

Climate Security Mechanism

**Progress in strengthening the United Nations' capacity
to address climate-related security risks**

May 2021

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1. CSM overview

The Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) is a joint initiative by the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). It was established in 2018 with the objective of strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system to analyze and more systematically address the adverse impacts of climate change on peace and security. The CSM works with partners around the world to enhance a gender-sensitive understanding of the issue and to support capacity building efforts in United Nations entities and regional and sub-regional organizations for the prevention and management of climate-related security risks.

The CSM was born out of a recognition that strong cross-sectoral collaboration is essential to addressing a challenge as complex as the linkages between climate change, peace and security. The Mechanism is geared towards leveraging strengths and capacities from across and beyond the United Nations system. At its core, the CSM is composed of a small team of staff drawn from the three entities, each contributing expertise from their respective institutions:

- DPPA contributes global expertise in political analysis and early warning, conflict prevention, peacemaking, and sustaining peace. The Department’s direct interaction with the Security Council, management of special political missions in the field, close working relationship with the Department of Peace Operations, and support to United Nations Country Teams in complex non-mission settings provide a strong peace and security dimension.
- UNDP is the largest provider of technical support to climate change mitigation and adaptation in the United Nations system, and the primary implementing partner of the Peacebuilding Fund. It also possesses leading expertise in conflict prevention and sustaining peace, governance, disaster risk reduction and recovery, delivered through its network of 170 Country and Regional Offices.
- UNEP promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and provides technical expertise on the environment.

The combination of these capacities allows the CSM to work towards cross-cutting solutions that recognize the impact of climate and environmental factors on peace and security, and, vice versa, strengthen prevention and conflict sensitivity in the context of adaptation and resilience. Guided by a set of core principles, the CSM engages in a range of activities related to integrated analysis and action, awareness raising, partnerships, capacity building, and the co-creation and management of knowledge.

CSM guiding principles

- 01 Technical advice and support are tailored to the particular conditions and opportunities of each situation.
- 02 Partnerships enable multidisciplinary approaches to risk analysis, prevention and management.
- 03 Data collection, analysis and response formulation are gender-sensitive and promote women’s empowerment.
- 04 Regional, national and local voices ensure local ownership and sustainability of efforts.
- 05 Lessons learned from field engagements drive policy and advocacy to ensure evidence-based approaches.

As a small headquarters-based team, the CSM has neither the mandate nor the capacity to coordinate the expansive work of the broader United Nations system related to climate security around the world. However, through in-depth engagement with its strong and growing network and by leveraging existing expertise and partnerships, the CSM promotes integrated approaches across the peace and development spectrum and makes a critical contribution to the global evidence base on climate security.

CSM field initiatives

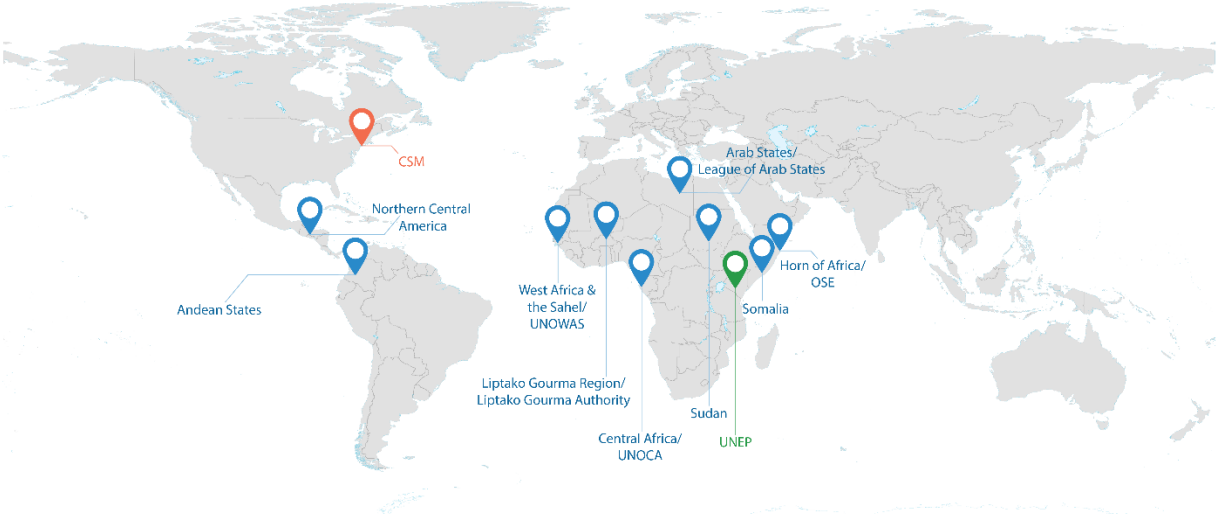


Figure 1: Map of CSM field initiatives

In the nine focus locations displayed in Figure 1, the CSM has forged close relationships with key partners to build this agenda on a sustained, long-term basis, including by deploying dedicated capacities on climate security. Partners include special political missions, Offices of United Nations Resident Coordinators, field offices of individual United Nations entities, and regional or sub-regional organizations. The CSM services these clients, who are directly involved at all stages of project design and implementation, by building capacity and supporting the analysis, prevention and management of risks. As climate-related security risks already acutely manifest in many other parts of the world, including in Small Island Developing States, the CSM will monitor opportunities to scale up its model of engagement with other regions, sub-regions, countries and organizations in the future.

CSM field initiatives



Figure 2: Snapshot of CSM focus field work

2. CSM priority areas of work

The complex linkages between climate change, peace and security demand a flexible approach that connects actors from different policy areas. The CSM embraces an intersectoral approach that enables it to respond to demand from the field while simultaneously growing its policy expertise, helping to deepen the global evidence base, and driving advocacy. Increasingly, the CSM has been able to provide targeted support in regions highly affected by the cascading effects of climate change. This includes technical advice to partners on climate security risk assessments and the translation of findings into policy, planning and programming decisions.

At the same time, the CSM continues its global efforts at mainstreaming climate security more broadly across the work of the three CSM entities as well as the wider United Nations system. This includes building partnerships with policymakers, researchers and practitioners, and promoting the inclusion of a climate security lens into United Nations processes such as Common Country Analyses, Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, and strategic reviews of field missions. Capacity building, advocacy and knowledge generation remain other key areas of the CSM's work.

Growing demand from the field and the need to make progress in all of these areas requires prioritization and an efficient use of resources. To this end, the CSM, in collaboration with its partners, has developed a simple and flexible model of service delivery, based on the CSM's comparative advantages. Cutting across regional and thematic focus areas, the model is centered around the four priority areas in Figure 3.

CSM priority areas of work



Figure 3: CSM priority areas of work

2.1 Support to analysis and action

The relevance of climate security as a policy area will ultimately be measured by its ability to trigger results in regions most affected by climate-related security risks. The CSM supports analysis and action by leveraging available resources and – where feasible – providing additional capacity at the field level. In most cases, CSM field support means providing technical advice to integrated assessments of climate-related security risks or the development of forward-looking risk prevention and management strategies. The regions and countries where the CSM engages are determined by a number of factors in line with the principles outlined on page 5, key among them a clear capacity gap that the CSM can fill. All field initiatives are rooted in in-depth analysis and participatory approaches, which are necessary preconditions for sustainable solutions.

Jointly with partners, the CSM seeks to play a catalytic role in support of new, innovative approaches to prevent and manage climate-related security risks. The exact modality of CSM engagement in the field varies between locations but generally falls into one of three categories:

CSM types of support



Figure 4: CSM types of support

The strong partnerships and extensive consultations needed to second experts or deploy other forms of capacity require a significant ramp-up period, which in 2020 was complicated by restrictions related to COVID-19. Therefore, at the time of writing, the majority of such longer-term support engagements are very new or in the process of coming online. At present, following thorough scoping and due diligence with its partners, the CSM has identified nine countries or regions (see Figure 2) with a strong demand for seconded experts or other forms of additional capacity. In each of the nine field initiatives, one CSM entity has assumed a lead role in the design and execution of activities, based on the comparative strengths and resources of their respective institutions. By building heavily on the existing experiences and capabilities of DPPA,

Additional capacity for the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA)

Responding to a 2019 request from the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) for support in the area of climate security, and building on the Security Council Presidential Statement S/PRST/2019/10 encouraging UNOCA to consider climate change in its activities, the CSM has worked with UNOCA to provide additional capacity on climate security. With the help of an expert consultant, a scoping study was completed in 2020 that mapped stakeholders and existing initiatives and identified key climate-related security challenges for further research. In 2021, a comprehensive risk assessment will be undertaken in collaboration with ECCAS, United Nations Country Teams, peacekeeping operations and other partners. Findings will inform the development of concrete risk prevention and management strategies for UNOCA and regional partners.

UNDP, UNEP and other partners, the CSM is in a position to tailor support arrangements to the particular context, scale them up quickly, and ensure their sustainability in the long run. Collaboration across CSM field initiatives has helped to ensure learning between different regions.

Given the investment needed to identify and embed capacity in the field, most of the CSM’s work in the field so far has been channeled through hybrid or remote support modalities. The hybrid model allows

Support for PBF project “Climate Security in the Pacific”

Since 2019, the CSM has supported the development and implementation of the first Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) project on climate security in the Pacific. The CSM participated in the design workshop in Fiji in September 2019, and continues to provide technical advice on information collection and analysis. The two-year project, led by UNDP and IOM in collaboration with regional organizations and the governments of Kiribati, Marshall Islands and Tuvalu, launched in 2020 and aims to strengthen the understanding of climate security risks in the region, building capacity of key stakeholders, and enhancing advocacy by atoll nations and Pacific States.

the CSM to react fast and provide catalytic in-person support at critical points of decision-making processes, such as technical advice to UNOWAS field research (2019) or during the design of the Peacebuilding Fund project on climate security in the Pacific (2019). The remote support modality covers a range of CSM contributions, such as advice during Common Country Analyses and the development of Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks, or assistance in the design of integrated peacebuilding or adaptation projects.

2.2 Advocacy, partnerships and convening

Sustained advocacy remains vital to keep the linkages between climate change, peace and security high on the agenda of relevant policy fora and ensure their integration into decision-making at all levels. The CSM supports efforts in this regard by organizing and participating in workshops, seminars and conferences – in-person as well as increasingly online – and preparing speeches, background notes, and analytical papers for senior United Nations officials that underscore the cross-cutting impact of climate security. The CSM targets interlocutors whose buy-in is critical to advance climate security and actively advocates through regular engagement with partners from across and beyond the United Nations system.

During 2020, as COVID-19 restrictions triggered the cancellation of a series of in-person events, the CSM embraced the opportunities afforded by remote technologies to expand its engagement around the world. Across several dozen online webinars, briefings and workshops, often co-organized with partners, the CSM reached nearly 1,000 practitioners, researchers and policymakers (of which around 66% were United Nations staff). These engagements not only raised awareness among participants but in many cases also laid the foundation for further engagement to advance a shared understanding of – and joint action to address – climate-related security risks. In addition, the CSM works with Member States and regularly briefs the Group of Friends on Climate and Security.

As an intersectoral initiative itself, the CSM is committed to a multidisciplinary approach that promotes collaboration among policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and civil society. Creating and deepening relationships with a range of partners globally forms an integral component of the CSM’s work and has helped to create platforms of engagement for the broader climate security community. Key partners come from across the United Nations system, regional and sub-regional organizations, and the research community. Each of these groups brings a particular set of capacities and resources that are critical for a comprehensive approach that cuts across sectors and national borders. Numerous ad hoc linkages exist between these groups, but there is a scarcity of mechanisms to bring all three together in a more systematic way. The CSM seeks to both strengthen existing linkages and provide a platform for cross-cutting exchanges and collective learning.

Partnerships and convening



Figure 5: Partnerships and convening

United Nations system

Beyond the three entities of the CSM, collaboration with actors across the United Nations system has been a critical factor for success. Joint work extends to field missions, Resident Coordinators, Peace and Development Advisors, as well as to field offices of United Nations agencies around the world. To promote

2019 CSM workshop in Berlin

In April 2019, the CSM, with support from the Government of Germany, organized an experts workshop on “United Nations Climate-Related Security Risk Assessments” in Berlin. The workshop for the first time convened experts from different United Nations entities, think tanks, governments, and regional organizations on this topic and resulted in the development of a new conceptual approach and toolbox for integrated climate-related security risk assessments. The workshop also served as an informal launching point for the United Nations Community of Practice on Climate Security.

cross-sectoral collaboration between the different pillars of the United Nations system as well as between headquarters and the field, the CSM in 2019 established a United Nations Community of Practice on Climate Security. The Community of Practice is open to all staff members and serves as a platform for an informal exchange of experiences and lessons learned among the different parts of the system. Participants from more than 20 United Nations agencies have joined this group and meet every two months to share updates, explore opportunities for collaboration and discuss upcoming events.

In 2020, the Community of Practice jointly completed a global scan of United Nations activities linked to climate security. The resultant report gives not only the most comprehensive snapshot available to date of United Nations efforts underway in this area, it also provides a baseline for CSM efforts, outlines existing gaps, and identifies opportunities for the way forward. Moreover, the process of putting together the scan with the Community of Practice was highly beneficial in itself and provided a useful entry point for inter-agency as well as intra-agency conversations about climate-related security risks, which contributed to a shared vocabulary and understanding.

Regional and sub-regional organizations

Regional and sub-regional organizations play a critical role in the prevention and management of climate-related security risks. For the CSM, close collaboration with regional partners ensures that activities are tailored to particular contexts and sustainable over the long term. Building on initial engagement with the African Union, European Union, League of Arab States, Pacific Islands Forum and others, the CSM seeks to strengthen engagement to build a shared assessment of climate security challenges and develop effective policy solutions. For CSM field initiatives, regional organizations are key partners, given their critical expertise and ability to identify needs, opportunities, and entry points for climate security work.

Researchers and civil society

Being plugged into new and evolving research is essential for the CSM to inform analysis across the United Nations system and design effective approaches in complex field environments. Through regular dialogue with research institutions and participation in conferences and workshops, the CSM is in a position to both absorb new insights and highlight research gaps emanating from the field, which in turn can help drive the international research agenda. The CSM is making a concerted push to diversify research partnerships and amplify the voices of academics from outside of Europe and North America. In some cases, research networks have enabled the CSM to connect with civil society in frontline communities, which has been critical to bring to the fore the lived experience of those most affected.

2019 Climate Action Summit

Jointly with the Social and Political Drivers Coalition and the Group of Friends on Climate and Security, the CSM organized a pre-summit event that featured practitioners showcasing innovative projects to address climate-related security risks in the Caribbean, the Middle East, Nepal, the Pacific, and Sudan. A standing room only audience heard about a diverse set of initiatives, ranging from mediation to alternative livelihoods, to empower communities and harness traditional knowledge on climate adaptation. Panelists underscored the importance of water, food and energy security for social cohesion and stressed the need to maximize synergies between adaptation, peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Strengthening the role of women in natural resource management was recognized as both an imperative and an opportunity for change.

2.3 Knowledge co-generation and management

A strong evidence base regarding the global linkages between climate change, peace and security is an important building block towards effective risk prevention and management. Thanks to the collective efforts of leading research institutions from around the world, United Nations entities, regional and sub-regional organizations, and non-governmental actors, a substantial body of knowledge has emerged in recent years. Nevertheless, more needs to be done to strengthen our shared understanding of climate-related security risks. The CSM supports efforts in this regard by co-generating new knowledge, filling research/policy/practice gaps, and contributing to the effective management of existing data and analysis in a clearing-house function.

In early 2020, the CSM launched a guidance package on climate-related security risks. This “toolbox”, targeted at the United Nations system but available to the general public, reflects the current state of knowledge in this area. Available in a number of languages, the toolbox contains a briefing note on the linkages between climate change and security, a conceptual approach to the assessment of climate-related security risks, a collection of relevant data sources, and a brief questionnaire to help climate-proof political analysis.¹ The conceptual approach represents the centerpiece of the guidance package and was developed at the 2019 Berlin Workshop (see above) in collaboration with a range of partners. It provides a systematic yet flexible approach to analyze the complex interplay between climate stressors, exposure, vulnerabilities and coping capacities.

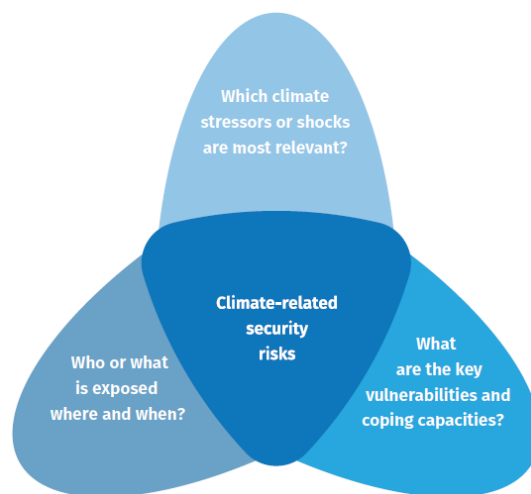


Figure 6: Conceptual approach

2020 UNDP study on prevention of violent extremism and climate security

The study shared insights on what a climate security lens can add to the work on the prevention of violent extremism (PVE), drawing on the experience of ongoing efforts in Central Asia, Iraq and Sudan. Through a desk review and consultation with the support of the CSM, the policy brief drew initial findings, including on the root causes of violent extremism and how they intersect with climate vulnerability; climate change as a risk-multiplier in conflict-affected and fragile contexts; climate security as a strategic consideration for non-state armed groups; climate action as part of an integrated approach to increase the opportunity cost of recruitment; the different roles and needs of women and youth; and strengthening regional approaches and strategies to address climate security and PVE.

The CSM also works closely with the different parts of its three constituent entities to support cross-cutting research at the intersection of climate security and other mandated areas. In 2020, this has led to the completion of UNDP research briefs on the interlinkages between climate security and the prevention of violent extremism and an analysis of the extent to which security implications were considered in the first round of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted by parties to the Paris Agreement. Research on the impact of climate change on peace mediation, the

gender differentiated impacts of climate security risks, and climate finance for sustaining peace are currently underway.

To support knowledge management, the CSM has built and works closely with a network of partners to help collect and share information. The CSM is testing different online tools to facilitate collaboration and an exchange of information on specific topics, in order to advance institutional learning and build a functioning policy-practice loop. This includes CSM support to thematic discussions on the SparkBlue platform in the fall of 2020.

¹ The toolbox is accessible at <https://dppa.un.org/en/addressing-impact-of-climate-change-peace-and-security>.

2.4 Capacity building

As United Nations entities and Member States, including in the Security Council, have noted, a shortfall in capacity can inhibit the ability of the United Nations system to systematically address climate-related security risks. Over the past 18 months, as the awareness of the linkages between climate change, peace and security has grown, so has the demand for training. In response, the CSM has developed an ambitious capacity building programme that combines initiatives targeted specifically at building skills in the area of climate security (e.g. for Peace and Development Advisors or the Peacebuilding Fund Secretariat) with efforts at mainstreaming climate security into broader, already existing training offerings (e.g. the Actionable Conflict Analysis Training in DPPA-DPO).

During the reporting period, the CSM has organized and co-organized around a dozen dedicated training sessions for practitioners across the United Nations system. Sessions build on the toolbox (see 2.3) and place a particular focus on key functions in the field. This includes Peace and Development Advisors, deployed in 65 locations around the world as part of the DPPA-UNDP Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention, whose role at the nexus of peace and development makes them critical interlocutors to mainstream analysis of climate-related security risks. Three targeted trainings were also organized jointly with the United Nations System Staff College, one with the Peacebuilding Fund, and one with the United Nations Development Cooperation Office. Moreover, in 2020, the CSM started work with the United Nations Joint Programme on Women, Natural Resources, Climate and Peace and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research on a Massive Open Online Course on climate security. Building on the work of the UNEP Environmental Advisor in UNSOM, work is also underway with special political missions to develop a training curriculum tailored to the needs of field operations.

2019 PDA Fellowship

The UNDP-DPPA Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention, the Folke Bernadotte Academy, and UNDP Oslo Governance Centre in December 2019 organized a week-long fellowship on climate security for Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs) and other field staff. The CSM provided technical advice, delivered substantive sessions, and assisted in the formulation of concrete ideas for action. Based on the fellowship, participants published [issue briefs](#) related to their respective contexts.

3. Opportunities, challenges and lessons learned

Scientific research and the experiences of millions of people around the world leave no doubt about the urgent need to address the linkages between climate change, peace and security. Integrating a climate security lens across planning, operations and programming is fast becoming an imperative for the United Nations and other actors, who are increasingly faced with the confluence of climate and security risks. At the time of writing, the Security Council has recognized the adverse effects of climate change, among other factors, on the stability of ten regional and country-specific situations. This growing attention reflects the reality that 75% of the field-based special political missions and many of the largest peacekeeping operations of the United Nations are deployed in countries or regions considered highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Yet, like all crises, the linkages between climate change, peace and security also create new opportunities. By strengthening integrated approaches, fostering inclusion, and opening windows for dialogue, climate security work can directly reinforce efforts at conflict prevention and sustaining peace. It can also help align different instruments across the humanitarian-

UN Security Council references to climate security

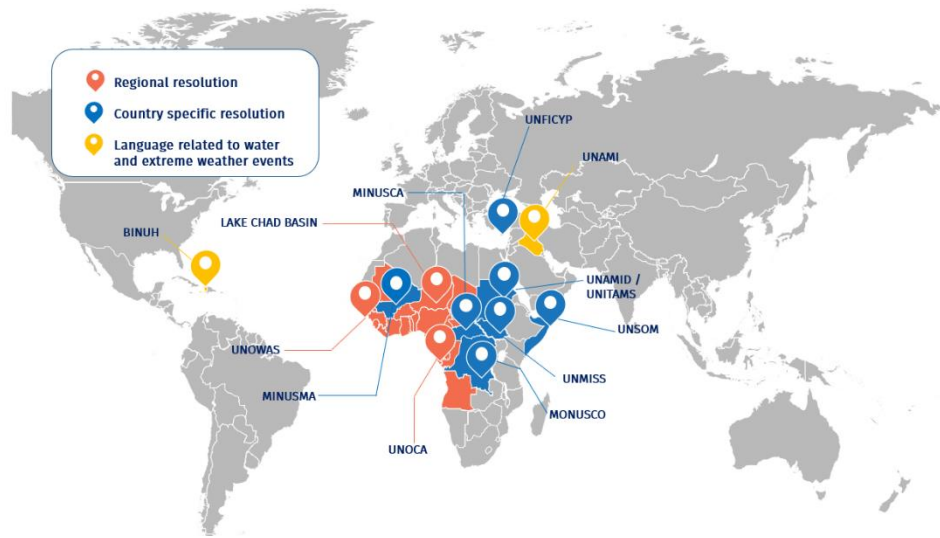


Figure 7: Security Council consideration of the adverse impacts of climate change on stability (As of 26 May 2021)

development-peace continuum to address short-term issues as well as the root causes and drivers of instability or humanitarian needs.

Yet a number of challenges need to be overcome in order to maximize these opportunities and effectively address climate-related security risks. A shared conceptual understanding of the topic remains elusive, and sensitivities continue around the framing of *climate security*. This can complicate cooperation between partners and make it difficult to evaluate outcomes and lessons learned from different activities. The inherently cross-cutting nature of climate security further means that this work often has no natural

Climate security and gender

A climate-sensitive approach to peacebuilding and peacemaking can create opportunities to strengthen inclusion and advance women's participation. Several recent studies, including by [UNEP, DPPA, UNDP, and UN Women](#), demonstrate how gender norms and power dynamics drive the differentiated exposure and coping capacities of women and men in the face of climate change. In practice, however, these linkages are not fully understood, nor addressed, and this hampers our collective ability to leverage the role of women and girls in addressing the climate, peace and security nexus. DPPA, jointly with the CSM, is developing a guidance note to collect good practices in this area and outline an approach to integrate a strong gender lens throughout the analysis, prevention and management of climate-related security risks.

home in the structures of international organizations or national governments, and no unit designated to take the lead and convene appropriate stakeholders. Bridging different policy areas to combine political expertise with technical knowledge is complicated, in particular given the lack of a shared vocabulary and diverging risk management approaches. Examples of effective approaches that connect prevention, risk management and resilience building remain rare.

Across the CSM's field initiatives, a growing number of good practices is

emerging to help deal with these challenges. Experience shows, for instance, the importance of investing upfront in collaboration and a shared knowledge base. Early in the scoping and design phase of new

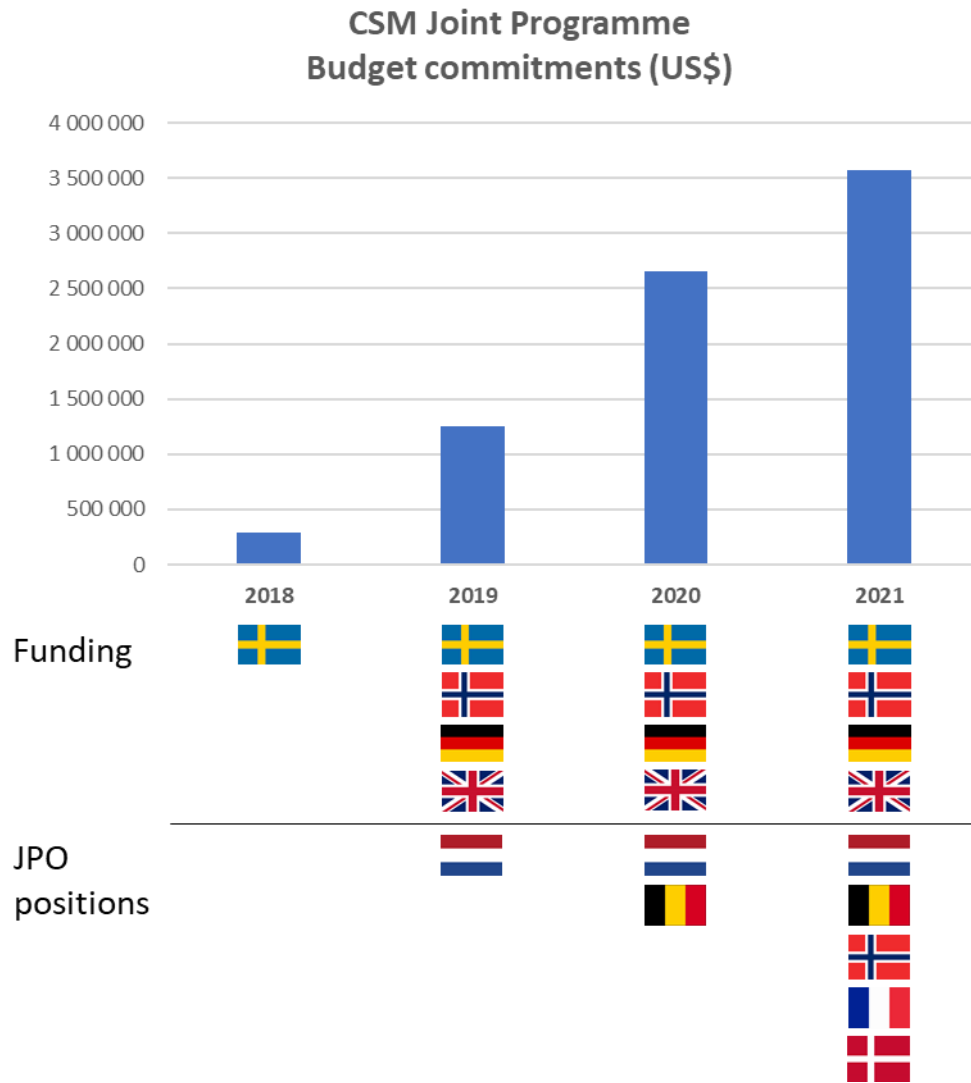
climate security initiatives, an in-depth analysis of the situation, identification of suitable entry points, and engagement of local stakeholders are critical steps that lay the foundation for success. To ensure sustainability and delivery of concrete results, the users of climate security analysis should be identified early and help feed findings into broader United Nations processes and national or regional policy frameworks. Deep knowledge of the interplay between vulnerabilities and coping capacities of states, communities and people must drive the development of tailored solutions. While climate change is a global phenomenon, there are no template approaches to address its impact on peace and security.

Building the necessary contextual knowledge requires a combination of quantitative and qualitative information, including through participatory mechanisms that integrate local knowledge and traditional practices. The aim is not only to identify drivers of past and current challenges but to collect information that helps to operationalize solutions in a forward-looking, preventive manner. The differentiated vulnerabilities and capacities of women and girls are particularly important in this regard and must be considered from the beginning, factoring into the analysis, design, implementation, and monitoring phases of all initiatives.² Where applicable, a dedicated capacity on climate security – in both field and HQ contexts – has shown to be an effective means of driving progress. Far from isolating climate security, a dedicated function can help to raise awareness, mainstream the issue across policy areas, and build further capacity. Such capacity is also useful to bridge the technical and political aspects of climate security and help translate scientific information into actionable policy terms.

The CSM will continue to identify good practices in the field and at headquarters to strengthen knowledge management and close the policy-practice loop. Nevertheless, each context will continue to require a tailored application of good practices to address particular challenges and maximize opportunities. Effective climate security risk prevention and management strategies demand an integrated approach that maximizes synergies between different sectors. As an interagency initiative, the CSM inherently thrives on cross-sectoral thinking and was designed to leverage the distinct strengths of its constituent entities. Replicating this approach at different levels – for instance in the shape of country-level task forces – can facilitate integrated action and connect efforts at peacebuilding, adaptation and resilience.

² DPPA and the CSM are compiling good practices in this area for a forthcoming policy note.

4. Financial snapshot



Thank you

The CSM would like to express its gratitude to the Government of Sweden, as founding partner of the CSM, and to the Governments of Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom for their generous contributions and consistent support. The CSM would also like to thank the Governments of the Netherlands and Belgium for their invaluable in-kind support through Junior Professional Officers. Without the strong support from partners, including at political and technical levels, the work of the CSM would not have been possible.

Moreover, the CSM would like to thank its many other partners in different United Nations entities, regional and sub-regional organizations, the research community, and civil society for their strong collaboration. These partnerships have helped foster innovative thinking, a shared language, a more robust evidence base and, critically, entry points to work on the ground where it matters most. They will remain vital in advancing this agenda globally and in more effectively addressing the linkages between climate change, peace and security.

