

Environmental Conflict Trainings

A Synopsis of Approaches and Further Needs

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INITIATIVE FOR  PEACEBUILDING

The logo for the Initiative for Peacebuilding, consisting of a blue circle with a white dot in the center.

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I. Introduction

Environmental degradation is increasingly perceived as a security challenge at the national and international level¹. The exacerbation of social and environmental vulnerability may fuel violent conflict when the effects of climate change and extreme weather events destabilize livelihoods and enhance competition over natural resources. However, research on the links between environmental change and the emergence of violent conflict revealed that the sociopolitical framework and adaptive capacities play a more significant role than the ecological degradation as such. Hence, besides sustainable natural resource management, addressing sociopolitical marginalization processes as well as providing legitimate institutions for conflict resolution are crucial factors for conflict prevention and transformation. Furthermore, empirical research points to the important potential of sociopolitical stabilization through resource cooperation. Collaborative natural resource management such as transboundary water management or sustainable forest management can stabilize relationships and secure livelihoods. Therefore, promoting such opportunities is receiving increasing attention from scholars and policy-makers alike. Training and capacity building are important tools in this context, as they provide and spread successful approaches dealing with the challenges related to environmentally induced conflicts.²

The present paper assesses the state of the art of specific trainings in this field and takes a closer look at their approaches. Questions addressed in this context are: Do the available trainings situate rivalry over access to natural resources within the larger sociopolitical and economic context of the affected societies? Do they explicitly address the cooperation and peacebuilding potential of shared natural resources? Are there explicit approaches for dealing with environmental factors in post-conflict and reconstruction contexts? The present survey indicates, that environmental factors and their potential for conflict and cooperation are only insufficiently addressed in broader trainings on conflict management or prevention and peacebuilding. Furthermore, those trainings addressing natural resource management

¹ The authors thank their colleagues from Adelphi for helpful comments on previous versions of this synopsis.

² For the purpose of the study, environmentally induced conflict and the subsequently used term "environmental conflict" are defined as violent conflicts linked to deteriorating environmental conditions or unsustainable use of resources such as land, water or forests. While resource scarcity or environmental degradation does not in itself predispose violent conflicts, it may exacerbate existing socio-economic problems of vulnerable societies or regions and thus possibly lead to the above defined environmental conflicts (on the current state of research see *Carius, Alexander et al. (2008): Climate Change and Security. Challenges for the German Development Cooperation. Eschborn: GTZ*).

seldom consider the macropolitical situation or specific conflict contexts. They are mostly focusing on the management of natural resources at the local level, but do not explicitly situate rivalries or conflict over these in the context civil wars or broader social unrest at the national level. However, such contexts may be a crucial driver of resource-related conflict and need to be understood and addressed for resolving environmental disputes at the local level. Generally, only few of the available trainings adopt such a combined approach integrating the local *and* the national or international level and the environmental *and* the broader socioeconomic context.³ Furthermore, within these particular trainings, target groups, objectives and environmental aspects are unevenly covered – leading to a heterogeneous array of measures.

The present review assesses publicly available trainings which explicitly address environmental issues and natural resources as a potential source of violent conflict. It rests on a structured, web-based research on conflict management trainings and manuals related to environmental or resource conflicts.⁴ Based on a typology of different providers, the survey addresses the characteristics and technical matters of the reviewed trainings along eleven categories. These categories range from general information like the providing institution to content-related characteristic such as the location of the training, the type, its objective, the target group, the conflict level addressed and the environmental aspects covered. Furthermore, organisational matters are also addressed and contact data provided.

To further clarify the scope of the study it shall be noted that - in general - past or announced trainings could not be included into the survey if they lacked in-depth information about content-related aspects of their work. **As a preliminary inquiry based on publicly available information, it thus welcomes participatory knowledge sharing for further expansion of the database⁵.** The database itself is accessible online at: www.adelphi-research.com.

³ For detailed reviews of conventional trainings on conflict transformation see: *Arajärvi, Outi (2007): Peace Building and Conflict Transformation in Europe. Current State and Needs of Training and Education, ARCA and Schmelzle, Beatrix (2006): Training for Conflict Transformation – An Overview of Approaches and Resources, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.*

⁴ The survey was conducted between March and July 2009 as an Internet-based research using key words (and their combination) such as “conflict”, “conflict resolution”, “conflict management”, “peacebuilding”, “environment”, “resources”, “natural resources”, “environmental conflict”, “environmental cooperation”, “natural resource management”, “training”, “toolkit”, “manual”, “capacity-building”, “workshop”, “seminar”. Additionally, a cross-reference search using known and found training providers has been employed with the same keywords. A full list of the agencies examined is provided in the Appendix.

⁵ Please send any suggestions to Annabelle Houdret, Houdret@adelphi-research.de

The subsequent section begins with a short overview on the institutions that provide such specialized trainings (II). It is followed by a detailed evaluation of these trainings and a discussion of future challenges and opportunities (III).

II. Who provides training on environmental conflicts?

Who is offering training on environmental conflicts and what kind of approaches and thematic scopes do they adopt? Which geographic dimensions of conflict are mostly addressed – local, national or international conflicts? While the present survey of trainings covering environmental issues does not claim to be exhaustive, it allows tentative conclusions to answer these questions. On the topic of “Natural Resource Management” (NRM), several trainings and manuals have been developed but they seldom refer to the broader sociopolitical situation or a general (post-) conflict context. In the field of peacebuilding and conflict management, trainings are provided too, but most of the identified providers rarely cover environmental issues. Furthermore, genuine trainings on environmental conflicts and their prevention, resolution or management are even less frequent. Two examples may illustrate this preliminary finding:

- a) *The United States Institute of Peace (USIP)* provided fifty-one trainings between 2006-2008 through their international education and training program to resolve and prevent violent conflicts. None of these were titled with reference to environmental issues and only one online available training manual (“*Natural Resources, Conflict, and Conflict Resolution*”) covers the environment, conflict and cooperation nexus.⁶
- b) Only one out of the nineteen different trainings offered in 2009 by the German *Akademie für Konflikttransformation (Academy for Conflict Transformation)* is exclusively dedicated to “*Natural Resources and Conflict*”, as its title indicates.⁷

While these examples are by no means exhaustive, trainings devoted to environmental conflicts and their management can in general be regarded as a narrow field. A look at the agencies offering specific environment-related conflict management trainings reveals that a general distinction among the different providers can be made between a) professional training institutes specialized in natural resource management and/or conflict management training courses and b) agencies where conflict trainings are limited and account for only a

⁶ See URL: <http://www.usip.org/training/onsite/date.html> for details on the trainings between 2006-2008 and URL: <http://www.usip.org/ed/npec/08sg.pdf> for the mentioned training manual [last accessed: Feb. 25, 2009].

⁷ See URL: <http://www.forumzfd-akademie.de/en-af/trainings-info-en> for a list of trainings available in English and explanations about the mentioned training on “*Natural Resources and Conflict*” [last accessed: Feb. 25, 2009].

small part of their overall activities. Examples of the first group are local non-governmental organizations often located in conflict zones or vulnerable regions (e.g. *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies* from Tanzania), while the latter are international organizations, donor agencies, international NGOs and academic institutions (e.g. *Food and Agriculture Organization/FAO*, *Styrelsen för internationellt utvecklingssamarbete/SIDA*, *International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources/IUCN* or the *University of Colorado* from the US). The following section summarizes key observations regarding the available trainings.

III. Main findings on existing trainings in environmental conflict resolution

Many local organizations involved in natural resource management also need to deal with related conflicts. However, few agencies located in vulnerable or post-conflict regions provide relevant training opportunities in the above-mentioned sense, i.e. linking the environmental to the broader sociopolitical issues of a given conflict. Both the standardized web search and a cross-reference search (through partners/links of providers) did not yield significant results and pointed only to a small number of trainings. These shared two common characteristics:

- Local organizations mostly provide short on-site trainings for decision-makers or practitioners from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).
- Natural resources management (NRM) is focused predominantly on a regional or community level, which points to the rather preventive and local character of most of these trainings.

The aforementioned *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies* from Tanzania, however, diverges from the above-cited pattern as it explicitly addresses post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction processes and covers unsustainable natural resource management as a driver of violent conflicts in Eastern and Central Africa.

Regarding International Organizations (IOs), the survey shows that they offer only relatively little training explicitly addressing the prevention or resolution of environmental conflicts. Their extensive research in this field mostly leads to an increasing number of policy recommendations while training manuals or even on-site trainings are rarely offered. Notable exceptions in this case are the FAO and the *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO). The former provides ten training manuals related to natural resource management while UNESCO offers several NRM training manuals as well and a short course on "*Negotiation and Mediation for Water Conflict Management*". Although these

trainings are targeted at a variety of actors ranging from practitioners to decision-makers and trainers themselves, they have a rather narrow and preventive character, mostly focused on the sustainable management of certain resources. The UNESCO trainings for example only cover water as a potential source of conflict and are not fashioned as post-conflict tools. Generally, the survey showed that despite their important resources, expertise and activities, few IOs provide training related to environmental conflicts, and that the existing trainings seldom address post conflict contexts.

In terms of donors and implementing agencies in the field of development cooperation, the number of publicly available, and thus reviewable trainings, is low compared to the overall output of these agencies. Although the environment, natural resources and conflict management are common matters addressed by these agencies, the survey indicates that trainings covering the interrelation of these issues and environmentally induced conflicts in particular are disproportionately rare. Most of the reviewed donors and their implementing agencies do not refer to any such trainings on their websites. This indicates that they are either not active in this area or that information is not made publicly available. Few exceptions are the German capacity-building organization InWEnt and the Swedish donor agency SIDA, as they both offer a variety of on-site trainings on (transboundary) water management. However, while designed as in-depth seminars on sustainable NRM for decision-makers or experienced executives from certain vulnerable regions (e.g. Great Lakes, MENA region), these trainings do not explicitly address violent environmental conflicts, post-conflict situations or peacebuilding dimensions.

While many International Nongovernmental Organizations (INGOs) exist, a search of trainings among the most prominent INGOs from the fields of peacebuilding, environmental protection and development (see the Appendix) did not yield significant results. Although many organizations work on awareness raising, lobbying and various on-site projects, this survey found only two organizations that provide a small number of trainings addressing environment-related conflicts. Both the IUCN and the *World Wide Fund For Nature* (WWF) provide general training manuals on NRM issues, mostly focused on enhancing the transboundary management of natural resources or regional biodiversity hotspots. While these training manuals show a strong emphasis on cooperative actions to prevent conflicts, they are partially related to peacebuilding or post-conflict initiatives as well and address a wide ranging audience from practitioners to trainers.

Whereas INGOs – with the notable exceptions mentioned above – do not seem to provide a substantial number of trainings related to the sociopolitical dimensions of environmental conflicts, the opposite appears to be true for the group of academic institutions under review.

This diversified group of actors ranges from regional think-tanks such as the South-African *Centre for Conflict Resolution* to universities such as the *University of Colorado* or the *Transcend University*. The survey shows a variety of trainings offered by such academic institutions that have included findings on environmental degradation, natural resources and violent conflict into their training programs. Most of these institutions take an academic approach and combine research on environmental conflicts with experiences on mediation and conflict resolution techniques. Yet, they often do not focus on particular regions or natural resources in their trainings, choosing instead to provide training on environmental conflict theories and possible solutions. Despite these common features, few further similarities could be observed. Trainings from academic institutions may either take the form of training manuals or on-site trainings and the latter may differ in their duration from two-day courses to twelve-week seminars. Aside from such differences in rather technical matters, academic institutions – like the other reviewed agencies – only seem to have a very limited focus on the macropolitical context or on the dimensions of civil conflict or peacebuilding.

IV. Conclusion

Scholars, policy-makers and activists alike are paying increasing attention to the links between resource scarcity, environmental degradation and violent conflict. This trend, especially in the context of climate change, poses the question of how to mitigate such conflicts. The present paper reflects the results of a structured internet search assessing the small number of publicly available trainings on conflict management related to environmental issues. Yet, the majority of these trainings on peacebuilding or violent conflict management cover environmental issues only marginally, thus not reflecting the potential demand. On the basis of this assessment, the following trends can be identified:

- In comparison to the overall amount of trainings on conflict resolution and conflict management, publicly available trainings focusing on environmental conflicts and their sociopolitical context are in general rare and difficult to access.
- Most of the reviewed trainings do not explicitly address environmental issues in conflict or post-conflict situations, but rather focus on general education and methods of sustainable and cooperative natural resource management. While such NRM trainings clearly have a preventive character, they are often not designed to provide conflict prevention in the forefront or aftermath of violent conflicts.

- A large group of agencies, in particular IOs, donors, and INGOs, have few reviewable trainings on environmental conflict prevention or conflict management as measured by their academic expertise and organizational capacity on this issue and their comparative advantage as both globally and locally represented institutions.
- Water and its sustainable management are by far the most frequently addressed issues covered by the reviewed trainings, and seem to have the most advanced curricula and methodologies as well. By comparison other natural resources or environmental issues as potential drivers of conflict are only marginally covered.
- Most of the reviewed trainings do not focus on a particular geographic region. Furthermore, hardly any of the reviewed trainings include local or regional practices on environmental conflict resolution.

On the basis of these conclusions, the following recommendations for improving training opportunities in the field of environmental conflict can be formulated:

Mainstreaming knowledge on environmental issues into conflict trainings

Since the overall amount of trainings covering environmental conflicts seems small compared to the general “market” of conflict management trainings, providers should incorporate as a first step environmental conflict issues into their already existing trainings. A second step would be to develop and mainstream specific trainings that explicitly focus on environmental issues as crucial aspect of conflicts and their management. Existing specialized trainings on Security Sector Reform, Human Rights or Gender, which embed these issues into the context of conflict prevention or conflict management could serve as helpful orientation.

Addressing environmental factors in situations of violent conflict, post-conflict and peacebuilding

Most of the reviewed trainings focus on questions of cooperative NRM at a local or national level. While such trainings may prevent the onset of violent conflicts, such collaborative actions seem unlikely in the immediate aftermath of violent conflict. Trainings should therefore explicitly address environmental issues in conflict and post-conflict situations while existing approaches on NRM should be adapted to such situations as well. Furthermore,

integrating knowledge on the potential of cooperation on natural resources in a peacebuilding context could strengthen the capacities for identifying new opportunities. Building upon existing cooperation on environmental issues can facilitate trustbuilding and conflict transformation beyond the environmental interests at stake.

Diversifying the topics covered by trainings

Since water is the most frequently addressed issue within the reviewed trainings, it is recommended to expand the focus from water to the role of other important natural resources, such as land or forests in conflict contexts. While such an expansion of issues seems necessary, some trainings on environmental conflicts should keep a general approach as well in order to serve as a common and universally applicable methodology. With respect to the water sector, most reviewed trainings cover transboundary aspects while only very few address the intrastate level.

Adapting training methodologies

Trainings, whether taking the form of on-site workshops or online available manuals, should be sensitive towards cultural settings and local languages. Most of the publicly available manuals for instance are only provided in English. While English may guarantee a certain universality and may serve as an entry point in many countries, translations of trainings and particularly of all relevant material into local languages will allow an improved dissemination and appropriation. The specific cultural and religious context of an environmental conflict also often plays a tremendous role in its emergence and violent or cooperative development. These factors therefore need to be taken into account more explicitly in the contents of the trainings, but also in the methodological approach chosen.

Encouraging traditional forms of environmental cooperation

Traditional and local practices in conflict resolution often enjoy an important legitimacy and should therefore be more specifically mobilized for environmental conflict resolution. Wherever specific approaches to the allocation of natural resources and the resolution of subsequent conflicts exist, for example in form of traditional water distribution systems, they need to be considered within the training's overall conflict and cooperation perspective. This also requires a specific adaptation of the often quite general trainings to the local context. However, as established patterns of resource allocation may also be root causes of conflicts, a careful evaluation of the possibilities and limits of such approaches needs to be undertaken. Furthermore, local ownership may be increased through the integration of local

traditional authorities, other leaders, and organizations into the development and diffusion of environmental conflict trainings.

Improving the access to trainings

Trainings need to be easily accessible, not only regarding their language and cultural background, but also with respect to the necessary practical means. While online manuals make sense in some contexts, their availability cannot be ensured in remote areas. Furthermore, the visibility of environmental conflict trainings on the internet needs to be improved. Training providers could furthermore initiate platforms where groups can indicate their interest in training opportunities and discuss their needs.

Appendix: List of reviewed providers of trainings related to environmental conflicts

International organisations	Donors or funding countries	International non-governmental organisations	Academic institutions	Local organizations
AFRICAN UNION (AU)	CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (CIDA)	CARE	AKADEMIE FÜR KONFLIKTTTRANSFORMATION (GERMANY)	ACCORD (SA)
CAP-NET	DEUTSCHER ENTWICKLUNGSDIENSTS (DED)	EARTHWORKS	AUSTRIAN STUDY CENTER FOR PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION (AUSTRIA)	ANNAN PEACEKEEPING CENTER (GHANA)
EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE (EITI)	DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID)	EUROPEAN PEACEBUILDING LIAISON OFFICE	BERGHOF CENTER (GERMANY)	ASIAN MUSLIM ACTION NETWORK
EUROPEAN UNION (EU)	GESELLSCHAFT FÜR TECHNISCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT (GTZ)	GLOBAL WITNESS	CENTRE FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION (SA)	BIOPOLITICS INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION (GREECE)
ENVIRONMENT AND SECURITY INITIATIVE (ENVSEC)	INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE (IDRC)	GREEN CROSS	CLINGENDAEL (NL)	CDR ASSOCIATES (USA)
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO)	INWENT	INTERNATIONAL ALERT	COPACK (FINLAND)	CENTRE FOR PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES (CAMBODIA)
GLOBAL WATER PARTNERSHIP	REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA	IUCN	GERMAN DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE (GERMANY)	COASTMAN (BALTIC AREA)
INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (IFAD)	SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION (SDC)	SAFERWORLD	DEPARTMENT OF PEACE AND CONFLICT RESEARCH UNIVERSITY OF UPPSALA (SWEDEN)	COALITION FOR PEACE IN AFRICA (KENYA)
NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT (NEPAD)	SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY (SIDA)	SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND	EASTERN MENONITE UNIVERSITY (USA)	CONCUR (USA)
ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE (OSCE)	UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (USAID)	TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL	ENVIRONMENTAL LAW INSTITUTE	FOUNDATION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY & SUSTAINABILITY (USA)
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC)	ZENTRUM FÜR INTERNATIONALE FRIEDENSEINSÄTZE (ZIF)	WORLD WIDE FUND FOR NATURE (WWF)	GENEVA CENTRE FOR SECURITY POLICY (CH)	GENEVA CENTRE FOR SECURITY POLICY (CH)
UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP)			INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION (USA)	INSTITUTE FOR INTEGRATIVE CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND PEACEBUILDING (CH)
UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (UNEP)			INSTITUTE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY (USA)	INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES (TANZANIA)
UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO)			INSTITUTE FOR INTEGRATIVE CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION AND PEACEBUILDING (AUSTRIA)	PEACE OPERATIONS TRAINING INSTITUTE (USA)