and regional actors, national and local governments, and stakeholders from the development, security, and climate fields should collaborate to develop a common terminology when working on the nexus. Both sectors have increasingly adopted the paradigm of building "resilience"; thus, "resilience" as a concept could serve as a bridge between policymakers and practitioners from the peace, security, development, and climate sectors.

a. Terminology associated with terrorism and VE conducive to terrorism can be sensitive in certain contexts. The use of such terms may inadvertently hinder potential collaboration with counterparts in the development and climate sectors.

b. Thus, to support effective collaboration, frameworks and policies must offer sufficient flexibility in defining goals and objectives that allow these actors to engage. For example, using terms such as "enhancing local or national resilience" can resonate across sectors, serving as a unifying concept that bridges diverse fields. As advised in other GCTF frameworks, it is key to tailor terminology to the local context, ensuring that it is both acceptable and comprehensible to local communities.

c. The concept of resilience has a variety of definitions, both in the climate and P/CVE fields. In climate, a canonical definition of resilience is "*the capacity of social, economic and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning and transformation.*"[1]

d. In P/CVE, examples from documents such as the GCTF recommendations on *The Role of Families in Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism: Strategic Recommendations and Programming Options* treat resilience as the ability to resist VE conducive to terrorism, recognizing that it is multilevel and depends on individuals, families, and communities. GCERF, one of the GCTF-inspired institutions, provides a similar definition, describing resilience as "*a dynamic attribute of communities and individuals to resist and respond in a non-violent way to internal and external shocks, including violent extremism. Resilient communities and individuals are not completely immune to violent extremism, but their resilience protects them from violent extremists' efforts to polarize societies and legitimize violence as a means to achieve political, religious, or social goals,*" and then list factors at the individual and community level that support this resilience.[2]

[1] Agard, J., and L. Schipper, editors. "Annex II: Glossary." *Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*, IPCC, Cambridge University Press, 2014.
[2] GCERF. *GCERF Strategy 2025*. GCERF, May 2021, www.gcerf.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/GCERF-Strategy-2025-English.pdf.

e. Thus, a common denominator for both the climate and P/CVE is the understanding that resilience is the ability to resist or withstand a shock, trend, or agenda (in the case of VE conducive to terrorism), and the factors that support this ability rest on different levels or systems. Such commonalities can be used to facilitate collaboration and cross-sectoral planning and implementation.

Implementation of GCTF Framework Documents #1

*The **GCTF Recommendations for Funding and Enabling Community-Level P/CVE Recommendation 1** suggests adapting P/CVE terminology by co-creating it with language that presents a positive goal, while maintaining its transparency and "do no harm" approach. This is applicable in the context in which addressing the nexus with climate and environment is needed for a P/CVE program or project. In this regard, resilience can serve as a positive common goal.*

Recommendation 2: Relevant international and regional actors, national and local governments, and stakeholders from the development, security, and climate fields should actively promote coordination and dialogue among CT and P/CVE, development, and climate action communities. Such coordination is particularly relevant in transboundary settings.

a. While climate action should not be securitized, climate change poses serious challenges that require coordinated responses. CT and P/CVE practitioners and policymakers should actively seek partnerships with actors experienced in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Moreover, coordination approaches may draw on established multi-sectoral disaster response models that integrate different sectors or functions within a unified operational framework.

b. Challenges such as VE conducive to terrorism and the effects of climate change often transcend national boundaries, with border regions experiencing heightened vulnerabilities to an acute degree. Regional initiatives and platforms are key to mobilizing political will, facilitating cooperation, and harmonizing policies to tackle cross-border issues such as seasonal migration. Collaborative efforts in transboundary natural resource management and climate resilience can serve as common objectives, fostering cooperation among countries in CT and P/CVE.

Recommendation 3: International donors and organizations, national and local governments, civil society, and community actors should be aware that the nexus between climate and VE conducive to terrorism is much more complex than it appears, because its effects compound and interact with other sectors, thus necessitating cross-sectoral collaboration that goes beyond P/CVE and climate communities.

a. Climate effects often trigger shifts into illicit economies, displacement, and food availability. These factors are then exploited by VE terrorist groups. To address these dynamics effectively, both P/CVE and climate

actors need to coordinate and collaborate with other stakeholders, such as humanitarian, agricultural, crime, and security actors.

Implementation of GCTF Framework Documents #2

The two recommendations above stress how actors not normally, or often not thought to be, involved in discussions regarding P/CVE and CT, such as climate-related government agencies and actors, become necessary interlocutors due to the nexus. They operationalize the ***GCTF Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism Good Practices 5 and 7*** that suggests that addressing VE conducive to terrorism requires a multidisciplinary and multisectoral approach, often involving national and local governments **(GCTF Memorandum on National-Local Cooperation Good Practice 8)** Moreover, these climate risks normally affect communities in cross-border areas, making them a common threat that requires consideration when devising national strategies for border security and requires international cooperation, in alignment with the ***GCTF Good Practices in the Area of Border Security and Management to Counter Terrorism and Stem the Flow of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) Recommendation 3***, and ***the GCTF Addendum to the Good Practices in the Area of Border Security and Management in the Context of Counterterrorism and Stemming the Flow of Foreign Terrorist Fighters Recommendations 1, 2 and 3***.

Gender

Recommendation 4: Relevant international and regional actors, national and local governments, and stakeholders from the development, security, and climate fields should actively mainstream gender when assessing, formulating, and implementing policies and interventions at the nexus of climate and VE conducive to terrorism.

a. Risks as well as the nexus between climate change and VE conducive to terrorism do not affect populations equally. Research consistently shows that women and men experience climate crises and VE conducive to terrorism differently. For example, in certain regions, where climate risks might trigger land disputes, women are disproportionately affected due to norms that undermine their access to land. Climate effects might also trigger migration to urban centers—especially amongst men—which results in increasing women's agency in rural areas and making women much more vulnerable to harassment and gender-based violence, and to some extent, recruitment.

b. Besides gender, other factors also play a role. Further research is needed on the distinctive vulnerabilities of different groups, such as youth, people with disabilities, migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and even people formerly associated with VE terrorist groups passing through rehabilitation and reintegration programs. This includes assessments for rehabilitation and reintegration efforts, for example, on foreign terrorist fighters, but also former associates involved with homegrown terrorism.

Implementation of GCTF Framework Documents #3

The mainstreaming of gender when assessing, formulating, and implementing policies and interventions on P/CVE and CT are recommended by **Good Practice 1 of the *Addendum to the GCTF Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism, with a Focus on Mainstreaming Gender*.** In fact, the ***GCTF Women in CVE Addendum Good Practices 2*** (evidence)**, *4*** (risk-assessment tools) and ***5*** (gender-sensitive analysis) highlight that when conducting these activities, the different gender dynamics and effects need to be taken into consideration. The same applies when examining the effects of climate, as climate shocks and events affect different groups in different ways.

Research/Needs Assessments

Recommendation 5: CT and P/CVE actors should incorporate climate risks into their needs assessments and research, while climate actors should consider conflict dynamics, and more specifically, VE conducive to terrorism drivers when relevant:

a. GCTF framework documents have emphasized that CT and P/CVE programs and policies should be grounded in thorough assessments. However, climate risks are seldom included in these exercises. Integrating climate considerations into CT and P/CVE would provide valuable insights into the relationship between climate change and VE conducive to terrorism, informing strategies to address or mitigate these risks.

b. Similarly, environmental assessments conducted by climate actors tend to focus on environmental conditions and, to some extent, their social impact, often neglecting security dimensions, particularly the influence of VE terrorist groups.

BOX E: The Gendered Dimensions of climate-security risks

Climate change does not affect populations uniformly. In contexts marked by armed conflict and VE conducive to terrorism, climate-related hazards deepen existing gender inequalities and generate harms for women and girls that differ qualitatively from those experienced by men. The IPCC Sixth Assessment Report in 2022 reported that climate hazards increase conflict risk by undermining food and water security and weakening institutions, which are also associated with gendered violence.[1]

The connection between climate effects and gendered harm can take different pathways, such as livelihood loss, forced displacement or migration (e.g., male migration for work), or generate different effects, such as hardening of gender norms. For example, due to the loss of livelihoods caused by climate shocks, girls may be pulled from schools and end up taking on a larger share of unpaid work or even forced into early marriage. Another example is the disruption of services due to climate events, such as water, which can increase the distances travelled by women and girls to collect supplies, not only increasing their burden, but also their exposure to potential violence.[2] Rigid gender norms on "breadwinning", for example, may function as a scope condition which channels climate-induced stress into violent instead of non-violent repertoire, as shown by a study on the cases of Tunisia and Syria.[3]

In a recent study done by the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), conducted along the border between Kenya and Somalia, several mechanisms through which Al-Shabab exploit climate effects were identified, such as weaponizing access to food distribution and water sources, as well as imposing taxes on trade and mobility (forced payment for safe passage).[4] This is relevant because, as a consequence of the cycle of droughts and livelihood disruption, women and girls are often left managing household survival, which results in longer and more frequent trips to water points and markets, heavier care responsibilities, increased time spent queuing or negotiating access to basic resources, and engagement in activities such as petty trades and informal markets.[5] Thus, placing both women and girls in direct exposure to some of the tactics employed by VE terrorist groups to weaponize the crises.

1. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Edited by Hans-O. Pörtner et al., Cambridge UP, 2022. IPCC, https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/

2. Fruttero, Anna, et al. "Gendered impacts of climate change: evidence from weather shocks." *Environmental Research: Climate* 3.4 (2024): 045018.

3. Francis, Ben. "Be a Man: A Theory of Climate Change, Masculinities and Violence." Environment and Security 2.1 (2024): 121–144

4. RUSI "Climate Change and Insecurity in the Kenya-Somalia Border Regions", March 2026 (forthcoming)

5. RUSI (forthcoming)

Recommendation 6: Researchers should focus on mapping the specific mechanisms through which climate change influences recruitment, radicalization, and terrorism, paying particular attention to its effects on drivers:

a. The relationship between climate change and VE conducive to terrorism varies significantly across regions. Identifying the pathways through which climate factors influence VE conducive to terrorism and assessing their impact will support policymakers and practitioners in setting priorities and designing targeted strategies and interventions.

b. Mapping these mechanisms and impacts should be undertaken through a gender-sensitive lens, as the effects of both climate change and VE conducive to terrorism are not uniform across society. For example, in many communities, men and women have distinct economic roles, meaning the effects of climate-induced livelihood disruptions may differ significantly.

c. Furthermore, CT and P/CVE assessments might benefit from mapping whether climate actions are being implemented in a particular area and whether and how they are affecting local dynamics relevant to CT and P/CVE.

Recommendation 7: Researchers should integrate different methodologies and ensure that different stakeholders' perceptions and contributions are appropriately captured when assessing the nexus:

a. Research on the nexus would benefit from a more diversified methodology. Although most research benefits from a mixed-methods approach, employing targeted methods—such as process tracing—can uncover specific mechanisms linking climate change effects to recruitment into VE terrorist groups.

b. Researchers should expand their audience beyond traditional groups such as practitioners and policymakers to include communities. Incorporating their local knowledge, perceptions, and lived experiences is indispensable for understanding the interplay between climate change and VE conducive to terrorism at the local level. Research efforts should actively seek to integrate local voices, including those of the most marginalized, through participatory methods. Such an approach is important for building solutions that fully integrate relational, locally rooted knowledge rather than relying on purely technical solutions that have blind spots to local dynamics and needs.

Box F: Chad Lake Basin: loss of livelihoods and coping strategies

In the Lake Chad region, the climatic threat is the combination of erratic rainfall, encroaching desertification, and rising temperatures. Those conditions have steadily undermined the agricultural, pastoral, and fishing livelihoods that most of the basin's population depends on,[1] pushing households to cope with a mix different livelihood activities,[2] sometimes even illicit ones[3], fostering instability in the region, although governance failure and political dynamics are also interconnected drivers of fragility.

Boko Haram and the ISWAP have turned this vulnerability into a recruitment strategy. Both groups have marketed themselves as economic lifelines in a collapsed local economy.[4] Community-level research captures recruiters directly contrasting the marginal returns of artisanal fishing with promises of payment in US dollars[5]- a pitch aimed at economically vulnerable communities. These groups have also taken on governance functions: distributing basic services, offering employment, and mediating resource conflicts, all while funding operations through illicit resource extraction, taxation and cattle rustling.[6]

1. Brunero, M., M. Burnett Stuart, O. Guiryanan, D. Hull, and A. Roberti. "Perceptions of climate change and violent extremism listening to local communities in Chad." Report to the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute), Torino, UNICRI (2022).
2. Okpara, Uche T., Lindsay C. Stringer, and Andrew J. Dougill. "Lake drying and livelihood dynamics in Lake Chad: Unravelling the mechanisms, contexts and responses." Ambio 45, no. 7 (2016): 781-795.
3. Adebayo, Taiwo Hassan “Economy of violence and sustenance of violent groups in the Lake Chad Basin”, Centre for Journalism Innovation and Development, (2025).
4. Ehiane, Stanley, and Philani Moyo. “Climate Change, Human Insecurity and Conflict Dynamics in the Lake Chad Region.” Journal of Asian and African Studies 57.8 (2022): 1677–1689.
5. Brunero, M., M. Burnett Stuart, O. Guiryanan, D. Hull, and A. Roberti. (2022); and Lukas, Katharina, and Lukas Rüttinger. Insurgency, terrorism and organized crime in a warming climate: Analyzing the links between climate change and non-state armed groups. adelphi, 2016.
6. Nyelade, Richard Atimniraye “Military force isn’t the solution for Lake Chad Basin conflict: the key is rebuilding local economies” The Conversation, (2025).

Implementation of GCTF Framework Documents #4

The necessity for any P/CVE or CT approach or intervention to be based on rigorous assessment is firmly grounded in GCTF good practices, such as in ***Recommendation 7 of the GCTF Recommendations for Funding and Enabling Community-Level P/CVE and the Ankara Memorandum on a Multi-sectoral approach to Countering Violent Extremism Good Practices 1 and 2***. In cases where climate acts as a threat multiplier and shapes the tactical environment, incorporating those dynamics into understanding the conditions conducive to terrorism becomes of primary importance for an evidence-based approach. Finally, as suggested above, this understanding is better grounded when different stakeholders are involved, in alignment with ***GCTF Memorandum on Good Practices on National-Local Cooperation (NLC) Good Practices 3 and 4.***

National Plans of Action/Strategies

Recommendation 8: National governments and other relevant stakeholders involved in such processes should strive to integrate climate risks into national P/CVE strategies as recognized risks or threats.

a. National P/CVE strategies and action plans should acknowledge and address how climate change may exacerbate drivers of VE conducive to terrorism, particularly where evidence supports such connections within specific countries or regions. This may include incorporating climate risk assessments into national security planning, ensuring coherence between national action plans on CT / P-CVE and other national strategies, and mainstreaming climate risks across implementation and review processes.

Recommendation 9: National agencies leading CT and P/CVE National Action Plans or strategies should consider engaging climate-related governmental agencies in the development and implementation of national P/CVE strategies.

a. GCTF framework documents consistently recommend a whole-of-government approach to formulating and implementing CT and P/CVE policies. While whole-of-government participation has increased, environmental agencies or departments are often underrepresented.

b. Although environmental agencies are unlikely to take a leading role in these efforts, their involvement during CT and P/CVE strategy development and implementation can help identify climate risks and how to mitigate them (while also enhancing coordination across government sectors).

c. To initiate collaboration, CT and P/CVE agencies should engage climate agencies during critical stages of national action plan development, ensuring their insights inform strategy formulation. It is also relevant to consider climate adaptation; in this context, it is not only complementary, but rather a core component of security provision.

Recommendation 10: National agencies leading on climate-related topics should consider integrating CT and P/CVE considerations into national environmental plans and policies (e.g., National Adaptation Plans) and promote dialogue between them and security agencies.

a. National and local governments should integrate security considerations, including those concerning VE conducive to terrorism, into their environmental strategies and plans. To ensure coherent policy responses, this integration should occur across all phases: assessment, formulation, consultations, implementation, and review. Fostering dialogue between the agencies responsible for such plans and their security counterparts is advisable for such a purpose.

b. An important aspect that needs to be further integrated is an assessment of how insecurity, particularly the actions of VE terrorist groups, might pose a challenge (or even an impediment) to climate action, and what strategies, policies, and actions need to be taken, in coordination with security, to address it.

Implementation of GCTF Framework Documents #5

The ***GCTF Memorandum on Good Practices on National-Local Cooperation (NLC) Good Practices 4 and 5*** advise that NAPs should identify key drivers and leverage existing local services, institutions, and development frameworks as part of a comprehensive approach to VE conducive to terrorism. The recommendations above show that following both practices- incorporating climate risks and leveraging strategies in related areas- is fundamental for a holistic understanding and for interventions that address the drivers of terrorism and VE conducive to terrorism in a particular region or context. To be effective, as suggested, it is important that a common understanding is built across different government agencies, in line with the ***GCTF Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral approach to Countering Violent Extremism Good Practice 6***, which calls for a common understanding to ensure a "whole-of-government" approach when countering VE conducive to extremism.

Funding and Outreach

Recommendation 11: International and national donors on CT and P/CVE should be open to funding projects that integrate climate risks into efforts to prevent VE

conducive to terrorism. This support may be facilitated through dedicated funding calls or targeted opportunities.

a. The nexus between climate change and VE conducive to terrorism needs to be effectively addressed within the CT and P/CVE mandates, allocating financial resources to projects that incorporate climate risks into their current or planned initiatives. Budgets should be structured to support essential partnerships and adapt strategies and evaluation frameworks. Integrating climate considerations into P/CVE and CT requires funding to embed these risks in foundational activities — needs assessments, research, and M&E.

Recommendation 12: International and national donors to development and climate should increase financial support for fragile settings, particularly those where VE terrorist groups represent a high risk and integrate security risks into their investment strategies to maximize impact and minimize unintended adverse effects.

a. Instability, especially that which is linked to VE conducive to terrorism, increases the risk profile of fragile settings for large-scale climate and developmental projects. This deters critical investment, further reinforcing the negative feedback loop of the nexus.

b. Donors should focus on developing tools and frameworks that enable investment in such settings, including adjusting their risk tolerance and possibly treating investment in such locations as a requirement (e.g., by establishing a minimum threshold). Additionally, facilitating investment requires reducing transactional costs (e.g., accreditation) and improving mechanisms to track how and where investments are being used at the subnational level.

c. Mainstreaming risks associated with climate change and VE conducive to terrorism into regional and national investment strategies can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of donor projects.

Recommendation 13: International and national donors across different fields (development, climate, CT & CVE) should collaborate to co-finance or establish cross-sectoral pooled funding mechanisms to address the nexus in fragile settings. In these contexts, donors need to consider funding organizations with diverse profiles.

a. Addressing the nexus between climate change and VE conducive to terrorism presents challenges related to risk and expertise. Donors should be open to collaborative funding approaches, such as coordinated investment, co-financing or pooled funds, to promote harmonization and distribute risks. Furthermore, donors should prioritize projects that bring together various actors with specialized knowledge in climate action, CT, and P/CVE under a single consortium to enhance the design and implementation of integrated strategies.

b. P/CVE and related actors might be uniquely positioned and suited to conduct work on the nexus in contested zones where the State is still present, but there is clear activity or influence of VE terrorist groups. It can be particularly useful in de-risking larger investments from development and climate actors.

Implementation of GCTF Framework Documents #6

The recommendations above highlight that, to effectively address the nexus between VE conducive to terrorism and climate, international and national actors need to be deliberate in their collaboration and, more importantly, open to funding new types of partners through a variety of possible funding schemes. Such recommendations align and implement the ***GCTF Recommendations for Funding and Enabling Community-Level P/CVE*** **Recommendations *2, 3, 4, 5 and 18,*** which call for long-term adaptable funding, appetite for tailored approaches and openness to fund (and collaborate) with different type of actors – including local civil society actors, in settings marked by fragility.

Awareness-Raising, Capacity Building and Trust-Building

Recommendation 14: International and national donors, national governments, and other relevant actors should devote resources to raising general awareness on climate security, and more specifically, the nexus between climate change and VE conducive to terrorism.

a. As part of any systematic approach to the nexus, it is important to include strategic communications to raise awareness among key stakeholders at the governmental (e.g., technical staff, decision-makers, law enforcement) and community levels (e.g., community and religious leaders). A more distilled version of such a campaign should also be implemented for the public, using various media such as radio, television, newspapers, and increasingly important, digital platforms.

Recommendation 15: International and national donors, national governments, and other relevant actors should invest in building the core capabilities of national- and local-level actors to address the nexus and build trust with local communities.

a. Capacity gaps are a major barrier to addressing the nexus. As part of an integrated approach, investments in analytical, data, and information capacities — data collection and storage, forecasting, and system-level M&E — are needed for policy development and project implementation.

b. Enhancing the capacity of local governments and local actors is crucial. Local governments are often tasked with managing specific natural resources, such as water, and responding to crises. Therefore, strengthening their key capabilities is essential for addressing the nexus. Furthermore, community actors play a vital role in resolving local conflicts, particularly those intersecting with climate-related challenges. Building their capacity is essential to address these complex issues effectively.

BOX G: Conservation efforts and violent extremism conducive to terrorism in West Africa

This case study examines how conservation enforcement in the Sahel and coastal West Africa has, in certain contexts, intersected with terrorism and VE conducive to terrorism. Although conservation efforts are not per-se interventions aiming to address climate change, they sometimes are part of the climate action packages. In 2022, the Global Initiative Against Transnational Crime, identified national parks in the region as very vulnerable to illicit economies and VE terrorists groups, due to the parks' remote and easy-to-hide terrain, sparse State presence, natural resources, and association with local grievances over exclusion from cultural and resource sites.[1]

This dynamic is most extensively documented in the W-Arly-Pendjari (WAP) complex, a transboundary protected landscape spanning Benin, Burkina Faso, and Niger. By 2022, an estimated 62 per cent of the complex was under the control of Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), al-Qaeda's Sahel affiliate.[2] The pattern, however, is not confined to the WAP complex. In Cote d'Ivoire, for example, a VE terrorist group offered artisanal miners both protection and access to gold sites that were protected within park boundaries.[3]

The causal pathway linking conservation enforcement to violent extremist recruitment runs through colonial/post-colonial "fortress conservation" frameworks, a governance model that often criminalizes pastoralist grazing, smallholder farming, and artisanal resource use within and around protected areas, often coupled with arbitrary application of rules or violence.[4] Armed groups have exploited these grievances as part of a deliberate counter-governance strategy. In the WAP complex, JNIM told communities it would return the park while tolerating farming, herding, and mining inside previously restricted zones. This framing presents these armed groups as liberators from state-imposed deprivation, offering tangible material benefits that the state had denied.[5] Conservation enforcement should be conducted in a manner that is conflict-sensitive, non-discriminatory, and consistent with the customary rights and livelihoods of pastoralist communities.

1. Walker, Summer. "The role of National Parks in illicit economies and conflict dynamics" (2023).
2. Sampaio, Antonio, et al. "Reserve assets: Armed groups and conflict economies in the national parks of Burkina Faso, Niger and Benin." *Global Initiative Against Transformational Organized Crime. Report May* (2023).
3. Berger, Flore, and Anicet Zran. "North-eastern Côte d'Ivoire: Between illicit economies and violent extremism." *Geneva: Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime* (2023).
4. Duffy, Rosaleen. "Waging a war to save biodiversity: the rise of militarized conservation." *International Affairs* 90.4 (2014): 819-834.
5. International Crisis Group, "*Containing Militancy in West Africa's Park W*, Report No. 310 (2023).

c. Armed forces also require awareness-raising and capacity-building. In regions where VE terrorist actors are prevalent, the armed forces often become the main face of the State — one of the few state institutions able to confront security risks, reach communities and respond to crises. Thus, their capacity to understand, prepare, and respond is crucial to prevent VE terrorist groups from taking advantage of such crises.

d. Special consideration should be given to specialized personnel responsible for the conservation of natural resources/habitats (e.g., forest rangers). They are often responsible for patrolling protected areas such as national parks and fining those suspected of illegal activity. In many cases, VE terrorist groups are establishing themselves in such areas, sparking conflicts. At the same time, there are often grievances between communities and these actors- communities might resent restrictions on their use of resources (or, in some cases, arbitrary fines)- these grievances are often exploited by VE terrorist groups, which then offer unrestricted access to these resources (e.g., as seen in Burkina Faso).

e. Finally, attention also should be given to frontline personnel, including social workers, humanitarian staff, psychologists, and local field actors, by integrating measures to mitigate burnout, secondary trauma, and operational fatigue into capacity-building efforts and support.

Implementation of GCTF Framework Documents #7

These good practices on increasing awareness, improving local capacity, and promoting trust are an operationalization of ***GCTF Memorandum on Good Practices on National-Local Cooperation (NLC) Good Practices 6*** *and* ***11.*** They stress the importance of these practices for effective response to terrorism and VE conducive to terrorism, since local actors are the ones closest to the drivers and dynamics used by these groups to recruit and radicalize.

Programming and M&E

Recommendation 16: Actors working on the nexus between climate change and VE conducive to terrorism should ensure that their interventions are conflict-sensitive, human rights-compliant, and inclusive of women and youth.

a. The effects of climate change and VE conducive to terrorism often disproportionately affect marginalized groups, including youth and women. For instance, youth comprise a significant part of the informal economy and are vulnerable to climate-induced livelihood shocks, increasing their susceptibility to recruitment. Youth are recognized in climate, CT, and

P/CVE literature as crucial actors; thus, it is advisable to fully mainstream youth engagement in their policies and programs.

b. Addressing the nexus through initiatives that focus on peace-related elements or P/CVE can be seen as an integral element of adaptation. For example, initiatives that strengthen dispute-resolution mechanisms and trust-building (often part of community-level P/CVE) foster an enabling environment for the effective delivery of adaptation programs.

Implementation of GCTF Framework Documents #8

Recommendation 16 above is fully grounded on **Recommendation 11** of ***GCTF Recommendations for Funding and Enabling Community-Level P/CVE,*** which calls for P/CVE projects to be gender-sensitive, human rights-compliant, and give special attention to how they engage and affect marginalized groups. The environmental component makes these considerations even more relevant, as climate risks often have compounded effects on marginalized groups.

Recommendation 17: CT and P/CVE Actors should incorporate climate risks and events into their counter or alternative narratives to VE conducive to terrorism.

a. VE terrorist groups often exploit climate events to spread mistrust and enhance their propaganda, occasionally incorporating environmental narratives into their messaging. Therefore, CT and P/CVE actors should integrate climate considerations into their strategic communications, engaging local communities and civil society organizations to develop and disseminate positive alternative narratives. Special attention should be given to crisis communications in case of extreme weather events.

Recommendation 18: Actors working on the nexus should prioritize the development, strengthening, and maintenance of early warning and response mechanisms for climate-related instability.

a. Prioritize boosting the capacity to monitor and predict climate-related events that may trigger instability. Those involved in early warning systems should be informed on the nexus, particularly on how climate shocks may present tactical opportunities for VE terrorist groups.

b. Integrate climate data into security warning systems. An intense drought or major flooding in an area with a known presence of a VE terrorist group should be seen not only as a humanitarian crisis, but also as a security risk.

c. Early warning systems should monitor social vulnerabilities and community tensions that may escalate in the aftermath of climate-related events.

d. Preparedness and response frameworks should include measures to ensure continuity of public services, protection of humanitarian operations, security of shelters, and safeguards against diversion of aid during climate-related emergencies.

Implementation of GCTF Framework Documents #9

The idea behind early warning systems, which alert relevant stakeholders to issues at community and individual levels, is consistently mentioned across different GCTF documents (e.g. the ***Addendum to GCTF Good Practices on Women and Countering Violent Extremism****, the* ***GCTF Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices on Education and Countering Violent Extremism***, and even in more security-related documents such as the ***GCTF Lomé Recommendations on Preventing and Countering the Acquisition and Use of Improvised Explosive Devices by Terrorist Groups in West Africa).***

The recommendation above highlights how, in a context in where terrorist groups are actively exploiting opportunities created by climate shocks, it is paramount to incorporate climate-related instability as an integral part of the early warning system. It would allow early warning systems both at the national and local levels to effectively identify and communicate threats, as suggested in the ***GCTF National-Local Cooperation Toolkit.***

BOX H: ISIS in Syria-Iraq: governance, and the weaponization of water.

Syria and Iraq share a geography that has been increasingly stressed by severe climate change impacts, particularly rising temperatures, erratic precipitation, and intense droughts. Between 2006 and 2010, Syria experienced a historic and devastating multi-year drought that had dire consequences for farming crops and livestock.[1] This led to massive internal displacement, which contributed to 2011 uprisings (and the subsequent descent into civil war). In Iraq, diminished agricultural livelihoods from increasing water scarcity similarly heightened communal tensions and exacerbated mass displacement.[2]

ISIS actively exploited the climate-induced vulnerabilities of the local populations, where, due to drought and policy failures that had eroded rural livelihoods, individuals were highly vulnerable to recruitment. It is estimated that 60 to 70 per cent of local ISIS fighters in Iraq and Syria were recruited because of these extreme deprivations. As farmers and herders —especially in northeast Syria— were facing crop failure and livestock death, ISIS offered its fighters an estimated USD 400 per month, about five times as much as a normal wage in the region[3]. ISIS also fully exploited the water infrastructure by poisoning water sources to punish communities and manipulating dam gates to flood or dry certain areas for tactical advantage, using water as an instrument of subjugation.[4] ISIS extorted taxes on farmers in areas under its control, using these revenues to fund their insurgency while coercing populations into compliance.[5]

1 Britchenko, Igor. "Climate change as a threat multiplier: Assessing its impact on resource scarcity, migration, and political instability." Politics & Security 12, no. 2 (2025): 41-58.

2 Schwartzstein, Peter “Climate Change and Water woes drove ISIS recruiting in Iraq” National Geographic, November (2017).

3 Lukas, Katharina, and Lukas Rüttinger. Insurgency, terrorism and organised crime in a warming climate: Analysing the links between climate change and non-state armed groups. adelphi, 2016.

4 UNDP “The climate security nexus and the prevention of violent extremism: Working at the intersection of major development challenges” UNDP Policy Brief (2020), and Mazlum, Ibrahim “ISIS as an Actor Controlling Water Resources in Syria and Iraq” in “Violent Non-State Actors and the Syrian Civil War, (2017).

5.Mazlum, Ibrahim (2017).

BOX I: Climate Change as the narrative amplifier in Europe

In the European context, climate change seems to function primarily as a potent narrative amplifier rather than a discrete causal trigger for VE conducive to terrorism. Environmental concerns are "contentious topics" opportunistically integrated into existing grievance frameworks across the ideological spectrum.[1]

For the far-right, this manifests as "new denial" or eco-fascism, where climate policies are framed as elitist conspiracies against national sovereignty, or where environmental degradation is used to justify nativist border-closures and exclusionary nationalism,[2] with extensive usage of the online space.[3] It mirrors similar behavior of the far-right in other contexts, such as the attacker in the case of Christchurch (who proclaimed himself as “eco-fascist”) and El Paso, both in 2019. [4]

For the “far left”, it instrumentalizes climate science to delegitimize the current socioeconomic system, and such a shift justifies a transition from civil disobedience to more disruptive tactics.[5] The threat is comparatively limited, but some have voiced concern regarding the risk of infiltration of environmental movements by violent far-left groups.[6]

1. European Counter-Terrorism Coordinator "The role of climate change and environmental concerns in violent extremist and terrorist radicalization in the EU” (2024).

2. Forchtner, Bernhard. "Climate change and the far right." Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change 10, no. 5 (2019); Wallner, Claudia “The Rise of the Fair-Right: From Climate Denial to Eco-fascism”, recording, RUSI (2022).

3. European Counter-Terrorism Coordinator "The role of climate change and environmental concerns in violent extremist and terrorist radicalization in the EU” (2024).

4. Macklin, G., 2022. The extreme right, climate change and terrorism. Terrorism and political violence, 34(5), pp.979-996.

5. Bitschnau, Marco. "Seeking attention, provoking reactance: Radical climate activism after Covid-19." European View 23, no. 1 (2024): 80-86.

6. European Counter-Terrorism Coordinator "The role of climate change and environmental concerns in violent extremist and terrorist radicalization in the EU” (2024).

Recommendation 19: International donors and organizations, national and local governments, as well as civil society and community actors, should promote conflict-sensitive natural resource management.

a. Climate change often exacerbates pressure on natural resources (e.g., water availability or pastureland), increasing the likelihood of disputes between communities on the management of those resources. Such divergences often coincide with how communities use resources (e.g., herders versus farmers) and may overlap with ethnic/religious divides.

b. VE terrorist groups have often exploited these resource-based conflicts, framing them in terms of broader religious or ethnic narratives to drive recruitment and radicalization. These disputes also offer an opportunity for the VE terrorist groups to showcase their governance model: the swift

delivery of solutions to these disputes by VE terrorist groups in certain regions of the Sahel helped these groups enhance their reputation in local communities.

c. When designing P/CVE initiatives at the community level, practitioners must be aware of such dynamics and identify the type of intervention needed to address them, including promoting conflict-sensitive natural resource management. Given the specialized nature of this work, P/CVE actors should acknowledge their limitations in expertise (and resources) and actively partner with organizations with the relevant capabilities.

Recommendation 20: International donors and organizations, national and local governments, as well as civil society and community actors, should promote climate-resilient and conflict-sensitive livelihood opportunities, which enhance food security.

a. VE terrorist groups often use material incentives to recruit and radicalize individuals. Communities whose livelihoods are threatened by climate change may be especially vulnerable to these tactics. Developing and supporting sustainable livelihood programs may offer economic alternatives to recruitment and provide basic levels of food security in climate-vulnerable areas, making it more difficult for VE terrorist groups to recruit and radicalize.

b. In certain circumstances, communities may turn to illicit activities as a coping strategy. For example, some shift from their traditional livelihoods to coca or opium poppy, crops that are relatively climate-resilient and highly profitable. Criminal networks often overcome logistical challenges in these fragile settings, making such transactions feasible. VE terrorist groups may exploit these dynamics by directly engaging in illicit trade or by extracting value through tolls and taxation. In such cases, it is crucial for international actors to provide communities with viable, sustainable livelihood alternatives, both in terms of the nature of the activity and the ability of its outputs to reach and succeed in markets.

c. It is equally important that these livelihood programs are climate-resilient to avoid unintended negative consequences. For example, if participants are supported in starting income-generating activities highly susceptible to climate impacts, their economic situation may deteriorate after the program ends, potentially leading to frustration and grievances, which VE terrorist groups can exploit. This is a particularly important consideration for Rehabilitation and Reintegration programs for former VE terrorists, since such failure could potentially prompt these individuals to rejoin VE terrorist groups.

d. Another unintended negative consequence to avoid is policies or interventions that benefit certain groups or encourage certain activities at the expense of others, without any mitigation. For example, the focus on encouraging smart agriculture and boosting crop production in the Sahel was sometimes done at the expense of pastoralists and fishermen, generating grievances that could be exploited.

e. Finally, the success of such initiatives can also trigger spirals of violence. A sudden abundance of resources – water or food, against a baseline of

scarcity – may serve as "honeypot" that attracts VE terrorist groups. Therefore, it is highly relevant to consider the safety and security implications of such interventions.

Recommendation 21: International donors and organizations, national and local governments, as well as civil society and community actors, should pay special attention to interventions that work with displaced populations and populations whose way of life relies on regular movement (e.g., pastoralism).

a. Both violence perpetrated by VE terrorist groups and climate change impacts, often in combination, trigger the displacement of individuals or entire communities. Although the evidence is mixed in regard to the extent to which these shocks create grievances and conflict between the displaced and host communities, instability, insecurity, and weak governance in displacement settings may leave these populations more vulnerable to extremist narratives.

b. Increased migration to urban centers is a common coping strategy, often used by men. Although urban economic activity might be less climate-reliant, individuals can become isolated from their social fabric, thereby decreasing their overall resilience against VE conducive to terrorism.

c. Finally, any intervention in the nexus should be especially aware of two types of populations. First, those who move regularly due to their economic activity. In many settings, the effects of climate change (e.g., floods, droughts) may alter their migratory pathways, triggering conflict and disputes that are then actively exploited by VE terrorist groups. Furthermore, promoting climate-resilient solutions should not harm or marginalize these populations, at the risk of reinforcing stereotypes, disputes, and conflicts. Second, the so-called “trapped populations” which for social, economic, political reasons are unable to move as a coping mechanism, which then make them even more exposed to the cumulative effects of conflict and climate risks.

Implementation of GCTF Framework Documents #10

The ***GCTF Ankara Memorandum on Good Practices for a Multi-Sectoral Approach to Countering Violent Extremism Good Practice 16*** stresses that the gap between expectations and the reality of an individual's socioeconomic status can place them in a vulnerable position creating opportunity for exploitation. Therefore, providing economic opportunity can be a valid intervention for addressing VE conducive to terrorism. The ***GCTF Hague Good Practices on the Nexus between Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism Good Practice 16*** highlights that providing economic opportunities and ensuring access to basic services are important for addressing the problem of community members relying on informal or shadow economic activities for livelihood, which is often exploited by VE terrorist groups. Implementing both recommendations in a context of climate vulnerability means that these dynamics may be triggered by adverse climatic conditions (leading to loss of livelihoods and/or lack of access to natural resources), but also that the response itself needs to take climate into consideration to not exacerbate the problem. These considerations are particularly important when dealing with displaced populations (increasingly due to climate shocks) and those who regularly move (e.g. pastoralists). Several GCTF frameworks have drawn attention to the importance of considering these two populations such as the ***GCTF Neuchâtel Memorandum on Good Practices for Juvenile in Counterterrorism Context Good Practice 3*** which alerts to the vulnerability of children in such context of displacement, and the ***GCTF Good Practices in the Area of Border Security and Management in the Context of Counterterrorism and Stemming the Flow of Foreign Terrorist Fighters Good Practice 5*** and its ***Addendum Recommendation 1*** that highlights the importance of engaging "nomad" populations (and settled communities) in the context of border regions.

Recommendation 22: Actors working on the nexus should prioritize trauma-informed and identity-sensitive approaches that address the dignity and psychosocial impacts of climate shocks as core drivers of vulnerability.

a. Integrate psychosocial risk and "identity disruption" indicators into assessments and monitoring. Programs should explicitly track markers such as loss of dignity/status, shame, hopelessness, and social role disruption following climate-related livelihood loss and displacement, and ensure partners understand how these conditions can increase susceptibility to coercion, recruitment, or harmful coping strategies.

b. Build practical trauma support and dignity-restoration components into climate adaptation and P/CVE interventions. This includes embedding trauma-sensitive services (e.g., community-based psychosocial support

and safe referral pathways), especially in post-disaster settings. It should include designing livelihood/resilience activities that restore a sense of purpose and social value (not only income), thereby reducing the emotional environment in which VE terrorist actors can gain influence.

c. Protect and rebuild social buffers that anchor identity and belonging. Responses should invest in strengthening community support structures and inclusive local networks (including those that help people retain roles, purpose, and social recognition), so that climate shocks do not translate into isolation, loss of status, and trauma-driven vulnerability that VE terrorist groups can exploit.

Implementation of GCTF Framework Documents #11

Within the corpus of GCTF good practices, the importance of integrating mental health and psychosocial support into P/CVE and R&R are mentioned across numerous documents, for example, in the *GCTF* ***Abu Dhabi Memorandum on Good Practices on Education and CVE Good Practice 10***, and the *GCTF* ***Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders Good Practice 8***.
Climate change and its negative effects (e.g., livestock loss and inability to provide, especially among young men) might lead to feelings of shame, hopelessness, loss of dignity, and ultimately, trauma. As the *GCTF* ***Abu Dhabi Memorandum*** correctly states, traumatic experiences can create vulnerabilities and make individuals more vulnerable to recruitment and radicalization.

Recommendation 23: International donors, organizations, and national and local governments should prioritize community engagement and the integration of traditional local knowledge and coping strategies/mechanisms into projects addressing the nexus.

a. It is highly beneficial to involve local communities in the design and implementation of climate adaptation and P/CVE initiatives. Community participation is particularly valuable when assessing the localized impacts of climate change and their interactions with drivers of VE conducive to terrorism. Local actors can provide insights into perceived effects and how VE terrorist groups may be exploiting the situation.

b. In many regions, communities have developed coping strategies to deal with climate shocks. While these strategies are increasingly strained by changing climate conditions, they can form part of the solution. Addressing climate-related challenges should therefore include efforts to reinforce or adapt existing local coping mechanisms while ensuring that such interventions do not produce unintended negative consequences.

BOX J: Climate Change and its effects on mental health

Communities exposed to armed conflict (including VE conducive to terrorism) suffer psychiatric harm. In fragile, conflict and violent settings, a meta-analysis reported an aggregate prevalence of depression (28.9%), anxiety (30.7%), and PTSD (23.5%), much higher than global averages.[1] Climate change, as a threat multiplier, also has potential negative effects on mental health, as theorized by Berry et al. via three main pathways: directly via extreme weather events, indirectly via physical injury and indirectly via community well-being.[2]

There is growing evidence of such effects, such as the meta-analysis done by Radua et al. on both climate change and air pollution,[3] but it is still a topic that is understudied especially in regard to its effects on developing nations. Some studies have examined populations affected by VE terrorist groups, climatic effects, and extreme weather events. For example, a study with IDPs from Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province found a high incidence of PTSD and depression.[4]

A recent study on Garissa and Wajir in Kenya (regions that have experienced major droughts and flooding, as well as Al-Shabaab activity, which often intersects with other types of conflict) found that repeated climate shocks (droughts/floods) was generating substantial mental-health burden in the communities by destroying livestock and income, undermining dignity and identity (especially for men expected to provide) and creating pervasive feelings of hopelessness, shame, low self-worth and "emptiness" among youth. Women were also particularly vulnerable to mental distress from increased household burdens, insecurity, and exposure to risks during longer journeys for water and resources.[5] In this environment, VE terrorist groups can exploit these situations, according to the research, by offering these distressed youth material benefits such as wages or loans, narratives that explain their abandonment and whom to blame, and an offer of status by joining those groups, which aligns with some theoretical frameworks that explain recruitment and radicalization[6] (e.g., 3N model: needs, narratives, and networks[7]).

1. Lim, Isis Claire ZY, et al. "Prevalence of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress in war-and conflict-afflicted areas: A meta-analysis." *Frontiers in psychiatry* 13 (2022): 978703.

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5.Badurdeen, Fathima Azmiya, et al. *Climate Change and Violent Extremism in Northeastern Kenya: Towards an Integrated Response*. Coventry Open Press, 2026.

6. Badurdeen, Fathima Azmiya, et al (2026).

7. Webber, David, and Arie W. Kruglanski. "Psychological factors in radicalization: A "3 N" approach." *The handbook of the criminology of terrorism* (2016): 33-46.

BOX K: Operational tools and frameworks

Over the past decade, a growing ecosystem of operational tools and frameworks has emerged to support practitioners and policymakers working at the intersection of climate change, peace, and security. Most of those tools do not focus on VE conducive to terrorism, but they can be useful for actors working in fragile settings, and the majority of them focus on identifying, analyzing, and anticipating climate-related security risks:

- **Weathering Risk Methodology** (Adelphi & PIK [Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research]): A field-tested, mixed-methods climate-security risk assessment methodology that integrates high-resolution climate impact data, conflict analysis, and scenario-based foresight.
- **UN Climate, Peace and Security Toolbox** (DPPA, UNDP, UNEP & DPO): A four-part practitioner toolbox for conducting integrated, gender-sensitive analysis of compound climate-related peace and security risks and identifying entry points for conflict prevention and peacebuilding.
- **CGIAR Climate Security Observatory** (Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research): An online decision-support platform providing localized, policy-relevant evidence on how climate exacerbates root causes of insecurity, using science on land, water, and food systems. It is underpinned by the **Integrated Climate Security Framework (ICSF)**, a mixed-methods analytical framework for understanding climate-conflict linkages at multiple scales.
- **Climate-Conflict-Vulnerability Index (CCVI)** (PIK, University of the Bundeswehr Munich, and German Federal Foreign Office): A quarterly-updated, high-resolution global index that maps the intersection of climate hazards, conflict exposure, and subnational vulnerability, enabling comparative risk identification across regions.
- **Climate Loss Index (CLiX)** (Sasakawa Peace Foundation): A process-based method to understand climate loss and guide action, which include extensive questionnaires/survey to be applied locally.

  A smaller but growing number of tools cover the entire programming cycle, from assessment through design and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

- **Addressing Climate-Related Security Risks Toolkit** (adelphi & UNEP): A practitioner toolkit comprising a Guidance Note and a Monitoring & Evaluation Note for integrating conflict-sensitivity and peacebuilding into climate change adaptation and sustainable livelihoods.
- **Defueling Conflict: Notes from the Field** (World Bank, 2025): A practical toolbox synthesizing MEL guidance, templates, and lessons learned for operationalizing conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding.
- **Toolkit for Anticipatory Action in FCV Settings** [where FCV = Fragility, Conflict and Violence] (Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, CGIAR & Anticipation Hub, 2025): A modular toolkit supporting conflict-sensitive anticipatory action in fragile, conflict-affected, and displacement settings, with thematic modules.

c. In many cases, coping strategies or mechanisms might serve a dual purpose. For example, Local markets where communities exchange products help withstand climate shocks and foster social bonds between groups, strengthening resilience against VE recruitment. In this case, both the climate and P/CVE communities should pay attention to support this type of "soft" mechanism.

Recommendation 24: International donors and organizations, national and local governments, civil society, and community actors should invest in developing appropriate tools to track and assess risks, monitor progress, and evaluate the results of interventions that are sensitive or integrate both domains.

a. A key initial decision for projects working on the nexus is whether the project is sensitive to conflict dynamics, climate stress, or both, and whether it aims to achieve outcomes that pertain to the nexus, which then calls for a fully integrated theory of change.

b. M&E frameworks should be at least climate- and conflict-sensitive, with indicators that track and assess risks. If the project fully integrates climate and P/CVE objectives, the M&E framework should include indicators that measure outcome change across the nexus. These may include indicators related to social resilience, such as community trust, perception of service delivery, social cohesion, and early signs of local tensions.

c. Such programs addressing the nexus should incorporate both quantitative and qualitative approaches, when possible. The latter approaches, such as outcome harvesting, help assess how interventions affect underlying mechanisms and pathways rather than focusing solely on whether a predefined change has occurred.

Implementation of GCTF Framework Documents #12

Both the ***GCTF Memorandum on Good Practices on Strengthening National-Local Cooperation (NLC) in P/CVE****(Good Practice 13)* and the ***GCTF Recommendations for Funding and Enabling Community-Level P/CVE*** (Recommendations 14,15, 16 and 22) stress the need for P/CVE projects to have robust and adequate M&E systems, and the importance of their localization.
Localization is indeed a key component of both documents. Localizing P/CVE by engaging communities and ensuring their knowledge/practices are incorporated enhances the likelihood of success for such interventions and strategies. Given that climate risk is an integral part of the threats, these good practices and recommendations become even more relevant.

Recommendation 25: International donors and organizations, national and local governments, civil society, and community actors should prioritize the sustainability of programs and project outcomes from the outset when designing and implementing policies and programs.

a. Programs and projects at the nexus face the same sustainability challenges as those in development, climate, CT, and P/CVE. It is essential to define what constitutes a sustainable outcome and identify mechanisms to support it, such as community buy-in, advocacy, and budget mainstreaming. Sustainability considerations should be embedded into M&E frameworks.

Implementation of GCTF Framework Documents #13

The challenge of sustainability is well recognized within GCTF architecture, for example, in the ***GCTF Recommendations for Funding and Enabling Community-Level P/CVE Recommendations 21*** *and* ***22***. It is also a central concept within the climate domain**.** As recommendation 24 shows, sustainability is better addressed at the beginning of the program to ensure that the intervention itself is not only sustainable, but also its intended objectives are as well.

BOX L: Addressing the nexus at community level: Iraq and Mali

In Iraq, a project supported by the German Federal Foreign Office, and implemented by the Berghof Foundation and Peace Paradigms Organization since mid-2022, tackled the nexus of climate change and conflict in Iraq, where water scarcity and extreme heat fuel tensions over resources, governance, and displacement.

It worked across six locations – including two regions that remained under ISIS control over a long period of time (Hawija and Tal Afar). It combined awareness-raising and mediation training, with facilitated dialogue between authorities and communities, supporting conflict-sensitive climate adaptation planning. An assessment found that the project trained over 180 community members, engaged 250+ stakeholders, and produced five agreements embedding conflict-resolution and climate action provisions across five districts. Tangible outcomes included a fair water distribution system in Hawija and new wells serving nearly 100 families in Kalar, stronger trust between communities and authorities, and improved cross-level governance coordination.[1]

In Mali, a project led by Initiatives conseils développement (ICD-Mali) together with APAPE/PH, funded by GCERF, engaged Dogon, Peulh, Bambara and Bozo communities across 12 communes, where livelihoods were heavily dependent on farming and herding and competition over shrinking land and water was acute. At baseline (2,858 households), around 70% relied on these livelihoods, 86% reported insufficient jobs, and 60% perceived resources as unfairly distributed, grievances that armed groups—including Katiba Macina and JNIM —exploit to intensify disputes and recruit.

The project established 12 dialogue spaces, trained members in mediation, and deployed committees on 130 missions reaching 3,900 people, resolving conflicts such as livestock crop damage and access to water points. This was reinforced with tangible resource investments, including restoring 253 hectares of degraded land and drilling 9 boreholes benefiting 17,390 people, alongside a savings-group capital formation to ease economic stress and support micro-initiatives.[2]

Evidence from an endline survey indicates measurable social-cohesion and P/CVE-related gains among beneficiaries compared with matched non-beneficiaries. The assessment found program participants had significantly better relations with the other occupational group, higher trust and more cross-group contact (ATT = +0.68; ATT = +0.42,ATT = +0.35; $p < 0.001$). Using GCERF's adapted tool, it was assessed that participants vulnerability to VE conducive to terrorism reduced while resilience increased. A participatory review in March 2025 (focus groups and workshops across all 12 communes) corroborated these patterns and linked them to the combined effect of dialogue mechanisms and resource-focused investments.[3]

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2. GCERF, Sahel Regional Portfolio Results, forthcoming.
3. GCERF, forthcoming

V. Conclusion

The evidence and analysis presented in this Toolkit confirm that the nexus between climate change and VE conducive to terrorism is significant, multifaceted, and demands urgent attention from policymakers and practitioners across sectors. While the relationship is neither linear nor deterministic, the pathways through which climate change exacerbates drivers of VE conducive to terrorism, as a threat multiplier, as a source of tactical opportunities for VE terrorist groups, as an obstacle to climate action, and through the unintended consequences of both coping strategies and climate interventions are evident and increasingly visible across regional contexts.

The case studies drawn from Southeast Asia, the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, Syria and Iraq, Afghanistan, and Europe demonstrate that VE terrorist groups are actively exploiting climate-related vulnerabilities. Whether by controlling access to scarce resources, positioning themselves as alternative governance providers, leveraging extreme weather events for recruitment, or instrumentalizing environmental narratives for propaganda, these groups are adept at turning climate-induced instability to their advantage. At the same time, climate change compounds the challenges experienced by populations that are already vulnerable, including women, youth, displaced communities, and pastoralists, further straining the social fabric and local resilience mechanisms that serve as buffers against VE conducive to terrorism.

The twenty-five recommendations in this Toolkit offer a comprehensive, actionable framework for responding to this challenge. They call for a common terminology that bridges the P/CVE and climate communities; cross-sectoral coordination at the international, national, and local levels; the integration of climate risks into CT and P/CVE research, needs assessments, and national action plans; and the mainstreaming of gender-sensitive and conflict-sensitive approaches across all interventions. They emphasize the need for dedicated and collaborative funding, strengthened local capacities, early warning systems, community engagement, and robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning frameworks. Crucially, each recommendation is grounded in, and aligned with, existing GCTF Framework Documents, demonstrating that addressing the climate-VE nexus does not require reinventing GCTF's policy architecture, but rather integrating climate considerations into its established good practices.

Looking ahead, sustained progress will depend on three imperatives. First, the evidence base must continue to expand. While significant strides have been made, the specific mechanisms linking climate change and VE conducive to terrorism remain underexplored in many contexts, and further investment in rigorous, participatory, and gender-sensitive research is essential. Second, cross-sectoral collaboration must move from aspiration to institutional practice. The silos between CT, P/CVE, development, humanitarian, and climate communities continue to limit the effectiveness and reach of interventions; building trust, shared understanding, and joint programming is a prerequisite for progress. Third, implementation must be locally grounded and conflict-sensitive. As this Toolkit has underscored, the nexus manifests differently across regions, and interventions risk doing harm if they do not account for local dynamics, power structures, and the evolving strategies of VE terrorist groups.

The GCTF Initiative on Addressing the Nexus Between Climate Change and Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism, co-chaired by Germany and Kenya and implemented by GCERF, has laid a critical foundation for this work. This Toolkit is intended to serve as a practical resource for translating that foundation into concrete action. Its recommendations are non-binding and should be adapted to national and local contexts, in accordance with applicable domestic and international law. They are offered not as prescriptions but as guidance — grounded in evidence, experience, and dialogue — to support policymakers and practitioners in building more resilient communities and more effective responses to one of the defining security challenges of our time.

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