The Hague Centre
for Strategic Studies

Climate Security in Global Hotspots

Policy Options for The Netherlands

Authors: Dorith Kool, Laura Birkman

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Executive Summary

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Progress 5.2 Climate and Security

Authors:
Dorith Kool, Laura Birkman

Contributors:
Juliette Eijkelkamp, Marleen de Haan

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The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies
info@hcss.nl
hcss.nl
Lange Voorhout 1
2514EA The Hague
The Netherlands

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Objective **of the report**

This report is a starting point for a more coherent and strategic interpretation of Dutch climate security policy in an international context. It analyses from a Dutch perspective where the most relevant and feasible opportunities for international cooperation on climate-related security lie. This was done by (1) developing an overview of existing international, EU, regional, and Dutch policy and instruments; (2) undertaking a data-driven assessment of hotspot countries of risk; and (3) designing a policy game to explore hands-on programming and collaboration opportunities for the Netherlands that can be adapted to different regional and contextual realities. These three steps provide Dutch policy and decision makers with a composite framework to support their efforts to manage, mainstream, and monitor Dutch-funded climate security programs and initiatives, taking into account vital security interests of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (including the Dutch Caribbean).

Introduction

Historically, the security policy landscape was reserved for policies focused on protecting and enhancing national security, such as defense and border control. Post-Cold War, new security dynamics evolved that underscored the need to look beyond national boundaries. Today, security risks are not limited to traditional 'nation state' concerns but also include 'people' concerns: i.e., the social, economic, political, and environmental aspects of human life. By extension, traditional security threat definitions focused on national security have come to include risks to people's livelihoods.[1]

The global climate crisis has brought an unprecedented push to the non-traditional realm of security. The US Council for Foreign Relations, for example, already recognized in 2007 that climate-related security risks have "far-reaching implications for the way the world manages peace and security", and that "climate actions to *adapt* and *mitigate* impacts can also have a negative effect on human security if mishandled."[2] It is now broadly acknowledged that climate change has a direct and indirect role in the onset of social unrest, political disputes, and violent conflicts. Efforts to respond, mitigate, and adapt to climate change should therefore take security concerns into account. Actions to combat climate-related security challenges require an integrated approach by a diverse group of actors that can address different aspects of the climate security nexus, including (international) diplomacy, development, defense, and disaster management.[3]

Definitions of the term 'climate security' vary. For purposes of this study, HCSS defines climate security as "interactions between change in global, regional, or local climate patterns and political, military, economic, and social risks/stresses to peace, security, and stability".[4] The term 'climate security' is sometimes referred to as 'climate-related security risks', 'climate-driven hazards', 'the security implications of climate change'. In this study, these and similar phrases are assumed to refer to the same thing: namely, the way in which climate change induces additional or new security risks.

In 2018, the Dutch parliament, responding to the recommendations developed by the Planetary Security Initiative (PSI),[5] recognized that integrating Dutch climate, development and security policies can better contribute to combatting the root causes of instability directly in countries at risk, and – indirectly – the impacts of broader instability on our national

1 Tobias van Lossow et al., 'Towards a Better Understanding of Climate Security Practices' (The Hague, Netherlands: Clingendael Institute, April 2021), 1.

2 Joshua Busby, 'Climate Change and National Security', no. Council on Foreign Relations (2007).

3 The integrated approach is often referred to in academic and policy circles as the '3D': Diplomacy, Defense, and Development. Disaster management was added as a fourth 'D' to take into account the increasing severity and complexity of climate-driven disasters.

4 Wyatt Scott, 'Climate Security: Building a Community of Practice', New America, 26 May 2021. While the term 'climate security' still invokes some semantic discussion among academics and policy makers, increasing attempts are being made to provide a mainstream definition. The definition used by HCSS is taken from the US think tank New America, who proposed a new definition in May 2021 based on existing definitions developed by the UN, NATO, EU, SIPRI, Adelphi, Clingendael, and Mercy Corps.

5 Planetary Security Initiative, 'About Us | Planetary Security Initiative', Planetary Security Initiative, 2015. The Planetary Security Initiative was launched in 2015 and sets out best practice, strategic entry points and new approaches to reducing climate-related risks to conflict and stability, thus promoting sustainable peace in a changing climate.

security.[6] Earlier that year, the parliament adopted the policy memorandum 'Investing in Global Prospects' recommending that more synergy in efforts should be made between Dutch-funded climate adaptation programs and conflict prevention activities, and translating these into action in countries of risk, specifically focusing on ongoing Dutch efforts in Mali.[7] To support this in the longer term, the Dutch government also committed itself to structurally take into account climate resilience and conflict sensitivity in both Dutch development cooperation policy and security policy.

The above efforts provide an important first step for a more integrated Dutch climate security policy. However, translating them into action requires more. Many Dutch development objectives, for example, are not yet linked up with Dutch security policy and defense mandates. Similarly, while much work has been done to align sustainability with development objectives, development programs and initiatives relevant for climate security action tend to focus on specific challenges.

6 Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Motie van Lid van Ojik (Kamerstuk 35000 V, Nr. 23)' (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 15 November 2018).

7 Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Investing in Global Prospects' (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 2018); Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 'Investeren in Perspectief – Goed Voor de Wereld, Goed Voor Nederland (34 952, Nr. 1)' (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 18 May 2018).

The climate security **policy landscape**

To identify priorities and possible opportunities for Dutch engagement on climate security issues, we provide an overview of international, EU, and Dutch policy and instruments addressing, directly or indirectly, the ecological, social, and economic impacts of climate change. As dealing with the security implications of climate change requires an integrated and whole-of-government approach that addresses the different types and stages of climate-security impacts, the study team has looked at current policy and practice in the field of disaster response and management, mitigation, adaptation (including development), and security.

Based on the overview, we derived the following key takeaways on the current state of climate security policy and practice at international, EU and Dutch levels:

1. There is a growing ambition to better understand and address climate security risks at the international, EU, regional levels and in the Netherlands. However, the translation of this ambition into concrete action is lacking at all levels.

2. States are scaling up financing to support developing countries that lack the social, lack the social, infrastructural, and financial capacity to manage climate shocks and/or are forced to prioritize ad-hoc, short-term challenges. However, financing remains insufficient and a stumbling block to effective climate (security) action.

3. Increased concerns with the security dimension of climate change has led to a greater focus on the role of the defense sector and the military in better understanding and mitigating climate-induced insecurity, including through research, decision-making, and action.

4. Given the cross-border impact of climate-related security risks, regional cooperation and partnerships are increasingly relevant. While there is clear regional-level ambition, there are also impediments to coordination and cooperation including tensions between member states national interests and regional interests.

5. The Netherlands is committed to addressing climate-related security risks to its vital security interests, as underlined in its policies on development cooperation, climate change, and security. The integration across policy fields relevant to the climate-security nexus remains inadequate within Dutch policy, however, and climate-security is not an explicit field with dedicated policy, budget, and activities.

Data-driven assessment: **Identifying hotspot countries and regions of risk**

The data-driven risk assessment uses quantitative data to assess and rank countries based on **potential impact** and **feasibility** for collaboration**.** Potential impact comprises two aspects. First, a country's risk of experiencing climate-related insecurity. And second, how that insecurity may negatively affect Dutch vital security interests. Feasibility is characterized by international opportunities for collaboration and socio-economic development opportunities to counter or mitigate the climate-related security risks and their consequences. Countries identified as 'relevant countries of risk' include countries that face medium to high climate-related security risks that have an effect on the vital security interests of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and with whom collaboration is feasible based on existing relations and practice.

The resulting ranking of hotspot countries enables policy makers to identify which countries can be feasibly supported via ongoing Dutch-funded programs focusing on achieving the sustainable development goals and other areas relevant for addressing climate change and related security risks. The plotting graph below provides the results of the data assessment at a country-level.

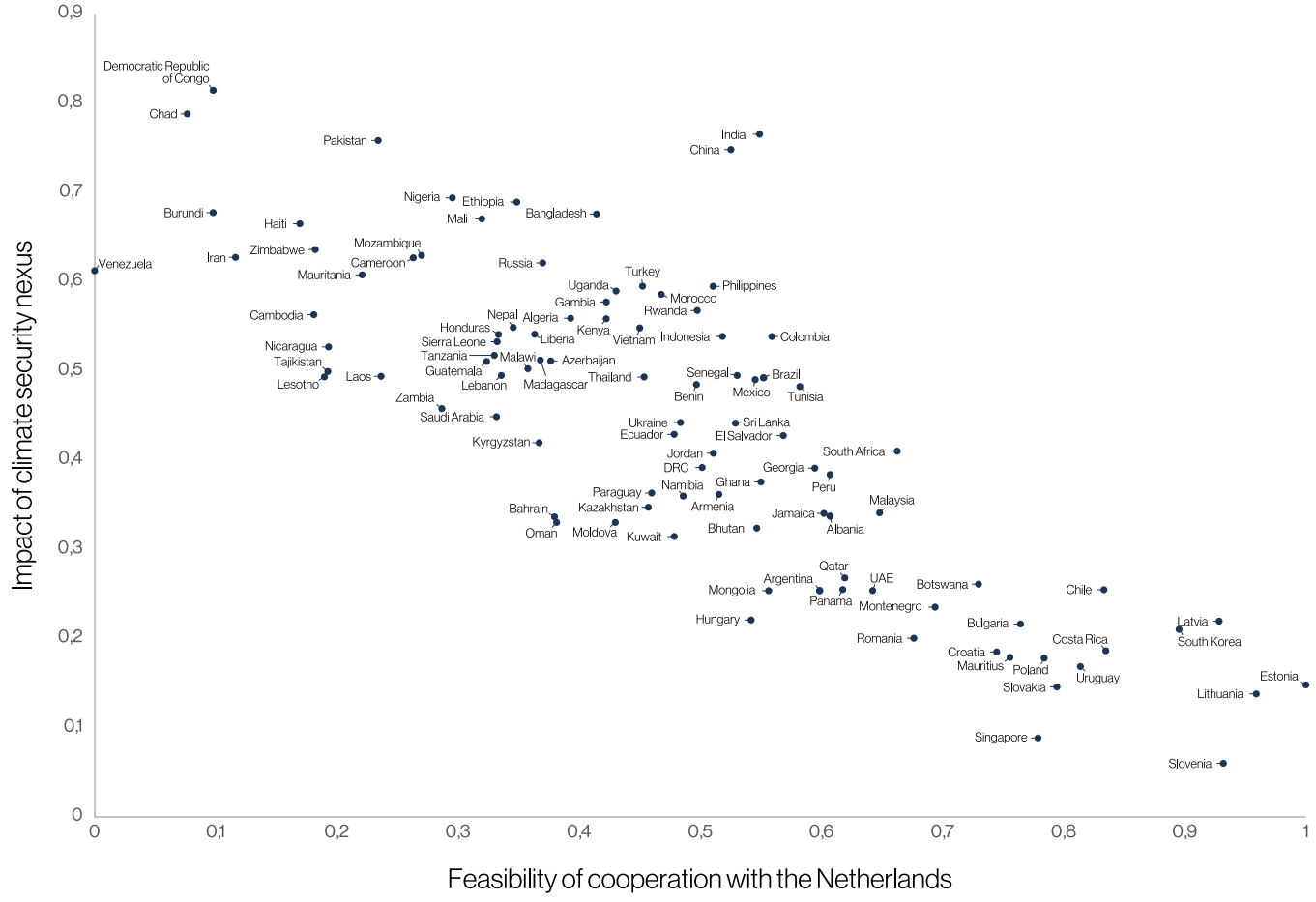

Figure 1 Potential for cooperation with the Netherlands. Source: HCSS

Using the initial ranking of 'hotspot' countries of risk, the study team mapped broader clusters of countries in regions that are both at high risk of climate insecurity and feasible for the Kingdom of the Netherlands to work with, taking into account current policy and programming priorities. The resulting seven clusters are illustrated below. Given the context-specific nature of climate-related security challenges, this regional overview provides a useful initial reference point for broader Dutch cooperation efforts, including ongoing EU and UN initiatives, and NATO missions.

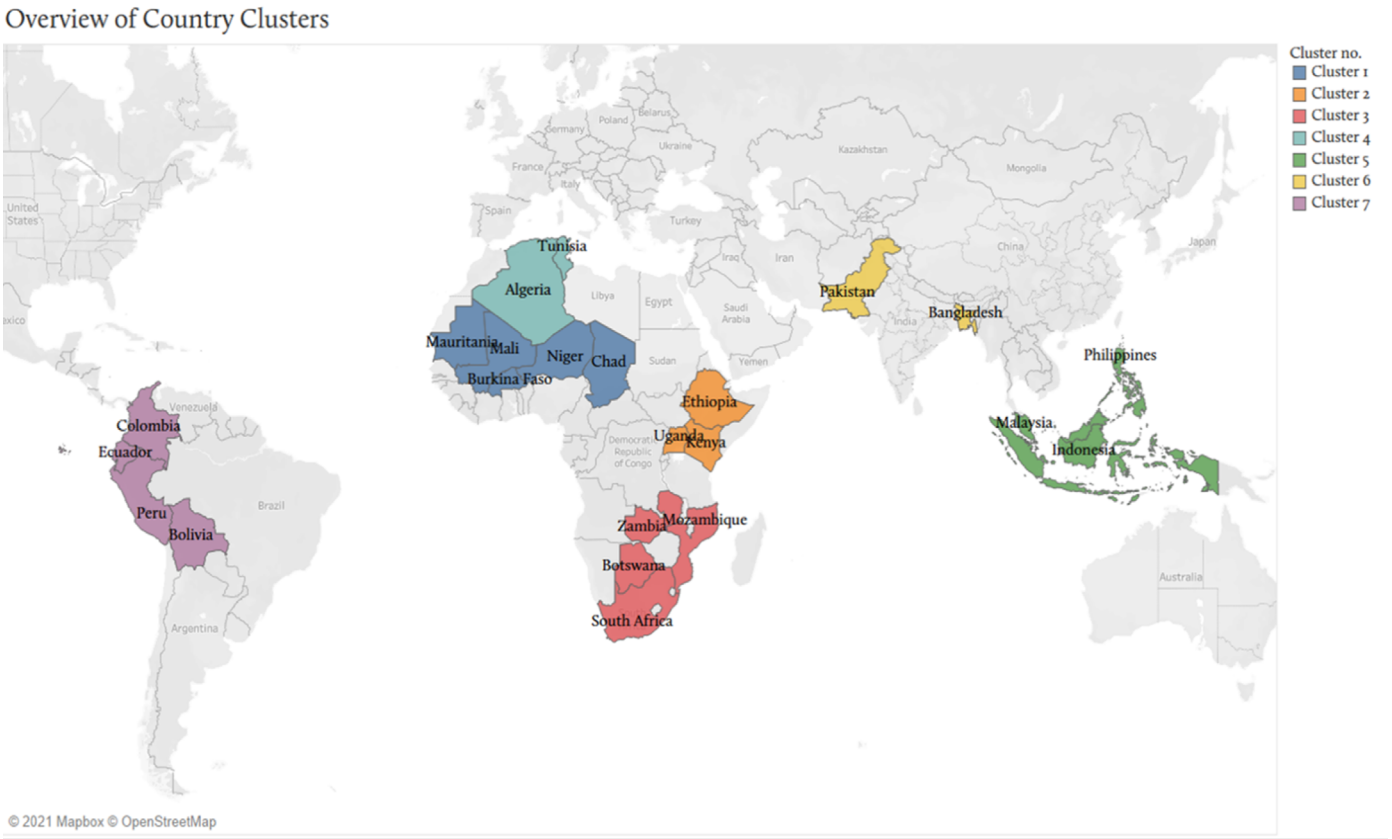

Figure 2 Mapping of country clusters. Source: HCSS

Case study: **Developing insights from the G5 Sahel**

Based on the country cluster mapping, the G5 Sahel cluster comprised of ***Mali, Chad, Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso*** (Cluster 1) was selected as a case study to get a better understanding of concrete activities that the Netherlands could undertake to address the climate-related security risks in the Sahel region, and inform and support the design of the game-driven analysis. It provides a starting point for the identification of gaps in current engagement, opportunities for the Netherlands to strengthen and expand its climate security policy and step-up relevant action with (potential) local and international partners. While the case study focuses on the Sahel context, it serves to provide broader insights about Dutch climate-security action and generic conclusions and recommendations that are relevant beyond the Sahel context. The Figure below provides a summary overview of the four key observations coming out of the case study analysis and our corresponding recommendations.

Observation 1 The framework of development and security initiatives is fragmented.	• The NL can apply its expertise in inter-agency coooperation, and stakeholder involvement to foster dialogue between different parties
Observation 2 EU and international initiatives are too focused on state capacity building.	• The NL can contribute to reinforcing the local capacity building of existing intiatives with its expertise in social capabilities
Observation 3 Broader macrotrends as urbanization and population growth are confounding factors for climate security risks and require specific capabilities.	• The NL can contribute to eliminating these risks by investing in capabilities that remain currently underexplored in the Sahel, such as Urban resilience, or Building of Infrastructures: Dams
Observation 4 Military security intiatives are mainly focused on short-term hard-security goals, and inadequately consider long-term climate security risks in practice.	• The NL can stimulate awareness of climate trends on security issues in defense initiatives, and lobby for an inclusive mandate of (future) missions • Through its military initiatives the NL can contribute to further climate adaptation, by taking climatic trends into account in their work on innovation, civil resilience and capacity building.

Figure 3 Case study Sahel: observations and recommendations. Source: HCSS

Game-driven analysis: **Designing smarter programs for increased impact**

In a third and final phase, the study developed a game-driven analysis designed to identify concrete opportunities for strengthening ongoing Dutch-funded programs and activities in 'hotspot' countries of risk, and explore possible cooperation options for prioritized climate security mitigation capabilities. Mali was selected as a country of focus based on the outcome of the data-driven assessment and ongoing Dutch development priorities, vital security interests, and ongoing defense commitments.

To initialize this work, three preparatory steps were taken. First, the game's analytical framework was developed based on the climate-related, context-specific challenges - hazards and their effects - of the region. Second, the study team made an inventory of Dutch-funded programs and initiatives defined during the Rutte III administration (2017-2021). Third, a set of 'climate security capabilities' was selected that capture the Netherlands abilities to support and/or otherwise collaborate on climate security challenges in Mali.

Based on these preparations, HCSS organized two trial runs to validate and align the game's analytical framework with policy experts from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense. Specifically, players were asked to select, map, and prioritize Dutch 'capabilities'; and introduce new 'capabilities' if any were deemed missing. The trial runs were followed by a 'real' game with a broader group of policy makers to test the game's broader added value for defining climate security policy and practice. This was done with experts from the Netherlands Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense.

Four key takeaways of the game-driven analysis are summarized below:

1. The **pre-game inventory** of ongoing Dutch-funded programs shows that several relevant climate security capabilities are currently being addressed by the Dutch government in its programming efforts. This includes gender inclusiveness and conflict sensitivity. Other capabilities frequently addressed by Dutch programs include agricultural planning, public support / communication and information campaigns, inter-agency, and multilevel cooperation. Capabilities that are supported less often across programs include (re)forestation and urban resilience.

2. The **mapping and prioritizing of Dutch climate security mitigation capabilities** provides insights into the alignment (and divergence) of ongoing programs in Mali. The game participants placed a priority on capabilities that only partially overlap with those used in existing programs. This means that some capabilities that were addressed frequently were also considered priority areas by participants, other frequently addressed capabilities were not considered a priority, and/or capabilities considered priorities were not addressed frequently.

3. **Some 'capabilities' lend themselves better to defining cooperation options than others**. For example, the capability 'food security' offered several cooperation options for the Netherlands including in the areas of research, development & innovation, education & training, legal and regulatory support, planning monitoring & operations, and finance and resources. Identifying the various cooperation options also gave insights into possible opportunities for creating and strengthening synergies between programs. It also provided guidance as to how and where different stakeholders can work together to achieve shared objectives.

4. **Different types of actors can be involved**. There is no cookie-cutter approach to cooperation. Cooperation opportunities depend on the specific climate-security risk, the required capability, and specific cooperation options. Some cooperation options focus more on government entities such as the Netherlands and potential partner countries' Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense or the EU, while others focus more on non-governmental or public-private stakeholders.

Conclusions and **Recommendations**

This study is a first step towards a more coherent and strategic interpretation of Dutch climate security policy in an international context. It analyses from a Dutch perspective where the most relevant and feasible opportunities for international cooperation on climate-related security lie. The analysis in this report is intended to support Dutch efforts to define more concrete actions and cooperation opportunities to address international climate security challenges.

Following the study's composite approach comprised of a policy overview, data-driven risk assessment and game-driven analysis, the study arrived at the following **conclusions**:

1. There is a **lack of conceptual clarity** on the definition of climate-related security. Few policy documents explicitly outline the pathways by which climate change can have security implications, such as poverty and injustice. Climate-related security falls in the gaps between the responsibilities, mandates and capabilities of different ministries and institutions, who tackle some aspects of the climate-security nexus, but not all.

2. Efforts within climate change mitigation, disaster risk reduction, adaptation, and sustainable development apply **siloed approaches** to climate security action, whereby each field applies different approaches and funding and operates within separate communities of practice. The step to turn policies into action and structurally integrate climate considerations into existing security practice has also fallen short.

3. While there is strong political momentum, the international and European policy community has been more focused on achieving its internal climate objectives than on integrating climate security into its foreign policy and practice. There is a growing effort in this regard, yet there is **little consensus on what and how concrete measures can be enacted.**

4. The **defense community has focused on (relatively) narrow climate-security objectives** such as greening its forces and strengthening disaster response. The tide is changing, however, and the defense community is beginning to integrate climate security factors more structurally and systematically into its military operations.

5. Dutch-funded **development programs and defense missions do not adequately take into account climate-related security challenges**. Fragile states in particular would benefit from a climate-proof development approach, as climate related shocks and extreme weather patterns put further pressures on its social and economic systems leading to further poverty and potentially protracting and exacerbating existing and emerging conflict.

6. Data-driven risk assessments and game-driven exercises are **useful supporting tools to achieve national and international climate security objectives**. Climate risk assessment methodologies provide an objective lens to identify countries and/or regions where the Netherlands should focus its resources. Game-driven foresight exercises facilitate the definition of existing and required capabilities to tackle climate-related security challenges. They also help with the identification of regional and international partners that could support the Netherlands in achieving broader impact.

Building on the study's general conclusions, the following recommendations provide a booster for Dutch policy and decision-makers to strengthen the Netherlands' contribution to climate security policy and practice. They are grouped into three levels: (1) pre-engagement; (2) engagement; and (3) monitoring and evaluation.

Pre-Engagement

- **Develop and strengthen a needs-based policy and programming approach** by coupling data-driven climate security assessments with existing Dutch policies, programs, and capacities to determine immediate added value of (possible) Dutch intervention. The underlying variables and indicators should be updated on a yearly basis, so that focus areas can be re-assessed regularly, considering fast-changing global, EU, and regional trends and developments.

- **Integrate climate security concerns into Foreign and Defense policies.** Integrate climate security considerations across foreign policy and long-term strategic engagements and move beyond the focus on the short-term response to the climate crisis. The military should incorporate more climate-related factors into its risk assessments, operational planning, and engagements in fragile and conflict-prone regions to enhance early warning capabilities and the prevention of conflicts.

- **Develop a comprehensive ecological security strategy** that integrates the Dutch National Security Strategy, Defense vision 2035, and Integral Migration Agenda with existing Dutch policy focused on addressing both the 'national' (state-level) and 'human' security impacts of climate change as well as emerging climate-related security risks, including climate-induced migration. This requires a broader inter-departmental collaboration effort.

- **Understand the complex role of governance.** Develop a better understanding of the role of governance in climate-security challenges and continue to invest in locally supported efforts. Militaries often engage directly with government security actors with poor governance and human rights records that may exacerbate climate-related security risks. At the same time, defense could play a key role in enhancing climate security efforts in highly fragile countries, regions that are currently underserved because it is too dangerous for humanitarian organizations to operate.

Engagement

- **Strengthen European Cooperation**. Climate change and its security impacts is a challenge that crosses borders and impacts EU member states unequally but requires a collective response to be effective. This requires that the EU have a shared definition of the climate-security nexus and develop synergies to address the siloed policy & action across the 4D Community (diplomacy, development, defense, disaster management).

- **Strengthen cooperation with at-risk 'hotspot' countries.** Countries at high risk of climate insecurity are often fragile and lack the necessary resources and capabilities required to mitigate and adapt to climate change. To prevent climate change from becoming a security issue with cross-border implications requires supporting these countries in their ability to respond effectively and prevent climate change from becoming a security threat.

- **Support regional efforts.** Many 'hotspot' areas already have policy instruments in place to implement climate security action at a regional level. Climate-related security risks do not stop at country borders and often have spillover effects to bordering countries and in the broader region. To prevent, or at least minimize these spillovers, requires a joint climate security approach. The Netherlands should support these regional initiatives and strengthen countries' resilience and ability to respond to climate-security challenges without being dependent on foreign interventions.

- **Develop further inter-sector partnerships** with business, civil society, and knowledge institutes to support Dutch capability development across the climate security nexus focused on prevention, preparedness, and response. Encourage a 'whole of society' resilience building approach towards climate security challenges moving forward.

Monitoring & Evaluation

- Monitor progress of ongoing programs and projects with country coordinators and thematic experts of the relevant Ministries on an annual basis via a **more informal and more flexible evaluation mechanism** such as the HCSS gamified analysis adopted in this study. The Embassy network of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs could play a more active role in this regard as well.

- **Build on the best practice model** developed recently by Clingendael[8] in at-risk regions and explore opportunities for expanding the inventory in other thematic areas relevant to addressing the climate security nexus. Use the inventory to scale successes based on at-risk country needs, the feasibility of cooperation and Dutch capabilities.

- Use the HCSS game-driven analysis framework to **support policy makers efforts to translate climate security objectives to action**. This can be done by mapping and integrating ongoing Dutch-funded social, economic, and ecological development initiatives and programs, and identifying gaps and opportunities for addressing climate security challenges.

- **Foster coherence in Dutch policy, programs, and initiatives** that touch upon the climate security nexus. The game-driven analysis could be used to link and/or integrate the programs being implemented under the current Theories of Change developed by DGIS. Use the analytical framework of the policy game developed in the study to identify synergies across Theories of Change.

8 van Lossow et al., 'Towards a Better Understanding of Climate Security Practices'.

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