



CONFLICT SENSITIVITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PEACEBUILDING IN CONSERVATION: Lessons Learned from Conservation International

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Photo: Fishermen pull in their nets during the early morning hours in the fishing village of Robertsport, located on the coast of the Atlantic Ocean. Photo: Michael Christopher Brown (2018).

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This report is dedicated to the memory and legacy of Henry H. Arnhold, and his vision for healthy, peaceful societies living with nature.

Conflict Sensitivity and Environmental Peacebuilding in Conservation: Lessons Learned from Conservation International

Summary

Conservation International (CI) sees conflict and peace as fundamentally linked to the success of our mission. Building on a decade of experience with conflict, conservation and peace, CI is partnering with PeaceNexus Foundation with the long-term vision that conflict and peace issues are considered integral to CI's conservation work, sufficient attention and resources are allocated to discussing, managing, and proactively addressing conflict and promoting peace as part of its mission to protect nature, global biodiversity and human well-being. This means considering, analyzing and addressing conflicts and identifying peacebuilding opportunities throughout our business operations.

This document highlights key accomplishments and lessons for CI on this conflict sensitivity (CS) and environmental peacebuilding (EP) agenda, drawing on more than 10 years of experience and the specific opportunities and successes as part of the CI-PeaceNexus partnership since 2018. CI's dedicated team and cadre of peace and conservation champions around the world have demonstrated commitment and vision to advance the importance of addressing conflict issues in conservation.

CI's organizational lessons learned include:

- **Conflict sensitivity, conflict management, and peace- and consensus-building offer powerful tools for reflection and transformation within organizations, not just in programming.**
- **Identifying and nurturing staff champions is key** in promoting uptake and integrating conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding across organizational policies, practices, and programming.
- **Diversity of and among partners can help us learn new ways that conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding can be incorporated into systems.**

CI's operational and programmatic lessons learned include:

- **Understanding and responding to context is essential** for the prioritization, framing and communication, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects/programs -- both in general and in relation to conflict & peace. This must be rooted in strong partnerships, analysis, and continued commitment to learning.
- **Conflict risks and impacts vary based on many factors (or power dynamics), including gender, ethnicity, and race; thoughtful and meaningful engagement of marginalized groups is essential and can also present opportunities for conservation and building peace.**
- **Conflict and peace linkages to conservation and development work are numerous and can be hard to prove, which can pose a challenge in communicating impact. At the same time, the narrative of environmental peacebuilding can be powerful for linking many complex, multidisciplinary concepts and telling human stories.**
- **Conflict sensitivity bolsters risk management, aligns with efforts to strengthen project governance, and can complement other conservation good practices.**
- **The more we learn and articulate about conflict-peace-conservation linkages, the more opportunities for partnerships, fundraising, and impact emerge.** Efforts across economic development, peacebuilding, and governance-strengthening face similar or fundamentally linked challenges to those in the context of conservation.
- **Trust is foundational to being able to address conflict and build peace in conservation.** This refers to trust within organizations, between partners including communities, and more broadly across sectors engaging in particular issues or geographies.

Conservation, Conflict and Peace Linkages

At its core, conservation involves the transformation of relationships between people, land and resources. This can involve new access, use, and ownership arrangements as well as the introduction of new value systems and priorities. Conflict, which is part of life, is implicit in conservation work and is not always obvious or violent. Sometimes, conflict is the manifestation of unequal power dynamics and ineffective or unjust mechanisms for addressing issues; if managed appropriately, conflict has the potential to be transformational.

Conservation is not carried out in a vacuum free of culture and politics. Conflict dynamics, including the legacies of conflict, can impact the long-term outcomes and sustainability of conservation projects. According to the 2013 CI Situational Analysis of Environmental Peacebuilding, Conservation International (CI) works in many conflict-affected contexts that are grappling with, for example, conflicts over access to and control of natural resources, distribution of conservation benefits and impacts, and what might be seen as competing priorities with other powerful actors. CI country offices operate in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, such as Colombia, Indonesia, Liberia, Peru, Solomon Islands, and Timor-Leste.¹ In such settings, CI staff must deal with risks such as the presence of armed groups in protected areas who may pose a threat to CI staff and partners, or the legacy of violence in the form of simmering tensions and post-traumatic stress, raising the stakes of competition or disagreements over natural resources. At the same time conservation projects can (inadvertently) play a role in conflict dynamics and may worsen or trigger conflict, which may adversely affect communities as well as conservation outcomes.

The environment plays a critical role in securing and sustaining health and livelihoods and is inextricable from many cultures and identities, particularly for Indigenous peoples and local communities who have critical relationships and rights to land and natural resources. Either directly or as co-benefits, conservation projects have the potential to provide opportunities for building trust, encourage cooperation, promote or facilitate dialogue, and strengthen livelihoods.² These opportunities can support improved governance and contribute to positive peace, a framing that envisions thriving societies – not just the absence of violence.³

Framing, acknowledging, and examining the linkages between conservation, conflict and peace can present possibilities for new and interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral partnerships, fundraising opportunities, and learning – all integral to CI's commitment to protecting nature for people.

Purpose of this Lessons Learned Report

CI aims to summarize and share its experience in striving towards conflict sensitivity and, when relevant, incorporating environmental peacebuilding elements in its work. The focus of this brief report is on key lessons learned over the past 10+ years of experience at the high-level – both from the perspective of organizational transformation and in relation to operations and programming.

Further, this report is meant to provide a starting point for knowledge exchange for peer organizations as well as organizations from different fields working in similar landscapes or facing shared challenges. Knowledge exchange is essential and timely; evidence for the complex linkages between conflict, peace, natural resources and climate change is growing⁴ while the urgency for action on climate and biodiversity intensifies.⁵

¹ Hammill, A. Matthew, R and Zamudio, A.N. 2013. Situational Analysis of Environmental Peacebuilding at CI. *Unpublished*.

² "Environment of Peace: Security in a New Era of Risk." 2022. *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*. [Online](#).

³ According to IEP, positive peace refers to the "attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies," including thriving economies, ecological performance, and resilience or adaptability to change. ("Positive Peace Report 2022." 2022. Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). [Online](#).)

⁴ E.g., Brown, O., & Nicolucci-Altman, G. The future of environmental peacebuilding: nurturing an ecosystem for peace. 2022. Geneva Peacebuilding Platform, PeaceNexus Foundation, Environmental Peacebuilding Association, Environmental Law Institute, and International Union for Conservation of Nature. [Online](#).

Matthew, R., Brown, O., & Jensen, D. From conflict to peacebuilding: the role of natural resources and the environment. 2009. United Nations Environment Programme. [Online](#).

⁵ E.g., Cho, Renee. How close are we to climate tipping points? 2021. Columbia Climate School. [Online](#).

Building Blocks of CI's Approach to Conflict Sensitivity & Environmental Peacebuilding

Mission connecting nature and people

CI's mission highlights the connection between nature's and people's well-being, which necessitates respect and support for human rights, inclusive and effective participation, equitable sharing of the benefits from conserving and sustainably managing natural resources, and meaningful partnerships with the communities most directly connected to nature. Since its founding, CI has worked with people (including Indigenous peoples and local communities) to achieve conservation goals. CI's recognition of the critical interplay between people and nature was further cemented in its commitment to a Rights-based Approach (RBA)⁶ to its conservation work since 2009 and role in the founding of the Conservation Initiative on Human Rights. The CI Safeguard System⁷ builds upon the RBA policies and strengthens project design and implementation practices to avoid and mitigate risks and create positive impact.

Creating dedicated staff capacity

In 2012, CI Board Member Henry H. Arnhold made a donation that enabled CI to set up the Policy Center for Environment and Peace, since renamed the Center for Communities & Conservation (CCC). As an institution, CI made an explicit commitment to demonstrate and foster nature's role in promoting peace. CI acknowledged the need to examine how conservation work is carried out – or, how strategy is defined and programs are delivered to ensure well-intentioned work doesn't exacerbate problematic power dynamics or contribute to issues such as conflict. Since then, media scrutiny and campaigns for accountability in conservation and development sectors more broadly have emphasized the importance of sensitivity and responsiveness to conflict dynamics and human rights-related risks.

Taking stock and capturing examples and evidence

Following the 2012 investment in addressing connections between conservation and peace, CI commissioned the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) to study the current state of research and policy on environmental peacebuilding (EP) and provide an indication of its likely evolution within the institution. CI also developed a set of case studies showing opportunities for dialogue and sustainable resource management offered by protected areas in conflict-affected contexts.

The Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual was launched in 2017,⁸ accompanied by a series of workshops training staff based in CI's Arlington, VA, office and across field offices. Conflict analysis tools and guidance, case studies, and a training-of-trainers manual on Communication Skills for Peace were also made available to the organization and many of its partners.

Boosting the agenda with targeted external partners

CI was selected for a conflict sensitivity (CS) support grant by the PeaceNexus Foundation in September 2018. The partnership aims to support CI in building on progress to date to integrate conflict and peace issues across

Lenton, T., Rockström, J., Gaffney, O., Rahmstorf, S., Richardson, K., Steffan, W., & Joachim Schnellhuber, H. Climate tipping points – too risky to bet against. 2019. Nature. [Online](#).

⁶ CI's Rights-based Approach (RBA) ensures respect for human rights in all its work. Initially, the RBA focused on four key themes: stakeholder engagement, free, prior & informed consent (FPIC), gender, and research ethics. Subsequent institutional policies and initiatives have built and expanded on the RBA, including CI's Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF), scheduled to take effect in 2023.

⁷ CI's Safeguard System houses CI's Environmental and Social Monitoring Framework (ESMF) policies, procedures and other guidance and is fully operational starting January 2023.

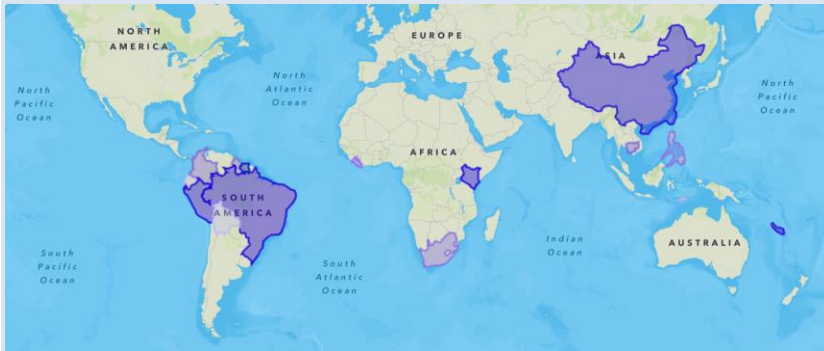
⁸ Ajroud, B., Al-Zyoud, N., Cardona, L., Edmond, J., Pavitt, D. and Woomeer, A. 2017. Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual. Arlington, VA: Conservation International. [Online](#).

the institution – ensuring its conservation work does not inadvertently fuel violence in volatile contexts and realizing CI’s potential to push thinking and practice on environmental peacebuilding at a global scale.⁹

Following the inception workshop and analysis, key staff developed a vision and outcomes for conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding at Conservation International. The long-term vision is for conflict and peace issues to be considered integral to CI’s work, with sufficient attention and resources allocated to discussing, managing, and proactively addressing conflict as part of its mission to protect nature, global biodiversity, and human well-being. The outcomes that CI’s conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding initiatives aim to deliver are as follows:

1. CI leadership and staff are more aware of CS/EP dimensions in conservation work and dedicate resources to discussing, managing, and proactively addressing conflict as part of its mission.
2. Field staff able to design, plan, and implement conflict and peace responses as part of their conservation programs.
3. CI remains active player in arena and secures & allocates resources needed to sustain/grow its conservation work in a way that effectively addresses conflict and, where possible and appropriate, contributes to building social cohesion and peace.

Box A: Geographic Overview of Select Kinds of Peace & Conflict Work at CI



- Countries where pilot projects and/or multiple trainings on conflict sensitivity and peace in conservation have been carried out.
- Countries where trainings and/or tailored technical support on conflict sensitivity and peace have been delivered.
- Countries with environmental peacebuilding case studies and other engagement on conflict sensitivity

Map created by Alexandra Eisinger using *ESRI StoryMaps*. 2022.

Conservation International is a global conservation organization, with offices in 29 countries and an even greater spread of projects and its over 2,000 partners. This map offers an overview of select kinds of peace & conflict work at Conservation International, but it does not encompass the full diversity of efforts at the policy, program, and project scales that promote conflict sensitivity and contributions to social cohesion and peace.

Efforts highlighted in this map include the implementation of conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding trainings for field and other programmatic staff, the development of tools and knowledge products for integrating conflict sensitivity, partnerships for the provision of relevant technical support and guidance on project design and activities and program strategy, and support for peace ambassadors and champions.¹⁰

⁹ PeaceNexus Foundation & Conservation International. 2019. Partnership on Conflict-Sensitive Conservation & Environmental Peacebuilding: Kick-off Workshop Report. *Internal Report*. Arlington, VA: Conservation International.

¹⁰ Countries where pilot projects and/or multiple trainings on conflict sensitivity and peace in conservation have been carried out: CI Brasil, CI China, CI Kenya, CI New Caledonia, CI Peru, CI Suriname.

Countries where trainings and/or tailored technical support on conflict sensitivity and peace have been delivered: CI Cambodia, CI Colombia, CI Guyana, CI Liberia, CI Philippines, CI South Africa.

Countries with environmental peacebuilding case studies and other engagement on conflict sensitivity: CI Bolivia, CI Ecuador, CI Timor-Leste.

Where We Are Now

In November and December 2021, CI and PeaceNexus undertook a stocktake or review exercise to reflect on achievements and identify strategic entry points for future conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding work at CI. The exercise comprised two main components: 1) interviews with CI staff selected based on past collaboration explicitly addressing peace and conflict or due to their leadership role and potential strategic insights, and 2) a reflection workshop.

The stocktake showed that various CI programs or initiatives have been incorporating elements of conflict sensitivity or environmental peacebuilding including prior to the PeaceNexus partnership – whether explicitly or implicitly – and, numerous opportunities for continuing and scaling this work in CI’s institutional practices, field programming, scientific research, and policy exist. While familiarity with the concepts and examples of conflict sensitivity or environmental peacebuilding varies across CI, there is broad recognition of the importance of understanding and responding to linkages between various scales and types of conflict and conservation work. Participants in the review highlighted it is not necessary to master the technical language and concepts of conflict sensitivity to recognize the importance of conflict issues in conservation.

The table below includes selected highlights from programming that has been positively received and opportunities for supporting CI’s efforts to become more conflict-sensitive:

<i>What’s Working</i>	<i>Opportunities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with field team staff (e.g., development of tools and training materials such as the Environmental Peacebuilding Training Manual, small grant opportunities for pilot projects) appreciated by those interviewed. • Continued relationships (formal or not) with teams across the organization lead to more partnership opportunities. • Leadership recognizes CCC’s role in shedding light on (and addressing) social dimensions of conservation and understands how conflict sensitivity & environmental peacebuilding can support CI’s goals for holistic, sustainable conservation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link between conflict sensitivity and managing risk is of interest to leadership (and field division is highly aware of this nexus). • Institutional frameworks (such as safeguards and project monitoring & evaluation) can facilitate the mainstreaming of conflict sensitivity (or can offer entry points for the inclusion of conflict and peace-related programming), rather than approaching conflict sensitivity as an additional “issue” or “box to tick.” • Partnerships across CI (such an ecosystem-based adaptation research project being conducted in partnership with the Moore Center for Science and CI-Kenya) are modeling collaboration and providing opportunities to build evidence through research and experience.

The stocktake interviews and reflection workshop both highlighted several constraints and needs for scaling conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding at CI, including resources (e.g., time, funding), capacity, leadership backing, and appropriate and coherent framing of the complex issues involved.

CCC’s Environmental Peacebuilding Program has framed CI’s efforts around conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding, co-creating the design and implementation of this work, in close collaboration with field-based staff where innovation is paramount for success. This placement has been strategic; conflict dynamics are explicitly relevant to CI’s work in relation to risk mitigation, safety and security, but focusing our engagement solely through these framings should be complemented to avoid missing additional opportunities for learning and contributing ways to fundamentally shift and improve conservation work. It remains crucial to engage with institutional governance processes and teams focused on risk, safety and security, though, because these partnerships can help demonstrate the importance of the framework and scale conflict sensitivity approaches at CI. A key strength of framing conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding around communities is that communities are essential partners in conservation work, but have also historically been systemically marginalized or even harmed by the same work in some cases. There is much-belated momentum for this area of work, which

will require CI staff to better understand power dynamics at various scales as well as to be open to different ways of thinking about and working to address the conflict-environment-people nexus.

In terms of future directions, the stocktake exercise reaffirmed the need for the CCC team and colleagues to deepen strategic engagement across organizational priorities, such as integrating conflict sensitivity thinking into the CI Safeguard System policies and tools in general and in specific projects that require higher levels of support on conflict issues. This foundation of conflict sensitivity will be critical at this important moment as CI advances our institutional commitments to “reimagine conservation” for a more just and equitable future.

Box B: Insights from PeaceNexus Foundation

“The partnership with CI was the first partnership for the PeaceNexus Foundation (PN) with a conservation organization. PN supports its partners in organizational change processes that help them maximize their contributions to peace – whether they are peacebuilding organizations or others with a big footprint in conflict-affected contexts. PN was concerned that the links between environment, conservation, conflict and peace were not being made across sectors, resulting in weaker outcomes for both conservation and peace. Collaborating with CI over the past four years proved to be a transformative experience for PN, as we learned more about the ‘vocabulary’ and debates within the conservation sector; as well as the dilemmas and opportunities for conservation organizations who take their responsibilities seriously in terms of their conflict and peace impacts.



PeaceNexus and CI’s Center for Communities & Conservation hosted a kickoff workshop to, among other objectives, create a shared vision and basis for an action plan on conflict sensitivity & environmental peacebuilding. Photo: Heloise Heyer (2019).

During our collaboration, CI transformed its internal work on this agenda by offering tailored support to field programs and linking this together through broader organizational learning, tool development and resource mobilization processes. Tapping into significant interest from field programs on conflict issues, this change process generated a higher level of energy and awareness on the agenda organizationally and led to conflict-related tools being embedded in important organizational processes. At international advocacy levels PN and CI joined forces to argue for the need to recognize and invest in the links between conflict and conservation, drawing on CI’s strong international standing on the conflict and peace agenda and PN’s positioning as a small, independent Swiss donor.

The partnership with CI has helped PN deepen its own strategy and contacts in the environment and conservation sector, and strongly contributed to our decision to expand our support portfolio to include more partners from this sector from 2022 onwards and to continue advocating for more investment in conflict-sensitive conservation work.”

- Heloise Heyer and Hesta Groenewald, PeaceNexus Foundation

Organizational Lessons Learned

CI’s experience working to integrate awareness and responsiveness to the conflict and peace dimensions of its conservation work has yielded insights about the process of organizational change. CI’s tagline, “Feet in the Mud, head in the Sky” acknowledges the historical change in conservation that happened at the grassroots, community level and builds to more national and international scales based on successful demonstration of outcomes. For the conflict sensitivity work, it was critical to mirror that path, identifying where the biggest

appetite for change has been (at the field level because they were most directly confronted with having to manage conflicts related to their work) and building out into the rest of the organization from there.

Conflict sensitivity, conflict management, and peace- and consensus-building offer powerful tools for reflection and transformation within organizations, not just in programming. Many of these disciplines or frameworks can apply at various scales, including at the interpersonal level or within institutions.

- Sensitivity to power dynamics within organizations and meaningful reflections and corresponding actions can be challenging. Fundamentally, different staff may have different priority issues or values, which can be conflicting. More immediately, different staff are more vulnerable to having their voices marginalized while facing greater security threats or conflict stakes than others.

Box C: CI Brazil conflict sensitivity pilot project

In 2021, CI launched a call for proposals for a small grants program aimed at piloting conflict sensitivity in its field programs. One of the proposals selected was from CI Brazil, which worked with a Brazilian consulting firm to deliver conflict management training for staff across different teams and functions including operations and technical programs. Training topics included stakeholder mapping, nonviolent communication, Theater of the Oppressed, consensus building, and problem trees. Ultimately, the training not only built skills and knowledge in incorporating conflict management into conservation programs, it also provided an “opportunity to really critically look at ourselves as an organization.”¹¹



CI Brasil engaged Vertice as facilitators of an interactive, online workshop on socioenvironmental conflict management. Photo: Screenshots of various online training materials developed by Vertice & Conservação Internacional Brasil. Facilitation graphic by @estudiofacilita / Karmel Arruda (2021).

Participants reported learning skills and gaining “insight into the types of conflict and the levels of conflict that people at CI confront within the organization’s day-to-day.” There was plenty of peer learning and recognition that individuals have diverse factors shaping their experiences and potential contributions to their teams and the issues that CI addresses in its work. Facilitators also observed the creation of interpersonal bonds through the exchanges at a time when CI was adjusting to remote work during the early Covid-19 pandemic.

Finally, participant evaluations noted that “without conflict, there is no growth, development or learning, because it is the ideas within the attempts to resolve conflicts that can lead to solutions.”¹²

Identifying and nurturing staff champions is key in promoting uptake and integrating conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding across organizational policies, practices, and programming.

- Working with key staff who recognize and value the importance and relevance of conflict and peace linkages in conservation work can help maintain momentum as topics, approaches and frameworks are socialized more broadly. Examples of these connections internally include the collaboration with CI Peru, CI Brazil, the Center for Oceans’ Coastal Fisheries team, safety and security experts, the Moore Center for Science and the Global Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and pilot studies in Kenya.
- CI seeks broad awareness and ability to respond to the peace and conflict dimensions of conservation work. Consequently, CI recognizes the importance of continuously engaging new staff who are in

¹¹ Vertice. 2021. Training on socioenvironmental conflict management (CI Brazil) – Summary Report. *Internal Report*.

¹² Ibid

strategic positions to advance this vision, as well as of amplifying staff at all levels of the organization who have experiences or insights from innovative or collaborative efforts that address conflict and peace in conservation.

Diversity of and among partners can help us learn new ways that conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding can be incorporated into systems.

- Within the organization, CI has identified and collaborated with other programs or initiatives that share interests or objectives to mainstream elements of environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity. Internal outreach and engagement processes require mutual effort and resources.
- CI also engages partners across the development, peace and human rights spaces. In addition to the PeaceNexus partnership (described above), CI is a founding member of the Environmental Peacebuilding Association (EnPAx), and actively participates in the Geneva Peace Platform’s Environment, Climate, Conflict & Peace (ECCP) group and Geneva Peace Week, and supports programs engaging university students (such as by hosting interns through American University, Middlebury Institute for International Studies, and Fort Lewis College) and young professionals (through the Young African Leaders Initiative – Mandela Washington Fellowship). These partnerships have facilitated opportunities for CI to learn about and contribute to global conversations about the role of conservation organizations in addressing complex challenges in a rapidly changing world and helped to build a network of individuals and organizations that look to CI for resources and guidance on environmental peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity.

Operational and Programmatic Lessons

Several key lessons on operationalizing conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding in programming at CI are distilled below.

Understanding and responding to context is essential for the prioritization, framing and communication, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of CS and EP efforts.

- Contextual analysis of social and conflict contexts is fundamental to conflict sensitivity, including when applied to conservation. The diversity of sociocultural, political, and other factors across the landscapes and seascapes where CI carries out conservation work means that different contexts present unique conflict-related challenges and peace-related opportunities.
- Relatedly, it is important to consider that the assumptions we make about what constitutes conflict may not be compatible with local perceptions or realities. Explicitly naming events or tensions “conflict” can put people in uncomfortable positions and undermine trust due to connotations of the term. Ultimately, work addressing root causes or impacts of conflict can also be framed as supporting social cohesion, cultural heritage, local governance or economic opportunity if it is more appropriate for the context.

Box D: CI Peru is working to address gender-based violence with support from USAID RISE grant

CI Peru has supported the Alto Mayo Protected Forest management system for more than 10 years, and the team has analyzed the inherent conflict dynamics through careful reflection and community engagement. For over a decade, CI has worked with the Awajún women to protect the nature upon which they rely. In this context, and globally, women play a critical role in conservation and often have distinguishable relationships to certain natural resources – yet, they receive disproportionately little support. In the Alto Mayo, gender-based violence (GBV) affects many communities and presents a challenge to achieving successful outcomes for nature, while having severe impacts on women and girls and social cohesion. Responding to requests from women community members in Shampuyacu partners and in light of its observations, CI Peru successfully sought support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Resilient, Inclusive and Sustainable Environments (RISE) Challenge to work on reducing social tolerance to GBV and building the capacity of key stakeholders to

prevent and respond to instances of GBV with support from additional partners. CI Peru's recognition and ability to respond to the challenge of GBV was built in part on the previous development of a landscape gender strategy and conflict analysis. The work was also facilitated by a strong partnership with an organization with localized and subject matter expertise (in this case, PROMSEX – Centro de promoción y defensa de los derechos sexuales y reproductivos). CI Peru is supporting research and exploring how to adapt and replicate similar programming across other Awajún communities it partners with, improving outcomes for particularly vulnerable community members who are critical to sustainably managing the landscape and its resources.



CI has worked in Shampuyaco, an Awajun community in Rioja, San Martin, since 2013. As part of USAID's RISE Challenge and in partnership with PROMSEX, CI started engaging men and women on the theme of gender-based violence. Photo: © CI Peru/ Marlon del Águila (2019).

Conflict risks and impacts vary based on many factors (or power dynamics), including gender, ethnicity or race, and socioeconomic background; thoughtful and meaningful engagement of marginalized groups is essential and can also present opportunities for conservation and building peace. Marginalized groups typically face disproportionate risks of conflict *and* tend to be disproportionately affected in the context of environmental conflict. These dynamics can occur both within and across communities and groups – and within the conservation sector.

- Conservation cannot be successful or sustainable without local partnerships, including with Indigenous peoples and local community stewards who have the tools, capabilities and rights to make informed decisions in designing and implementing conservation approaches that benefit them. Meanwhile, land and environmental defenders continue facing diverse targeted threats (including lethal attacks) from a variety of powerful actors.¹³
- Conservation practitioners should be alert to these sensitivities and ensure programming doesn't amplify conflict dynamics, which may harm human well-being and undermine conservation goals. Practitioners should also recognize how conservation work can present unique opportunities to address some of these challenges, either directly or by addressing systemic issues.
- Finally, conservation practitioners should seek to understand their own positionality¹⁴ in order to recognize and respond to potential biases, perceptions and differential access to opportunities, that may (unintentionally) contribute to power dynamics.

Box E: Meet Josephine Ekiru, recipient of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) 2021 Women Building Peace Award

Josephine Ekiru is a peacebuilder from Northern Kenya's Turkana community. From a young age, Josephine witnessed the impacts of inter-tribal conflict and observed its complex intersection with environmental factors and

¹³ Global Witness. 2022. "Decade of Defiance: Ten years of reporting land and environmental activism worldwide." [Online](#).

¹⁴ According to the University of Michigan's Center for Social Solutions, "positionality focuses not only on how our individual identities are constructed, but on how these identities shape the way we see the world in relation to those we interact with." See: University of Michigan Center for Social Solutions. "Intersectionality, Positionality, and Privilege | Infographic." *University of Michigan*. Accessed Nov. 30, 2022. [Online](#).

conditions. Through numerous and at times risky experiences, Josephine has sought to engage the diverse communities in the landscape where she is from to change perceptions and bridge divides by facilitating dialogue, recognizing the role of women, and pursuing different approaches to securing livelihoods.



Josephine Ekiru was the recipient of the United States Institute of Peace's 2021 Women Building Peace Award for her work at the intersection of peacebuilding and natural resource governance in Northern Kenya. Photo: Courtesy of Josephine Ekiru.

In 2020, Josephine became one of CI's Indigenous Women's Fellows, during which she examined the underlying drivers of conflict in pastoralist communities in Northern Kenya, documented traditional peacebuilding practices, and further developed her leadership for women and others working in conservation, particularly in the context of the community conservancy model. With support from CI and PeaceNexus, she also worked to expand the representation of women in a Peace Ambassadors program,¹⁵ highlighting how participation can provide unique benefits for peace outcomes and serve as a platform for women to build leadership, communication, and negotiation skills to solidify their roles and visibility within communities. Josephine was selected as the recipient of USIP's 2021 Women Building Peace Award, recognizing her leadership in building peace in a culturally and politically complex context that is simultaneously confronting global climate change impacts.

Conflict and peace linkages to conservation and development work are numerous and can be hard to prove, which can pose a challenge in communicating impact. At the same time, **the narrative of environmental peacebuilding can be powerful for linking many complex, multidisciplinary concepts and telling human stories.**

- Increasingly, global media, advocacy organizations and governments are placing scrutiny on conservation and development organizations for their role in conflicts and human rights. The connections between the environment, climate change and conflict risk factors or flashpoints are similarly garnering attention as evidence grows.
- Conservation organizations are positioned to seize this moment, acknowledging historic and present challenges, and using it as a call to action in transforming natural resource management into something that contributes to positive peace.

Conflict sensitivity bolsters risk management, aligns with efforts to strengthen project governance, and can complement other conservation good practices.

- Conflict sensitivity bolsters risk management: in addition to assessing and addressing external factors and dynamics impacts on an organization and its work, conflict sensitivity involves consideration of an organization and its work's impact on contextual conflict and peace dynamics. This encourages reflection on potential unintentional consequences that could threaten the durability or quality of work and outcomes.¹⁶

¹⁵ NRT's Peace Ambassadors serve act as conservation champions to ensure the goal of ensuring wildlife protection, good governance and coordination with local administration in peace and security matters.

¹⁶ PeaceNexus Foundation & Conservation International. 2019. Partnership on Conflict-Sensitive Conservation & Environmental Peacebuilding: Kick-off Workshop Report. *Internal Report*. Arlington, VA: Conservation International.

- The development of CI's Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) and corresponding safeguard system presents an opportunity to advance practices and raise considerations that will improve conservation outcomes and respond to risks including related to conflict.
- Institutional efforts to address Diversity, Equity & Inclusion organizationally and in programs are also complementary to efforts to address conflict and peace in conservation; both call for the recognition of historical and persistent power dynamics, representation of diverse experiences and skillsets to deal with complex challenges (including in leadership), and establishing meaningful opportunities for building trust and participation, for example.

The more we learn and articulate about conflict-peace-conservation linkages, the more opportunities for partnerships, fundraising, and impact emerge. Efforts across economic development, peacebuilding, and governance-strengthening face similar or fundamentally linked challenges to those in the context of conservation.¹⁷ In addition to the potential for conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding to improve conservation outcomes and sustainability, working on these issues may lead to engagement with non-traditional conservation funders and opportunities for learning and building networks across disciplines and sectors.

Trust is foundational to being able to address conflict and build peace. This refers to trust within organizations, between partners including communities, and more broadly across sectors engaging in particular issues or working in similar geographies.

Future Directions

As conservation organizations work to address the intersection of the environment, conflict and peace, CI proposes a number of future areas for engagement in addition to applying the lessons learned shared in this document:

- Addressing the linkages between conservation, conflict and peace should support and align with discussions about decolonizing (or reimagining) conservation. In addition to offering a framework to acknowledge and address historic dynamics and harms, this may involve, for example, supporting and strengthening local knowledge, innovative solutions, and structures for preventing, managing and resolving socioenvironmental conflict.
- Engage climate and biodiversity finance actors, proposing conflict sensitivity as a strategy to manage risk and improve outcomes and examining the opportunities climate adaptation and mitigation offer in terms of peace dividends.¹⁸
- Work to establish or strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks at various levels: in the context of projects, seek to integrate conflict- and peace-related indicators into frameworks to improve adaptive management; institutionally, consider how different frameworks and approaches can support accountability; and through partnerships, continue building the evidence base linking conflict sensitivity and conservation outcomes.
- Continue engaging in policy discussions to promote the visibility of conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding, especially where conservation organizations play a key learning, supporting or leading role. Given the impacts of conflict and environmental change on Indigenous peoples and local communities, these voices should be highlighted and amplified in these spaces.
- Advance conservation approaches and practice highlighting the crucial links between gender, peace, conflict and conservation. Building on CI's recognized leadership on integrating gender-responsive

¹⁷ See, e.g., "Two Crises and a Deficit." 2021. Environment of Peace. SIPRI. [Online](#).

See also: "Linkages between environment, fragility, and conflict." 2020. Evaluation of GEF Support in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations. Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF. [Online](#).

¹⁸ United Nations Development Programme & Climate Security Mechanism. 2021. "Climate Finance for Sustaining Peace." UNDP:New York. [Online](#).

Wong, Catherine. 2022. "Climate Finance and the Peace Dividend" (Blog). *Climate Promise*. United Nations Development Programme. [Online](#).

strategies across all relevant projects and programs, we will grow our women's leadership program and influence key policy, practice and finance actors in order to ensure gender-equitable benefit sharing in conflict sensitive conservation programs.

This list is not exhaustive of the many areas of innovation and opportunity related to conflict sensitivity and environmental peacebuilding at CI or other conservation organizations.

Conclusion

Over the past 10 years, CI has demonstrated increasing leadership and field lessons on environmental peacebuilding, and the institution has advanced conflict sensitivity in our approaches, linked to rights-based approaches and emerging social and environmental framework. CI has tested innovative new solutions and drawn on highly relevant expertise and experience to improve policy and practice. In the coming years of increasing calls for cross-sectoral international cooperation, CI is a leading voice on the importance of integrating natural resource management into peacebuilding at local, national and international scales.