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**An overview of FAO Africa work on conflict sensitivity and peace
contributions**

Executive Summary

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) recently conducted a stocktake of conflict sensitivity and peace contributions in the Africa region, aiming to assess current practices and capacities to support FAO's work on peace and conflict. The stocktake has analysed FAO documentation and projects from 2016 to the present.

While FAO's conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding interventions show promise in addressing issues such as agropastoralist support and work in displacement settings, challenges persist in integrating conflict analysis at the design stage and addressing gender and age-related dynamics disparities. Partnerships with United Nations agencies and regional inter-state bodies have expanded, but coordination gaps remain, especially in joint project implementation. The stocktake exercise underscores the importance of deepening partnerships with peace-focused non-governmental organizations and incorporating conflict sensitivity into technical guidance and climate risk assessments.

Recommendations include strengthening conflict analysis, prioritizing the inclusion of women and youth as peace builders, and institutionalizing conflict sensitivity throughout project cycles. The outcomes of the stocktake show that FAO, working with partners and with communities, has a role to play in contributing to peace, and it has the tools to improve conflict sensitivity. These recommendations of the stocktake of FAO's contribution to peace in the RAF region, including improved coordination, targeted interventions and sustained partnership, are expected to be translated into action through a more deliberate and consistent integration of "comprehensive and innovative approaches" and "conflict-sensitive approaches" into FAO programming.

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I. Introduction

1. FAO's commitment to supporting sustainable peace, as outlined in its *Corporate Framework to support sustainable peace in the context of Agenda 2030*, underscores the Organization's recognition of the integral relationship between peace, resilience and sustainable development. This framework emphasizes the need for comprehensive and innovative approaches to address conflicts and promote peace processes, especially in crisis-prone regions like Africa.
2. The 31st Session of the FAO Regional Conference for Africa, in 2020, highlighted the urgency of addressing conflicts in the region and emphasized the importance of adopting conflict-sensitive approaches to build resilience and promote sustainable development. It called for collective efforts to address the vulnerabilities and risks facing communities in crisis-prone countries, particularly through the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN) approach.
3. The 2021 evaluation of FAO's Contribution to the HDPN 2014-2020 underscored the necessity for FAO to promote people-centered approaches across its humanitarian and development programmes, and to effectively integrate conflict-sensitive and peace-related objectives into its interventions.

II. Food security is one of the keys to lasting peace and security

4. The stocktake of FAO conflict sensitivity and peace contributions in Africa aims to contribute to addressing the root causes of acute food insecurity, including conflict and climate change, and strengthening the work along the HDPN, given the key role of agriculture in food security and peace. Agricultural interventions strengthen agrifood systems, save lives and protect the agricultural livelihoods of the most vulnerable and improve food security, but they can also contribute to lasting peace and security.
5. The objectives of the stocktake were multifaceted: to provide an overview of FAO's conflict sensitivity and peace contributions in Africa for the Regional Conference for Africa in 2024; to identify and document good practices; and to test and refine FAO's pathways to peace, as outlined in the 2022 how-to guide [Operationalizing pathways to sustaining peace in the context of Agenda 2030 \(fao.org\)](https://www.fao.org/publications/operationalizing-pathways-to-sustaining-peace-in-the-context-of-agenda-2030)
6. The stocktake comprised two primary components: an overview of FAO's conflict sensitivity and peace contributions in Africa and an assessment of FAO's peace and conflict capacity to support these efforts. Additionally, the review generated a set of good practice fact sheets highlighting FAO's peace contributions in key thematic and technical areas, with a focus on gender equality, women's empowerment and youth involvement.
7. The methodology employed for the stocktake encompassed a comprehensive desk review of relevant policy papers, technical guidance and conflict analyses, supplemented by data collection through key informant interviews and outreach seminars. The inclusion of implicit peace contributions in the assessment posed challenges in project selection, necessitating a snowballing approach to identify relevant projects that were in alignment with FAO's contribution to peace objectives.
8. The overview of conflict sensitivity and peace contributions delves into crucial inquiries regarding the theories of change/pathways utilized by FAO Africa's interventions; the role of partnerships in contributing to peace; key conflict sensitivity risks associated with FAO Africa's interventions; and the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of conflict-sensitive and peace-contributing interventions. It also examines the contextual and institutional factors driving contributions to peace and the main challenges hindering conflict sensitivity and peace efforts.
9. A selection process, combining desk reviews, key informant interviews and outreach seminars, ensured the stocktake's objectives were met effectively. Gender and youth considerations were integrated throughout the assessment, acknowledging their integral roles in peacebuilding efforts. Data collection and analysis focused on key aspects of gender and youth empowerment, despite the relatively nascent incorporation of conflict sensitivity into FAO's gender and youth-related initiatives.
10. In summary, the stocktake provides a comprehensive overview of FAO's peace contributions in Africa, grounded in a rigorous methodology that captures the Organization's evolving role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. By identifying key areas of strength, challenges and potential pathways

for improvement, the stocktake offers valuable insights to guide FAO's future peace-related efforts in the continent.

III. Strengthening the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus

11. The stocktake has collected examples of emerging good practices in FAO peace contributions on agropastoralist support, forced displacement settings, land tenure governance, natural resource management, women and youth, social cohesion approaches and technical diplomacy in Africa. It also identified further potential peace contributions in human-wildlife conflict, seed systems, climate change adaptation and social protection.

12. Emerging promising practices in agropastoralist support:

- a. FAO's interventions in agropastoralist support address various drivers, including access to water and pastures, damaged crops, exclusion of women and youth from natural resource management, weak local conflict resolution mechanisms and negative perceptions of pastoralist communities.
- b. These interventions aim to contribute to peace by enhancing agricultural production, supporting the availability of water points, improving fodder production and livestock vaccination, and promoting social cohesion through joint problem-solving and overcoming negative perceptions. Examples include cross-border projects in Chad, Cameroon and Niger, where FAO partnered with organizations like the World Food Programme and the International Organization for Migration to address conflicts linked to transhumance and natural resource management, resulting in decreased conflict and improved livelihoods.
- c. FAO's initiatives extend to conflict mitigation efforts in areas like South Sudan and the Abyei Administrative Area, where interventions focus on cattle-related violence and community dialogue, leading to reduced violence and strengthened social cohesion. Moreover, FAO collaborates with regional bodies and organizations like the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the Economic Community of Central African States to develop coordination mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution, exemplifying its commitment to promoting peace and stability in agropastoralist settings.
- d. Through innovative approaches like the Predictive Livestock Early Warning System (piloted in Kenya and being expanded to Uganda) and the adaptation of Farmer Field School methodologies, FAO works to address the complex interplay between conflict, food security, climate change, migration and displacement factors, fostering resilience and sustainable development in vulnerable communities.

13. Emerging promising practices in forced displacement settings:

- a. FAO's initiatives in displacement contexts are designed to address multiple drivers of conflict, including scarcity of natural resources and gaps in joint natural resource management, while also considering the impacts of climate change. By adopting an inclusive targeting approach, FAO aims to assist both displaced populations and host communities, thus fostering peaceful coexistence and collaboration.
- b. This approach is particularly crucial in rural displacement settings where vulnerable groups, such as women, are exposed to risks like gender-based violence (GBV) while collecting wood fuel. By improving access to (wood) fuel and implementing measures to protect women, FAO contributes to reducing conflict and enhancing community resilience.
- c. In various displacement settings, FAO implements projects that target both host and displaced populations, aiming to improve livelihoods and promote social inclusion. For instance, projects in Burundi and Burkina Faso focus on enhancing access to food and production resources for both returnees and host communities.
- d. Despite efforts to carefully target interventions, challenges persist, as observed in Burkina Faso, where internally displaced persons benefited less than host communities due to land quality

issues. These complexities highlight the need for tailored interventions that address the specific realities of different groups within displacement settings.

- e. In addition to inclusive targeting, FAO develops interventions to improve relationships between host and displaced populations where tensions exist. Efforts in Kenya, Sudan and South Sudan involve providing fuel-efficient stoves and promoting trade between host and refugee communities, thereby reducing competition over resources, and minimizing exposure to protection risks for vulnerable groups.
 - f. Collaborating with the United Nations (UN) Refugee Agency, FAO implements projects in Kenya and Uganda to enhance economic integration and self-reliance among refugees and host communities. These initiatives not only provide agricultural inputs and trainings, but also integrate conflict sensitivity measures, such as addressing GBV awareness, into programme activities to promote social protection and peaceful coexistence within and between communities.
14. Emerging promising practices in land tenure governance:
- a. FAO's focus on land tenure governance in Africa aims to alleviate conflicts arising from unclear regulatory frameworks and conflicting traditional and formal tenure systems. With over 60 percent of lands in Sub-Saharan Africa under customary tenure arrangements, the challenge lies in bridging the gap between these systems and formal regulatory frameworks.
 - b. The [Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security \[Policy Support and Governance\] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(fao.org\)](#) provide a comprehensive framework, emphasizing the recognition and protection of tenure rights for marginalized groups, such as pastoralists and women. FAO utilizes participatory mapping and dialogue approaches to assist communities in accessing land and resolving conflicts, emphasizing the importance of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.
 - c. Participatory land mapping initiatives, exemplified in Burundi and Sierra Leone, have facilitated the identification and demarcation of community/customary rights, increasing clarity over land tenure and reducing disputes. In Sierra Leone, the Community Land Protection approach empowered women through training and participatory mapping, leading to greater tenure security and reduced gender discrimination in land tenure.
 - d. Multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) serve as inclusive fora for dialogue and solutions, fostering trust and cooperation between stakeholders. In countries like Mali and United Republic of Tanzania, MSPs have addressed capacity building for conflict resolution and strengthened relationships between pastoralists and farmers.
 - e. Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms play a crucial role in resolving land-related conflicts and enhancing transparency in governance institutions. In Eswatini and Kenya, FAO's support has strengthened local mediation and arbitration commissions, contributing to more effective conflict resolutions.
 - f. In Gambia, a UN Secretary-General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) project focused on conflict mapping, community training and capacity building for land governance institutions, highlighting the importance of local-level interventions in addressing land-related conflicts. These initiatives underscore FAO's commitment to promoting peace through improved land tenure governance and conflict resolution mechanisms across Africa.
15. Emerging promising practices in natural resource management:
- a. FAO's interventions in irrigation, forestry and fisheries highlight the potential of natural resource management to foster social cohesion and mitigate conflicts over resource use. In Lower Shabelle, Somalia, an irrigation project focused on rehabilitating canals and strengthening water management committees, resulting in a 90 percent reduction in water-related conflicts over the project's duration. Training in conflict-sensitive water governance improved relations between clans and facilitated enhanced trading relations among

communities. These efforts underscore FAO's commitment to leveraging local governance structures for conflict management and resolution.

- b. Forestry interventions have demonstrated significant impacts on social cohesion, particularly in dryland areas where competition over fuel-wood between host and displaced populations is common. FAO's initiatives address this competition by implementing strategies to reduce gender-based violence risks faced by women collecting fuel-wood.
 - c. In fisheries management, FAO employs the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries and the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries to incorporate conflict management aspects into natural resource management practices. In South Sudan, FAO's fisheries project aims to improve livelihoods and peacebuilding by promoting sustainable fishery resource use and fostering mediation platforms for fishers from diverse ethnic backgrounds.
 - d. In Malawi, FAO's fisheries project focuses on monitoring vessels in Lake Malawi to reduce conflicts between commercial and small-scale fishers. The project also seeks to assess benefit-sharing mechanisms between local leaders and fisheries management authorities to alleviate tensions arising from conflicting demands on fishers. By harmonizing benefit-sharing structures, FAO aims to address long-standing conflicts and promote sustainable resource management practices. These examples illustrate FAO's holistic approach to natural resource management, emphasizing community engagement, conflict resolution and sustainable livelihoods in various contexts across Africa.
16. Emerging promising practices in relation to women and youth:
- a. Initiatives on women and youth empowerment are grounded in the recognition of their vital roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agendas emphasize the inclusion of women and youth in decision-making processes for sustainable peace.
 - b. Gender and age dynamics intersect with conflict, exacerbating vulnerabilities and perpetuating inequalities, as evidenced by increased risks of GBV and youth radicalization. FAO's Corporate Framework to support sustainable peace acknowledges these complexities, highlighting the importance of addressing the specific consequences of conflicts on women and youth.
 - c. Efforts to empower women and youth in conflict-affected regions focus on enhancing their access to resources, decision-making processes, and conflict resolution mechanisms. In countries like Central African Republic and Niger, FAO collaborates with UN Women to promote female political leadership and improve relationships between farming and pastoralist communities.
 - d. Approaches like Dimitra Clubs and land tenure reforms facilitate women's engagement in governance and conflict resolution, fostering social cohesion and women's empowerment. In Madagascar and Sahelian countries, FAO initiatives aim to mitigate youth involvement in violence by providing sustainable job opportunities and facilitating their participation in policy dialogues.
 - e. In Kenya, Somalia, and South Sudan, youth participation in decision-making regarding water access and use – as evidenced by resource-sharing agreements – has fostered intercommunal collaboration, providing a sustainable approach to joint problem solving.
 - f. Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programmes integrate agricultural skills and livelihood support to facilitate the reintegration of ex-combatants into local communities. In Democratic Republic of the Congo and Central African Republic, FAO's partnership with national DDR programmes focuses on community violence reduction and agropastoral training for former combatants.
 - g. However, addressing GBV remains a critical challenge, with FAO's Safe Access to Fuel and Energy initiative focused on implementing measures to mitigate risks through fuel-efficient stove distribution and dialogue facilitation between refugee and host communities in Kenya and South Sudan. Despite these efforts, the targeting of women and youth for special assistance may

inadvertently exacerbate tensions and increase instances of GBV in patriarchal societies, highlighting the need for gender-sensitive approaches in conflict settings.

17. Established FAO approaches that can impact social cohesion, technical diplomacy and other peace contribution entry points:

- a. FAO has developed several approaches that significantly impact social cohesion, emphasizing trust within and between communities and contributing to non-violent dispute resolution.
- b. Farmer Field Schools (FFSs) and Agro Pastoral Field Schools (APFS) promote agricultural knowledge-sharing and community collaboration. For instance, in Central African Republic and Uganda, FFS/APFS facilitated the reintegration of former combatants into communities and improved relations between groups with historical conflicts. These initiatives create spaces for dialogue and resource-sharing, fostering social cohesion and reducing tensions over natural resources.
- c. Dimitra Clubs, implemented in Mali, Niger and Senegal, mobilize communities to address socioeconomic issues and enhance relationships. In Senegal, the clubs facilitated discussions, community projects and improved relationships among villagers. In Mali, they contributed to conflict reduction within communities and facilitated agreements between pastoralist and farming groups.
- d. Moreover, the “*Caisses de Résilience*” approach, integrating technical, economic and social interventions, strengthens community resilience and cohesion. In Burundi and Mali, the *Caisses de Résilience* approach not only enhanced economic opportunities but also promoted social cohesion within communities.
- e. FAO leverages technical diplomacy to address cross-border natural resource management and transboundary conflicts. The establishment of regional platforms like the Senegal River Basin platform fosters collaboration among neighbouring countries, promoting sustainable water resource management. Similarly, FAO's involvement in trans-border management initiatives in areas like the Greater Karamoja Cluster and the Sahel enhances coordination and dialogue among countries facing common resource challenges.
- f. Human and wildlife conflict poses significant challenges in conservation areas, often exacerbating tensions between communities and conservation efforts. FAO advocates for participatory approaches that engage affected communities and stakeholders in conservation decision-making.
- g. Projects in Zimbabwe exemplify efforts to strengthen community-based natural resource management, fostering co-existence between humans and wildlife. Additionally, FAO's focus on seed systems and climate resilience addresses resource scarcity and livelihood vulnerabilities exacerbated by climate change. By promoting community seed banks and climate-smart agriculture, FAO supports collective action and conflict mitigation in resource-dependent communities.

18. Key conflict sensitivity risks for FAO peace contributions in Africa:

- a. In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, interventions may inadvertently produce adverse effects among targeted and non-targeted populations. These adverse effects may undermine the impact and sustainability of FAO's interventions, while also raising the risks for targeted populations. Identifying and monitoring conflict sensitivity risks, and adapting programmes accordingly, are integral to achieving improved agricultural and food security outcomes. Investing in conflict-sensitivity approaches reduces the likelihood of such risks being realized, while effective conflict-sensitive monitoring enables adaptations that can reduce these emergent risks.
- b. Some of the leading conflict sensitivity risks identified through the stocktake review of FAO programming include those risks related to procurement, governance, market distortions, access to land, beneficiary selection, power dynamics and inequality, and gender-based violence.

