



# Lessons from environmental peacebuilding programming

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## Questions

*What lessons are there from conflict resolution/peacebuilding programmes that include land, resource management, and/or environmental issues (including climate change)?*

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# 1. Summary

This rapid literature review collates lessons from conflict resolution/peacebuilding programmes that include land, resource management, and/or environmental issues.

This is a burgeoning area of research which draws on a number of interrelated concepts such as environmental peacebuilding, resilience building, and bottom-up peacebuilding. Ide and Scheffran (in Ide, 2017, p.545) conceptualise environmental peacebuilding as including “all forms of cooperation on environmental issues which simultaneously conceptually aims at or de facto achieves the transformation of relations between hostile parties towards peaceful conflict resolution”. The environmental peacebuilding literature has moved the focus from resource scarcity, violence and competition to how the environment can incentivise cooperation and peace (Dresse, Fischhendler, Nielsen & Zikos, 2019) through rebuilding key relationships, trust, and a desire for coexistence (Bromwich, 2014; Roulin, et al., 2017). Thus rebuilding and restoring cooperation over natural resources and the environment is important for both peacebuilding and for governance more generally (Bromwich, 2014).

Environmental peacebuilding includes a wide range of environmental and natural resource activities, e.g. including activities in the areas of: climate change mitigation and preparation; agriculture and farming; natural resource exploitation; access, use and ownership of land; rewilding; and nature conservation; etc. This query draws on a range of examples from these areas, and from different countries, and provides lessons for the key issues most mentioned in that literature.

## ***Key findings***

- It is clear from the literature that the relationships between natural resources, the environment and violent conflict are complex, not linear, and context specific. Historically much of the literature focussed on whether environmental scarcity causes conflict, or on high-level governance structures to manage natural resources. However, the current focus is much broader - it acknowledges that violent conflict has a fundamental impact on natural resources, and environmental governance systems; it explores the socio-political factors that play a role in exacerbating environmental vulnerability; it focuses on the roles that environmental pressures can play in exacerbating tensions, violence or political fragility, and in hindering peacebuilding; and it focuses on the roles environmental activities can have in building communication, cooperation and coexistence.
- The literature widely discusses the role that environmental pressures can play in exacerbating tensions, violence or political fragility, and in hindering peacebuilding (Tänzler, et al., 2018, p.5). The flipside of this is that the literature considers environmental peacebuilding to have a potentially transformative effect on conflict and community relationships. Environmental peacebuilding presents different opportunities for engagement according to the local context and the stage the context is at on the peace and security continuum (e.g. whether it is a period of preventive diplomacy/early warning, peace-making and mediation, peacekeeping, peacebuilding/sustaining peace, and sustainable development
- It is widely acknowledged that communication, cooperation and collaboration around natural resources can be an essential entry point for dialogue and for confidence building between divided groups and communities. Thus it is importance to focus analysis and activities on relationships.

- While there is a growing understanding of how peacebuilding and the environment could complement each other, and may undermine peace if not addressed, conflict and fragility analyses still do not incorporate substantive analysis of environmental issues (Tänzler, et al., 2018, p.4). This is widely identified as a key limitation that stems from a number of analytical challenges, and from the lack of political and strategic prioritisation of this agenda.
- There are a number of institutional barriers to integrating environmental activities and peacebuilding. E.g. the different actors involved (e.g. foreign policy, humanitarian, development, environmental) tend to work with different objectives, timeframes, budgets and incentives. There is a need for more institutional integration, coherence and coordination between the different sectors to adequately tackle the cross-cutting demands.
- Women's' central roles in natural resource management and agricultural production, makes them crucial actors in environmental peacebuilding, yet the failure to recognise the specific challenges and opportunities women face risks perpetuating inequalities and deepening grievances. Despite the evidence of women's specific inequalities, programmatic responses that are gender sensitive are in their infancy (Stork, et al., 2013).
- While much of the literature on environmental peacebuilding is focussed on local-level activities and bottom-up development and peacebuilding activities, ultimately this needs to be part of a multileveled approach at the local, national and international levels.

### ***Literature base***

There is a large and disparate literature base that could be considered to provide lessons on the broad remit of environmental peacebuilding. This is partly due to the broad spectrum of issues that the environment can be considered to cover (as above). The literature which provides high-level lessons on this is mainly produced by practitioners (especially the UN agencies), and there are a number of academic articles that provide micro-level case studies. While there is a lot of literature providing overall principles, guidance, and lessons, there is less literature that specifically evaluates programmes in this area. This literature has increased significantly in recent years as the environment has moved up as a political priority for many donors.

## **2. Lessons from environmental peacebuilding programming**

### **Natural resources contribute to conflict through varied pathways**

It is clear from the literature that the relationships between natural resources, the environment and violent conflict are complex, not linear, and context specific (Bromwich, 2014; SIDA, 2018). UNEP (2016) distinguish, broadly, between “violent conflicts where natural resources act as an economic means for financing conflict, versus situations where natural resources contribute to the social and political motivation for conflict” (UNEP, 2016). It highlights that “tensions and grievances over natural resources are rarely, if ever, the sole cause of violent conflict”. And that the distinct and varied characteristics of each natural resource in its specific context mean that natural resources can drive conflicts in different ways (UNEP, 2016). E.g. the breakdown in

governance that conflict causes can make natural resources particularly vulnerable to looting (UNEP, 2016).

**Historically much of the literature focussed on whether environmental scarcity causes conflict, or on high-level governance structures to manage natural resources.** This tended to lead to “overarchingly technocratic prescriptions” focussed on security or high-level governance mechanisms, while the structural realities of land enclosure and the needs of resource users such as farmers were disregarded (McAllister & Wright, 2019, p.790).

**The current focus on environmental peacebuilding acknowledges that violent conflict has a fundamental impact on natural resources, and environmental governance systems** (SIDA, 2018). It explores the socio-political factors that play a role in exacerbating environmental vulnerability – e.g. lack of financial resources, technologies, knowledge or rule of law – that make countries ill equipped to adapt, and that make some groups more vulnerable, to environmental shocks and climate change (Tänzler, Rüttinger & Scherer, 2018, p.5).

## **The potential to hold back peace / the transformative potential of environmental peacebuilding**

The literature widely discusses the role that environmental pressures can play in exacerbating tensions, violence or political fragility, and in hindering peacebuilding (Tänzler, et al., 2018, p.5). The flipside of this is that the literature considers environmental peacebuilding to have a potentially transformative effect on conflict and community relationships. This central role occurs because natural resources often provide a main livelihood to people in developing countries, and this is even more of a lifeline during violent conflicts when basic service provision breaks down (UNEP, 2016). Thus there is an essential and practical need for cooperation at this level – e.g. small-scale farming is the mainstay of rural livelihoods (McAllister & Wright, 2019). Environmental concerns also tend to cut across identities - e.g. nature conservation is seen as providing important opportunities for dialogue as it can bridge culture, tradition, language, party political, and religious divides (UNEP, 2015; McAllister & Wright, 2019).

Farming can re-forge relationships to bridge divisions, framing can unite communities around land-use practices or bio-cultural resource protection, it can form alternative sources of power and identity, and learning to pool skills and act collectively can build capacity and impetus for ongoing action (McAllister & Wright, 2019). “These characteristics were found more prominently where landscape activities had created a sense of collective endeavour” (McAllister & Wright, 2019). All this can help communities to transcend conflict boundaries (McAllister & Wright, 2019). And natural resource and environmental cooperation can have important spill over effects, where it can lead to cooperation on other issues and can develop and establish trust for continued joint action (UNEP, 2016). Local environmental activities can also address the “underlying power and complex social relations that define access to, and control over, environmental resources”, and thus can redevelop community relations (McAllister & Wright, 2019, p.790). One programmatic example is the USAID Peace Centers for Climate and Social Resilience in Ethiopia which have started to use dialogues on climate-related resource challenges as a mechanism to address tensions among different pastoralist groups within Ethiopia (Tänzler, et al., 2018).

UNEP (2015, p.9) depicts the risks and opportunities that environmental peacebuilding presents in relation to the “peace and security continuum” (e.g. whether it is a period of preventive diplomacy/early warning, or peace-making and mediation, etc) in Figure 1. It identifies the following broad environmental peacebuilding goals (UNEP, 2015, p.40):

### **1. Preventive diplomacy/early warning**

- Ensure resource governance is transparent, inclusive, accountable, sustainable and equitable
- Identify violations of economic, social and cultural rights linked to natural resources
- Identify resource scarcity hotspots and livelihood support needs
- Support existing mechanisms that channel the voice of women

### **2. Peace-making and mediation**

- Support dialogue between parties
- Provide impartial technical information
- Identify mutual benefits from natural resources
- Build capacity for interest-based negotiation and for natural resource management
- Include natural resources in negotiations and agreements where they are a conflict driver or means
- Open the political space for key resource stakeholders to engage, including women

### **3. Peacekeeping**

- Secure and demilitarise resource rich areas
- Issue sanctions against conflict resources and support their enforcement
- Support the implementation of natural resource clauses in peace agreements
- Prevent threat financing from environmental crime
- Restore administration of natural resources

### **4. Peacebuilding/sustaining peace**

- Establish a national vision and a framework for resource governance reforms combined with capacity building
- Create jobs and resilient livelihoods around natural resources for men and women
- Secure land right and other resource rights as a basis for sustainable resource management
- Use cooperation over natural resources as a basis for trust building between divided groups
- Develop co-management regimes and local dispute resolution processes for natural resources
- Develop natural resources in a conflict and gender sensitive manner
- Use resources as economic incentives for peace
- Include a specific focus on ex-combatants, marginalised groups, and women

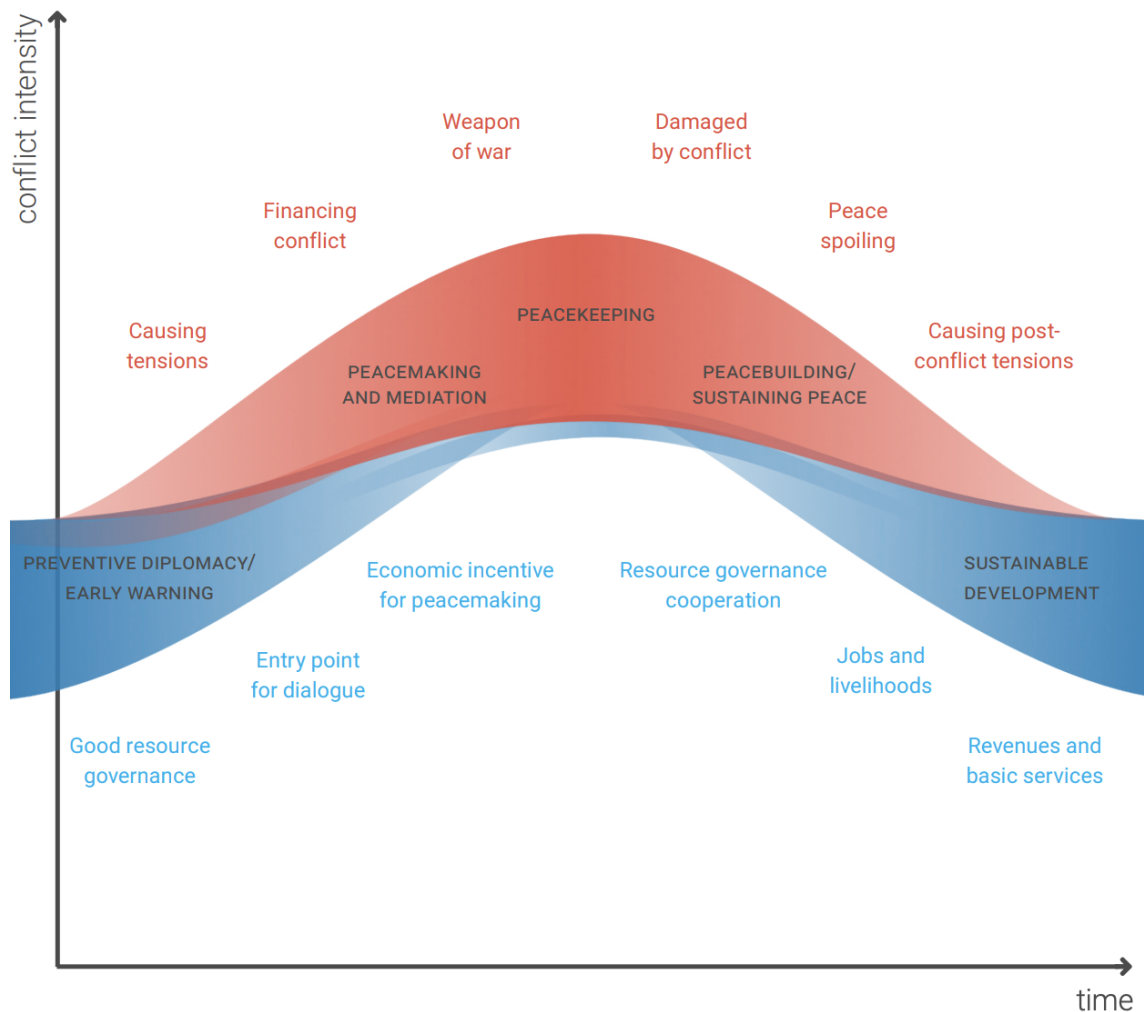
### **5. Sustainable development**

- Build inclusive, transparent and accountable political and economic institutions
- Provide opportunities for inclusive decision-making on natural resources, including for women and indigenous groups

- Share benefits from natural resources in an equitable manner
- Ensure public rights to information, participation and justice in decision-making on natural resources and the environment
- Increase transition towards an inclusive green economy for human well-being and social equity

These stages are depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Conceptualisation of risks and opportunities from natural resources and the environment along the peace and security continuum**



Source: UNEP (2015: 9), [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/9821/-Addressing\\_the\\_role\\_of\\_natural\\_resources\\_in\\_conflict\\_and\\_peacebuilding\\_a\\_summary\\_of\\_progress\\_from\\_UNEPs\\_Environmental\\_Cooperation\\_for\\_Peacebuilding.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/9821/-Addressing_the_role_of_natural_resources_in_conflict_and_peacebuilding_a_summary_of_progress_from_UNEPs_Environmental_Cooperation_for_Peacebuilding.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y)

Yet despite the potential for environmental peacebuilding approaches to transform community relations, the reality of the complexity of social relations in conflict and post-conflict environments means that these activities often miss their goals. E.g. the reconstruction of water supply infrastructure by the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) found that the community management model used “did not lead to more cooperation among

community members and did not enhance the stability and cohesiveness of local communities” (Krampe & Gignoux, 2018). Krampe and Gignoux (2018) highlight a number of explanations for this failure. The locals did not have the resources to maintain the equipment, creating tensions with the transitional administration. The international community did not understand the local social structures and what constitutes a community in East Timor. And tensions arose from the traditional Timorese versus more modern forms of water resource management.

## **Opportunity for dialogue and confidence building**

It is widely acknowledged that communication, cooperation and collaboration around natural resources can be an essential entry point for dialogue and for confidence building between divided groups and communities (e.g. UNEP, 2016; Tänzler, et al., 2018). “Some natural resources or environmental issues seem to have more cooperation and peacebuilding potential than others – much depends on how “politicised” the resource is within the prevailing political context combined with the historical levels of conflict and cooperation around the specific resource” (UNEP, 2016). Cooperation required there to be mutual interests and somewhat the agreement of a common vision (even if implicit and not articulated) (UNEP, 2016).

In another UNEP report, Bromwich (2014) highlights the importance of focussing on relationships in the interrelated areas of governance, community resilience, climate change adaptation, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, “precisely because these agendas all rely on improved relationships”. He finds three types of relationships that need to be restored to rebuild good governance: (a) institution to institution; (b) institution to community; and (c) community to community”. And identifies five core dimensions of a relationship: “directness (good communication); commonality (shared purpose); continuity (time together and a shared history); multiplexity (mutual understanding and breadth); and parity (fairness)” (Bromwich, 2014).

## **Lack of analytical framework to integrate analyses of conflict, the environment, and natural resources**

While there is a growing understanding of how peacebuilding and the environment could complement each other, and may undermine peace if not addressed, conflict and fragility analyses still do not incorporate substantive analysis of environmental issues (Tänzler, et al., 2018, p.4). This is widely identified as a key limitation that stems from a number of analytical challenges, and from the lack of political and strategic prioritisation of this agenda.

While there are many peace and conflict methodologies and toolkits,<sup>1</sup> and various (environmental) vulnerability methodologies, there is no integrated toolkit or methodology (Tänzler, et al., 2018, p.5). Developing an integrated and standardised toolkit is challenging as fragility and climate impacts are highly context specific (Tänzler, et al., 2018, p.5). And different methodologies will lead to different diagnoses of problems and programmatic responses. E.g. Yousaf, et al. (2014, p.6) highlight the need to monitor and analyse local level agreements that manage access to resources to learn from them what works and their evolution. Yet analysis is also further complicated by the standard challenges of working in and on fragile and conflict

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<sup>1</sup> See the topic guide on conflict analysis by Herbert (2017) for a summary of the main conflict analysis toolkits developed for policymakers and practitioners.

affected states (FCAS) - e.g. data, research and access is often limited by the security situation (Tänzler, et al., 2018).

It is clear that environmental assessments are fundamental for priority setting when working in this area (UNEP, 2015), and that taking a conflict sensitive approach is essential to ensure that interventions do no harm, such as aggravating tensions between communities (Tänzler, et al., 2018). However, as yet, there is limited guidance and debate on how to do this effectively (Tänzler, et al., 2018). E.g. although SIDA (2018) carries out interventions targeting both climate-change and conflict, it has not integrated its environment, climate change and conflict analyses. Tänzler, et al. (2018) identify that a guide on conflict-sensitive adaptation for the German Ministry for the Environment and the Federal Environment Agency could be used as a starting point for developing such guidance. Tänzler, et al. (2018) also identify the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) processes (for climate change) as an entry point to build up analytical capacity.

## **Institutional barriers to effective programming**

There are a number of institutional barriers to integrating environmental activities and peacebuilding. The different actors involved (e.g. foreign policy, humanitarian, development, environmental) tend to work with different objectives, timeframes, budgets and incentives. This makes them administratively siloed, and there are a lack of incentives to integrate (Tänzler, et al., 2018). The two communities of practice are also held back by the lack of common language and concepts (Tänzler, et al., 2018). E.g. in East Timor the UNTAET's water supply infrastructure reconstruction project faced a "difficult transition from short-term relief efforts to long-term planning and the uncoordinated work of too many actors during the emergency phase impacted the long-term perceptions of the state authority" (Krampe & Gignoux, 2018).

There is a need for more institutional integration, coherence and coordination between the different sectors to adequately tackle the cross-cutting demands that occur from natural resource management and climate change mitigation. While the leadership of this needs to come from a high leadership level (SIDA, 2018), robust governance structures are needed at local, national and regional levels to address these risks (Tänzler, et al., 2018). "Without coordination and leadership, the risk that adaptation in one area leads to maladaptation in another increases" (SIDA, 2018). E.g. within the UN, natural resource management requires a strategy that "goes well beyond" the mandates and capacities of individual UN agencies (UNEP, 2016).

## **Importance of gender sensitive programming**

Women's central roles in natural resource management and agricultural production, makes them crucial actors in environmental peacebuilding, yet the failure to recognise the specific challenges and opportunities women face "risks perpetuating inequalities and deepening grievances linked to natural resource rights, access and control, which have proven to be powerful catalysts for violence" (Stork, Travis & Halle, 2013). E.g. the UNTAET's water supply reconstruction project failed to include women in local water-user committees (as well as other marginalised), which inhibited the diffusion of more progressive norms (Krampe & Gignoux, 2018). "Addressing issues of inequality related to resource access and ownership, participation in decision-making and benefit sharing early on in the peacebuilding process is therefore a critical condition for lasting peace and development" (Stork, Travis & Halle, 2013).

A UN funded paper, based on interviews and literature review, finds that despite the evidence of women's specific inequalities in accessing, owning and using of natural resources, and the



impacts on peacebuilding and conflict, programmatic responses seeking to address this remain in their infancy (Stork, et al., 2013). Their paper recommends the following (Stork, et al., 2013, p.7-8):

- **“Promote women’s participation in formal and informal decision-making structures and governance processes related to natural resource management in peacebuilding”** (Stork, et al., 2013, p.7-8). While the peacebuilding phase can provide a window of opportunity for reform, discriminatory laws and policies (at the sub-national, national and regional levels) must be understood and addressed so that women are able to participate in governance processes (Stork, et al., 2013). Entry points include (Stork, et al., 2013, p.32-36):
  - Formalising women’s roles in peace negotiations
  - Supporting women’s engagement in decision-making bodies (e.g. national ministries and regional representation bodies, land commissions, water resource boards and forestry committees)
  - Capitalizing on women’s leadership in civil society
- **“Adopt proactive measures to protect women from resource-related physical violence and other security risks early in the peacebuilding period”** (Stork, et al., 2013, p.7-8). Failure to understand and respond to the specific gendered risks and vulnerabilities post-conflict means that women and men face significant risks in their daily lives, and the continued exposure to insecurity and violence can undermine peacebuilding (Stork, et al., 2013). Entry points to address this include (Stork, et al., 2013, p.36-40):
  - Building awareness with aid and peacekeeping actors of the threats faced by women while gathering natural resources
  - Promoting innovative technologies that reduce resource demands within conflict-affected communities
  - Creating secure boundaries and transport to areas most frequented by women (e.g. removing landmines, ensuring women’s safety at water point and sanitation facilities)
  - Ensuring infrastructure projects are developed in consultation with women
  - Engagement and sensitization of men and men’s groups
- **“Remove barriers and create enabling conditions to build women’s capacity for productive and sustainable use of natural resources”** (Stork, et al., 2013, p.7-8). Support for women’s productive activities in the agricultural sector is often lacking and attention needs to be given to household responsibilities, cultural norms, community infrastructure development, rehabilitation projects, financial and technical resources. Entry points to address this include (Stork, et al., 2013, p.41):
  - Strengthening women’s abilities to capitalise on their natural resource management roles
  - Legal protection for land and resource rights for women
  - Women’s wage and self-employment in natural resource sectors
  - “Addressing these barriers requires concise and complementary efforts by national and local-level authorities early on in peacebuilding contexts, as detailed in the three-track approach of the United Nations Policy for Post-conflict Employment Creation, Income Generation and Reintegration, which includes immediate emergency employment and income-generation activities (Track A), capacity-building and

improved access to credit for small business growth (Track B), and the creation of non-discriminatory employment policies (Track C), implemented in parallel with different intensities over time” (Stork, et al., 2013, p.41).

- “Comprehensive assessments to better understand the specific needs and opportunities for women across various natural resource sectors, and to establish a baseline for monitoring” (Stork, et al., 2013, p.41).

## **A multileveled approach needed**

While much of the literature on environmental peacebuilding is focussed on local-level activities and bottom-up development and peacebuilding activities, ultimately this needs to be part of a multileveled approach. E.g. Roulin, et al. (2017) explains this in cross-border nature conservation programming as:

- Local – taking a bottom-up approach where people from both sides of a border initiate nature conservation programs.
- National - national leaders need to support and invest financial and human resources to promote the projects
- International – the international community needs a common platform to mediate between communities in war, and nature conservation offers this platform

Tänzler, et al. (2018) find that for climate change adaptation, peacebuilding and conflict prevention, participatory adaptation processes, at the local level, “are particularly well suited to building resilient communities, as they give marginalised groups the opportunity to voice their concerns, thus promoting inclusion”. However, they underline that adaptation measures might cause or contribute to friction and conflict if they are not designed in a conflict sensitive way (Tänzler, et al., 2018).

Roulin, et al. (2017) elaborate lessons for local and international actors for environmental peacebuilding activities, including:

### **Local:**

- For cross-border interactions to be credible, activities should have a firm local rooting and be beneficial within each country
- Work on common, politically neutral goals to strengthen common regional identities and to challenge stereotypes of the cross-border community
- Local actors need to appeal to, and unite, high-profile partners to promote the impact of the activities, to ensure new projects are financed and developed.

### **International:**

- Ideas from one side of the border may be considered intrusive by those on the other side of the border, although local cooperation can be built and attitudes towards other groups can change.
- Third party peacemakers (e.g. neutral countries, international NGOs, etc) can help organise international support, raise funds, and increase the legitimacy of projects.
- International actors can garner support for initiatives across political divides

## Examples of environmental peacebuilding

### *Dafur*

A study on Dafur finds that national level attempts to resolve its conflicts have not succeeded in bringing lasting peace, yet there are interesting examples of peace-making and collaboration at the local level where numerous agreements have been brokered, with varying levels of success (Yousaf, Fadali & Adam, 2014, p.6). They agree that while local agreements cannot resolve the overarching Dafur conflict, it is an essential compliment to the high-level political agreements (Yousaf, et al., 2014, p.6). Those local agreements that were most effective have tended to address land access (though not land rights, which is one of the major conflict causes) (Yousaf, et al., 2014, p.6). In terms of lessons, Yousaf, et al. (2014) found: particular strength in agreements: most closely following traditional conflict resolution mechanisms; where tribes came together more or less as equals; where some of the underlying conflict causes were tackled; and that (re)established the benefits of coexistence. The agreement process starts with (re)building trust (Yousaf, et al., 2014, p.6).

### *Israel, Jordan and Palestine*

A paper by Roulin et al. (2017) examines joint projects on peacebuilding and nature conservation between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority – see Figure 2 for detail on those challenges and keys to success.

**See: Figure 2: joint projects on peacebuilding and nature conservation: challenges and keys to success in the specific projects occurring between Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority** (Roulin, A., Rashid, M. A., Spiegel, B., Charter, M., Dreiss, A. N., & Leshem, Y., 2017: 306). <http://wp.unil.ch/owlforpeace/files/2018/08/2017-TREE-Peace-Review.pdf>

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Yousaf, A. A., Fadali, H. B. & Adam, A. A. (2014) Local-Level Agreements in Darfur January 2014 A review with reference to access and management of natural resources. UNEP [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280068633\\_Local-Level\\_Agreements\\_in\\_Darfur\\_January\\_2014\\_A\\_review\\_with\\_reference\\_to\\_access\\_and\\_management\\_of\\_natural\\_resources](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280068633_Local-Level_Agreements_in_Darfur_January_2014_A_review_with_reference_to_access_and_management_of_natural_resources)

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