4 Conflict-Sensitive Programming in the GEF

This chapter examines the various conflict-sensitive strategies implemented in Global Environment Facility (GEF) projects to address and manage risks across the different stages of the project cycle—from design through implementation and completion.

Conflict-sensitive strategies gleaned from the in-depth review of selected GEF-supported projects in the seven situations of focus can be arranged into a five-category typology (Figure 4.1). The categories are (a) acknowledgement, (b) avoidance, (c) mitigation, (d) peacebuilding, and (e) learning. Acknowledgement, the threshold consideration in the typology, demonstrates in project documents that the project is aware of the conflict context. From there, a project may take no further action (simply acknowledging the situation without trying to manage accompanying risks), or may respond to the conflict context through avoidance or one or more mitigation measures. In some cases, project activities actively embrace peacebuilding opportunities. Projects also draw on learning from other GEF-funded projects and initiatives from other organizations to improve future programming.

Conflict Acknowledgement

At the most basic level of conflict sensitivity, many projects acknowledge the presence of armed violence and insecurity in the project area. In several cases, early project documents such as Project Identification Forms acknowledged previous armed conflict and its environmental effects, but few described strategies for managing conflict-related risks. More frequently, especially in projects nearer in time to the armed conflict, acknowledgement of a situation's conflict context was accompanied by measures designed to avoid or mitigate conflict-related risks or even to capitalize on peacebuilding opportunities. (Appendix 4.1, at the end of this chapter, presents a list of all projects discussed in Chapter 4.)

Acknowledgement can appear in mentions of several conflict-related phenomena, including conflict itself, associated political instability and fragility, and the presence of refugees, displaced persons, combatants, and ex-combatants. One document for a project in the Albertine Rift, for instance, listed the DRC's "succession of conflicts," including the "war of the Democratic Force Alliance for the liberation of Congo in 1998 [and] war of the Congolese Rally for Democracy between 1998 and 2003" up to conflicts "still happening today," when establishing the project's

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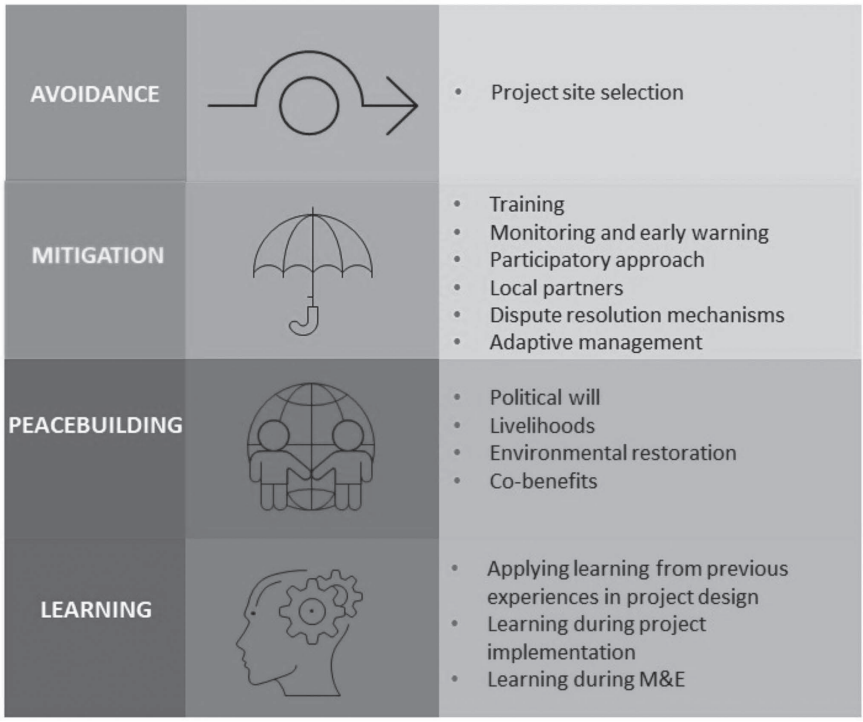

Figure 4.1 Typology of Conflict-Sensitive Strategies in GEF Projects
Source: Adapted from GEF IEO (2020).

context (GEF, 2018a, p. 13).[1] The project acknowledged the history of conflict but did not highlight specific risks that conflict posed to the project or propose measures to manage those risks.

Where project documents did propose measures to mitigate or otherwise manage conflict-related risks, they also tended to provide more specificity about the risks. For example, some project documents highlighted the location of combatants or ex-combatants in relation to the project site. A project in Cambodia described the project location by explaining that "from the early 1970s the region was a central base of the Khmer Rouge and as a consequence experienced long periods of conflict and civil war, which only ceased in 1998" (GEF, 2004c, p. 7).[2] Beyond the Khmer Rouge presence, project documents stated that the "military poses the most significant risk to the project" because of its involvement in illegal logging, large-scale hunting, and wildlife trade (GEF, 2004b, p. 9). A section on the implications of the 1998–99 Kosovo War in a document for a project in the Balkans (North Macedonia)[3] listed refugees among the "negative repercussions" of the war and identified "transboundary refugee movements" as a potential resulting issue between Albania and Kosovo (GEF, 1999a, p. 9).

At the design stage, some projects acknowledge the impact that conflict has had on the environment and natural resources. For example, projects may highlight instances of illegal resource use, such as logging, wildlife trade, and poaching, that take place during conflict; moreover, they may propose measures to manage those conflict-related risks (e.g., GEF, 2018b, p. 12).[4] Several projects noted the lasting impacts of land mines. A project in Cambodia[5] mentioned that "landmines, armaments and munitions are still widespread" (GEF, 2001c, p. 9) and expressed concern that "the same landmines are then being deployed in the forest to hunt wildlife" (GEF, 2001d, p. 15). Pollution from armed conflict has also motivated efforts to address locations suffering from acute pollution (sometimes referred to as "environmental hotspots"), including that from "the destruction of electrical and military equipment during regional conflicts, such as the Balkans and the Israel-Lebanon wars" (GEF, 2007a, p. 184). Uncontrolled development is another impact of conflict on the environment with implications for GEF projects. A project in Lebanon noted that "uncontrolled urban expansion occurred in particular during the civil war, when many people wished to settle away from the urban centres for security reasons" (GEF, 2008b, p. 10).[6] Projects have also noted the impacts of conflict on ecotourism (e.g., GEF, 2016b, p. 22), water infrastructure (e.g., GEF, 2005e, p. 16), and energy infrastructure (GEF, 2009b, p. 1).[7]

While acknowledging the impacts of conflict on the environment, some projects also have recognized that the effects of conflict—and peace processes—on environmental governance pose risks and obstacles to project success. Some peace agreements create institutional arrangements that can complicate governance. For example, a project in the Balkans noted that the institutional structure created by the Dayton Peace Agreement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, "while mitigating the potential for inter-ethnical tensions and conflict is rather complicated and a potential source of diseconomies" (GEF, 2005d, p. 21).[8] Insecurity associated with conflict can cause difficulty in physically accessing project sites, particularly protected areas. A project in Afghanistan mentioned that "some difficulties could arise in communications routes to/from the protected areas" of focus (GEF, 2003b, p. 8).[9] After conflict, the political push for economic development can take priority over environmental protection. In Lebanon, for example, a project identified the "need for quick reconstruction of the country in the post-war period" as one of the root causes of conversion of woodland (GEF, 2008a, p. 7).[10] Environmental data are often missing, making governance decisions difficult (e.g., GEF, 1998a, p. 3).

The remaining four approaches adopted by GEF projects to conflict-sensitive design and implementation—avoidance, mitigation, embracing the peacebuilding opportunities, and learning—all go beyond simple acknowledgement of risk and identify measures to manage the risk.

Managing Conflict Risks Through Avoidance

The simplest approach to managing conflict-related risks is avoidance. To mitigate the risks posed by a situation's conflict context, some project proponents have deliberately selected a geographic location for the project that is physically

removed from the regions affected by conflict. For example, documents for a project in Colombia noted that the "Quindio departments face some security problems because of armed insurrection, paramilitary forces and common delinquency" and subsequently ruled out the possibility of working there.[11] In light of the security risk factors, the "high mountain zones were therefore discarded, even if livestock systems in those higher altitudes" were better suited for the project objectives (GEF, 2002, p. 111). Project proponents in Afghanistan similarly decided to select areas "that have experienced calm and good governance" (GEF, 2010b, p. 18, 2012b, p. 13).[12]

Although avoidance can help to manage conflict-related risks, it has its limitations. Many conflict-affected regions are biodiversity hotspots (Hanson et al., 2009). Systematically avoiding those areas because of conflict—rather than taking other measures to manage the risk—may contribute to biodiversity loss and overall lower achievement of desired global environmental benefits, particularly those related to biodiversity and land degradation. Moreover, the geographic range of conflicts can change quickly, so relying solely on avoidance can be limiting from a long-term perspective.

Managing Conflict Risks Through Mitigation

Mitigation strategies directly address conflict-related risks in project design and implementation. Generally, mitigation strategies recognize that the conflict-affected or fragile context presents risks to the project and then seek to identify them early on and address them before they escalate and seriously affect the project. The reviewed GEF projects adopted six categories of approaches that mitigate conflict-related risks: training, monitoring, using a participatory approach, partnering with local organizations, instituting dispute resolution mechanisms, and using adaptive management.[13]

Recognizing that environmental staff may lack expertise in conflict management, some projects have sought to build capacity by training staff to understand and manage conflict-related risks to environmental projects. For example, in Mali, a project used training materials on natural resources conflict management that were produced by the GEF agency and the Department for International Development (GEF, 2005b, p. 16).[14]

Another approach to mitigating conflict-related risks is to develop mechanisms to monitor security conditions that could affect activities. Fragile and conflict-affected situations can be volatile, with the security situation changing both dramatically and rapidly. Monitoring enables project staff to detect emerging risks early, before they have escalated. Monitoring often begins with baseline assessments (e.g., GEF, 2003a, p. 53). While a project is underway, monitoring can continue to inform risk management and ensure rapid action to reduce the risk of negative impacts.

Participatory approaches that equitably engage all affected stakeholders have been used as a mitigation strategy, especially where tension exists between different actors. A project in Afghanistan, for example, aims to ensure "an inclusive, participatory approach involving all key stakeholders" to mitigate the risk of

intercommunity conflict (GEF, 2012c, p. 9).[15] Similarly, a project in the Albertine Rift (including Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, and the DRC) identified "a decentralized, participatory and adaptive management approach" and "extensive stakeholder consultations from local to basin-wide level" in the design stage to mitigate the risk of civil strife and insecurity (GEF, 2008c, p. 8).[16] With participatory approaches, a project also often strengthens the participation of traditionally underrepresented or otherwise marginalized groups, including "buffer zone and rural communities" and women—as in projects in in Colombia (GEF, 2005a, p. 4, 2017b, pp. 114–116).[17] A non-GEF project carried out in the Farchana refugee camp in Chad illustrates the importance of consulting with local communities ahead of project implementation. At least one outbreak of violence, leading the death of two refugees and multiple other injuries, may have begun when a GEF agency "asked the refugees to plant trees" (IRIN News, 2004). Across West Africa, tree planting is viewed as a demonstration of land ownership. When the Darfuri refugees were asked to plant trees, they interpreted the request to mean that they were being given the land surrounding the refugee camp and could not expect to return to Darfur. Had the project staff undertaken an earlier consultation with the Darfuri refugees or others from the community, they might have been able to "avoid this misinterpretation and its subsequent violence" (Rehrl, 2009).

Consideration of staffing, job creation, and procurement—all of which affect local livelihoods—across social divides can also mitigate conflict-related risks. Such consideration can help ensure that a project does not unintentionally entrench existing inequities. Careful selection of project staff can be important. A project in Afghanistan, for example, specified that "project staff employed will be from local Wakhan communities, wherever possible" to reduce the risk of potential resurgence of conflict (GEF, 2018c, p. 52).[18] Awareness of conflict dynamics can drive decisions concerning distribution of jobs created by project activities. A project in the Balkans (North Macedonia)[19] specified that the project would create "local construction jobs and a very few jobs when the units are operational, which will benefit both ethnic groups," namely, Macedonian and Albanian community members with lingering tensions from the Kosovo War (GEF, 1999a, p. 9).

Partnering with local groups and communities has been used to help mitigate conflict-related risks. Before entering a conflict-affected area, projects can work with in-country and local partners to lay the groundwork for coordinated implementation. In the Albertine Rift, a project set out to "obtain full cooperation of local and national government authorities for inter-sectoral processes" to mitigate security risks (GEF, 2009a, p. 54).[20] Other projects work with local partners to learn from their experiences so project activities can continue even if security conditions worsen. In one project, the World Bank worked with the Humboldt Institute because of its experience in Colombia's conflict-affected areas,[21] which allowed the project "to work in rural areas and avoid security problems" (GEF, 2001a, p. 38). A project in Afghanistan noted that on-the-ground activities would "be coordinated by local-level authorities so that project activities can be completed in relative independence during times of increased security concerns" (GEF, 2015b, p. 14).[22] Local partnerships can directly engage combatant groups that affect the

project (see, e.g., Pritchard, 2015). A project in the Albertine Rift, for example, explained that its "proposed integration of Simba communities into project activities is an important element of the project," given the group's presence and history of rebellion in the area surrounding the DRC's Maiko National Park (GEF, 2006a, p. 127).[23] In another example, a project proposed working with the Cambodian Armed Forces,[24] which had integrated ex-combatants from the Khmer Rouge and other combatant groups after hostilities ended (GEF, 2004b, pp. 9–10).

Projects have also established dispute resolution mechanisms to peacefully resolve disputes before they escalate to violence or conflict. These mechanisms can rely on or draw from traditional institutions and practices; projects in Mali[25] and Afghanistan,[26] for example, both specified that customary dispute resolution mechanisms would be used to mitigate conflict-related risks (GEF, 2003a, p. 53, 2012c, p. 9). Conflict resolution mechanisms can also support a project's participatory approach. Another project in Mali aimed to reduce the number of conflicts in the project area by half through a "conflict resolution mechanism including 30% women as members" (GEF, 2016d, p. 24).[27] Partners on the ground can also help resolve conflicts when they do arise. This same project looks to community-based organizations to "contribute to the conflicts resolution" and to municipalities to "contribute to the resolution of possible conflicts in the context of the implementation of the project" (GEF, 2016d, p. 24).

Last, some projects have integrated adaptive management approaches into their design. Adaptive management relies on monitoring, periodic evaluations, and—most importantly—an ability to adjust strategies to address new information and developments (e.g., GEF, 2015b, p. 14, 2017a, p. 33, 2017c, p. 88). Some projects have stated generally that the project will adapt to changing circumstances: A project in the Albertine Rift drew on the World Bank's experience in the DRC and noted the importance of keeping project design "simple and flexible" (GEF, 2006a, p. 16).[28] Project documents can also specify ways in which the project could adapt if security conditions worsen. A project in Colombia proposed a general adaptive approach that would allow modification of project activities.[29] Measures in this approach included a conflict resolution mechanism and "a flexible design that would allow the modification of some activities according to the security situation (e.g., meetings to be held outside of the region), without affecting project development objective" (GEF, 2000, p. 26). A project in Afghanistan indicated that it would monitor the security situation, and "if necessary, project activities will be shifted to more secure districts or management" (GEF, 2012c, p. 9).[30]

Occasionally, projects explicitly contemplate the resource requirements of adaptive actions. Although many projects have referred to adaptive management or adaptation strategies to manage risks of working in fragile or conflict-affected situations, they seldom indicated that they had estimated how much the adaptations might cost, let alone included a budget line. One uncommon example was a project in the Albertine Rift that highlighted the need to evaluate "what it will cost now and projected into the future under various scenarios good security to intermittent security" (GEF, 2005c, pp. 13–14).[31] Interviews with project staff indicated that the costs required to respond to a potential conflict flare-up can be listed as a separate

budget line without allocated funds in the design phase, making it easier to efficiently reallocate funds if the security situation deteriorates. Specific and detailed planning for adaptive actions and their costs allows projects to more efficiently change course when the security situation demands it.

Managing Conflict Risks by Embracing Peacebuilding Opportunities

Several projects have gone beyond merely trying to manage the risks of conflict to proactively embracing peacebuilding opportunities presented by the conflict or fragile context. The reviewed GEF-funded projects presented three particular types of peacebuilding opportunities: political will, cooperation, and confidence building; post-conflict recovery; and reintegration of ex-combatants.

Some projects have observed that the heightened political priority and political will focused on peacebuilding during conflict and post-conflict periods create opportunities for the project. A project in Cambodia noted that "post crisis conditions create a special set of circumstances which represent both a threat and a significant opportunity for the conservation of nature and natural resources" (UNDP, 2000, p. 3).[32] In particular, the post-conflict inflow of international funding allowed for a reexamination of Cambodia's protected area system and development of effective management plans for existing protected areas (UNDP, 2000). Some projects have framed their relevance in part as implementing the peace agreement. A project in Colombia, for example, emphasized the positive implications of the 2016 peace agreement by identifying the GEF's opportunity "to supporting [sic] the inclusion of environmental management criteria in these updated planning tools" (GEF, 2016a, p. 10).[33] Projects also identify specific ways that conflict and peace dynamics can contribute to the project. A project in Mali that focused on community-based elephant conservation[34] explained that the 2017 ceasefire agreement "could be a boon for elephant protection in Mali, as the security tensions should decrease, providing opportunity for this GEF project" (GEF, 2018b, p. 9).

Projects in the GEF international waters focal area have cited increased cooperation as a co-benefit. In the Balkans, for instance, a project explained that "interstate cooperation in the Drina River Basin has a potential to ease conflicting interests, and provide gains in the form of savings that can be achieved, or the costs of non-cooperation or dispute that can be averted" (GEF, 2016c, p. 68).[35] Cooperation can even be a motivating factor for countries to participate in projects. Both tranches of the Nile Transboundary Environmental Action Project[36] highlighted "an awareness at the highest political levels of the Nile countries of the possibilities of a 'cooperation and peace dividend' which the broader Nile Basin Initiative can leverage" (GEF, 2001b, p. 38). This awareness would aid in achieving "cooperation, economic exchange and eventually greater integration and interdependence" (UNDP, 2008, p. 23).

Some projects identify how they will rebuild livelihoods, infrastructure, capacity, and ecosystems as part of the broader post-conflict recovery process. A project in the Albertine Rift, for example, stated that one of its broad goals was to "help

restore productive capacity and livelihoods in a country that is just emerging from severe conflict by revitalizing and diversifying its agricultural production on a sustainable basis" (GEF, 2004a, p. 86).[37] A project implemented in "among the worst war devastated communities" in Bosnia-Herzegovina,[38] where substantial water infrastructure was destroyed, similarly explained that the project, "by transferring best available climate resilient flood risk management, will . . . contribute to further reconciliation in a war damaged area" (GEF, 2015a, pp. 25, 53). Other projects also adopt an approach of building back better with an eye toward future conflict prevention. In Colombia, a project stated:

> by implementing activities for controlling deforestation hot-spots, it is anticipated that the [integrated land-use planning] component will also contribute to improving State presence in areas affected by violence and illicit activities, thus reducing illegal land acquisition and land related conflicts.
>
> (GEF, 2019, p. 11)[39]

The project claimed that, on a broader level, the sustainable land use and management component "will contribute to reduce the historical disparity between urban and rural areas, one of the structural causes of the Colombian conflict" (GEF, 2019, p. 13). Also in Colombia, a project and the GEF Small Grants Programme funded community enterprises to process and commercialize non-timber forest products in the biodiverse Chocó Region, providing alternative livelihoods to mining (GEF, 2012a; GEF IEO, 2019, p. 34).[40]

Some GEF projects have also been designed to engage with processes to reintegrate ex-combatants and displaced persons. In the Albertine Rift, a project aligned with the Burundi government's Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy,[41] which supports "the reintegration of displaced persons and other victims of conflict into agricultural production" (GEF, 2004a, p. 6). Actors in armed conflict—including members of rebel groups—can also serve as partners in project implementation. A project in the Albertine Rift proposed to integrate "Simba communities into project activities" in Maiko National Park (GEF, 2006a, p. 127).[42] A project in Cambodia similarly highlighted that its education program would focus on "awareness and pride in key species conservation" among the "armed forces and at military bases" because the military was among the most involved in illegal natural resource use (GEF, 2004c, p. 8).[43] During implementation, project staff communicated frequently with the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces to assess the security situation during the Thai-Cambodian border dispute starting in 2008. Members of the military also escorted project personnel through the forests in the project's area of work in Cambodia's Northern Plains.

Other GEF projects explicitly note the role that natural resource management can play in conflict resolution. A project in the Albertine Rift, for instance, argued that reversing land degradation would "reduce conflicts over resources for instance between farmers and herders" (GEF, 2009a, p. 33).[44] Similarly, a project in Colombia noted that "environmental themes may contribute to the solution of the armed conflict" (GEF, 2006b, p. 2).[45] Although these projects did not describe in detail

how they might build peace, the acknowledgement of their potential role in the process in itself is notable. Another project in Colombia, in contrast, directly addressed how it would contribute to peacebuilding, namely by "improving interinstitutional coordination . . . and promoting platforms for dialogue and peace building that address the principal barriers that prevent the reduction of deforestation in the Colombian Amazon" (GEF, 2017b, p. 8).[46]

Managing Conflict Risks by Learning

Many GEF projects implemented in fragile and conflict-affected settings learn from both their own experiences and from other programming. Learning in the reviewed GEF-funded projects takes three forms:

1. Identification of ways in which conflict or fragility threatened project success.
2. Positive assessment of conflict-sensitive strategies used in project implementation that paid dividends in project success.
3. Recommendation of strategies that were not used during implementation but should be used in future programming.

Learning can come from within GEF-funded projects, from non-GEF projects implemented by agencies, and from non-GEF projects implemented by other institutions. For a summary of learning by GEF agencies on conflict-sensitive programming, see Box 4.1.

Project staff have been learning about the negative impacts of conflict on project implementation, particularly as a precipitating factor in project cancellation, difficulty in carrying out project activities, and limited on-site staff involvement because of risks to personnel. UNDP's Afghanistan office, for instance, requested cancellation of a project "in light of the challenging security conditions in the country in 2009" (GEF, 2010a, p. 1).[47] Short of cancellation, projects can also face delays because of conflict (see Chapter 3). The evaluation of a project in Mali explained that "with the exception of some emergency operations, IDA [International Development Association] suspended all operational activities in Mali" after the country's coup d'état in March 2012 (World Bank, 2013, p. 21).[48]

Even when a project as a whole has continued, discrete project activities may encounter difficulties because of conflict. For a project in the Albertine Rift, 12 of the 17 quarterly progress reports outlined the ramifications on project operations of changing security conditions in Burundi and the DRC.[49] Stated impacts ranged from reduced fishing activity "because of army fears that rebels are using fishing boats to transport raiding parties" (GEF, 1996a, p. 3) to insecurity continuing to "seriously limit activities in the Francophone region" of Lake Tanganyika (GEF, 1996b, p. 1) and field staff being unable to sample all of the project's river monitoring locations (GEF, 1999b). Reflecting on these challenges, the 1998 and 1999 project reviews indicated a high probability that the project's assumption that the lake's security situation would improve throughout implementation "may fail to hold or materialize" (GEF, 1998b, p. 4, 1999c, p. 4).

Box 4.1 Lessons Learned by GEF Agencies

With a growing body of experiences related to programming in conflict-affected and fragile situations, GEF agencies have increasingly examined lessons from these experiences to inform future programming. Some of these experiences reflect broad lessons learned; others focus on particular dimensions, such as gender or conflict prevention. Following is a sample of flagship reports and other publications distilling lessons.

African Development Bank

- From Fragility to Resilience: Mitigating Natural Resources and Fragile Situations in Africa (2016)

Asian Development Bank

- Mapping Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations in Asia and the Pacific (2016)
- Engagement in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situation: Pilot Fragility Assessment of an Informal Urban Settlement in Kiribati (2013)

Inter-American Development Bank

- Lessons from Four Decades of Infrastructure Project-Related Conflicts in Latin America and the Caribbean (2017)
- Conflict Management and Consensus Building for Integrated Coastal Management in Latin America and the Caribbean (2000)

International Fund for Agricultural Development

- Fostering Inclusive Rural Transformation in Fragile States and Situations (2017, with Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services)
- Fragile Situations (Rural Development Report) (2016)
- IFAD's Engagement in Fragile and Conflict-affected States and Situations: Corporate-Level Evaluation (2015)

International Union for the Conservation of Nature

- Conflict and Conservation (2021)

United Nations Development Programme

- Risk-Informed Development—From Crisis to Resilience (2019, with others)
- Local Ownership in Conflict Sensitivity Application—The Case of Nepal (2017, with others)

United Nations Environment Programme

- Gender, Climate, and Security: Sustaining Inclusive Peace on the Frontlines of Climate Change (2020, with others)

- Environmental Cooperation for Peacebuilding Programme—Final Report (2016)
- Women and Natural Resources: Unlocking the Peacebuilding Potential (2013, with others)
- The Role of Natural Resources in Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: Addressing Risks and Seizing Opportunities (2013, with UNDP)
- Greening the Blue Helmets: Environment, Natural Resources, and United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (2012, with others)
- Protecting the Environment During Armed Conflict: An Analysis and Inventory of International Law (2009)
- From Conflict to Peacebuilding: The Role of Natural Resources and the Environment (2009)

World Bank Group

- Defueling Conflict: Environment and Natural Resource Management as a Pathway to Peace (2022)
- Fragility and Conflict: On the Front Lines of the Fight Against Poverty (2020b)
- Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict (2018, with United Nations)
- Strengthening Conflict Sensitive Approaches to Climate Change in MENA (2018)
- World Bank Group Engagement in Situations for Fragility, Conflict, and Violence: An Independent Evaluation (2016)
- Enhancing Sensitivity to Conflict Risks in World Bank-funded Activities: Lessons from the Kyrgyz Republic (2014)
- Renewable Natural Resource: Practical Lessons for Conflict-Sensitive Development (2009)
- Mainstreaming Gender in Conflict Analysis: Issues and Recommendations (2006)
- Toward a Conflict-Sensitive Poverty Reduction Strategy (2005)
- Natural Resources and Violent Conflict: Options and Actions (2003)

Learning has also highlighted the risks to project staff and affiliated partners. For example, during the implementation of a project in Cambodia, "several security-related incidents prompted the project to suspend activities and temporarily remove staff from Phnom Aural Wildlife Sanctuary" (GEF, 2007b, p. 11).[50] Two rangers in the wildlife sanctuary, in which a project operated, were murdered during the project, which led to transferring responsibilities to the Ministry of the Environment (GEF, 2007b, pp. 50–51).

Some projects have identified and noted successful strategies from other projects to inform their programming. One approach that has been highlighted is the use of a simple, flexible project design. Drawing on the World Bank's work since 2002 in post-conflict DRC, a project there recommended in its design stage that the project team "keep project design simple and flexible" (GEF, 2006a, p. 15).[51] The evaluation of a project in the Albertine Rift noted that the "project design was kept simple considering the country's post-conflict environment" and assessed that this was a justified mitigation measure given the conflict-related risks (GEF IEO, 2016, pp. 16–17).[52] For a biodiversity project in Colombia,[53] the GEF STAP review suggested that the project designers validate assumptions about the project's peacebuilding potential by making an effort to "learn lessons from post-conflict states and consult with expert organizations such as the UN Environment's Expert Group on Environment, Conflict and Peacebuilding" (GEF STAP, 2017, p. 2).

Projects also reflect on the importance, particularly at an interpersonal level, of building trust and a common cause between various actors involved in project implementation. This can start at the project design phase. A project in the Albertine Rift, for instance, looked to the example of the International Gorilla Conservation Program (IGCP), a joint initiative between Flora and Fauna International, World Wide Fund for Nature, and the African Wildlife Foundation.[54] The project remarked that collaboration between Uganda, Rwanda, and the DRC in the IGCP "primarily ha[d] worked because it was built at the field level first rather than being imposed from above" (GEF, 2005c, p. 7). The potential for person-to-person relationships to break through international tensions also appeared in the design of another Albertine Rift project,[55] which highlighted that the Nile Basin Initiative's past programming showed that "developing trust and personal relations among riparian delegations from countries that have often been in conflict for decades or more is a key ingredient to moving the process further" (GEF, 2001b, p. 48). A third project in the Albertine Rift[56] expanded further on the example of the IGCP, saying "it demonstrated that it is possible to achieve effective trans-border cooperation for conservation, even between warring parties, by getting them to rally round a common cause" (GEF, 2006a, p. 17).

GEF agencies and other organizations have learned that engagement with the local community can help projects succeed. A project in the Inner Niger Delta in Mali[57] indicated that it would draw on the successes of an International Union for the Conservation of Nature project in the same region, particularly in relying on "the traditional management systems at the sites and project areas, in order to involve all the local stakeholders in the processes of designing and implementing the activities" (GEF, 2003a, p. 48). In the Albertine Rift, staff learned from an earlier GEF-funded project in Lake Tanganyika that was "hampered by civil unrest" and addressed conflict-related risks in Burundi in part "by supporting close coordination among beneficiaries" (GEF, 2004a, p. 15).[58] Box 4.2 describes this learning. Projects have learned that local organizations, too, are valuable partners. In the Albertine Rift, a project drew from the World Bank's experience in post-conflict DRC, planning to "empower perennial institutions," such as government agencies, and "engage local NGOs in program implementation" (GEF, 2006a, p. 16).[59]

Box 4.2 Learning from the Lake Tanganyika Biodiversity Project

Running from 1991 to 2006, this project sought to demonstrate an effective regional approach to controlling pollution and preventing the loss of the biodiversity of Lake Tanganyika's international waters through collaboration between Burundi, the DRC, Tanzania, and Zambia.[a] Overall, this project received favorable evaluation scores and included significant references to conflict sensitivity in project design documents. The project also dealt with substantial and frequent insecurity in Burundi and the DRC during implementation.

A "Results and Experiences" document created in February 2001 dedicated a section to lessons learned by the project for the benefit of future programming in the region and other areas affected by civil war and insecurity (Jorgensen et al., 2010). It highlighted six key lessons.

The first lesson, "remain flexible and seek creative solutions," related to the project's decision to relocate project staff to the DRC because of a phase III UN security rating in Burundi, where the unit was intended to be based. Relocation was deemed less convenient, but the flexibility to relocate immediately paid off after a subsequent phase IV security rating in Burundi during project implementation. The document noted that Burundi's increased insecurity would potentially have been "devastating to the project." This arrangement also allowed the DRC to remain more engaged in the project.

The second lesson learned was to maintain a presence. The project found that when staff could not reside in project areas, a "considerable amount could be accomplished through emails, telephone calls and short-term visits to the country (as UNDP allowed) by regional staff or visits by national staff to other countries to meet with regional staff."

The third lesson was to foster regional collaboration, noting the project's ability to "hold regional meetings, formulate a Strategic Action Programme and draft a Legal Convention during a period of strained relationships among Tanganyika's four riparian nations." This was achieved through close collaboration between project partners on various technical aspects of the project, which "forced participants to see beyond the prevailing political climate and fostered regional collaboration."

The fourth lesson concerned the project's ability to remain neutral, specifically that it was "crucial that expatriate staff and national staff in managerial and coordinating roles be agreeable to collaborating with any and all stakeholders and, moreover, be seen to be impartial." This was relevant specifically because the "government and armed forces in charge of eastern [Democratic Republic of] Congo changed several times over the project's course," and "Burundi had four national coordinators during the life of the project."

The fifth lesson stressed the importance of not underestimating people's good will during difficult times. The project found that national partners were often "tired and frustrated with the deteriorating political-economic situation that was beyond their control" and "wanted to be a part of something bigger that they perceived to be a good cause." In the DRC, local staff were "confident, productive and took a new pride in their work" despite low or nonexistent wages in their roles. Overall, the lessons document emphasized that small incentives for local partners and the feeling of being part of a good cause can help stabilize communities during conflict.

The sixth lesson addressed the importance of being briefed on security and having contingency plans. The project found that acting based on the UN's security plans and taking part in "regular security briefing sessions and periodic personal security workshops" combined with good fortune to ensure that project staff were never in immediate danger during the project. Further, contingency plans and communication with local staff helped ensure evacuations went smoothly during periods of insecurity.

a Project 398

Several projects have learned the value of monitoring and apportioning resources to respond to security conditions. A project in Mali[60] referenced the strategies of the Mali Elephant Project, which stayed "informed of the detailed situation across the elephant range through its network of informants that include the 670 eco-guards" and "adapt[ed] their behaviour accordingly," as a possible measure to mitigate the risk of military conflict and jihadist insurgence (GEF, 2018b, p. 62). In more concrete terms, the evaluation of a project on the Nile Transboundary waters[61] stated that the project responded to insecurity and conflict with the "provision of necessary resources for security related equipment and escorts" (Nile Basin Initiative, 2009, p. 42).

Learning can also reflect on negative experiences and recommend alternative approaches for future programming. For example, reviewers and evaluators have at times identified steps that future projects in fragile and conflict-affected settings could take to improve their outcomes. This learning often focuses on adequately assessing risks and setting realistic project objectives. The evaluation for a project in Mali noted that the project design "was preconfigured at the program-level, and did not reflect any country-specific modifications or lessons learned from previous projects executed in Mali" (GEF IEO, 2013, p. 80).[62] As a consequence, "neither the PAD nor the Operations Manual included risks of delays due to . . . political instability" in Mali (GEF IEO, 2013, p. 81). The evaluation for a project in the Albertine Rift critiqued the project's objectives, mentioning that the "target set for net profits of 30% [for the project's rural producer beneficiaries] is unrealistically

high for these types of operations, particularly in a post conflict situation" (GEF IEO, 2012, p. 11).[63]

During the implementation of a project in the Balkans,[64] North Macedonia was experiencing "a period of turbulence . . . caused first by the wave of . . . refugees during the Kosovo War and second by severe civil unrest and tension between the Albanian and Macedonian ethnic groups in the country" (GEF IEO, 2004, p. 7). Despite the tension, however, the project "encouraged continuing communication and cooperation between the two ethnic communities," a co-benefit (GEF IEO, 2004, p. 6). The evaluation's "lessons learned" section was rated moderately unsatisfactory, in particular because the section "could have addressed how to overcome ethnic tensions to achieve project objectives in future projects, but failed to do so" (GEF IEO, 2014, p. 12).

The typology of conflict-sensitive approaches to programming advanced in the report on which this book is based—including acknowledgement, avoidance, mitigation, peacebuilding, and learning—draws upon GEF innovations and experiences. It was developed organically by the evaluation team, based on the findings from the in-depth analysis of designing GEF projects explored in the regional case study chapters. Many of the approaches may also be found in the peer-reviewed and gray literature on conflict-sensitive programming (e.g., Akinyoade, 2010; Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012).

Notes

1 Project 9515
2 Project 1043
3 Project 32
4 Project 9661
5 Project 1086
6 Project 3028
7 Projects 9414, 2143, and 4133
8 Project 2143
9 Project 1907
10 Project 3028; see also Project 3772
11 Project 947
12 Projects 4227 and 5017
13 As noted earlier, of 62 projects reviewed as part of the seven situation profiles, 59 identified various risks, and 56 proposed initial measures to manage risk. Only 39 Project Identification Forms identified conflict as a risk—even though all 62 projects were situated in a country with an ongoing or past major armed conflict—and only 33 of the projects proposed measures to manage conflict-related risks. None of the 62 Project Identification Forms reviewed mentioned fragility. (These numbers do not include other Project Identification Forms that were reviewed but were not part of the seven situation profiles.)
14 Project 2193
15 Project 5202
16 Project 2139
17 Projects 2551 and 9663
18 Project 9531
19 Project 32
20 Project 2139

21 Project 774
22 Project 9090
23 Project 2100
24 Project 1043
25 Project 1152
26 Project 5202
27 Project 5746
28 Project 2100
29 Project 1020
30 Project 5202
31 Project 2888
32 Project 1086
33 Project 9441
34 Project 9661
35 Project 5723
36 Projects 1094 and 2584
37 Project 2357
38 Project 5604
39 Project 9578
40 Project 4916
41 Project 2357
42 Project 2100
43 Project 1043
44 Project 2139
45 Project 2551
46 Project 9663
47 Project 3220
48 Project 1253
49 Project 398
50 Project 1086
51 Project 2100
52 Project 4133
53 Project 9441
54 Project 2888
55 Project 1094
56 Project 2100
57 Project 1152
58 Project 2357
59 Project 2100
60 Project 9661
61 Project 2584
62 Project 1348
63 Project 2357
64 Project 32

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Appendix 4.1 GEF-Supported Projects Referenced in Chapter 4

Project ID	*Project Name*	*Region*	*Dates*
32	Mini-Hydropower Project	North Macedonia	1999–2004
398	Other Measures to Protect Biodiversity in Lake Tanganyika	Burundi, Tanzania, Zambia, DRC	1991–2000
774	Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in the Andes Region	Colombia	2000–2008
947	Integrated Silvo-Pastoral Approaches to Ecosystem Management	Nicaragua, Colombia, Costa Rica	2002–2008
1020	Conservation and Sustainable Development of the Mataven Forest	Colombia	2001–2004
1043	Establishing Conservation Areas Landscape Management (CALM) in the Northern Plains	Cambodia	2004–2012
1086	Developing an Integrated Protected Area System for the Cardamom Mountains	Cambodia	2001–2007
1094	Nile Transboundary Environmental Action Project, Tranche 1	Burundi, DRC, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan,	2003–2010
1152	Biodiversity Conservation and Participatory Sustainable Management of Natural Resources in the Inner Niger Delta and its Transition Areas, Mopti Region	Mali	2003–2013
1253	Gourma Biodiversity Conservation Project	Mali	2001–2013
1348	Africa Stockpiles Program, P1	Regional	2005–2019 (cancelled)
1475	Establishing the Basis for Biodiversity Conservation on Sapo National Park and in South-East Liberia	Liberia	2005–2010
1907	Natural Resources and Poverty Alleviation Project	Afghanistan	2003–2007

Project ID	*Project Name*	*Region*	*Dates*
2100	Support to the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation (ICCN)'s Program for the Rehabilitation of the DRC's National Parks Network	DRC	2006–2018
2139	SIP: Transboundary Agro-Ecosystem Management Programme for the Kagera River Basin (Kagera TAMP)	Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda	2007–2017
2193	Enabling Sustainable Dryland Management Through Mobile Pastoral Custodianship	Argentina, Benin, Burkina Faso, Iran, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Tajikistan	2005–2013
2357	Agricultural Rehabilitation and Sustainable Land Management Project	Burundi	2004–2012
2380	Sustainable Co-Management of the Natural Resources of the Aïr-Ténéré Complex	Niger	2006–2012
2551	Colombian National Protected Areas Conservation Trust Fund	Colombia	2005–2015
2584	Nile Transboundary Environmental Action Project (NTEAP), Phase II	Burundi, DRC, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania,	2007–2009
2888	Transboundary Conservation of the Greater Virunga Landscape	DRC, Uganda	Dropped (2009)
2929	Reducing Conflicting Water Uses in the Artibonite River Basin through Development and Adoption of a Multi-focal Area Strategic Action Programme	Haiti and Dominican Republic	2008–2012
3028	SFM Safeguarding and Restoring Lebanon's Woodland Resources	Lebanon	2007–2014
3160	Preparation of the POPs National Implementation Plan under the Stockholm Convention	DRC	2007–2011
3220	Capacity Building for Sustainable Land Management	Afghanistan	2007–2010
3772	CBSP Forest and Nature Conservation Project	DRC	2008–2015
4108	PCB Management Project	Lebanon	2010–present

(*Continued*)

Appendix 4.1 (Continued)

Project ID	*Project Name*	*Region*	*Dates*
4124	Implementation of Phase I of a Comprehensive PCB Management System	Jordan	2010–2016
4133	SPWA-CC: Energy Efficiency Project	Burundi	2010–2015
4227	Building Adaptive Capacity and Resilience to Climate Change in Afghanistan.	Afghanistan	2010–2018
4916	Conservation of Biodiversity in Landscapes Impacted by Mining in the Choco Biogeographic Region	Colombia	2014–2019
5017	Developing Core Capacity for Decentralized MEA Implementation and Natural Resources Management in Afghanistan	Afghanistan	2012–present
5202	Strengthening the Resilience of Rural Livelihood Options for Afghan Communities in Panjshir, Balkh, Uruzgan and Herat Provinces to Manage Climate Change-induced Disaster Risks	Afghanistan	2013–present
5604	Technology Transfer for Climate Resilient Flood Management in Vrbas River Basin	Bosnia-Herzegovina	2014–present
5723	West Balkans Drina River Basin Management Project	Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia	2014–present
5746	Scaling up and Replicating Successful Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and Agroforestry Practices in the Koulikoro Region of Mali	Mali	2014–present
9090	Community-Based Forest Management for Biodiversity Conservation and Climate Change Mitigation in Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Dropped (2016)
9414	Preparation of the Republic of Moldova's Second Biennial Update Report to UNFCCC	Moldova	2016–present
9441	Contributing to the Integrated Management of Biodiversity of the Pacific Region of Colombia to Build Peace	Colombia	2016–present

Project ID	*Project Name*	*Region*	*Dates*
9515	The Restoration Initiative, DRC child project: Improved Management and Restoration of Agro-sylvo-pastoral Resources in the Pilot Province of South-Kivu	DRC	2016–present
9531	Conservation of Snow Leopards and their Critical Ecosystem in Afghanistan	Afghanistan	2018–present
9578	Sustainable Low Carbon Development in Colombia's Orinoquia Region	Colombia	2017–present
9661	Mali- Community-based Natural Resource Management that Resolves Conflict, Improves Livelihoods and Restores Ecosystems throughout the Elephant Range	Mali	2016–present
9663	Colombia: Connectivity and Biodiversity Conservation in the Colombian Amazon	Colombia	2015–present