

ROUNDTABLE ON CLIMATE SECURITY: SOUTH ASIA (Summary)

BANGLADESH, Dhaka

As part of its membership in the UN Security Council in 2019/2020, Germany has emphasised the need to address the security implications of climate change and is liaising with partners globally to seek advice on their perspectives and priorities in this realm. To this end, **adelphi** and the **International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD)**, with support from the **German Federal Foreign Office**, hosted the **Roundtable on Climate and Security: South Asia**, on the 19th of November 2019 in **Dhaka**.

The Roundtable brought together 31 participants from academia and research organisations, international and national NGOs, donors and civil society organisations to better understand the climate security risks in Bangladesh and South Asia, and to discuss potential strategies for addressing them. The discussions underscored that responses to climate-fragility risks need to be integrated into wider development policies and interventions, protecting livelihoods and increasing adaptive capacities.

CLIMATE-FRAGILITY RISKS IN THE REGION

Against the backdrop of a [risk brief on climate-fragility in South Asia](#) produced by the [Climate Security Expert Network](#), participants offered a clear perspective of the challenges at hand:

- The South Asian region, and Bangladesh in particular, already experience high rates of **migration and displacement**. This trend is likely to continue - and grow further - as climate impacts pose a threat to livelihood security and increase the risk of natural disasters. Growing migration can boost anti-migrant sentiment in receiving communities and lead to social conflict. Rural-to-urban migration might also decrease the stability of urban systems and lead to further environmental degradation.
- One specific case that underlines how conflict can undermine resilience and increase vulnerability to climate change is the **Rohingya refugee crisis**. While the displacement was not driven by climate change, the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar are highly vulnerable to climate change, and resilience is decreasing through deforestation and overuse of water resources.
- The **loss of livelihoods** across the region due to climate impacts on the agricultural sector (through water stress and land degradation) might lead to declining food production, spikes in food prices and impacts on the income of the poorest. This can increase frustration with governments and fuel crime and extremism.
- Climate change can add to international issues over the **management of transboundary water resources**. Water resources are already contested in South Asia, where most of the Himalayan rivers are shared by two or more countries. These challenges may be compounded in a scenario of increasing water scarcity due to climate change impacts.
- Overall, climate change acts as a **risk multiplier** in Bangladesh and the whole South Asian region, worsening existing conflicts and compounding situations of fragility.



ENTRY POINTS FOR RESPONSES

Participants agreed that focusing on protecting livelihoods and increasing human security is key to address the compound climate-fragility challenges in the South Asian region. This requires integrated approaches combining climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies with development policy and interventions.

- 1 The discussion highlighted that **improved education systems** are an essential starting point for addressing climate-fragility risks. Quality education can give people, and especially youth, the tools and capacities they need to protect their livelihoods in the face of climate change. Improved schooling for girls in particular and ensuring the availability of employment outside the home for women is key to lowering the vulnerability of households. These investments can have wider positive developmental effects by bringing additional income and adaptive capacity, while supporting the advancement of gender equality more broadly.
- 2 With extreme weather events increasing in frequency and scale, the current adaptive capacities of individuals and communities are often exhausted. Therefore, responses to climate-fragility risks should focus on **development and livelihoods interventions** aimed at ensuring that those impacted by disasters can retain their livelihoods. Projects such as “Pathways to Prosperity for Extremely Poor People” by the UK Department for International Development recognise that meeting basic economic and social needs is the foundation for individuals’ adaptation to climate change. Financial solutions for loss and damage beyond insurance should also be explored, including within multilateral frameworks such as the UNFCCC negotiations.
- 3 Participants noted that **inequality and marginalisation** increase the vulnerability of individuals and communities. In order to ensure long-term sustainability, it is important that particularly vulnerable groups are protected from climate impacts, and that their views are included in government and donor responses. This requires a change in our narrative on climate change adaptation, focusing on opportunities as opposed to risks. ICCCAD, for example, is championing the idea of “climate-resilient, migrant-friendly cities”, looking at how secondary cities in Bangladesh can generate opportunities for migrants through investing in climate-friendly infrastructure, jobs and services.
- 4 National governments should not take up these approaches in isolation. The **improvement of multilateral relationships** and regional fora is necessary to respond to the cross-border security risks compounded by climate change, such as water management and migration. Participants noted that the best way to ensure responses come to fruition is to integrate them into coordinated, sustainable approaches, setting domestic political priorities to promote sustainable development pathways, and reduce climate-fragility risks.

LEGAL NOTICE

Editorial responsibility: adelphi
www.adelphi.de

PROVIDED BY

The **Climate Security Expert Network**, which comprises some 30 international experts, supports the **Group of Friends on Climate and Security** and the **Climate Security Mechanism of the UN** system by synthesising scientific knowledge and expertise, advising on entry points for building resilience to climate-security risks, and helping to strengthen a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities of addressing climate-related security risks.

www.climate-security-expert-network.org

The **climate diplomacy initiative** is a collaborative effort of the German Federal Foreign Office in partnership with adelphi. The initiative and this factsheet are supported by a grant from the German Federal Foreign Office.

www.climate-diplomacy.org

Supported by:



Federal Foreign Office



ICCCAD

International Centre for
Climate Change and
Development



Climate
Diplomacy



adelphi