# DEEP DIVE SERIES

The Reality of Aid PACIFIC

# Exploring the climate-conflict crossroads in Asia-Pacific

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### Introduction

While the crisis of climate change is of global concern, its impacts are disproportionately felt by developing countries, fragile states, and marginalized communities. According to the United Nations, 70% of the countries most vulnerable to climate change are also considered politically and economically fragile.<sup>1</sup> Climate change serves as a 'risk multiplier' for conflict-affected and fragile states, as it worsens root causes of instability and provides additional barriers in addressing long-standing development challenges. The climate crisis has caused food insecurity, loss of livelihoods, displacement of families, and the violation of peoples' rights, especially in fragile states.

State fragility can emerge through extreme events or shocks, and is marked with instability in state-society relations. While there are numerous causes for state fragility, common drivers include recent conflict, longterm civil war, weak state capacity, high agriculture dependence, famine, and high political exclusion. Nowadays, climate hazards, such as floods, droughts, cyclones, and rising sea levels, become a new driver of fragility. A vicious cycle of fragility, human insecurity, and climate vulnerability can be initiated by either social or climatic events.<sup>2</sup>

In this context, development cooperation has a crucial role in addressing conflict, strengthening state capacity and mitigating the impacts of the climate emergency. While there is initiative from the international community to address these interconnected crises, as exhibited in climate finance commitments from COP26 and increase in climate changerelated projects, it remains insufficient to address the multitude of problems at hand. Furthermore, access to available climate funding is within reach for international finance institutions (IFIs), private sector and donor countries, while still largely inaccessible for local development actors, such as CSOs and community-based groups. Development aid is then threatened to be repackaged for climate-related projects, instead of climate financing being novel and additional to Official Development Assistance (ODA) commitments.

This Deep Dive aims to highlight the interconnections of the causes and impacts of conflict, state fragility, and climate change. The policy brief also details how the current aid architecture and narratives surrounding Official Development Assistance and climate financing further impede effective mitigation and adaptation responses in the global South. Furthermore, the Deep Dive highlights the necessity of development actors to pursue both a people-centered approach on the triple nexus of Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) work, as well as climate justice, to genuinely addresses the root causes of conflict and the climate crisis, and the interlinkages between them.

Understanding state fragility and climate change in the development cooperation context

### What is state fragility?

State fragility usually arises when social, economic and political conditions are highly unequal and discriminatory. The prevalence of inequalities can lead to widespread violence, failure of institutions, displacement, and humanitarian crises.<sup>3</sup> In 2020, fragile contexts house 23% of the world's population, a figure expected to increase to 26% or 2.2 billion people by 2030. While poverty and income are associated with fragility, not all fragile contexts are low-income – nearly 63% of the population in fragile contexts lives in middle-income countries.<sup>4</sup> Fragility is rooted in inequalities within and among countries and populations. Economic disparities, under the neoliberal paradigm, hinders the attainment of development outcomes and betterment of peoples' lives. , which then drives conflict and fragility.

Therefore, while conflict serves as a driver of fragility, it is also a symptom of deep-seated inequalities and development gaps. For instance, violence diverts crucial resources needed for development initiatives to expenditures on the police, security, and judicial services. In addition to conflict, climate change is likely to be an accelerator of state fragility. Studies have recognized that social, political, and economic inequalities increase both climate change vulnerability and the probability of conflict.

# *How is state fragility defined by development actors?*

Donor governments, multilateral agencies, and civil society conceptualize, define and measure 'state fragility' in different ways. The framework used by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is different from that of non-government organizations (NGOs) such as Fund for Peace (FFP) and international financial institutions (IFIs) like the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Definitions mainly fall into two dimensions: on the legitimacy of the government and on the capacity of the state. With the ambiguity inherent in the concept of state fragility, conceptualizations are always open to politicization.5

The OECD classification of state fragility, as stated in the States of Fragility Report, is the most influential in the development cooperation context. The report is based on a multidimensional fragility framework, which characterizes fragility as the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, systems or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate economic, environmental, political, security, and societal risks.

Another framework is the Fragile States Index (FSI) developed by the Fund for Peace, which aims to provide the necessary basis for the work in conflictaffected contexts of policymakers and development actors. The FSI reflects a country's ability to maintain stability, by ranking countries using social, economic, political, and military indicators. These indicators include economic development, legitimacy, human rights, basic services, and security.

On the other hand, the World Bank Group releases its own list of countries that fall under its Classification of Fragility and Conflict Situations (FCS) annually. The classification is based on its Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA), a measurement of recipient countries' capacity to use aid effectively. The bank defines FCS as having "high levels of institutional and social fragility," and those "affected by violent conflict."<sup>6</sup> This classification is a crucial aspect of the bank's Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (FCV) Strategy.

Meanwhile, the Asian Development Bank defines fragile and conflictaffected situations (FCAS) as having "political instability, weak governance and institutional capacity, economic and social insecurity, and greater vulnerability to the effects of climate change."<sup>7</sup> The ADB's identification of FCAS is derived from its country performance assessments (CPAs) that are also aligned with the WB's CPIA. The ADB also recognizes the vulnerabilities faced by small island developing states (SIDS) like "geographical remoteness and dispersion, small populations and markets, narrowly based economies, low fiscal revenue, high import and export costs for goods, and increasing exposure to natural hazards and climate change."<sup>8</sup>

The state fragility indicators, developed by the international actors, construct a particular norm for states to comply. This particular norm suggests a framing that the international arena largely consists of stable states, and fragile contexts are an anomaly. Ironically, state fragility is a more common phenomenon than is recognized.

According to the 2015 Fragile States Index, only 30% of states were considered to be stable. The 2019 FSI recognized only 33% of the countries as stable. According to the OECD, 75 countries had been included in the most fragile category in the last decade.<sup>9</sup> In the last 15 years, the number of protracted humanitarian crises, or those lasting more than five years, has more than doubled, as it went up from 13 to 31.<sup>10</sup> In the State of Fragility Report 2020, the OECD identifies 57 fragile states, an increase from the 2012 report with 48 states.<sup>11</sup> Among 178 countries measured for conditions of fragility by the Fragile States Index, only 22 countries improved their scores between 2019 and 2020. Among the most fragile states in 2010, 23

still remained in the top 30 in the 2020 Index.<sup>12</sup>

'Stable' countries show similarity in terms of their history and politics, having no recent military regimes or international invasions in the recent years. The fragile states, on the other hand, have diverse histories and socioeconomic backgrounds. Many of the states which are currently referred to as fragile suffered not only from divisive politics during the Cold War, but also from oppressive government regimes after this period.

Furthermore, donor governments and IFIs remain as purveyors of the neoliberal system, which have largely contributed to state fragility. As loan and aid conditionalities require enacting neoliberal reforms that re-orients state policy and functions that enable an unregulated private sector and privatization of essential services. With this, states that are heavily influenced by and dependent on the private sector become fragile with the event of economic shocks, persisting conflict and worsening climate emergency. All of these states are subjected to different kinds of fragility-economic, political, security, societal, and environmental.

# How are climate change and conflict interrelated?

Many studies<sup>13</sup> have discussed how the impacts of climate change can intensify state fragility. Climate change can magnify many common drivers of fragility such as conflict, marginalization and the erosion of social relations and institutions.<sup>14</sup> Climate-fragility risks can emerge when climate change interacts with other social, economic, and environmental pressures.<sup>15</sup> Violence in connection with climatic extremes is more likely to occur in fragile states where institutions are less effective, infrastructure quality is poor, affected people are marginalized, and basic services such as education and health care are lacking.<sup>16</sup>

# How can climate change influence state fragility?

 Climate change aggravates conflict in fragile states. According to the United Nations (UN), climate change has become a dominant driver of conflict.<sup>17</sup> From 1980 to 2016. among states with large populations, politically excluded groups, and low levels of human development, nearly one third of all conflicts have been driven by climate-related disasters.<sup>18</sup> Changes in the environment, such as prolonged dry seasons, droughts, abnormally high temperatures, and excessive rainfall, are linked to the occurrence of and increased levels of conflict.<sup>19</sup> Global warming can lead to an estimated two-fold increase in conflict risks.<sup>20</sup>

A study based on 60 countries has predicted that a one-degree Celsius increase in global temperature can increase homicide rates by 6% in regions plagued with existing conflict and instability.<sup>21</sup> Conflict risks connected to climate hazards are estimated to be systematically higher in countries with significant ethnic divides<sup>22</sup> and lower levels of democracy.<sup>23</sup> Fragile states with a history of conflict are the most vulnerable due to climate-related stress.<sup>24</sup> Climate change may also aggravate state fragility by prolonging existing conflicts<sup>25</sup> as well as may make societies more vulnerable to renewed violence in the wake of major climatic shocks.<sup>26</sup>

• Climate-induced displacement increases possibilities for tension and risk of conflict or violence.

Exposure to climate hazards can trigger forced displacement, which can prompt social unrest<sup>27</sup> or violent conflicts<sup>28</sup> in host areas within the country. In 2019, over 70% of the internally displaced population was the result of extreme weather events and natural disasters, three times more than displacements caused by conflict and violence in that year.<sup>29</sup> Movements from rural to urban areas are expected to increase either in direct response to climatic impacts or in search of alternative livelihoods, especially in informal settlements.<sup>30</sup> With the existing lack of socio-economic opportunities for the host community, the large influx of migrants, who they may view as competition for limited resources, can increase the risk of riots and conflict.<sup>31</sup> In fragile contexts, tensions between migrant and host communities can be worsened by the erosion of customary mechanisms for dispute resolution and the loss of traditional mediators.<sup>32</sup>



Climate change increases the economic fragility of individuals and developing states. Exposure to climatic hazards may cause reduction in economic activity, affecting people's livelihoods and income. Extreme heat can reduce human productivity, with an average loss of 2% in temperatures above 25°C.<sup>33</sup>
A day with maximum temperatures above 30°C reduces daily labor supply, or the supply of workers and hours, by 14% in climate-exposed industries, such as agriculture, construction and manufacturing.<sup>34</sup>

Changes in temperature and weather can affect economic factors such as investment, consumption, and production. Hotter years are associated with lower economic growth rates in developing countries.<sup>35</sup> With every one-degree Celsius increase in the temperature, industrial output can be reduced by 2%, GDP by 1.3%, and agricultural yield by 2.4%.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, exposure to heat waves or cold waves poses a serious health risk and causes high numbers of illnesses and deaths among older individuals and children.<sup>37</sup>

 Climate change undermines agricultural livelihoods, therefore reducing the capacity of agriculture-dependent states.
 Seasonal variations of different climate variables like temperature, rainfall, humidity, and day-length control agriculture. Drought reduces the total cultivable area available for production. A study has identified that drought during the growing season increases the likelihood of violent events.<sup>38</sup> While patterns differ, studies have found that the growing season or time for cultivation, is generally a time of heightened conflict activity.<sup>39</sup>

In Afghanistan, for instance, farmers are turning to illicit and lucrative opium cultivation, in part because climate change undermines traditional crop cultivation. In India, decreased agricultural income due to drought and heat contributes to increasing crime rates.<sup>40</sup> In some coastal areas in Indonesia, the reduced income opportunities from fishing have been linked to an increase in piracy-related activities.<sup>41</sup> Due to these disruptions, there is an increased risk of internal conflict in agriculture-dependent societies.<sup>42</sup>

• Climate change intensifies state fragility by widening inequalities.

Climate change is expected to increase inequality within countries. If growing inequalities and larger relative deprivation overlap with group identities, they fuel conflict, as frustration between groups rises.<sup>43</sup> This will undermine resilience to climate change and leave more people vulnerable to climate-related risks.

Worsening livelihood conditions due to climate change can not only increase the risk of conflict, but can also heighten gender and intergenerational inequalities.<sup>44</sup> Female-headed households in conflict situations are especially vulnerable to intergenerational poverty.<sup>45</sup> Maternal risks are much higher in fragile contexts than in other developing countries, with 75% of all maternal deaths worldwide occurring in fragile contexts.<sup>46</sup> Climate change is expected to increase the prevalence of child stunting and early childhood malnutrition because of unattainable food prices and increasing poverty levels.<sup>47</sup>

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**Climate change increases the** risk of regional and international fragility. As a global phenomenon, the impacts of climate change are not confined in a single country or community.<sup>48</sup> Climate change exacerbates inequalities between and across countries.<sup>49</sup> As donor countries, for example, try to respond to the threats posed by the climate emergency, their policy responses can increase vulnerability of developing countries to the same risks, which may then disrupt harmonious and diplomatic relations between them. For example, a country's decision to counter global warming by geoengineering, or the pursuit of large-scale technologies, to address the impacts of climate change could foster disagreements with its neighbors. State fragility deteriorates the capacities of formal and informal institutions to respond to domestic threats and issues caused by climate change.50

# What is a climatefragility trap?

If state fragility and climate risks co-exist in any context, it produces a "climate-fragility trap". Similarly, if climate change is primarily responsible for increasing state fragility, it can be termed as "climate-induced fragility". Climate-related damages to institutions, infrastructure or financial systems may require some time before they contribute to climate-induced fragility.

Climate change is expected to produce mass exodus of climate refugees through desertification, extreme weather events, and sea level rise.<sup>51</sup> A massive refugee settlement, which often has poor living conditions, scarcity of resources, and a lack of social services, is often a situation that is vulnerable to potential conflict. More than 67% of all refugees worldwide came from just five conflictaffected fragile contexts of Myanmar, Afghanistan, Somalia, South Sudan and Syria. Climate-induced fragility is expected to put additional burden on development cooperation. Research has identified that each degree Celsius rise in temperature would require 3.1% more humanitarian spending per year.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, it is more practical that donors increase their provision of sufficient, accessible, and flexible humanitarian aid because for every dollar spent on emergency preparedness, two dollars of expenditure is averted.<sup>53</sup>

Without appropriate action, climate change will likely contribute to states' susceptibility to fragility. Climatic events may have strong implications to cause state fragility if appropriate adaptation and mitigation measures are not taken.<sup>54</sup> As climate adaptation and mitigation policies are more broadly implemented, the risks of unintended negative effects in fragile contexts will decrease.<sup>55</sup> Studies have also shown that adaptation to climate change is essential for maintaining peace. Yet, most peacebuilding funding instruments do not specifically support projects with a climate dimension.<sup>56</sup>

### Living in a climate-fragility trap.

People living in low-income countries and in the Asia-Pacific region are highly vulnerable to the climate-fragility trap. A person living in the Asia-Pacific region is five times more likely to be affected by natural disasters than a person living outside the region.<sup>57</sup> People in low-income countries are much more vulnerable to flooding and its negative impacts than those living in high-income countries.<sup>58</sup>

### **Community in a climate-fragility** trap: Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Since 1977, the Rohingya people have been fleeing to Bangladesh after every violent military crackdown and communal violence between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims takes place. In just two months, from August to October 2017, over 800,000 Rohingyas forcibly fled to Cox's Bazar District, one of the most climate-vulnerable areas in Bangladesh. The overcrowded Rohingya refugee camps, mostly located on unstable hilltops at the edge of the hills and in valleys, are currently vulnerable to five climatic hazards of extreme rainfall, windstorm, flash floods, tropical cyclones, and landslides.

According to experts, the majority of the shelters and facilities in the camps are unable to bear the wind pressure of over 50 kilometers per hour. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), landslides triggered by extreme rainfall had affected more than 3,000 Rohingya families in July 2019. From May to December 2018, there were also more than 50,000 Rohingyas affected by climatic hazards.

Rohingyas had low exposure to landslides back home, in the Rakhine State, as most of them lived in lowlying plains. In contrast, Rohingyas are now highly exposed to rainfalltriggered landslides in the camps at the Cox's Bazar District. At the same time, nearly 6,000 hectares of forest land cover were cleared to build makeshift shelters and to supply cooking wood for the Rohingya refugees, which has significantly increased the risk of landslides.

- Country in a climate-fragility trap: • Syria. The Syrian conflict has drawn attention to the question of how climatic conditions can contribute to political unrest and civil war. The conflict in Syria is depicted as one of the first climate wars because of several droughts in the Eastern Mediterranean since 2006. While several studies have argued that climate-induced drought is a key factor in the 2011 Syrian conflict,<sup>59</sup> socio-economic grievances were the actual key factor in the civil war. It can be seen that the same drought affected the neighboring countries of Jordan, Lebanon, and Cyprus, yet widespread violence did not occur there unlike in Syria.<sup>60</sup> In addition, economic liberalization was responsible for inter-state migration in Syria.61
- Region in a climate-fragility trap: Small Island Developing States

**(SIDS)**. There is no one definition of small island developing states, and membership to the group is largely by self- appointment. The SIDS are often classified as subgroups such as the Pacific SIDS and the Caribbean SIDS. The Pacific SIDS are among the most remote states in the world. Most of them have some common characteristics such as small population sizes, dispersed populations, small domestic markets, remoteness from global value chains, and limited state capacity to absorb economic and environmental shocks. These common characteristics also act as drivers to induce the climatefragility trap.

Many of these countries fall into the least developed countries (LDC) category and are located in some of the world's most disaster-prone regions with high exposure to climate change. Any rise in sea level will have significant and profound effects on settlements, living conditions, and island economies of the SIDS. Due to rising sea levels, the islands of Tuvalu and Kiribati are facing threats to their survival.

Moreover, climate-induced challenges brought about by their geographic and economic remoteness lead to high public service delivery costs. With this, SIDS were the most affected by the 2008 global financial crisis, compared to other developing countries.

# Development cooperation to address the climate-fragility trap

### What is the role of Official Development Assistance in addressing the climatefragility trap?

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, Agenda 2030, Sendai Disaster Risk Reduction Framework, and Addis Ababa Action Agenda have all recognized the importance of ODA to support sustainable development in developing countries and fragile contexts. In 2018, the OECD-DAC members channeled USD 60.3 billion or 63% of their ODA to fragile contexts. Bilateral ODA decreased by 3% from 2017, but multilateral ODA increased by 12% in the same period.

However, a lot of issues still surround the patterns of aid disbursement. ODA continues to flow to countries with authoritarian governments due to donors' strategic security and economic interests. For example, in 2010, Canada began shifting its aid priorities from Africa to Latin America, notably to Peru and Colombia, both middleincome countries where Canadian mining companies played an active role. A significant amount of climate finance is released as loans, despite Article 9.4 of the Paris Agreement having stressed the need for public and grant-based resources for adaptation efforts in LDCs and SIDS.

Donor countries and their aid agencies follow a similar approach of aid delivery in fragile contexts. Donors are mainly focused on strengthening capacities of states and institutions, rather than attending to the realities of local communities. In many fragile contexts, donors are primarily interested in demonstrating visible success in addressing immediate humanitarian crises.<sup>62</sup> The appetite for short-run, visible impact in fragile states encourages donors to package aid in relatively shortterm grants or project-based financing through UN agencies, multilateral development banks or international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). Multilateral development banks are often tied into funding patterns that prioritize larger projects implemented by large institutions and contractors based in the global North or by private financial intermediaries, making it more difficult for local actors to access aid

Resources are also lacking for adaptation projects, as most of the aid is used for mitigation purposes. Climate change adaptation funding for fragile contexts makes up only a small share of total adaptation funding allocated by international bodies such as the Adaptation Fund, Climate Investment Fund, Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund.<sup>63</sup> The vast majority of climate finance tends to be channeled to large financial institutions focusing on large-scale projects that do not necessarily build upon or support local efforts.<sup>64</sup> Local actors, including local authorities, grassroots organizations, communities, households, and individuals, who are more directly accountable to the poorest, should be systematically engaged and enabled to receive a significant share of climate finance investments.<sup>65</sup>

# How can the Triple Nexus approach help address the climate-fragility trap?

Proper implementation of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) or triple nexus approach can aid in addressing the climate-fragility trap. The 2019 OECD-DAC Nexus Recommendation provides a comprehensive framework for collaborative and context-specific humanitarian, development and peace actions in fragile and conflict-affected situations.<sup>66</sup>

While the approach is a welcome progress to address situations of conflict, it is not without criticisms. CSOs have noted that the triple nexus is largely a UN and donor-driven agenda, with its implementation approaches excluding local civil society actors.<sup>67</sup> The large intermediary international organizations like UN agencies, IFIs or INGOs usually manage nexus programs. To be effective, triple nexus programs require deliberate and consistent integration of conflict and gender sensitivity, enhancement of local capacities for peacebuilding, and participation of local actors in decisionmaking and implementation.<sup>68</sup>

Development actors have tried to implement triple nexus programs in certain fragile contexts:

The case of Rohingya refugees.

The Rohingya refugees are currently more exposed to climatic hazards in their host community than their place of origin. At the same time, massive refugee settlements can contribute to increasing conflicts and climate risks for host communities. In 2020, the third Joint Response Plan for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis (JRPRHC) has acknowledged its focus on the humanitarian-development nexus, in which humanitarian support is predominantly provided to Rohingya refugees and the development assistance is provided to the affected Bangladeshi population in the host communities. If the peace component is incorporated into the JRPRHC, it could have been considered a triple nexus intervention. It has been stressed long ago that providing both humanitarian and long-term development assistance to both refugee and host communities can reduce tensions and conflicts between them.<sup>69</sup> In this case, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus should be seen as an integral part of the financing landscape of development cooperation.



The case of small island developing states states. Small island developing states are also particularly vulnerable to these impacts and will continue to be at the frontlines of the climate emergency.<sup>70</sup> However, it is difficult to predict the realistic climate change impact on SIDS due to the lack of technical data available.<sup>71</sup> These countries are more reliant on ODA than other developing countries. In fact, SIDS receive ODA that is 4.7 times higher than in other developing countries.

The decision to disburse aid to SIDS largely reflects donors' interests and priorities, rather than these states' actual needs. For these countries. climate finance is primarily for adaptation efforts. In recent years, there is also a stress on provision of climate finance from private sources. However, without new and additional finance for climate-related initiatives, many developing countries will not be able to meet their climate adaptation needs. Furthermore, the climateconflict nexus in the global South could be exploited by donor countries to continue, or even increase, their high rates of spending on military equipment, rather than spending more money on climate adaptation and mitigation.72

• The case of the Group of Seven Plus (g7+). The g7+ has emerged as a new political voice advocating for global change in the international peacebuilding and aid architecture, including more effective support for country-led transitions out of conflict and fragility.

Contrary to the G7 or Group of Seven composed of countries from the global North, the g7+ was established in 2010 as an intergovernmental organization of countries affected by war, conflict and fragility, in order to collectively voice their priorities at a regional and global level. So far, it is the only platform that brings together fragile states, led by senior level political leadership, that share similar experiences of fragility and its associated challenges.

The g7+ developed and operationalized a "Fragile-to-Fragile (F2F) cooperation" concept for conflict-affected and fragile situations, which aims to address the concern that traditional development cooperation is delivering limited results in conflict-affected and fragile environments, and that it is based on unequal power dynamics. In fact, the Fragile States Principles,<sup>73</sup> developed by the OECD-DAC, had not involved countries affected by conflict and fragility in their design and implementation.

### How do current aid patterns and approaches worsen conflict, fragility and the climate emergency?

While there are existing donor approaches to address conflict, the climate emergency and their intersections, these initiatives have to be monitored closely and assessed according to development effectiveness principles. At large, ODA has been used by donor countries and IFIs to further their interests, which puts fragile contexts and marginalized populations further at risk.

**Securitization of ODA.** Allocation of ODA in conflict-affected states and for climate change measures are heavily influenced by donors' strategic security and economic interests. Donor countries prioritize regions and areas where they can exert their influence, foster allies, and counter their opponents.

In line with the Defense-Development-Diplomacy (3D) doctrine, aid agencies have also included defense and diplomatic objectives in their development strategy.<sup>74</sup> This 3D doctrine strengthens the hegemony of member states of the OECD-DAC and the IFIs in their relations with fragile states.<sup>75</sup> Money spent on the military is money not being spent on social and economic programs that confer resilience. The conflict-oriented fragility indexes remain focused on domestic factors and biased toward 'freedom from fear' approach. Furthermore, in this context, aid becomes heavily concentrated in certain fragile contexts called "aid darlings" while producing "aid orphans" or states facing gaps in aid provision.<sup>76</sup>

As major shareholders of IFIs, superpowers can also shape and steer the IFIs' policies and projects toward their own security agenda. Through their partnerships with recipient country governments, IFIs have also financed authoritarian and fascist regimes that have supported militarization of communities

and worsened conflict. The IMF-WB, for instance, has a long history of funding dictatorships, specifically in Indonesia, Philippines, Brazil, and Nicaragua, among others. More recently, in the face of the ongoing military coup in Myanmar, the ADB transferred a total of USD 527.27 million to the military government before announcing the freezing of disbursements to the country last February 2021. Such funding can be used for the continuing conduct of arrests, attacks, disappearances and deaths.<sup>77</sup> As projects in fragile contexts are not based on responding to people's needs and addressing the root causes of conflict, donors contributed to worsening situations of fragility.

**The framing of climate change as a 'threat-multiplier'.** The climate crisis is increasingly being framed as a security issue. The "threat multiplier" framing suggests that climate change will not independently cause conflict, but can accelerate, trigger or exacerbate conflict. Since 2007, the United States government has been promoting global warming as a threat multiplier and starting 2008, by the European Union. In June 2009, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) also emphasized climate change's role as a threat multiplier.

The threat multiplier framing has significant implications for how climate emergency is addressed, at both the national and international levels. The relatively vague and unidirectional threat multiplier framing generally favors support for military forces, as threats are crucial to legitimizing their existence.<sup>78</sup>

Considering climate change as a security risk works in favor of donors, as this reasoning is used to pursue their strategic interests. The securitization narrative of climate change supports the marketization and militarization of nature.<sup>79</sup> This could be used as a rationale among powerful nations to continue, or even increase their military spending, rather than spending more money on climate mitigation. For instance, this discourse could be used as a means to further militarize United States foreign aid or to legitimize the intensification of monitoring and surveillance by the US intelligence community.<sup>80</sup>

Perpetuating the neoliberal

**paradigm.** The 'fragile state' concept is widely used by international organizations and donors to legitimize their strategic goals in foreign policy and aid allocation. With this label, the narrative of instability and fragility is perpetuated in order to justify efforts to quell conflict for international peace and security. For instance after the 9/11 attacks, fragile states have been perceived by donors as the 'greatest security challenge' to international order.

Moreover, the term 'fragile state' promotes a neoliberal political economy narrative that purports a normative image of the existing international legal and political arena. In the 1980s, the IMF-WB pursued the Washington Consensus, which entailed the forwarding of neoliberal economic reforms like fiscal austerity, free trade liberalization, privatization, and market deregulation, to address the impacts of the debt crisis at that time. Mainstream development debate further promotes the idea that the absence of liberal economic policies will cause state fragility. On the contrary, these neoliberal economic policies contributed to the pursuance of neoliberal reforms during the 1980s and 1990s, when bilateral development agencies and IFIs aggressively pushed to limit the state authority in favor of the private sector.<sup>81</sup> These have effectively reduced the influence of the state, with the market and private sector taking over government functions and services.

Development actors have shifted away from risky and intensive on-theground projects, towards scaled-up programs and policy dialogue in a neoliberal context. The current narratives and instruments used by donors and IFIs in determining their priorities and programs are shaped by and further promotes the current neoliberal paradigm. As their strategies highlight, IFIs are the main champions of marketoriented approaches with economic growth as the gateway to sustainability and development. These financial institutions also facilitate the entry of the private sector in these contexts in order to supposedly "invest" in development. Market-based and profit-oriented solutions to address the threats of climate change have also been pursued by donor countries and IFIs, despite its lack of effectiveness in addressing and preventing the climate crisis.

Likewise, mainstream climate research reflects and reproduces an ensemble of global North stereotypes, ideologies, and policy agendas.<sup>82</sup> Much of the published literature about the climate change-conflict link has been focused on finding or disproving a causal relationship, based on statistical correlations between weather and conflict, while largely ignoring the political economy of climate change in fragile areas. Climate change knowledge remains biased toward developed countries, which has implications on the decisions being made by donor countries in responding to the conflict-fragility trap.<sup>83</sup> With this, ODA is instrumentalized to further donor and private sector interests, instead of genuinely addressing the root causes of conflict and mitigating the impacts of climate change.

Championing the climate justice framework and the people-centered nexus approach to address the climate-fragility trap

Aid has already been recognized as a key and strategic resource for addressing state fragility and climate justice. The need for international humanitarian aid has been growing intensely due to the increasing trend of conflict, displacement, and natural disasters all around the world. It is expected that this ever-increasing need for international humanitarian aid is likely to grow due to climate change. With this, it is crucial to examine climate needs in a developmental context, and development needs in a climate context. Climate change is a threat to the development of poorer nations and a cause of humanitarian crises.<sup>84</sup> Likewise, persisting conflict hampers development efforts to mitigate crises, including the climate emergency. Furthermore, in the face of the securitization and exploitation of aid for donor and neoliberal interests. the need to adopt a climate justice

framework and a people-centered triple nexus approach is further highlighted.

Climate justice is about fairness, equity and appropriateness of response to climate change and its impacts.<sup>85</sup> It argues that the poorest countries, which have contributed very little to climate change but suffer the worst impacts, must be duly compensated.<sup>86</sup> As a basic principle of climate justice, developing countries should not be responsible for paying back loans to developed countries for measures to respond to climate change. In fact, developed countries are responsible for 79% of historical carbon emissions, which primarily drives the climate crisis being experienced by the world today.<sup>87</sup>

There are justice dimensions to the three major climate policy areas: mitigation through emission reductions, adaptation or tackling the impacts of climate change, and loss and damage, or dealing with the residual adverse impacts after the adoption of the other two measures.

The lack of distributive justice in addressing environmental issues can also cause conflict.<sup>88</sup> Some climate change adaptation strategies favor politically dominant members of society, increasing inequalities in some urban environments and negatively impacting peace and security.<sup>89</sup> The triple nexus approach, if implemented in a rights-based and people-centered manner, could address the root causes of conflict and fragility in order to uphold peoples' rights and to produce positive development outcomes.

Lessons from donor policies implementing triple nexus programs are clearly applicable to climate-related finance, particularly for adaptation as well as in addressing loss and damage. Responding to climate change in fragile contexts should explicitly integrate the triple nexus approach, particularly where preparation for the impacts of climate change is insufficient. Assessments of humanitarian needs in protracted crises should take into account climate-related vulnerabilities. Donors should collaborate and coordinate with each other before formulating projects to avoid duplication of similar unsuccessful types of projects.

There is a need for a fundamental change in the financing modalities, donor incentives and underlying power dynamics in the aid sector in order to genuinely address climate change and state fragility. Climate change policies and response strategies must always take into consideration the local context and actors. There also needs to be better integration of local climate adaptation measures for improved community resilience as part of a more coordinated approach to fragile situations. Marginalized and vulnerable sectors should also be engaged more critically and centrally at all stages of projects and policies related to climate change and state fragility.

The Fragile-to-Fragile (F2F) Development Cooperation, a hybrid approach that is situated somewhere between South-South cooperation (SSC) and triangular cooperation (TrC), promotes a different narrative of fragility that depicts a broad dissatisfaction with existing models of cooperation, peacebuilding and state-building approaches. While underrated, the F2F approach, if grounded on principles of democratic ownership, solidarity and people's participation, can be a possible approach to the climate-fragility trap.

The standards and indicators that the international donor community or development providers set for mapping fragile contexts perpetuate neoliberal aims and donor interests instead of genuinely addressing the needs of affected communities and fragile states. Fragility cannot be ended by processes that simply replicate these paradigms that have contributed to the multidimensional crises being faced by the world today.





### Recommendations

The world is challenged by the compounded impacts of multidimensional crises - social, economic, geopolitical, ecological, and climatic. The intersection of these crises has the capacity to produce climatefragility traps that can negatively impact the state of development, peace and security of these contexts. While there are existing initiatives by the donor community to address these challenges, these have been further utilized or exploited by donor countries themselves and financial institutions to forward their interests and promote neoliberal aims, which have largely contributed to these crises in the first place. This raises concerns about the capability of the current international system to adequately respond to multidimensional crises and protracted conflicts.

In this light, the Reality of Aid-Asia Pacific forwards the following recommendations:

- At the minimum, donor countries must meet and exceed the 0.7% GNI target of Official Development Assistance (ODA), channel 0.2% of their GNI for aid to LDCs and other countries in chronic conflict and state of fragility, and provide climate finance additional to ODA. The donor community must not utilize situations of fragility and conflict to forward their own economic and security interests.
- Development actors should uphold the climate justice framework, highlighting the historical responsibility of Northern countries to lessen emissions and contribute needed climate finance to the global South. More attention must be given to adaptation measures, especially toward those living in the frontlines of the climate emergency. Sufficient financing and compensation must be channeled towards loss and damage, to aid Southern countries in weathering disasters that were not of their making.
- 3. A people-centered triple nexus approach must also be implemented by development actors in conflictaffected, fragile states. This ensures that peace actions address the root causes of conflicts and lessen militarism and repression. Climaterelated measures and projects must be incorporated in triple nexus programs in order to address and reduce the threat of climate-fragility trap.

4. Humanitarian, development, peace, and climate finance must be accessible to local actors such as national CSOs, community-based organizations and people's organizations. Steps towards the localization of aid should give civil society actors the capacity to design, develop, and implement nexus and climate programs that are rooted in their contexts and that genuinely address their needs.

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