

Stocktaking of security sector roles in climate and environmental security

Report on the Philippines



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Executive Summary

The Philippines is facing a range of climate and environmental risks that directly affect human security. Climate change is intensifying existing disaster risks in an active geological region known as the Pacific Ring of Fire, causing volcano eruptions, tsunamis and earthquakes, and the region faces other disaster risks, including typhoons and tropical storms, floods, droughts and landslides. At the same time, the urban areas and settlements in the Philippines are located in such a way that ca 74% of its population is exposed to these different kinds of hazard. Moreover, the country is one of the world's 17 megadiverse countries, with many endemic species of flora and fauna, giving it a critical role in the protection of global ecosystems.

However, human activities, including environmental crime, are further undermining protective ecosystem services and destroying carbon sinks, contributing to the cycle of degradation and accelerating the effects of climate change. From rising sea levels and changing rainfall patterns, which cause both water scarcity and seasonal flooding, to widespread pollution and the destruction of natural resources, such as coastal ecosystems and tropical rainforests, the combined effects of climate change and human pressures on the environment are threatening to undo the economic development and peacebuilding gains achieved, including by the various peace processes.

There are important links between disaster risk reduction (DRR) and environmental harms. Illegal logging and land-grabbing, leading to deforestation, significantly increase the risk of mudslides. Unregulated waste disposal and mining not only affect soil and water resources, but also have serious public health consequences and ultimately increase flood risks. This directly affects the health and resilience of available ecosystem resources for farming and fishing, driving migration and urbanisation.

While many of these risks require a response that extends well beyond the security sector, security institutions have an important and perhaps not fully recognised role to play in this context.

As climate change increases the risk of flooding, mudslides and other disasters, the role of the Philippine security sector institutions, especially the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP), in DRR and in supporting efforts of the Office of Civil Defense will be increasingly important. The well-established area of DRR offers a valuable opportunity for institutions to work closely with communities and local government to better analyse and mitigate the risk of both sudden and slow-onset disasters.



Photo: DCAF

Likewise, the National Bureau of Investigation's Environmental Crime Unit, in conjunction with the Philippine National Police, the Philippine Coast Guard and in some instances the AFP, has the potential to play a more active role in preventing and prosecuting cases of environmental crimes and other forms of harm to the environment. Community-based organisations, such as forest rangers and guards of fishing grounds (Bantay Gubat and Bantay Dagat), are an interesting example of how communities and volunteers can complement state capacity, but they require additional institutionalisation and professionalisation.

It is worth noting that the government response to these risks (or lack thereof) and failure to address corrupt practices that directly exacerbate an already critical context clearly affect the population's perceptions of the state. Overall, this stocktaking study has found significant potential for conflict prevention, peacebuilding and security cooperation programming to improve service delivery of security institutions with regard to mitigating the impact of climate and environmental risks on communities and the environment, strengthening social cohesion and contributing to sustainable peace. There are multiple affordable opportunities for security institutions to strengthen their role in addressing human security needs with regard to both protecting communities from disasters and protecting the ecosystem services that communities rely on. In doing so, there is a strong opportunity to contribute to social cohesion.

This stocktaking study is part of a study across four countries, aiming to identify entry points informing security sector governance and reform (SSG/R) from the climate and environmental security perspectives. While international partners in their programming tend not to fully maximise potential in this area, findings place security sector roles in climate and environmental security at the heart of the triple nexus of humanitarian needs, development and security. Moreover, working on this nexus is relevant in the context of the sustaining peace and prevention agenda, as agreed under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement's Global Goal on Adaptation.

In addition to the more practical recommendations for international partners and the Government of the Philippines that are included in the report, several of the conclusions have broader relevance for SSG/R, prevention, peacebuilding and stabilisation programming across a range of regional, environmental and security contexts, and have been further explored in the other countries in the stocktaking study.

Findings

- ▶ The Philippines is among the countries most vulnerable to climate change, and at the same time it is one of the most relevant countries in terms of preserving biodiversity. It faces a range of multidimensional risks at the intersection of environmental and human security, and across the two functional areas of DRR and environmental protection explored in this study. These risks interact in a way that continues to increase the vulnerability of Filipinos to the human security consequences of the changing climate.
 - ▶ Environmental harms, such as pollution, illegal logging and mining, and violations of existing legislation are sometimes inextricably linked with community livelihoods, especially of indigenous peoples and those depending on agricultural livelihoods. Even if law enforcement in this area is strengthened, harm to the environment is unlikely to cease without a focus on creating alternative, sustainable options for income generation.
 - ▶ Strengthening environmental governance is also crucial because of the strong links between harm to the environment, corruption and organised criminal activities, including transboundary activities such as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, smuggling of resources and waste dumping.
 - ▶ A variety of civilian and security sector agencies are involved in DRR and combating environmental crime, with mandates that are not always entirely clear or distinct. Moreover, when it comes to issuing environmental licences and permits (for mining, logging, construction, etc), it is not always clear which agency's licensing takes precedence over the other.
- ▶ While challenges around natural resource management and corruption remain, particularly in the Mindanao peace process, there are several promising entry points for environmental peacebuilding. Examples include the transformation of decommissioned rebels into forest and guards of fishing grounds in the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) process, security sector agencies proactively working with communities on fostering climate-smart livelihoods, simultaneously building trust and countering extremist narratives, and community-based environmental protection actors such as forest and guards of fishing grounds.

Recommendations

- ▶ **Recognising and reinforcing climate and environmental security roles:** the international community should recognise and engage with the security sector in mitigating climate and environmental risks as a top priority:
 - The security sector's climate and environmental security roles should be integrated into **bilateral partnerships**, including bilateral development cooperation, climate partnerships and defence cooperation. This means, for example, mainstreaming DRR and environmental protection into capacity-building efforts and when delivering equipment.
 - International and regional cooperation to tackle environmental crime should be strengthened, recognising the importance of preventing non-criminalised forms of environmental harms. A legal approach that creates strong disincentives and enforcement mechanisms through criminalising offences (in addition to civil offences) has been shown, in combination with leveraging technology for customs controls and fraud detection, to be a promising entry point in this regard.
 - The knowledge base should be expanded, including with analysis, data and evidence on climate security and environmental crime and SSG/R, thus enabling future programming to be better equipped for delivering dividends for people, planet and peace.
- ▶ **Corruption and accountability:** corruption and lacking accountability in the security sector is an enabler and a driver of environmental crime; it also prevents effective disaster prevention and can lead to unequal access to disaster aid. Investment in

capacities for tracking financial flows can increase transparency and at the same time enable better forward financial planning. Special attention needs to be paid to direct links between the security sector and private sector actors with interests in primary sector industries. A principled approach to supporting security sectors in these roles is paramount for maintaining the credibility and legitimacy of the international community and partner states.

- **Environmental degradation through waste disposal and pollution:** waste disposal and pollution are human security issues that are likely to become more important as pressures on ecosystems from climate change and demands for natural resources including land continue to increase. Polluted land and water affect public health and decrease food and water security, and the value chain linked to waste management is prone to illicit and illegal activities that can have transnational dimensions. In a global context of tightening environmental regulations, security institutions in many regions may also need to strengthen their understanding of the transnational dimensions of illegal waste disposal.
- **Shifting from response to prevention:** a longer-term focus on **prevention** is critical for DRR and environmental protection and for preventing conflict. **Risk-informed urban planning and land use planning** can make a significant contribution to mitigating future disaster risks but is not always well integrated with DRR functions or enforced. The widespread destruction of ecosystems is a **slow-onset disaster**, with potentially catastrophic consequences for future food and water security, and also increases vulnerability to other hazards by damaging nature-based solutions for mitigating climate and disaster risk. Climate and environmental risk data can provide useful insights for **forecasting security risks**, such as social unrest, crime and conflict.
- **Coordination and integration:** because of their high level of complexity, tackling environmental crime and analysing disaster risks require an approach that is **horizontally integrated between sectors** (in particular, close coordination is required between security institutions and environmental and other government agencies that may not traditionally work together) and **vertically integrated between levels of government** (which is of particular importance in decentralised systems). Furthermore, at the community level, disaster risk and environmental harm are often linked with different vulnerabilities, such as migration and livelihood pressures. Thus, solutions that focus solely on enforcement are unlikely to succeed.

- **Comprehensive international partner approaches:** working effectively on DRR and environmental protection, and more broadly on the triple nexus of humanitarian aid, development and peace, also requires development actors to view these issues as linked and act accordingly. This means developing innovative funding instruments that can cover several hitherto separate sectors and policy areas, and having the ability and willingness to engage with a wide range of national counterparts across sectors.
- **Private sector:** environmental protection and DRR pose many questions, and law enforcement and private actors can benefit from each other's expertise and cooperation in pursuing sustainable business exploitation. Companies need to be seen as important stakeholders to discuss environmental governance with and have a considerable interest in good governance. At the same time, where companies exploit weaknesses in the system and build unequal relationships with local and national security sector actors, or local, regional and national elites, security sector actors can be complicit or co-beneficiaries. Those working on oversight and accountability efforts to expose such exploitative and environmentally destructive schemes, such the media and civil society, especially environmental defenders, who often become targets, deserve special attention and protection.

Photo: DCAF



- **Supporting capable communities:** especially in resource-constrained, remote and fragile contexts, communities play a key function **as a first line of defence**. This requires a realistic analysis of what communities themselves can do as a first line of defence, and where security and government institutions must play a role. Working with volunteers can multiply state capacity but requires the right institutional and oversight framework.
- **Sustaining peace:** climate change has been mostly studied as a risk multiplier for conflict. However, there are a variety of promising opportunities to leverage climate and environmental issues and SSG/R for sustaining peace:
 - The responses of states, including security sector actors, to climate and environmental risks, and the way in which they engage with communities and individual citizens on these risks, have a great impact on communities' perceptions. This is an opportunity to strengthen trust in the state, break extremist and rebel narratives and foster reconciliation between groups. Programming should fully leverage this through the inclusion of peacebuilding expertise and methodologies.
 - In addition to addressing questions of environmental governance and natural resource management in peace processes, DDR, military integration and rightsizing processes offer opportunities to re-hatting ex-combatants and former soldiers within the security sector into climate and environmental security roles. This in turn provides them with opportunities for sustainable livelihoods, draws on their experience and strengthens environmental protection and DRR.
 - Supporting volunteers and civic engagement, and applying confidence-building methodologies for joint training programmes, are opportunities for building trust between groups and the community and security sector.

SSG/R needs to mainstream climate and environmental risks so security sectors can help protect people, planet and peace



Photo: DCAF



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