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Climate, Mobility, Peace and Security Interplay

Assessing the integration of peace and security into climate change policies in Southern Africa

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KEY MESSAGES

- **While Southern Africa remains one of the more peaceful regions in Africa, increasing local tensions and conflicts have been reported, largely due to socioeconomic instabilities, as well as resource availability and access owing to climate change impacts.** The ways environmental and climatic conditions manifest and interact with conflict levels vary across countries in the region. Climate extremes and compound hazards feed into environmental and socio-economic crises, making local adaptation particularly challenging, particularly for individuals in the most vulnerable situations. Livelihoods, access to resources, economic growth and social stability are some of the multifaceted implications.

- **Few national climate change-related policies in Southern African countries are more explicit in their description of the link between climate, peace and security, while other national strategies only allude to it.** There is a general recognition of the social aspects of climate adaptation and mitigation as well as the links between poverty and climate change. Some National Adaptations Plans (NAPs) touch on resource scarcity and tensions over unequal distribution but mentions of peace and security components are more infrequent. Similarly, little mention is made of the climate implications and vulnerabilities faced by displaced populations.

- **There is room to clearly and intentionally embed climate, peace, and security into national and regional climate change policies in Southern Africa.** Some overall key contributions and opportunities include integrating conflict sensitivity into climate adaptation and mitigation work, developing climate evidence base and monitoring capacity, as well as improving coherence across policy levels for management and implementation of local adaptation plans. It is also crucial to ensure climate change adaptation interventions are socially inclusive and responsive to diverse social groups, including refugees.

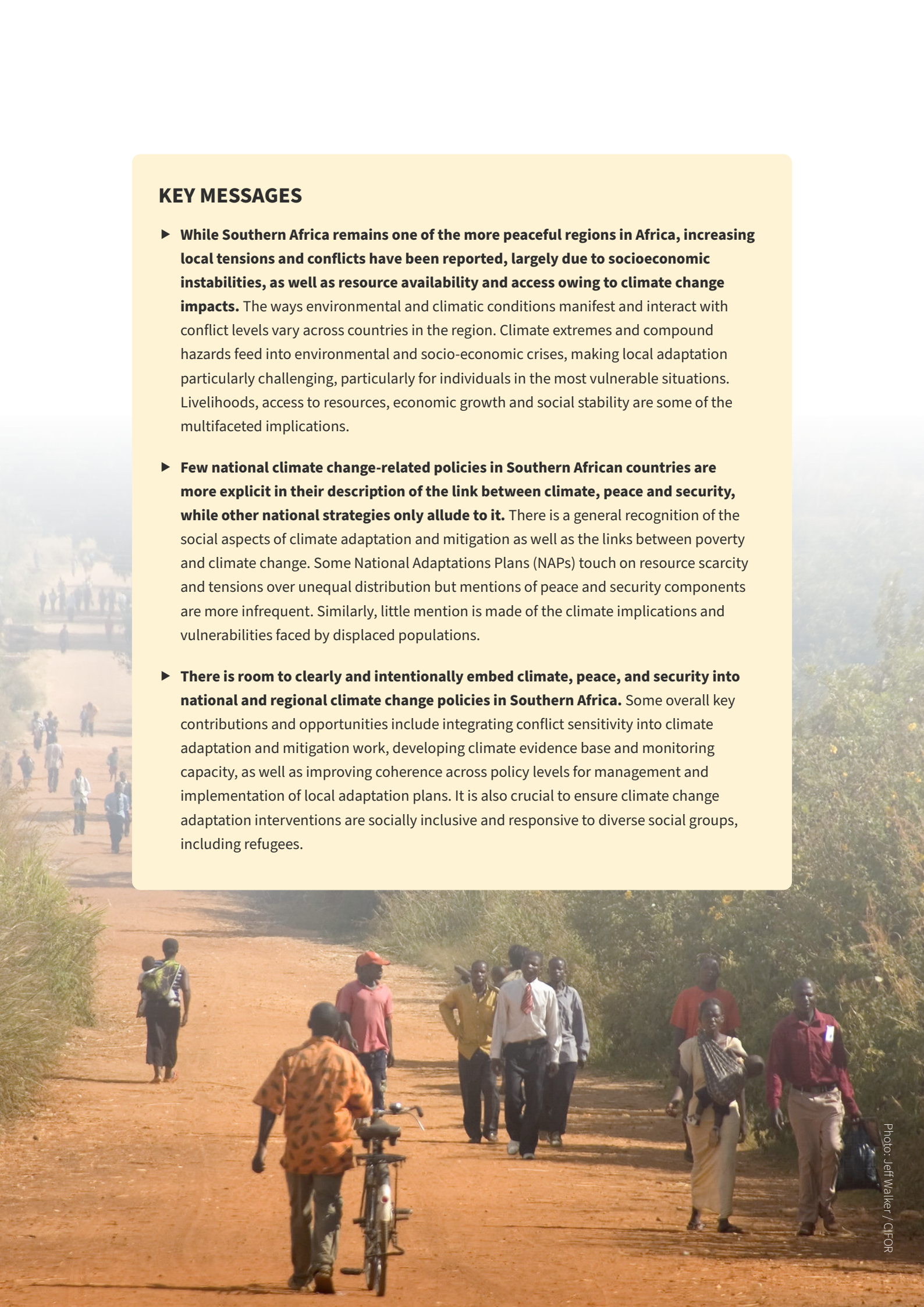


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Introduction

Southern Africa is among the world's most climate-vulnerable regions (IPCC 2022). The region is experiencing changes in temperature and rainfall patterns, and an increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events which pose significant risks to food and water security, livelihoods, and natural ecosystems. These climate-related risks intersect with existing socio-economic challenges, such as poverty, inequality, and weak governance, and have the potential to amplify vulnerabilities and exacerbate social tensions. Thus, the exposure to climate change and the vulnerability of affected communities threaten socioeconomic development and pose risks towards peace and conflict dynamics (Liebig et al. 2022). Compared to other African regions such as the Sahel or the Horn of Africa, compounding risks of climate and conflict in Southern Africa are not as pronounced and high on the agenda of governments and international organisations. Notwithstanding, the interrelated risks that climate impacts impose on food, land and water systems and the livelihoods of the people directly depending on them have been found to undermine social cohesion and increase human security risks across Southern Africa (Rüttinger et al. 2023). In response, there is a need for governments in the region to acknowledge the specific risks that climate change and variability pose to their social systems and vulnerable populations and find suitable mechanisms to address the compounding risks of climate, peace and security.

Climate, peace, and security risks are crosscutting challenges for most countries, connecting various dynamics from climate, environment, resource management, rural development, migration, displacement, peace and conflict. Addressing these, therefore, needs a multidimensional approach, connecting various stakeholders along the Humanitarian, Development, Peace (HDP) nexus and providing an enabling environment for co-benefits of climate mitigation and adaptation, and peace to emerge. Integrating the HDP nexus into climate responses is essential to mitigate further harm (Läderach et al. 2021).

This paper aims to assess the extent to which Climate, Peace and Security are provisioned for within existing climate-responsive policies in selected Southern African countries. To achieve this, the paper will specifically:

1. offer an overview of climate, peace and security threats within the region and establish the need for improved conflict-sensitive climate responsiveness in Southern Africa;

2. assess the extent to which peace, conflict and security have been embedded into climate change-responsive policies in Southern Africa; and

3. identify gaps and practical entry points for embedding conflict-sensitive and peace-responsive solutions into the climate change policy landscape in Southern Africa.

Climate, peace and security in Southern Africa

The Southern Africa region covers approximately 7 million square kilometres, with average annual precipitation ranging from as little as 100 mm to 2000 mm per annum (Nyagwambo et al., 2008). The CGIAR Focus Climate Security developed three human-specific climate indices using historical and future climate data. They are presented in Figure 1a below and represent heat, drought and flood under baseline (1980-2010) and future conditions (2020-2040).

The co-occurrence of heat, drought and flood and, therefore, the compounding nature of the climate extremes is currently most prevalent in Angola, Zambia, Mozambique and Madagascar (Fig. 1b). By 2040, compound climate hazards are projected to increase substantially in all SADC countries (Fig. 1b).

While extreme weather events destroy natural resources and crops, increasing temperatures and decreasing rainfall patterns deplete regional agricultural outputs and affect the livestock sector in multifaceted ways (IPCC, 2022). In Southern Africa, about 70% of the agricultural sector is rainfed and only 9% of cultivated land is irrigated (Nhemachena et al., 2020). As the agricultural sector makes up 17% of the regional GDP these climatic implications will have significant consequences for regional economic stability and growth (Nhemachena et al., 2018 and 2020).

While Southern Africa remains one of the more peaceful regions in Africa, increasing local tensions and conflicts have been reported in recent years, largely informed by changes in resource availability and access (Rüttinger et al., 2023). Violent conflict hotspots exist in Mozambique, where insurgents have been operating since 2017 (ACLED, 2023; Sturridge et al., 2022), as well as in the Democratic Republic of Congo (ACLED, 2024). Although instances of organised armed conflict are not common in Southern African countries, it is evident that social tensions have risen because of changes to the environmental and natural resource landscape. For example, in Zambia, the lack of water is pushing pastoralist communities to seek water surrounding sedentary communities, leading to conflicts over scarce water resources (Funder et al., 2012; Marcantonio, 2018). Similarly, in Zimbabwe, conflicts occur over the use of water sources, particularly surrounding boundary streams (Mutopo & Chiweshe, 2014; Shoko, 2022). Natural resource depletion exacerbates socio-economic conditions, a significant concern in a region already grappling with stark income inequality. Notably, six of the ten most unequal countries globally are in Southern Africa (The World Bank, 2023).

Southern Africa is considered one of the world's main forced mobility regions; reportedly hosting 9.9 million forcibly displaced people and returnees, including 797,500 refugees, 187,600 asylum-seekers and 33,700 other persons of concern (UNHCR, 2024a). Of the 9.9 million people, 6.9 million were displaced by conflict, with an additional 1 million internally displaced people (IDPs) induced by climate change and disaster, making insecurity, climate change and disasters some of the most significant drivers of displacement regionally (Carciotto & Ferraro, 2020; UNHCR 2024a). Table 1 provides an overview of some of the indices that help to shape understanding of climate and conflict contexts across the region.

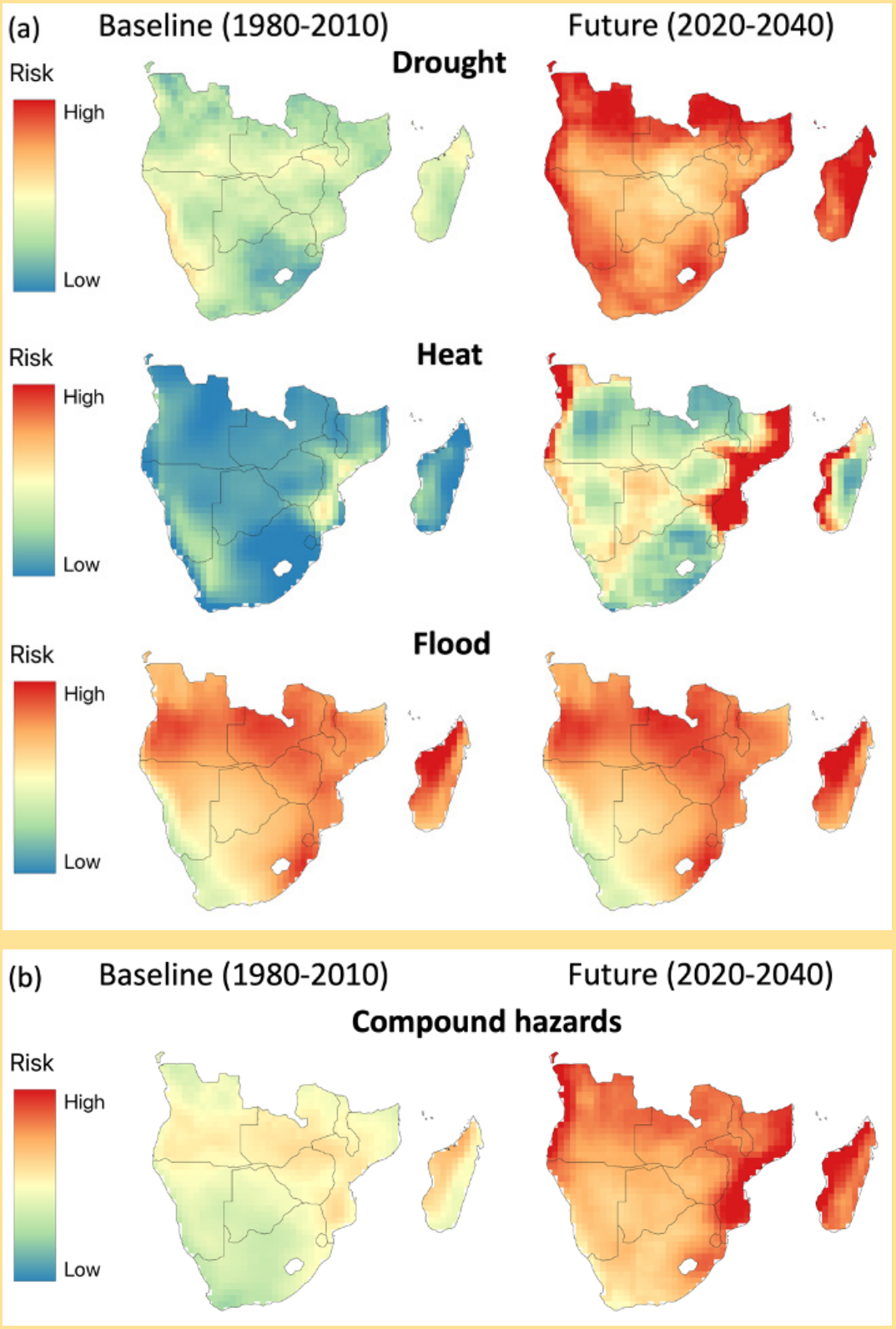


Figure 1a and Figure 1b.

Figure 1a- baseline (1980-2010) and future (2020-2040) climate hazards including drought, heat, and flood. An ensemble of 27 general circulation models from different modelling centers globally is used to develop the indices. Climate data are sourced from the 6th Coupled Model Intercomparison Project (CMIP6). The climate pathway with high radiative forcing (SSP585) was used for the future climate projection.

Figure 1b- baseline (1980-2010) and future (2020-2040) for compound hazards. Compound hazards are considered as the composite risk of heat, drought, and flood to determine the cumulative impact of multiple hazards

Table 1: Relevant Indices framing the level of conflict and fragility, as well as vulnerability towards climate security in Southern African countries

	Global Peace Index	Fragility State Index	ND-GAIN	Food security Rate	Gini Index	Freedom House
Madagascar	1.846 (55)	81.7 (49)	35.3 (low)	40.6 (108)	42.6	58 (partly free)
Malawi	1.97 (74)	83.2 (43)	37.6 (low)	48.1 (91)	38.5	66 (partly free)
Mozambique	2.259 (118)	94 (21)	38.5 (low)	47.3 (94)	50.5	44 (partly free)
South Africa	2.405 (130)	72 (78)	48.3 (lower middle)	61.7 (59)	63	79 (free)
Zambia	1.898 (63)	81.8 (48)	42.2 (low)	43.5 (102)	55.9	54 (partly free)
Zimbabwe	2.3 (124)	96.9 (16)	35.6 (low)	x	50.3	27 (not free)
Tanzania	2.058 (91)	76.6 (65)	40 (low)	49.1 (90)	40.5	36 (partly free)
Lesotho	2.191 (111)	76.3(66)	41.8 (low)	x	44.9	66 (free)
Mauritius	1.546 (23)	38 (154)	57 (upper middle)	x	36.8	85 (free)
Botswana	1.762 (42)	53.3 (122)	50.8 (upper middle)	51.1 (87)	53.3	72 (free)
Eswatini	1.168 (109)	79.1 (58)	42 (lower middle)	x	54.6	17 (not free)
Angola	2.02 (84)	86.9 (39)	37.9 (lower middle)	43.7 (101)	51.3	28 (not free)
Seychelles	X	53.3 (128)	50.8 (upper middle)	x	32.1	79 (free)
DRC	3.214 (159)	107.2 (4)	32.4 (low)	43 (104)	42.1	19 (not free)
Namibia	1.859 (56)	60.3 (112)	45.9 (lower middle)	x	59.1	77 (free)

X= no data.

The Global Peace index *ranges from a scale of 1-5, the lower the score the more peaceful the country is. Global ranking is seen in the brackets (Vision of Humanity, 2023).*

The Fragile States Index *ranks 178 countries on a range of pressures that impact national fragility. The highest fragility ranking is 120, the higher the score the more fragility the country has (Fragile State Index, 2023).*

The ND-GAIN Country Index *"summarizes a country's vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges in combination with its readiness to improve resilience". The higher the score the more climate resilience (University of Notre Dame, 2021).*

The Global Food Security Index *ranks 113 countries on the affordability, quality and safety and sustainability and adaptation of national food security. Availability. The higher the score the more food security. Ranking out of 113 countries in brackets (Economist Impact, 2022).*

The Gini Index *measures income inequality based on governmental primary household survey data, the higher the score the less income inequality exists nationally (The World Bank, 2023).*

Freedom House *"rates people's access to political rights and civil liberties in 210 countries and territories through its annual Freedom in the World report. Individual freedoms—ranging from the right to vote to freedom of expression and equality before the law—can be affected by state or non-state actors." Global freedom statuses are calculated on a weighted scale, the higher the score the more freedom (Freedom House, 2023a).*

Regional policies and agenda for climate, peace, and security in Southern Africa

When reflecting on integrating the climate, peace and security nexus into climate-responsive policies and plans, regional responses and actors play a key role in making this possible. Both SADC and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) recognise climate change as a significant challenge requiring coordinated action (COMESA, 2021; Lesolle, 2012). Regional cooperation and multilevel partnerships are promoted among Member States to harness funding, technical expertise, and other resources (COMESA, 2021; SADC, 2015). This is reflected in climate policies and frameworks that focus on mainstreaming adaptation, mitigation, and resilience building, especially in climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, water, and energy. The regional policy frameworks developed by SADC and COMESA to guide member states in addressing challenges related to climate change are presented in Table 2:

Table 2: COMESA and SADC policy framework related to climate security

Policy	Aim	Period
SADC Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (CCSAP)	The CCSAP identifies crucial sectors to address climate change adaptation and mitigation to support regional sustainable development (SADC, 2015), it also assists Member States in realising their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement and promotes the decarbonisation goals articulated in member nations' mid-century, low-carbon, climate-resilient strategies (SADC, 2015).	2020-2030
SADC Food and Nutrition Security Strategy.	The strategy advocates for sustainable agricultural methods, including climate-smart agriculture, conservation agriculture, and agro-ecology as well as natural resource management and biodiversity (SADC, 2014). It deals with food production, access, utilisation, and stability (SADC, 2014).	2015-2025
SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP)	The RISDP is made up of six main pillars, of which the Peace, Security and Good Governance Pillar outlines several objectives and interventions related to addressing insecurity, violent extremism, peaceful resolution and dialogue (SADC, 2020). The RISDP also operationalises SADC's 2030 Vision by promoting regional integration and development (SADC, 2020).	2020-2030
COMESA Strategy on Climate Change	The strategy aims to enhance the resilience of the region to climate change impacts. It aligns with broader development goals and the COMESA Vision, emphasizing the importance of climate resilience as a cornerstone for achieving sustainable development.	2020-2030
COMESA Regional Resilience Framework	The framework provides direction to Member States, and other Regional Economic Communities (RECs) with shared membership, important stakeholders, and partners in crafting and executing resilience initiatives (COMESA, 2020; Radeny et al., 2022). It does this by highlighting four priority areas: Disaster Preparedness, Response and Recovery, Private Sector Development and Risk Financing, Risk informed regulation and Knowledge and Innovation (COMESA, 2020).	Not stated

The regional policies above show that there are existing institutional avenues for climate, peace and security, albeit to varying degrees. In SADC's CCSAP (2015, 20), for example, the climate-security interface is explicitly recognised:

> *[d]ecreasing availability of resources due to regional effects of climate change — like drought and desertification — leads to intensified competition for these resources. It can contribute to instability, lead to displacement and migration, worsen existing conflicts and threaten global security.*

These regional policies underscore the importance of addressing climate impacts within peace and security frameworks, particularly in vulnerable areas like Southern Africa. While SADC's CCSAP highlights the security risks associated with resource scarcity, it also signals a need for stronger, more cohesive responses to mitigate these risks. Effectively integrating climate adaptation measures into security planning could help reduce vulnerabilities, manage competition over scarce resources, and foster resilience across the region.

Building on the existing recognition of climate-related security risks in regional policies, it is essential to evaluate how climate, peace and security considerations are being integrated into climate change policies across Southern Africa.

Assessing the integration of peace and security in selected SADC countries

Given the very heterogeneous and specific dynamics in which climate, peace and security may develop within different national contexts, this paper zooms in to country-specific risks, as well as the institutional and governance agenda within the country cases to address climate, peace and security risks. Due to time constraints limiting the number of in-depth case studies able to be covered by the research team, a selection of six countries (Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe) with different levels of compounding risks from both climate and insecurity dynamics were chosen, to showcase entry points of implementing a climate security sensitive and peace positive lens within the given policy landscape.

Each case study follows a similar structure. It begins with a concise overview of the country's specific climate, peace, and security context, followed by an examination of key national-level climate change policies, strategies, and plans (see Annexures 1-6 for the tabulated summaries of these). The selection of these policies may vary between the countries and is informed by the most pronounced climate security risks initially identified, targeting vulnerable sectors of, for example, energy, water, land or conservation policies. As climate change emerges through varied anthropogenic and environmental factors its relevance stretches across a broad array

of policies and responses including agriculture, energy, transport, conservation, etc. Thus, the overviews provided focus on high-level climate change policies but include policies relevant to other sectors where these interact with the peace and security landscape in the national context. Finally, the case studies analyse the provision of peace and security within the current national policy framework to give concrete entry points and recommendations for climate, peace and security in the country.



Madagascar

Climate, peace, and security risks

In Madagascar, disasters and climate change disrupt community livelihoods, indirectly impacting mobility patterns. In 2022 about 33% of the population faced food insecurity, with over 2 million of the people in the Great South and Great South-East facing emergency-level food insecurity (IMF, 2023). Conflicts may emerge as displaced populations compete for the same pool of resources and infrastructure as local residents (FAO, undated; Prescia and Tower, 2021). In Southern Madagascar, social conflicts and heightened violence against women have been associated with the rising frequency and severity of droughts (World Bank, 2022). Other tensions arise through the exploitation and management of natural resources in response to climate change. Examples include mining or large-scale agriculture which result in conflicts over land rights, as indigenous populations are marginalised and excluded from decision-making processes regarding their ancestral lands (Martinez-Alier, 2023).

Provision of peace, conflict and security into national climate change responses

Madagascar's climate change policy landscape is comprehensive and spans climate change adaptation measures, disaster risk reduction frameworks and other sectoral initiatives. Some of the climate response policies in Madagascar are presented in Annexure 1. Exploring the existing national climate change policies reveals that while they indirectly relate to climate security through their commitments towards resilience strengthening and vulnerability reduction, most policies do not explicitly account for climate, conflict, peace and security threats or responses. Madagascar's NDC is one example where climate security concerns are clearly described by recognising the interlinkages between food insecurity and social and water-related conflicts (Government of Madagascar 2022). However, there is potential to integrate climate security further and clearly into Madagascar's institutional climate change framework. The country's 2019 National Policy to Combat Climate Change offers an entry point for infusing climate security considerations into Madagascar's policy landscape, as one of its five strategic pillars emphasizes integrating climate change at all levels. Specifically, under Pillar 3, the policy seeks to "Integrate climate change dimensions into national, regional, and sectoral policies and strategies (including public, private, and local government frameworks)," creating a foundation for incorporating climate-security linkages into governance structures (Government of Madagascar, 2019b:4). private, and local government frameworks).

To anticipate and manage the impacts of increased climate change-induced human mobility, policies should strategically incorporate displaced populations. Madagascar currently hosts a small number of refugees and asylum seekers, but the situation can evolve leading to greater numbers of these groups being hosted in the country (IOM, 2024). National climate change policies can also better account for climate-driven human migration from rural to urban areas by including strategies for organized community relocations for vulnerable populations. Planned relocations can help manage migration's environmental impact and promote resilience to future climate challenges.

Malawi

Climate, peace, and security risks

Conflict dynamics on Chisi Island during times of resource scarcity illustrate how socio-ecological pressures, combined with economic downturns, promote conflicting coping strategies, environmentally related conflicts, and habitat degradation (Nagoli et al., 2016). In addition, Malawi's ongoing urban transition, compounded by climate-related migration pressures, raises concerns about the sustainability of urban growth and the living conditions in rapidly expanding urban areas where access to basic services remains limited (ISS, 2023c). While environmental-induced migration may not directly trigger violent conflict, it presents major challenges for hosting communities, particularly in densely populated regions like Malawi (Webersik, 2012).

Provision of peace, conflict and security into national climate change responses

Malawi has a robust climate change-related policy framework. Some of the major climate change policies and frameworks are presented in Annexure 2. Generally, looking at the nine policies in Annex 2, the inclusion of peace, conflict, and security in these national climate change responses is minimal. Even though most documents acknowledge that the impacts of climate change compound the existing socioeconomic challenges, there is minimal recognition of human security risks or threats to social cohesion because of climate change impacts. Of the 9 documents analysed, the Growth and Development Strategy III (Government of Malawi, 2017:39) is the only document that mentions human security and social conflicts. It states that "sustainable approaches to harnessing water for irrigation will minimize water shortages, environmental degradation, social conflicts and health risks". The Growth and Development Strategy III also has a section on peace and security (page 75), which, however, is not directly linked to climate change. Relatedly, The NAPA also indicates that "Climate change is also likely to further reduce grazing areas due to droughts and this will generate conflicts between livestock keeping and farming communities" (Government of Malawi, 2015a, p. 8). This indicates the acknowledgement of climate security in the NAPA of Malawi. An analysis of the National Adaptation Plan Framework of 2020 shows that the document has identified "human safety and well-being" as one of the key systems that are core to climate change adaptation for Malawi. Similarly, on page 21 of the National Climate Change Response Strategy of 2012; it is stated that the response to climate change will address, among others, challenges such as rural-urban migration. Rural-urban migration has been identified as one of the pathways of climate security in the region at large. On page 23 of the same document, the government of Malawi recognises that climate change endangers human health. In both documents, these mentions present entry points that can be used to embed climate, peace and security into the frameworks. Finally, although there is a mention of issues related to climate, peace and security by inference, there is a clear gap in the Malawian climate-related frameworks and policies in acknowledging and embracing the concept of climate, peace and security as a policy priority in climate action.



Photo: CIFOR-ICRAF

Mozambique

Climate, peace, and security risks

In Mozambique, severe human security risks have sparked large numbers of displacement across the country with 126,305 IDPs officially recorded in Mozambique because of climate hazards (UNHCR, 2024b). Alongside these challenges, the country is facing ongoing armed conflict in the northern provinces, particularly Cabo Delgado, that began in 2017 (GCR2P, 2023; Human Rights Watch, 2023b). Attacks have been carried out by the insurgents locally known as 'Al-Shabaab' or 'Mashababos', with armed operations involving the Mozambican military force, local militias, Rwandese military and SADC forces (ACLED, 2023; Shield, 2023; Kenyette, 2023; SADC, 2021). The conflict has been largely attributed to the lack of socio-economic stability, youth unemployment and unequal access to natural resources, particularly in the face of natural gas extraction in Cabo Delgado (Sturridge et al., 2022; Neethling, 2021). As of February 2024, there were 582,764 IDPs as a result of the conflict (UNHCR, 2024b).

Provision of peace, conflict and security into national climate change responses

Some of the major climate change policies that are in place in Mozambique are listed in Annexure 3. Limited mentions are made within the climate-responsive policy framework on conflict, peace or security. Despite Mozambique's significant vulnerability to climate change, its climate change response faces substantial challenges, particularly in the implementation and coherence of relevant policies and plans. Limited infrastructure and capacity coupled with political fragility and instability hinder opportunities for local and national collaboration as well as cross-sectoral collaboration within climate responses. Efforts are ongoing to localise responses, through the development of Local Adaptation Plans, implemented at district level on a 10-year basis (UNDP, 2020), signifying a great step towards cross-level collaboration.

Socio-economic development plays a crucial role is Mozambique's climate response, a topic that is mainstreamed throughout Mozambique's National Adaptation Plan, with its aim to promote "peaceful and climate-change-resilient development" through sectoral policies and strategies (Government of Mozambique, 2013 p.8). However, while there is great recognition of the links between poverty and climate change, the document has limited mention of peace and security components. While there is some recognition of social protection and development, most policies predate the ongoing conflict and thus do not consider this challenge in implementation planning. For example, the NAP holds little mention of the climate and conflict implications and vulnerabilities faced by displaced populations, such as the high 'at-risk infrastructure', limited land-use planning and reliance on high-carbon energy sources (e.g., coal) that dominate displacement and refugee contexts. Although the strategy notes the risk of displacement due to climate change, it is not clear whether protection mechanisms for climate hazards transfer into displacement contexts generated by conflict (Government of Mozambique, 2013 p. 32). Ongoing conflict also heightens security levels and limits access to information, restricting opportunities for building the evidence base on climate change for targeted responses and programming. Mozambique has faced heavy limitations on information gathering and sharing in relation to both climate and conflict-related risks due to a lack of technical capacity, restrictive journalistic legislation and limited financial means (Amnesty International, 2020; Hill & Nhamirre, 2022; Human Rights Watch, 2023a).

South Africa

Climate, peace, and security risks

Half of South Africa's population lives in poverty (Statistics South Africa, 2019), with persisting inequalities and political instability (Walsh & Mnyandu, 2023) continuing to undermine development efforts and exacerbate human security issues. The threat of climate change looms to further destabilize the national security landscape in multifaceted ways.

High dependence on rainfed agriculture leaves many households food insecure in the face of escalating droughts and floods, sinking more people into poverty (IFRC, 2024; Mani et al., 2021). Efforts to curb the forthcoming climatic changes are needed, yet as South Africa gears towards transitioning to renewable energy sources, the closures of coal plants across the country are having damaging consequences for those who depend on these for their livelihoods (Nel et al., 2023). For the around 100,000 coal workers across the country, climate mitigating initiatives such as the green energy transition pose a great risk to their livelihoods and have escalated levels of poverty, instability and social tensions, with protests sparking nationally in opposition to the plan (Molelekwa, 2023; Rahim, 2023; Simpson et al., 2023).

Provision of peace, conflict and security into national climate change responses

South Africa has a comprehensive policy landscape when it comes to responding to climate change. Annexure 4 represents only a snapshot of South Africa's existing policies for tackling climate change. Despite South Africa's robust climate change governance framework, peace

and security remain largely neglected in the face of absent provisions and mechanisms for just and peaceful implementation and monitoring. While the framework emphasises the interconnections between climate impacts and socio-economic development, it offers limited guidance on how these links will be tackled during the implementation phase. Moreover, political instability, inequality, and a lack of coordination capacities impede on the implementation of existing policies and plans (Averchenkova et al., 2019). In response, documents such as the National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS) mainstream social development throughout. Persistent inequalities not only undermine response capacities but also weaken climate resilience at both national and local levels. Thus, the NAP recognizes the added vulnerabilities to climate change for the most marginalized groups, including lower-income households, women, children and the elderly (p.12). The strategy holds particular focus on women, with an intersectional understanding of added vulnerabilities for women from lower-income backgrounds and rural areas. While there is no mention of the ways in which climate change may influence conflict levels within the country, the strategy takes a positive peace approach, focusing on equity and development as well as overall human security, such as access to food, health and energy. Social-inclusion-oriented plans are key when striving for equity in a climate-insecure future and a crucial inclusion for a conflict-sensitive implementation of South Africa's NAP. It is essential that climate action strengthens the integration of social inclusion and peace into climate-related policies and projects. Since climate action is closely tied to natural resource management, an area deeply affected by South Africa's historical and ongoing divisions, any interference must be conflict-sensitive to mitigate harm and avoid exacerbating tensions and instability.



Photo: M. DeFreese/CIMMYT

Zambia

Climate, peace, and security risks

Politically, Zambia is considered a relatively stable country that successfully managed to avoid armed conflict in its post-colonial era (Burnell 2011). While violent conflict is rare in Zambia and the country is relatively stable, the interactions between climate and society have reinforced vulnerabilities, reduced social cohesion and can negatively shape peace and conflict outcomes in the country (Caroli et al. 2023).

Provision of peace, conflict and security into national climate change responses

The Government of Zambia has developed a comprehensive climate change policy framework. Some of the important policy documents are listed in Annexure 5. There was minimal acknowledgement or recognition of the climate, peace and security nexus in the Zambian policy framework before the publication of the Green Growth Strategy in 2024. Climate, peace and security, and climate-related peace and security-related risks are acknowledged and defined in the 2024 Zambian Green Growth Strategy. The policy documents published before the Green Growth Strategy detail other social impacts of climate change, except the risks posed by climate change on human security and social cohesion. One of the few instances a climate security-related matter is mentioned is on page 8 of the INDC document, where avoidance of land use conflicts is listed as a co-benefit of one of the key adaptation activities, “improve monitoring system for infrastructure at all administrative levels”. This is one of the pathways (conflict over resources) of climate security and an entry point when the process to update the INDC document commences.

Zimbabwe

Climate, peace, and security risks

Climate change threatens Zimbabwe’s agriculture-reliant economy, which supports two-thirds of the workforce and is vital for food security and poverty reduction (World Bank, 2021). The adverse impacts on food production have exacerbated political and community conflicts, as food insecurity fuels political contestation and community tensions over resource distribution (Moyo, 2022; Ferre Garcia et al., 2024; Madurga-Lopez et al., 2021). Climate-induced drought also intensifies water scarcity, with cross-sectional surveys showing increased social conflict at water points, disproportionately affecting women and girls (Chiguiswa et al., 2022). Urban areas like Bulawayo, enduring persistent water shortages, have seen tensions between central and local authorities, with each blaming the other for the crisis, thus heightening governance-related conflicts (Ferre Garcia et al., 2024; Zimbabwe Peace Project, 2019; Matabeleland Institute for Human Rights, 2021).

Provision of peace, conflict and security into national climate change responses

Zimbabwe has developed several policies to tackle climate change. Some of these policies are summarised in Annexure 6. While Zimbabwe's climate change policies, strategies, and plans address various aspects of climate change, including mitigation, adaptation, and resilience, they do not explicitly incorporate peace, conflict, and security considerations. The policies primarily focus on environmental, economic, and social dimensions of climate change, such as energy security, food security, and sustainable development. While these factors can indirectly impact peace and security, the policies do not directly address the potential security risks associated with climate change, such as resource scarcity, migration, and conflict. As an example, Zimbabwe NAP only mentions the word conflict where it refers to the likely impact of climate change on the forestry and biodiversity sector resulting in human-wildlife conflict (Government of Zimbabwe, 2023). However, in Zimbabwe's Climate Change Response Strategy, the Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate (2015) acknowledges that drought is leading to increased human-human and human-wildlife conflict. The same document on page 20 also highlights that there is potential for increased water conflicts in the country pitting different sectors and water users. However, beyond mentioning this likelihood, there is no attempt to embed peace, conflict and security in any of the country's climate change-related policies.

To enhance the effectiveness of Zimbabwe's climate change response and mitigate potential security risks, it is crucial to integrate peace, conflict, and security considerations into future policy development and implementation. To this end, although the National Climate Policy (Government of Zimbabwe, 2017:9) does not explicitly address climate security issues, principle 6 of the 8 that underpin the policy offers a leeway as it says "Address[ing]implications of the past, current and future climate" is one of the principles of the policy. Future updates to climate policies, including the National Climate Policy and National Adaptation Plan (NAP), should explicitly include climate-security risks. This could involve assessing the potential for climate-driven resource scarcity, migration, and competition for natural resources, and embedding targeted strategies to address these risks. This focus could align with existing principles, like Principle 6 of the National Climate Policy, to address current and future climate impacts holistically.



Photo: Johnson Siamachira/CIMMYT

Summary and conclusion

This policy analysis paper of Southern Africa's climate security landscape highlights gaps and opportunities in the integration of conflict-sensitive climate action within the region's policy frameworks. The different deep dives of the country cases indicate that while the region remains one of Africa's more stable areas, climate variability has exacerbated resource scarcity, thus fuelling local tensions and conflicts. The study notes that while some National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) acknowledge the socio-economic impacts of climate change, most lack a robust focus on peace, security, and displacement aspects. For instance, Zimbabwe's NAP highlights the agricultural sector's climate vulnerabilities but lacks specificity in conflict-sensitive measures, such as equitable resource management in response to water scarcity. South Africa's heavy focus on conservation and renewable energy risk exacerbates already existing socio-economic and land-based inequalities and thus a strengthening of peace-responsive policies is needed to mitigate such harms. In Madagascar, one of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries, frequent droughts and tropical storms devastate crop yields, exacerbating food scarcity and contributing to migration within and across regions. Madagascar's climate strategy acknowledges these vulnerabilities but needs a stronger focus on managing migration-induced tensions. In Mozambique climate-induced natural disasters such as cyclones have intensified pressures on rural resources, triggering internal displacement and heightening tensions over access to agricultural land and water resources. Although Mozambique's climate policies acknowledge environmental risks, they lack specific mechanisms for managing associated social conflicts.

On a regional scale, the lack of a harmonized approach across national policies suggests an opportunity for integrating conflict-sensitive adaptation at the SADC level. Challenges include limited coordination among climate, development, and security institutions and a need for comprehensive climate-security frameworks tailored to Southern Africa's unique vulnerabilities. The policy analysis paper underscores the importance of inclusive and peace-responsive climate policies that account for diverse social groups, especially in water-stressed communities, to prevent potential conflicts. The overall findings point to the need for stronger conflict-sensitivity and collaborative policy implementation across sectors to sustain peace and enhance social, economic and environmental resilience to climate change.

Recommendations

To effectively address the complex interplay between climate change and security challenges in Southern Africa, it is essential to strengthen regional cooperation by developing a unified framework within SADC that emphasizes a conflict-sensitive climate change response. Such a framework would promote a cohesive approach to adaptation and mitigation efforts across member states, recognizing that climate impacts, such as resource scarcity and displacement, do not adhere to national borders. A standardized, collaborative approach would facilitate cross-border coordination and policy alignment, allowing SADC nations to better manage shared challenges, such as migratory pressures from drought-prone areas and conflict risks in resource-constrained regions.

Promoting inclusive adaptation policies is a vital step to ensuring that climate actions address the unique needs of all affected groups. Gender-sensitive and age-oriented approaches within climate policies would help amplify the voices of vulnerable groups, particularly those who are disproportionately impacted by displacement and resource scarcity. Inclusive policies have the potential to empower marginalized groups by ensuring their participation in decision-making processes at all stages, from policy development to implementation. **Community consultations and engagement in policy formation** are essential to building climate adaptation strategies that are both effective and equitable, fostering resilience in a way that aligns with community values and aspirations.

Lastly, **supporting local-level capacity building** is integral to effective climate-security action in Southern Africa. Allocating resources and providing training for local governments will enhance their capacity to implement climate-security interventions that respond to specific regional challenges. By focusing on community-level engagement, local governments can develop contextually appropriate strategies that address issues such as water management, land use, and natural resource access—key areas where competition can lead to conflict. Strengthening local capacity ensures that adaptation efforts are not only scalable but also rooted in the lived experiences and needs of the communities most affected by climate risks. Through such multi-level, inclusive actions, Southern Africa can build resilience against climate-related conflicts and support sustainable, equitable growth across the region.

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ANNEXURE 1

Table 3: Snapshot of the Climate Change Policies of Madagascar

Name of Policy	Objective	Developed by	Publication Year	Updated	Reference
The National Policy on Climate Change	Aims to promote actions at the national level to reduce vulnerability through five main pathways; adaptation, mitigation, climate change mainstreaming within other policies, research, development and technology, and adaptive management. It also includes multi-hazard early warning systems and restoration of natural habitats.	Government of Madagascar	2010	Not Stated	(Nachmany et al. 2015)
National Policy to Combat Climate Change	To strengthen climate change adaptation and mitigation actions.	Ministry of Environment and Forestry	2011	2019	(Government of Madagascar 2019b)
National Strategy to Face Climate Change in Agriculture-Livestock-Fishery	To build on aims within the National Policy to Combat Climate Change by focusing on strengthening within four main areas; adaptation, mitigation, mainstreaming, financing and innovation. Strengthening should occur across agriculture, livestock and aquaculture sectors.	The Ministries of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries	2013	Not Stated	(Nachmany et al. 2015; Government of Madagascar 2013)
Nationally determined contribution (NDC)	To communicate national commitments towards reducing climate change vulnerability and to promote adaptation measures through actions to strengthen renewable energies, reforestation initiatives and climate-smart agriculture amongst others. It does recognise the impact of social conflicts arising from natural resources.	Government of Madagascar	2015	2022	(Government of Madagascar 2022)
National Disaster Risk Management Strategy 2016-2030	To guide actions to prepare, prevent, manage and recover from hazards and disasters. It does not explicitly mention climate change adaptation but does include sustainable social, cultural, economic and environmental development	Government of Madagascar	2016	Not Stated	(Nachmany et al. 2015; Government of Madagascar 2016)
National Adaptation Plan (NAP)	To outline key priorities aimed at enhancing the country's resilience to climate change impacts. It focuses on integrating climate change adaptation into national and sub-national development policies and strategies	Government of Madagascar	2022	Not Stated	(UNEP, undated)

ANNEXURE 2

Table 4: Snapshot of the Climate Change Policies of Malawi

Name of Policy	Objective	Developed by	Publication Year	Updated	Reference
National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA)	The second edition of NAPA has been developed to enable Malawi to continue addressing the urgent and immediate adaptation needs caused by climate change and extreme weather events as they emerge and evolve.	Government of Malawi	2006	2015	(Government of Malawi, 2015a)
Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) III	Building a productive, competitive and resilient nation.	Government of Malawi	2017	Not stated	(Government of Malawi, 2017)
National Climate Change Response White Paper (Draft)	To address regional and international obligations and commitments and effectively address the impacts of climate change in Malawi.	Ministry Of Environment and Climate Change Management (Environmental Affairs Department)	2012	Not stated	(Government of Malawi, 2012)
National Climate Change Investment Plan	To increase climate change investment in Malawi.	Ministry Of Environment and Climate Change Management (Environmental Affairs Department)	2013	Not stated	(Government of Malawi, 2013)
Malawi's Strategy on Climate Change Learning	To address major gaps in formulating climate change policies and interventions.	Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining (Environmental Affairs Department)	2013	2021	(Government of Malawi, 2021)
National Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs)	Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.	Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining (Environmental Affairs Department)	2015	Not stated	(Government of Malawi, 2015c)
National Climate Change Management Policy (NCCMP)	A guide for integrating climate change into development planning and implementation by all stakeholders at local, district and national levels.	Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining (Environmental Affairs Department)	2016	Supposed to be updated every five years	(Government of Malawi, 2016a)
Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy (IMES) for NCCMP	To ensure that NCCMP is implemented effectively	Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining (Environmental Affairs Department)	2016	Not stated	(Government of Malawi, 2016)
National Adaptation Plan Framework	To align efforts to address climate change	Government of Malawi	2021	Not stated	(USAID, 2023)

ANNEXURE 3

Table 5: Snapshot of the Climate Change Policies of Mozambique

Name of Policy	Objective	Developed by	Publication Year	Updated	Reference
Strategic Program for Climate Resilience (SPCR)	To mainstream climate change into vulnerable sectors and ensure private sector investment.	Government of Mozambique	2011	Not Stated	(Government of Mozambique, 2011)
2013-2025 National Strategy for Climate Change (ENMC)	Focuses on climate adaptation and mitigation and efforts to reduce vulnerability to climate change.	Ministry for Co-Ordination of Environmental Affairs – MICOA	2013	Not Stated	(MICOA, 2013)
Disaster Risk Reduction Master Plan (2017 – 2030)	"To reduce disasters, loss of human lives and infrastructure and prevent the emergence of new disasters"	Conselho de Ministros	2017	Not Stated	(Conselho de Ministros, 2017)
Update of the First Nationally Determined Contribution to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2020 – 2025)	To provide an update on the contributions to climate adaptation and mitigation and the barriers to national implementation.	Ministry of Land and Environment	2020	December 2021	(Government of Mozambique, 2021)
National Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Strategy for 2013-2025 (NCCAMS)	To "establish the action guidelines to create resilience through climate risk reduction in communities and the national economy, and promoting low-carbon development and the green economy through its integration in the sectoral and local planning process"	Ministry for the Coordination of Environmental Affairs (MICOA)	2012	Not Stated	(UNDP, 2020)
Local Adaptation Plans	Localising climate adaptation.	Ministry of Coordination and Environmental Affairs (MICOA)	In process	Not Stated	(Doumenjou, 2015)

ANNEXURE 4

Table 6: Snapshot of the Climate Change Policies of South Africa

Name of Policy	Objective	Developed by	Publication Year	Updated	Reference
National Climate Change Response Policy White Paper (NCCRP)	To provide a long-term plan for reducing GHG emissions and present a vision for transitioning to climate resilience and sustainable development.	Republic of South Africa	2011	Not Stated	(Republic of South Africa, 2011)
The National Determined Contribution (NDC)	To provide an update on national climate adaptation and mitigation processes and their implementation of these, including support requirements.	Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment	2015	2021	(UNFCCC, 2021)
2020 The National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (NCCAS)	To provide "a common vision of climate change adaptation and climate resilience for the country, and outlines priority areas for achieving this vision."	Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment	2019	Not Stated	(Government of South Africa, 2020)
Climate Change Bill	Regulate climate adaptation, mitigation, and responsible actors as well as strengthening accountability.	Republic of South Africa	Not yet operational, signed into law in 2024.	N/A	(South African Government, 2024b)
The Disaster Management Amendment Act, 2015 (Act 16 of 2015)	Amendment of the 2002 Disaster Management Act 2002, responsible for disaster management response to include additional content on adaptation and climate change.	Republic of South Africa	2002	2015	(Government of South Africa, 2015)
National Development Plan (NDP)	"The National Development Plan aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030"	National Planning Commission, The Presidency of the Republic of South Africa	2012	Not Stated	(National Planning Commission, The Presidency of Republic of South Africa, 2012)

ANNEXURE 5

Table 7: Snapshot of the Climate Change Policies of Zambia

Name of Policy	Objective	Developed by	Publication Year	Updated	Reference
National Adaptation Programme of Action	To broadly communicate to the international community priority activities that address Zambia's urgent and immediate needs for adapting to the adverse impacts of climate change.	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Management	2007	Not Stated	(Government of Zambia, 2007)
National Change Response Strategy	To support and facilitate a coordinated response to climate change issues in the country.	Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Natural Resources	2010	Not Stated	(Government of Zambia, 2010)
National Disaster Risk Management Framework	To build on the Sendai framework and others to facilitate the identification of priority areas which must be integrated into the national development planning processes.	Ministry of Vice-President	2017	Not Stated	(Government of Zambia, 2017a)
Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC)	Presentation of Zambia's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) on climate change.	Republic of Zambia	2016	2021	(Government of Zambia, 2021)
National Climate Change Policy	To establish a coordinated national response to climate change.	Ministry of Lands, Natural Resources and Environmental Protection	2017	Not Stated	(Government of Zambia, 2017b)
National Adaptation Plan (NAP)	Address identified risks and vulnerabilities in various sectors to enhance the country's resilience to the impacts of climate change.	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment	2023	Not Stated	(Government of Zambia, 2023)
National Green Growth Strategy	To place Zambia on a low-carbon, resilient, resource-efficient and socially inclusive pathway.	Ministry of Green Economy and Environment	2024	Not Stated	(Government of Zambia, 2024)

ANNEXURE 6

Table 8: Snapshot of the Climate Change Policies of Zimbabwe

Name of Policy	Objective	Developed by	Publication Year	Updated	Reference
Zimbabwe Climate Change Response Strategy	To mainstream climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies into economic and social development at the national and sectoral levels through multi-stakeholder engagement.	Government of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate.	2014	Not Stated	Government of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Environment, Water and Climate (2015)
The Intended National Determined Contribution (NDC)	The INDC outlines specific mitigation and adaptation actions, particularly in the energy and agriculture sectors.	Government of Zimbabwe	2015	2017	(UNFCCC, 2022a)
Zimbabwe Nationally Determined Contribution	This revised NDC expands the scope of mitigation actions to include sectors like industrial processes, product use, waste, and agriculture, forestry, and other land use (AFOLU). Additionally, it outlines specific adaptation measures to address the country's vulnerability to climate change impacts.	Government of Zimbabwe	2021	Not Stated	UNFCCC, 2022b)
National Climate Policy	To "guide climate change management in the country, enhance the national adaptation capacity, scale up mitigation actions, facilitate domestication of global policies and ensure compliance to the global mechanisms.	Government of Zimbabwe	2017.	Not stated	Government of Zimbabwe, 2017
Zimbabwe Climate Change Gender Action Plan (CCGAP)	To promote a more comprehensive, inclusive, and equitable approach to climate change by advancing women's full, equal, and meaningful participation and promoting gender-responsive climate policies.	Government of Zimbabwe	2023	Not Stated	Government of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality in Industry; Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development. (2023).
National Energy Policy	This policy framework seeks to optimize the use of available energy resources and enhance the efficiency of energy delivery services.	Republic of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Energy and Power Development	2012	Not stated	(Republic of Zimbabwe, Ministry of energy and Power Development, 2012)
National Renewable Energy Policy	Focus on creating a conducive environment for renewable energy investment, promoting energy efficiency, and diversifying the country's energy mix.	Ministry of Energy and Power Development	2019	Not stated	Republic of Zimbabwe, Ministry of energy and Power Development, 2019)
National Climate Change Learning Strategy (2020-2030)	To create a climate change literate, responsive, and resilient nation. It aims to mainstream climate change education and learning strategies into all relevant social and economic development initiatives.	Government of Zimbabwe Ministry of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry	2021	Not Stated	Government of Zimbabwe Ministry of Environment, Climate, Tourism and Hospitality Industry, 2021
National Adaptation Plan	It seeks to diminish vulnerability to climate change by incorporating adaptation strategies into national and sub-national development planning. It aims to enhance institutional capacity, improve coordination mechanisms, and stimulate research to mobilize resources and implement adaptation options, thereby increasing climate resilience	Government of Zimbabwe	2023	Not stated	Government of Zimbabwe (2023)

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