

GENDER AND CLIMATE SECURITY TRAINING MODULE 03



CHARACTER CARDS

**A Gender-Responsive, People-Centered
Training Tool**

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CONTENT

1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 What are the Character Cards?	5
3.0 What makes the Character Cards unique?	6
4.0 Who are the Character Cards designed for?	7
5.0 How were the Character Cards developed?	8
6.0 Learning Objectives	10
7.0 How to use the Character Cards?	10
8.0 Character Cards Game Activities	11-21
◦ Activity 01: Social Identity Markers	
◦ Activity 02: Risk and Resilience Factors	
◦ Activity 03: Risk Continuum Ranking	
◦ Activity 04: Wellbeing and Happiness Indicators	
◦ Activity 05: Needs Assessment and Intervention Mapping	
9.0 The 12 Character Cards	22- 33
10. Invitations to Engage	34
11. Acknowledgements	34

INTRODUCTION

Climate change involves more than rising temperatures, shifting seasons, sea level rise and disasters. It also disrupts the everyday rhythm of life – from people's sense of place and belonging, to their aspirations, choices and overall health and well-being. Displacement, loss of livelihoods, food and water insecurity, as well as conflict and shifting social dynamics are some of the consequences that are less immediately visible.

Climate change is at its core, a human experience – it may be measured and reported in numbers, graphs, facts and figures, but it is essentially a human story. The lived realities of those affected by climate change are important to understanding beyond the bigger picture at global level. It allows us to zoom in on how individual stories unfold in communities and households to create a patchwork of lived experiences. These stories also help ground climate data and orient broader conversations of resilience, development, adaptation and system change towards the people most affected.

People are not affected by climate change equally. There are many layers of intersecting inequalities that mediate impacts ([Rigon 2023](#)). Social identity markers like gender, age, ethnicity, social class, level of income, education and mobility status play important roles, as do structural conditions such as access to resources, social protection, governance, conflict management and public institutions. Where a person lives and the environmental and geographical realities they face are also crucial to shaping their experience of climate change. Low-income households or marginalised social groups like women, ethnic minorities, Indigenous communities and those facing multiple vulnerabilities are typically the worst affected (Rigon 2023). Pathways of vulnerability, resilience, adaptation, and survival are highly individual and context specific. People tend to adopt coping mechanisms and innovative adaptive strategies to deal with the adverse impacts of climate change.



Participants at a training workshop at Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding. **Credit:** Salma Kadry



Character Cards Portraits. **Credit:** Raramai Campbell

Representing a diversity of voices in climate policymaking and action requires that intersecting inequalities, identities and vulnerabilities are included and prioritised (Rigon 2023). Part of the answer lies in human-centred approaches that prioritise genuine experiences at local level. This is not a novel perspective; it forms a pillar of climate justice and equity discussions and is increasingly recognised within global climate agendas. UNFCCC calls for locally led adaptation while the SDGs acknowledge the intersecting importance of overlapping socio-economic, environmental and structural determinants for sustainable communities. Other organisations working in the humanitarian-development-climate nexus such as FAO, WFP, UNDP and UNHCR also promote local, people centred approaches within their policy frameworks. CGIAR's research on climate security, livelihoods, and resilience is part of this effort too. The Character Cards make these agendas tangible and interactive by harnessing storytelling, data and research to make findings more accessible, concrete, and people driven.

“Stories can make us feel connected, open our eyes to new perspectives, stimulate self-awareness or social reflection”
(*Bentz 2020*).

For climate change, stories and narratives are especially powerful; they can make abstract and distant risks more tangible and relatable, create visibility through awareness raising, inspire solutions and make us reflect on the lived experiences of affected communities and notions of climate injustice and intersectionality (Rigon 2023). As a methodology, storytelling can be a tool for advocacy, dialogue and training. In fact, narrative approaches and participatory art have been shown to enhance understanding and drive change more effectively than statistics alone (Bentz 2020; Burke et al. 2018). Stories also have the power to shift attitudes, create empathy, rewrite assumptions and spotlight local voices and lived realities and by extension, narrow the gap between policy and practice (Rigon 2023).

Similarly, visualisations, data-based representations and infographics have been used as visual storytelling techniques to engage audiences on environmental and human rights issues in the past (Hahn and Berkers 2020). Images and art are also used to provoke reactions and inspire responses (León 2022; Roosen, Klöckner and Swim 2017). Environmental or climate art “can portray the invisible, the remote, and reach across borders” (Hahn and Berkers 2020). It captures the complexity of human experiences by translating and humanising climate data into a story more audiences can understand and connect to. This is key to bridging the gap across sectors and creating a common language to drive solutions (Bentz 2020).

WHAT ARE THE CHARACTER CARDS?

The Character Cards merge art, storytelling, and research from Alliance Bioversity and CIAT to build awareness and understanding on how climate risks, vulnerabilities, and resilience intersect and differ across gender, identity, and geography. The game features 12 characters—each portraying a unique lived experience shaped by climate, peace, security, and displacement contexts. Through these stories, participants place characters along a risk continuum, explore their individual risks and resilience factors, and identify solutions to strengthen adaptive capacities. Illustrated by Raramai Campbell, the cards act as an artistic and human-centered training tool designed for gender and climate-security practitioners. The Character Cards blend evidence and creativity to encourage empathy, dialogue, and reflection on climate justice, intersectionality, and resilience. They also invite participants to see beyond data — to the people and communities whose stories represent the human dimensions of climate, peace and security.

Character Cards Portraits. **Credit:** Raramai Campbell



WHAT MAKES THE CHARACTER CARDS UNIQUE?

The Character Cards for Climate Security stand out as a unique and innovative training tool because they merge field research, storytelling, art, and human-centered design into one coherent learning experience.

1. Grounded in Evidence and Field Engagement

The Character Cards are built directly from field-based evidence and firsthand engagement with climate-affected communities. Each character draws from qualitative data, interviews, and participatory research conducted by the Climate Security team across diverse geographies — from the Middle East and North Africa to Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa. These include a series of Community Voices reports on [Kenya](#), [Philippines](#), [Guatemala](#), [Senegal](#), [Zambia](#) and other case studies from Jordan, Honduras, Pakistan, India and Zimbabwe. The Character Cards embody the lived realities of farmers, displaced families, pastoralists, youth, and women navigating daily climate-related social risks. This grounding in real stories ensures the tool reflects not generalized trends, but the actual voices, challenges, and resilience practices of frontline communities.

2. Storytelling and Narrative Depth

At the heart of the tool lies a storytelling approach that humanizes climate data. Each card represents an individualized human story — a composite portrait that captures how gender, age, identity, and geography intersect to shape risk and resilience. The storytelling methodology promotes empathy and deeper understanding, shedding light on nuanced lived experiences and enabling participants to engage with a wide spectrum of perspectives. Users move beyond analysis to empathy, critical thinking, and reflection, making the training experience both analytical and emotionally engaging.

3. Integration of Climate Art and Visual Imagination

The visual dimension of the cards — each character illustrated through original climate art — adds a layer of imagination and creativity. These portraits are fictional but inspired by real people and contexts, designed to visualize how a farmer in Jordan, a fisherwoman in Senegal, or a youth in Kenya might appear in their environment. This creative component helps participants visualize complexity, spark curiosity, and connect with climate realities beyond statistics. By integrating art into learning, the cards also create an entry point for creative thinking, emotional engagement, and visual storytelling — elements often missing in conventional training tools.

4. Centering Human-Focused Learning

Finally, the tool serves as a medium for human-centered learning. By using the character cards, participants develop the capacity to analyse risks, vulnerabilities, and solutions through a people-centered lens. This promotes inclusive dialogue and more context-sensitive design of policies and programs, helping professionals across humanitarian, peace, development and climate sectors prioritize community needs, aspirations, and resilience strategies.

WHO ARE THE CHARACTER CARDS DESIGNED FOR?

The Character Cards are designed as a flexible and participatory training tool that can be applied across diverse learning, policy, and program development settings.

Targeted Fields of Application

The tool is designed for use across a range of interconnected thematic fields, including:

- Climate Security
- Climate Justice
- Gender and Social Inclusion
- Humanitarian Action
- Peacebuilding
- Development

Primary Users

The primary users of this tool are facilitators and trainers engaged in designing and delivering capacity-building sessions, workshops, and trainings on:

- Climate security and resilience,
- Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI),
- Humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development programming.

Facilitators can use the Character Cards as a standalone activity or as part of a broader training module. The modular format allows adaptation for different contexts, audiences, and learning objectives — whether used in short sessions or multi-day learning programs.

Targeted Trainees

The targeted trainees include a broad range of professionals and practitioners working in climate-affected or fragile contexts, such as:

- Policymakers and government officials involved in climate adaptation, social protection, or local development planning.
- Program and project managers from international and local NGOs, UN agencies, and donor-funded initiatives.
- Practitioners and field staff engaged in humanitarian response, peacebuilding, or livelihood programming.
- Early-career researchers and analysts seeking to strengthen their understanding of gender-responsive and people-centered approaches to climate risk and resilience.

HOW WERE THE CHARACTER CARDS DEVELOPED?

The development of the Character Cards was an iterative, collaborative, and evidence-based process that combined research, testing, and creative design. The cards evolved through multiple stages to ensure their credibility, usability, and learning impact.

1. Grounded in Evidence and Field Engagement

The foundation of the tool lies in community-based fieldwork conducted by the Climate Security team and partners across diverse geographies. Findings and reflections were summarised in Community Voice reports and other reports.

2. Tested in Real-World Training Environments

The first testing phase took place during an in-person training workshop in a capacity-building course, titled “Training the Trainers: Building National Capacity on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda” (15-19 June 2025) organized by the Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping, and Peacebuilding. The course brought together program managers and practitioners from national and international NGOs that work on gender equality and women rights in Egypt. This session provided valuable feedback on the tool’s level of engagement, clarity, and applicability in capacity-building settings. Insights from this exercise informed adjustments in the structure, flow, and facilitation guidance.



Participants at a training workshop at Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding. **Credit:** Salma Kadry

3. Iterative Refinement Through Internal Online Pilots

A second phase of testing was conducted internally through an online training session, allowing the team to observe how the tool performs in virtual learning environments. Based on participants’ feedback and facilitator observations, several revisions and amendments were made to improve usability. New activities and prompts were also added to enhance interactivity.

4. Integration of Climate Art

The portraits are inspired by real people and communities but do not depict any individual directly, in order to protect participants' identities. The creative process of painting the portraits began with research into the communities, countries and regions they represented. We were inspired by photojournalism, cultural representations and the histories of people. In this sense, the portraits are a collage of different influences and are not intended to accurately depict one place or person. They are painted using acrylic, in a process of layering to add depth, texture and richness. Much like the stories on the Character Cards themselves, the portraits are intended to be interpreted differently by viewers. In some, details relating to the character's life are also included to give more context. "Creativity, inspiration, and positive stories are powerful means to explore practical solutions for addressing climate change" ([Bentz 2020](#)). This links directly to the overall aims of the Character Cards and the learning objectives facilitators and trainees will walk away with.



Raramai's process of painting one of the portraits. **Credit:** Raramai Campbell

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this character cards game, participants should be able to:

- Explore how **individual risks and vulnerabilities** differ based on gender, geography, socio-economic status, livelihood, and other social identifiers in climate, insecurity, and displacement contexts.
- Explore and discuss individual **notions of resilience and adaptive capacities** by discussing how social roles, norms, and power dynamics shape adaptive capacity and exposure to climate risks.
- Recognise **intersectional vulnerabilities** (gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic aspects, education, mobility, etc.) in climate-impacted communities.
- Reflect on **wellbeing and human flourishing**, moving beyond survival to consider how climate risks and responses influence individuals' overall wellbeing, happiness, and quality of life — and how programs can support not only resilience, but the pursuit of meaningful, dignified, and fulfilling lives.
- Discuss the **impacts of climate, fragility and conflict** on individual's risk and resilience
- Identify and propose **actionable, inclusive, and context-sensitive solutions and policy interventions** to address needs and support the strengthening of resilience capacities

HOW TO USE THE CHARACTER CARDS?

For the **physical version** of the Character Cards, print out pages 22-33. To adapt the card game for a **virtual audience** online, we used Mural to create an interactive board for participants.

- This is a **multi-phased game** that requires analytical thinking and teamwork.
- **The card game can be adapted based on time and training needs:**
 - The card game is **modular** and designed to be **flexible**.
 - Facilitators may choose to **run all five activities** or select only specific activities depending on *time availability, participants' experience level, and training objectives*.
 - Each phase can also be **shortened or simplified**. For example, instead of reflecting on the 12 Character Cards, teams may just select and reflect on a smaller set of cards.
 - What matters most is achieving the **core objective**: helping participants explore differentiated climate risks, vulnerabilities, resilience, and well-being factors experienced by diverse community members.
- This is a lengthy game, so take **small breaks/pauses** between phases.
- To help manage the length and intensity of this multi-phased game, it is recommended that the facilitator uses a visible timer, such as one projected on the screen or placed at the front of the room. This helps keep the group on track.

CHARACTER CARD GAME ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY 01: SOCIAL IDENTITY MARKERS



Learning Objectives

By the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

1. Identify and understand a range of social identity markers (e.g. gender, age, education, ethnicity, marital status, caregiving roles, mobility status, etc.) and recognize their relevance in shaping individuals' experiences of climate risk and resilience.
2. Acknowledge the concept of intersectionality, understanding how multiple identity factors interact to influence a person's exposure to risks, access to resources, and adaptive capacity.
3. Reflect on why social identity analysis matters for climate security, humanitarian, and development programming — and how overlooking identity markers can lead to gaps or inequities in interventions and policies.



Time Required

+/- 2 hours



Instructions for Facilitators

- Divide participants into small groups (ideally 4–6 people per group).
- Distribute a set of Character Cards to each group — one character per participant, ensuring diversity in gender, geography, livelihood, and social background.
- Provide each group with a Social Identity Markers Table, listing indicators such as:

◦ Gender	◦ Religion
◦ Age	◦ Language
◦ Level of education	◦ Occupation / livelihood
◦ Marital status / household composition	◦ Access to social protection or support
◦ Caregiving responsibilities	◦ Mobility status (e.g. seasonal migrant, IDP, refugee)
◦ Ethnicity	◦ Nationality / legal status
- Ask participants to read their assigned character card carefully and fill in the table with as much information as can be inferred or interpreted from the text. Encourage them to make educated guesses where information is implied but not directly stated.
- Once the tables are completed, ask each group to reflect on patterns or gaps they observe — for example, who seems to have greater access to opportunities or protection? Whose identity may make them more vulnerable?
- Bring the groups together for a plenary discussion guided by the discussion questions on the next page.
- Summarize by connecting observations to the concept of intersectionality, explaining that each identity marker influences — and is influenced by — others, shaping the way individuals experience climate impacts and access solutions.

Discussion Points

1. Which social identity markers stood out most across your characters, and how do these shape each individual's risks and opportunities?
 - *Possible insights:* Gender and livelihood may influence exposure to hazards; education may affect access to adaptation opportunities; caregiving responsibilities can limit mobility or access to work.
2. How do these identity markers intersect to amplify or mitigate vulnerability?
 - *Possible insights:* A young, displaced woman with low education faces compounded risks different from an older male farmer with stable land access; intersectionality reveals these overlapping layers.
3. Why is it important to analyze identity markers when designing climate security interventions?
 - *Possible insights:* It helps ensure interventions are inclusive and equitable; avoids one-size-fits-all solutions; enhances understanding of power, access, and agency within communities.

Materials Required

Character Cards, social identity markers table worksheet and pens



Participants identifying Character Cards' identity markers at a training workshop at Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding.

Credit: Salma Kadry

ACTIVITY 02: RISK AND RESILIENCE FACTORS



Learning Objectives

By the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

1. Identify and analyse key risk and resilience factors affecting individuals and communities across contexts.
2. Recognize that risk and resilience are multi-dimensional, shaped by a combination of environmental, social, economic, and institutional factors — not just by exposure to hazards.
3. Understand how gender, identity, and access to resources influence both vulnerability and adaptive capacity, revealing why some individuals are more at risk while others can better cope or recover.
4. Appreciate the diversity of resilience strategies — from coping mechanisms to adaptive behaviours.



Time Required

1- 2 hours



Instructions for Facilitators

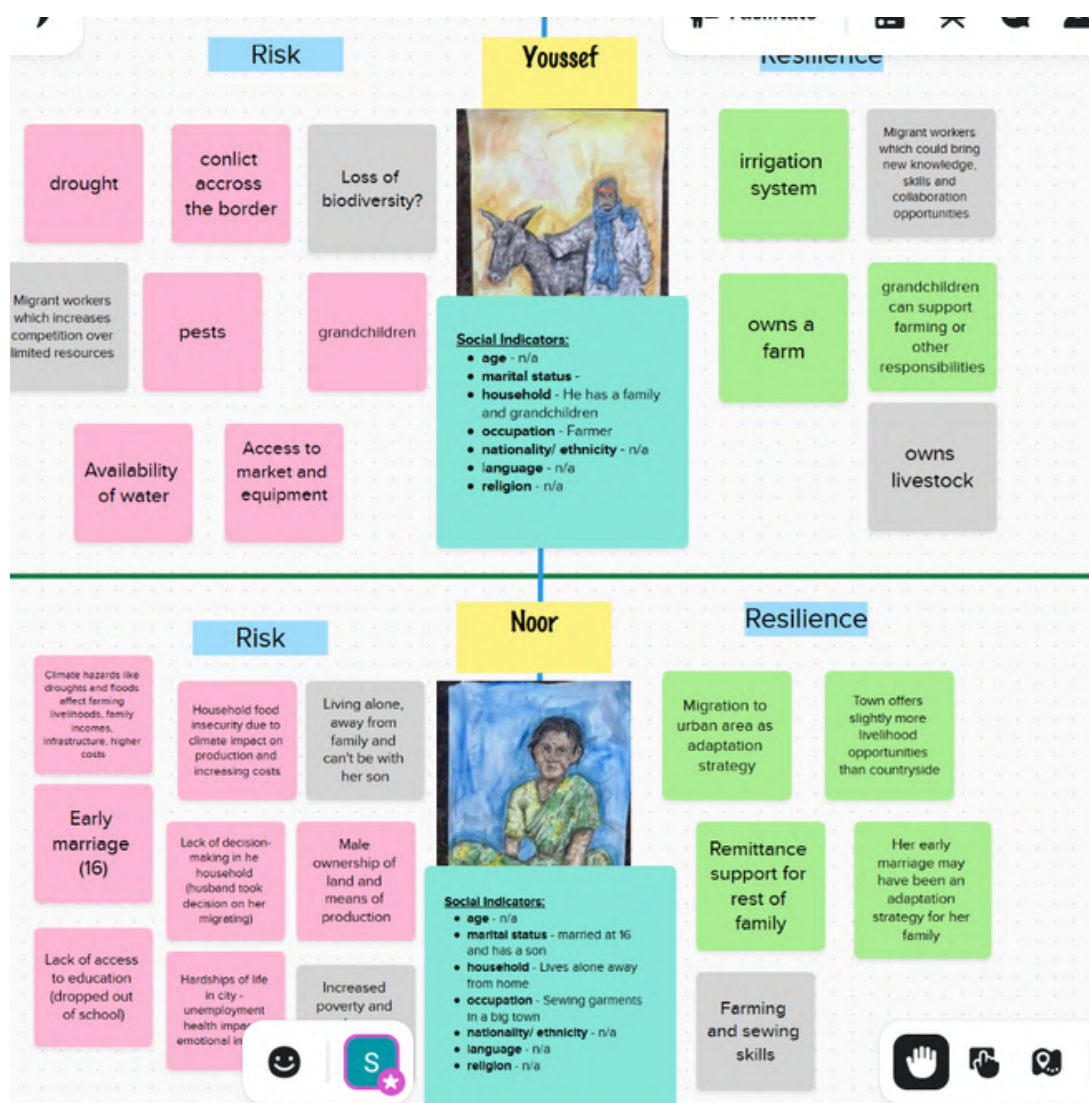
- Divide participants into small groups (4–6 participants per group). Provide each group with a set of Character Cards (ideally one per participant) and a Risk and Resilience Table divided into two columns: Risks/Vulnerabilities and Resilience/Adaptive Capacities.
- Ask each participant to read their assigned character carefully and identify all risk and resilience factors mentioned or implied in the card, filling these into the table.
- Encourage participants to think broadly — risks may include physical, social, economic, and institutional challenges, while resilience may include adaptive practices, skills, networks, or sources of support.
- Once individual work is completed, invite each participant to present their character's analysis to their group. The group should then discuss and compare across characters to identify common patterns, contrasts, and interlinkages.
- Each group should summarize their discussion visually on a flip chart (e.g., a two-column “Risk–Resilience Map”), which can be presented to the plenary if time allows.
- Facilitate a plenary discussion, inviting 1–2 groups to share key insights. Emphasize the interconnections between risks and resilience, and how resilience can coexist with vulnerability — it's not a binary.
- Conclude the session by summarizing that risk and resilience analysis is a tool to understand diversity and intersectionality — helping design more equitable and targeted interventions.

Discussion Points

1. What are the main risks and vulnerabilities your characters face? Which factors — environmental, social, economic, or institutional — appear most influential?
 - *Possible insights:* Climate hazards interact with social roles and mobility; economic insecurity amplifies exposure; gender or legal status may restrict coping capacity.
2. How do individuals and communities build and sustain resilience in these contexts? What adaptive practices or coping mechanisms stand out?
 - *Possible insights:* Use of social networks, migration, livelihood diversification, or local knowledge systems can help mitigate risks; however, not all are equally accessible.

Materials Required

Character Cards, risk and resilience table worksheet, flip charts, markers, sticky notes



Identified risk and resilience factors for 2 Character Cards from online training with Alliance Bioversity CIAT Climate Security Team. **Credit:** Salma Kadry

ACTIVITY 03: RISK CONTINUUM RANKING



Learning Objectives

By the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

1. Compare and contrast levels of vulnerability and resilience across diverse characters and contexts using a structured risk continuum.
2. Analyze how social, economic, environmental, and institutional factors interact to influence individuals' exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity to climate risks.
3. Recognize the subjectivity and complexity of assessing risk — understanding that perceptions of risk can vary depending on context, perspective, and lived experience.
4. Engage in dialogue and collective reasoning to unpack the assumptions behind ranking decisions, strengthening collaborative analysis and systems thinking.



Time Required

1- 2 hours



Instructions for Facilitators

- Divide participants into small groups (ideally 4–6 people per group). Each group should receive a full set of Character Cards (12 characters) representing diverse gender, livelihood, and geographic contexts.
- On a large surface (wall, table, or flip chart), prepare a visible Risk Continuum Scale labelled from “Lowest Risk” to “Highest Risk.” Provide adhesive tape or sticky notes for participants to place their cards along the continuum.
- Ask groups to discuss and collectively decide where to place each character based on their analysis from the previous activity. Encourage dialogue and debate — participants should justify why they perceive certain characters as more or less at risk.
- Remind participants that there are no fixed or “correct” answers. The goal is not to achieve consensus but to understand how different identity, livelihood, and contextual factors interact to shape vulnerability and resilience.
- Once each group finalizes their ranking, invite them to briefly present their continuum to the plenary.
 - If time allows, display all group continuums side by side to compare outcomes.
 - Facilitate a comparative discussion on why different groups placed characters differently — what influenced their perceptions and interpretations.
- Conclude the exercise by summarizing that risk is relational and context-specific — and that understanding these differences is key for inclusive climate and development programming.

Discussion Points

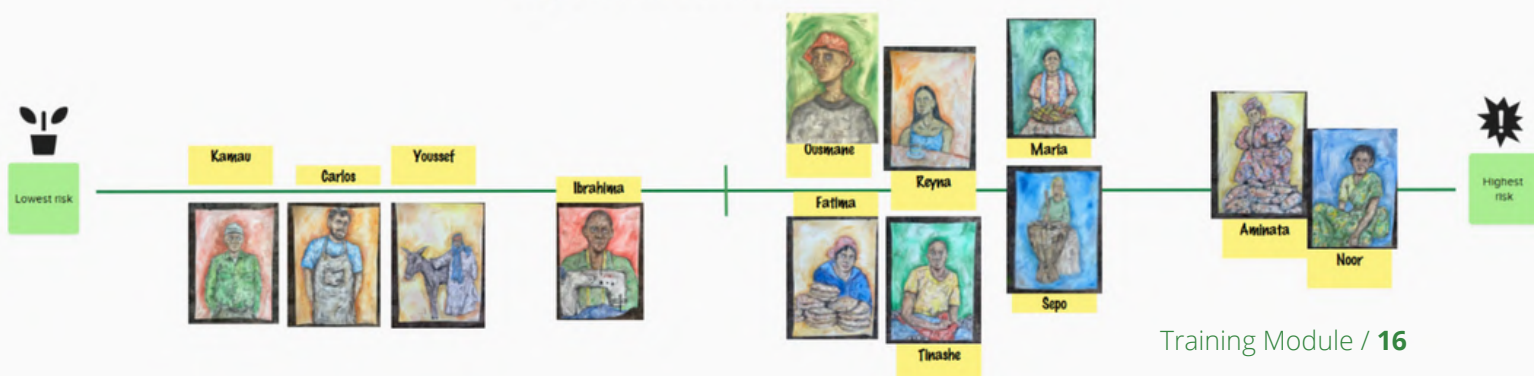
1. What factors did you consider most important when ranking the characters along the risk continuum?
 - *Possible insights:* Gender, livelihood dependency, access to social protection, location, or conflict exposure may all influence perceptions of risk.
2. Were there any characters that sparked disagreement or different interpretations between group members or across groups? Why?
 - *Possible insights:* Different professional lenses (policy vs. community) or cultural assumptions can shape how risk is perceived and prioritized.
3. What does this exercise reveal about how we define risk and resilience in real-world programming or policy contexts?
 - *Possible insights:* Risk is multi-layered and dynamic; resilience is not fixed but built through opportunity, access, and agency; interventions must therefore remain flexible, and people centered.

Materials Required

Character Cards, Flipchart, tape



Risk Continuum Ranking in person at Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding (above) and online with Alliance Bioversity CIAT Climate Security Team (below). **Credit:** Salma Kadry



ACTIVITY 04: WELL-BEING AND HAPPINESS INDICATORS



Learning Objectives

By the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

1. Assess individual and collective wellbeing across multiple dimensions — emotional, physical, social, and economic — using the wellbeing and happiness indicators.
2. Recognize that resilience extends beyond survival, encompassing happiness, dignity, agency, and the overall quality of life.
3. Reflect on how climate risks and social inequalities affect wellbeing, and how programming can aim not only to reduce harm but also to enhance human flourishing and long-term life satisfaction.
4. Connect wellbeing analysis to program and policy design, identifying opportunities to integrate wellbeing-oriented metrics into climate, humanitarian, and development frameworks.



Time Required

1 hour



Instructions for Facilitators

- Divide participants into groups (4–6 participants each). Ensure that each group has a set of Character Cards representing diverse gender, livelihood, and regional backgrounds.
- Distribute a Well-being and Happiness Rating Sheet (see next page). Each sheet includes ten indicators such as Life Satisfaction, Emotional Balance, Sense of Agency, Social Connection, Belonging, Physical Health, Financial Security, and Safety.
- Ask each participant (or each group collectively) to review their assigned character(s) and select one emoji per indicator that best represents their perception of that character's wellbeing status:
 - 😊 Very High (Thriving)
 - 🙂 High
 - 😐 Moderate
 - 😞 Low
 - 😫 Very Low (Distressed, frustrated)
- Encourage participants to justify their choices based on clues in the character narrative — e.g., access to income, family support, or exposure to insecurity.
- Once ratings are completed, participants can:
 - Visualize results (e.g., on a flip chart, radar/spider diagram, or wellbeing wheel).
 - Compare across characters to identify who seems to thrive and who struggles, and why.
- Facilitate a plenary discussion on patterns and insights. Highlight how some characters might show strong emotional or social wellbeing despite material hardship — and vice versa.
- Conclude by linking the exercise to program design implications — e.g., how wellbeing metrics can complement conventional risk and resilience frameworks.

Well-being and Happiness Rating Sheet

Participants choose one emoji per indicator that best reflects each character's status:

- 😄 Laughing face – Very high (thriving, joyful)
- 😊 Smiley face – High (generally happy, positive)
- 😐 Neutral/Okay face – Moderate (mixed feelings, neutral)
- 😞 Sad face – Low (unhappy, discouraged)
- 😡 Irritated/angry face – Very low (distressed, frustrated)

Wellbeing and Happiness Indicators:

1. Life Satisfaction
 - *Definition: Overall, how satisfied the person feels with their life right now.*
 - *Indicator Statement: "This person feels content with their overall life situation."*
2. Emotional Balance
 - *Definition: Ability to experience more positive emotions (joy, hope) than negative (anxiety, sadness).*
 - *Indicator Statement: "This person generally feels positive emotions more often than negative ones."*
3. Physical Health & Energy
 - *Definition: Strength, vitality, overall health, and ability to perform daily tasks.*
 - *Indicator Statement: "This person has good health and enough energy to do what they need or want."*
4. Sense of Agency
 - *Definition: Feeling of control over one's life choices and future.*
 - *Indicator Statement: "This person can make meaningful choices and feels in control of their life."*
5. Social Connection & Support
 - *Definition: Having people to trust and rely on emotionally or practically.*
 - *Indicator Statement: "This person has someone to turn to for help or support."*
6. Belonging & Inclusion
 - *Definition: Feeling accepted and valued within their community or group.*
 - *Indicator Statement: "This person feels they belong and are respected by others around them."*
7. Purpose & Meaning
 - *Definition: Having goals, roles or values that give life direction and meaning.*
 - *Indicator Statement: "This person has a clear reason or motivation that gives meaning to their days."*
8. Financial & Basic Needs Security
 - *Definition: Reliable access to essentials like food, water, shelter, and basic income.*
 - *Indicator Statement: "This person feels their basic needs are consistently met and stable."*
9. Time for Rest or Leisure
 - *Definition: Having sufficient free time for rest, relaxation, or personal activities.*
 - *Indicator Statement: "This person has enough time to rest or do things they enjoy."*
10. Safety & Stability
 - *Definition: Living without fear of violence, harm, or sudden upheaval.*
 - *Indicator Statement: "This person feels safe in their environment and secure in their situation."*

Discussion Points

1. What factors contributed to these differences?
 - *Possible insights:* Safety, belonging, and financial security often decline in fragile settings, while purpose or social support can remain strong despite hardship.
2. How can this kind of wellbeing analysis influence program priorities or intervention design?
 - *Possible insights:* It highlights the importance of supporting dignity, hope, and community connection — not only material needs — in resilience programming.
3. Did any characters show signs of happiness or hope despite vulnerability? What can we learn from these positive deviance cases about building resilience and wellbeing?
 - *Possible insights:* Wellbeing can coexist with risk; strengthening agency, inclusion, and meaning can support both mental health and adaptive capacity.

Materials Required

Character Cards, Well-being and Happiness worksheet (see previous page), and pens

This activity was developed based on UNDP's Human Development Index, WHO's Five Well-Being Index, OECD's Better Life Index, and World Happiness Report 2025.

ACTIVITY 05: NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION MAPPING



Learning Objectives

By the end of this activity, participants should be able to:

1. Identify and categorize the key needs of individuals and communities as portrayed in the character cards — spanning social, economic, environmental, and psychological dimensions.
2. Prioritize and cluster needs into thematic areas (e.g., livelihoods, social protection, education, health, safety, governance, wellbeing) to recognize patterns and entry points for action.
3. Propose inclusive and context-sensitive interventions, linking needs to feasible solutions, services, and policy responses that strengthen both resilience and wellbeing.
4. Apply a systems-thinking approach, understanding how different needs and interventions interact — and how addressing one domain (e.g., income security) may influence others (e.g., safety, empowerment).
5. Bridge analysis to action, learning how to move from human stories and evidence to practical design of programs and policies that are responsive, equitable, and locally grounded.



Time Required

1-2 hours



Instructions for Facilitators

• Step 1: Needs Assessment

- Ask participants to return to the Character Cards and draw on their earlier analysis (identity, risks, resilience, and wellbeing).
- Each group should list all observable or inferred needs for their set of characters.
- Encourage them to think broadly — not only material needs (e.g., income, shelter) but also intangible ones (e.g., belonging, agency, stability, voice).
- Document the list on flip charts or worksheets under the heading “Needs Assessment.”

• Step 2: Needs Clustering and Prioritization

- Once the list is complete, invite groups to cluster the needs into broader categories such as:
 - Economic & Livelihood Support
 - Food & Water Security
 - Health & Wellbeing
 - Social Protection & Inclusion
 - Safety & Stability
 - Education & Skills
 - Governance & Participation
- Within each cluster, ask participants to prioritize the most urgent or foundational needs, using stickers, colored dots, or ranking numbers (e.g., 1 = high priority).



Instructions for Facilitators (continued)

• Step 3: Intervention Mapping

- For each priority cluster, participants brainstorm possible interventions or solutions, asking:
- What can be done? (programs, services, policies)
- Who can do it? (communities, government, NGOs, donors)
- At what level? (individual, household, community, institutional)
- Encourage practical but creative thinking — e.g., combining short-term relief (cash support, access to credit) with longer-term resilience strategies (vocational training, early warning systems, community safety nets).
- Groups summarize their proposed interventions on a flip chart, showing the links between needs → priorities → solutions.

• Plenary Reflection

- Each group presents their mapping briefly.
- Facilitate a comparative discussion highlighting common needs across contexts, unique or localized challenges, and promising cross-cutting solutions.
- Conclude by emphasizing how this process mirrors real-world program design and policy planning, where inclusive analysis must guide equitable action.



Discussion Points

1. What patterns emerged in the needs you identified? Which needs appeared most urgent or recurrent across different characters or contexts?
 - *Possible insights:* Livelihood insecurity, access to healthcare, safety, or social inclusion often cut across contexts; wellbeing and belonging are often overlooked but essential.
2. How did your group decide which needs to prioritize? What criteria or values guided your ranking?
 - *Possible insights:* Some may focus on immediacy (survival needs), others on sustainability (long-term resilience); trade-offs reveal institutional and ethical priorities.
3. How can these identified needs translate into real interventions or policy actions in your own field of work?
 - *Possible insights:* Encourages linking analysis to practice — showing how understanding lived realities helps design inclusive, effective, and context-relevant programs.



Materials Required

Character Cards, Flipchart, sticky notes, markers

IBRAHIMA

The weather and conflict around Mayo, in northern Saare, make life uncertain for me and my family. My name is Ibrahima and I am a 47-year-old tailor. Both my small shop and my children's future are at risk.

Some years, drought dries up the wells, and my wives must walk long distances for water. Other years, floods destroy homes, block the roads, and soak the fabrics I depend on for work. At the same time, violence between new settlers and old residents in nearby provinces forces many families to move into Mayo, creating tensions over land and resources.

Still, I work hard for my two wives and five children. I never had the chance to go to school, but I want my children to finish their studies. I also hope to pass on tailoring to them, so they always have a skill to rely on. I registered them in football tournaments too, so they can grow up strong and stay close to their neighbors.

I never know what the next year will bring, but I pray for peace — and a better life for my children.



OUSMANE

My name is Ousmane and I just turned 22, but it feels like I've been grown for a long time. Most days I'm behind the wheel of my combi, weaving through downtown Binkéné. I know these streets — I grew up in Kamfyemfye, the biggest settlement in the city.

Since my parents passed away, it's been me holding things together for my grandparents and my two younger siblings. Driving taxis keeps us going, but it's not easy. Some days the taps run dry and people fight in line for water. Other days the rains come hard, and the floods take over our streets. Malaria, cholera — they spread fast, and medicine costs more than I can afford.

I think about my friends a lot. Most of them left Jamana, chasing opportunities across the border. Sometimes I wish I'd gone with them. But then I remember what my girlfriend says — the journey is dangerous. And I know my family needs me here. So, I keep driving, saving, and dreaming. I want to be an engineer. That dream still keeps me moving.



AMINATA

Feeding my children has never been easy, but I do it one day at a time. I am called Aminata and I am 56, I am a fish vendor on Ranomasina. I came here after fleeing the war in Sisintany. I lost my husband on that journey, and since then, I've raised my four children on my own.

Life here is safer, but every day brings struggles. The fishermen I buy from return with smaller catches. They say the waves are stronger, the nets must go deeper, and the big foreign ships take most of the fish. Floods eat away the fields, rice prices climb, and families cannot keep up.

Without official papers, I fear being discovered and sent back — separated from my children. But I keep going... I find strength in our small church and from the others I've met who have come from Sisintany. I can hear my mother tongue again and I feel like I am home again.

What keeps me steady is my children. They are my reason to rise each morning, to sell what little I can, and to hope that tomorrow will bring more than today.



KAMAU

Conflict over land and water is getting worse in Makazi. I know this because I face it every day as a forest manager. I'm Kamau and I am 63. I patrol with my team to stop loggers, poachers, and disputes among pastoralist groups.

When rains fail, people become desperate. A quarrel over pasture can quickly turn into a violent clash — especially now that firearms are so easy to get. In the past, we could read the signs of rain from the birds or the trees. Today, drought is the only thing we can count on. Families live in constant uncertainty, wondering how to put food on the table.

I used to be a pastoralist too. But like many, I had to change my life. Some went into eco-tourism, some sell charcoal, some make beads, others try poultry or carpentry. All of us are searching for ways to survive, even without much support from the government... For me, protecting the forest is how I protect my family's future. My son deserves a life where conflict doesn't decide who eats and who starves. That is why I do my best to protect these forests, day after day.



R. Campbell 2025.

SEPO

Farming in Amaka is no longer what it was. Droughts and floods come in the same year, and the land cannot feed us like it did before. My mother named me Sepo when I was born but I have grey-hair now. I am still farming the 10 hectares my husband once received but with fifteen mouths to feed, it is never enough.

Land disputes have grown worse. Chiefs control the plots, bribes are common, and the line for land never ends. Neighbours fight, even over the soil of their ancestors. Envy causes tension — sometimes even fears of witchcraft cause us trouble.

This region was once called the breadbasket of Amaka. Now we depend on imported grain when our harvests fail. Food costs rise, and families struggle. I tell my children to seek work in towns and cities. They send money when they can, though jealousy here in the village follows.

Still, I plant. I pray at church each week, and I hope the land will give again as it once did. For all the hardship, it is still my home.



TINASHE

The cyclone of 2021 changed my life forever. I am Tinashe, from the Urebo mountains of eastern Pamudzi. A landslide crushed my leg as I fled with my family. Since then, I cannot farm as I once did - even moving around is difficult.

Now I break granite stones into gravel. It is painful, difficult work, but it is the only way I can provide. My wife and three children keep working the fields, but without me, the burden is too much. They come home tired, wake before dawn, and live without rest.

The cyclone left more than broken homes. It tore apart roads, cut power, and left us without water for months. Many still live in tents years later. Aid came, but never enough. The biggest loss was trust — we had no warning. Few of us understood the radio alerts in Udzi, and many only fled when the storm was already upon us.

Even so, kindness endures. Neighbours share food, shelter, even laughter. That is what keeps me going — the knowledge that even in hardship, people still find a way to care for one another.



MARIA

The Chúnul people live between the mountains and rivers in Cordavía. I am Maria, a Community Custodian and elder here; I see how storms, landslides, and corporations threaten our way of life.

Hurricanes and earthquakes take homes and lives. Young people leave, seeking work far from here. The forest that once fed and sheltered us is fenced by mining companies, who claim it as theirs. They promise jobs, but too often betray us by never fulfilling their part of the bargain and refusing to pay us for our work.

Without the forest, our ceremonies, our medicine, our traditional food are diminished. Our elders taught us: “The forest is not outside of you, it is inside of you.” But it feels like men with machines pull up the roots of our ancestors. My heart is broken.

For decades, corruption and violence have weighed heavy on Cordavía — coups, wars, organized crime. Here in the village, we live with uncertainty, caught between holding on to the old ways and searching for new survival... Still, I keep the songs, the stories, the language. Because as long as we remember, we endure and our roots remain deep.



CARLOS

My name is Carlos and I am a shopkeeper in El Recio, Florecente. Storms, violence, and neglect define life here and I became tired of waiting for help that never came. So I do what I can for others here through my church.

Tropical storms Ana and Fria triggered landslides that destroyed our roads. Now food, medicine, and supplies are scarce and too expensive. Even if you reach the clinic, medicine is rarely there — and if you don't have money, you go without and try to remember the old traditional healing ways - but many have forgotten.

Meanwhile, robberies and trafficking rise. Women say they feel unsafe in our own streets. Its hard this close to the border because there's more crime. We have demanded a police station and demanded action but the government ignores us.

So, we do the work ourselves. Parents, church groups, neighbors — we repair the roads, we share food, we protect each other. We should not have to. But until someone listens, we will not wait in silence.



R. Campbell 2025.

REYNA

I want to help create a better future for farmers here in Bahay. My name is Reyna, I'm 25 and studying agricultural management in Dilaw, Bahay's capital. I live with my parents and younger siblings, and I dream of becoming an extension officer to help families like mine adapt and grow.

Our history shapes us. In the 1970s, conflict across Bahay forced many women to take charge of farms and households when men were persecuted by militant groups. That legacy remains — my mother leads the selling of our crops, working with a strong network of women across municipalities. My father supports her with transport, but it is her leadership that carries us.

The challenges today come from climate. Heat waves make both home and outdoors unsafe for children. In just five years, three typhoons have forced us into shelters, leaving us to start over again and again. Rice harvests that once gave 60–70 sacks per hectare now barely reach 10–15.

Still, I keep studying. Because I want to do more than survive the storms — I want to help farming families like mine thrive beyond them.



NOOR

My name is Noor, I'm 24, and I come from Darya, a farming village in south Khandan but our farm is suffering and survival has forced me to leave. I married at 16 and left school to work on the family farm with my husband and in-laws.

But farming has become too hard. First the drought dries our fields, then the floods wash away our cotton and rice. Fertilizer costs too much, and the soil is weaker than before. We no longer grow enough to eat, and there is nothing left to sell.

My husband owns the land and the machines, so he stays. He told me I must go to Shehr, 150 km away, to earn money. I now try to sew garments in the city, but work is hard to find. Life here is crowded, hot, and polluted. Food and water are more expensive, and I often cough from the smoke.

I miss my home, the trees, the river, and most of all my little boy. I am afraid of missing his childhood, but I don't see another choice. I must try to support them, even from far away.



Rampell 2015

YOUSSEF

The Salam River Valley is drying, and with it, our way of life. I am Youssef, and my family has farmed here for generations. I am an old man now and much has changed since I was young.

The wetlands that once sang with birds and fish are now silent. My citrus, bananas, and olives depend on irrigation, but I am only allowed to pump three hours a day. Strange pests spread through the orchards, and the cost of spraying is high. Many neighbors have already sold their land. Each evening, my wife prays that we will not lose ours.

Conflict surrounds us. Refugees from Hadi come to work in the valley, fleeing war. They learn our language; I learn theirs. War planes cross overhead, back and forth, as they always have. Here, we no longer fear them, but it makes our hearts heavy to hear them coming.

What troubles me most are the young ones. My grandchildren have little work, little joy, and too many fall to drugs. The land once gave us everything. Now, I fear it gives them nothing. I don't blame them for leaving this place.



Rampbell 2015.

FATIMA

My name is Fatima, I'm 20, and I've lived in Akhdar Refugee Camp in Arrd since I was five. My parents fled Hafa during the war. For them, the camp was safety. For me, it became my whole world – I hope not forever.

Here, refugees depend on the government and aid agencies. We are given ration cards and food, but it is never enough to live on. We are not allowed to work outside the camp, and when the government cuts water in the dry season, families suffer. Once, the cuts sparked riots, and I saw neighbours collapse from heat stroke.

I try to adapt. My mother farms a small plot, and I run a small bakery on the main street, using flour from aid distributions. But life in the camp often feels like waiting — long days with little chance to move forward. Many young people leave to work in the salt mines, but I don't risk it. If caught, I could lose my papers, and with them, any hope for resettlement for me and my parents.

Still, I find light to fill the days of waiting. I sing with a girls' choir in the camp. In those songs, in the language I was born with and I feel joy, even freedom. I hold on to that till the waiting will finally end.



INVITATIONS TO ENGAGE

We warmly invite practitioners, trainers, and organizations to use, adapt, and share their experiences applying the Character Cards in different training and learning environments. We are especially eager to hear how the tool has been used, what lessons emerged, and how it might be further improved or tailored to specific regional, institutional, or thematic contexts. Your reflections and feedback are essential to ensuring that this tool continues to evolve and respond to the needs of the broader gender and climate security community.

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Please share your stories, insights, or suggestions directly with us at:
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For the **physical version** of all the Character Cards, print out pages 22-33 of this Training Module.

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