



LOCALISING CLIMATE SECURITY: COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE, VIOLENCE AND DISPLACEMENT IN AFRICAN CONTEXTS

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Climate change has emerged as a critical multiplier of violence and displacement across Africa, intensifying pre-existing structural vulnerabilities rooted in inequality, fragile governance, and historical marginalisation. Increasingly frequent droughts, floods, and environmental degradation are placing severe pressure on land, water, and livelihood systems, particularly in rural and peri-urban contexts. Drawing on political ecology and human security perspectives, this article argues that climate-induced resource stress does not directly cause violence. Still, it interacts with governance failures, uneven power relations, and limited adaptive capacity to produce conflict and forced displacement. Using a qualitative narrative literature review of secondary sources, including peer-reviewed studies, policy frameworks, and institutional reports, the study synthesises evidence from 17 selected studies. It examines how climate change reshapes access to natural resources and amplifies competition, social fragmentation, and insecurity. The analysis situates climate-related displacement within broader development challenges, demonstrating how violence and mobility undermine progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDGs 1, 6, 11, 13, and 16, and threaten the realisation of the African Union's Agenda 2063 aspirations for inclusive growth, peace, and resilience. The article advances a community-centred governance framework that foregrounds indigenous knowledge systems, participatory resource management, and locally grounded peacebuilding as critical mechanisms for reducing climate-related violence and displacement. It contends that technocratic and securitised climate responses remain insufficient without inclusive institutions, social cohesion, and accountable governance at the local level. By integrating climate adaptation, conflict prevention, and sustainable development, the study offers policy-relevant insights to strengthen resilience, protect vulnerable populations, and advance long-term peace in climate-stressed African contexts and displacement dynamics.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Climate change is becoming an increasingly significant source of insecurity in Africa; however, it is not typically perceived as a cause of violence. Instead, climate change can be seen as a "threat multiplier" that exacerbates existing vulnerabilities.¹ Throughout Africa, there have been numerous climatic changes, including increased temperatures, longer periods of drought, less consistent rainfall, and extreme weather conditions, which have added additional strain to already limited natural resources.² In rural and peri-urban communities throughout Africa, these climatic disturbances will likely add stress to already strained environments where individuals depend on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture, water sources, and land management.³

These various climate-based shock waves have historically and contemporarily existed within numerous African regions' long-standing issues that include high rates of poverty and inequality, and other forms of historical marginalisation.⁴ Therefore, climate-based disruptions affect communities differently based on their current socio-economic status. Consequently, this has led to growing concern about the impact of climatic pressures on increased instability, tension among communities, and forced migration.⁵ For this reason, there is a need to transition from viewing globalised climate security measures and towards localised approaches of addressing climate-based security through community-governance models, social networks, and indigenous knowledge systems that enable us to understand better how climate-based risk translates into violence and forced displacement in African communities.

¹ United Nations Environment Programme, *Annual Report 2024* (UNEP 2024).

² Sarah F Kew and others, 'Impact of Precipitation and Increasing Temperatures on Drought Trends in Eastern Africa' (2021) 12 *Earth System Dynamics* 17

³ Sunanda Manasi and K V Raju, *Coping Mechanisms for Climate Change in Peri-Urban Areas* (Springer 2020).

⁴ Franklin Obeng-Odoom, 'The Intellectual Marginalisation of Africa' (2019) 17 *African Identities* 211.

⁵ Laurie Freeman, 'Environmental Change, Migration, and Conflict in Africa: A Critical Examination of the Interconnections' (2017) 26 *The Journal of Environment & Development* 351.

In a localised climate security context, there is no direct and determinate link between climate change and violence; however, the relationship is influenced by community governance systems, institutional capacity, and power relations.⁶ In settings where governance is weak or fractured, the state has a limited presence and natural resource distributions are unequal; climate change will create scarcity of essential resources like water, land, and grazing areas.⁷

As a result of this scarcity, the ability to politically compete for access to these resources increases and reinforces existing social divides. Where institutions fail to provide effective mechanisms for dispute resolution, ensure equal access to shared resources, or adequately address environmental shock events that may impact those resources (and communities dependent upon them), local conflicts may be intensified.⁸ However, settings with more robust forms of governance, including institutions capable of managing scarce resources cooperatively and adapting to changing environmental conditions, have greater potential to reduce tensions arising from competing demands for those resources.

The most visible consequence of climate-related distress in Africa is the increasing number of displaced people.⁹ Environmental degradation and declining income sources in these environments have forced individuals and communities to relocate to find environmentally sustainable ways to support themselves. While this migration can be both internal and temporary, for many, it becomes either long-term or permanent, especially if there is no sign of environmental recovery.¹⁰ In addition to physical relocation, climate-driven displacement affects people's sense of safety, dignity, and access to the things they need from a human security

⁶ Halvard Buhaug and Nina von Uexkull, 'Vicious Circles: Violence, Vulnerability, and Climate Change' (2021) 46 *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 545.

⁷ Olawale A Ikhuoso and others, 'Climate Change and Agriculture: The Competition for Limited Resources Amidst Crop Farmers-Livestock Herding Conflict in Nigeria – A Review' (2020) 272 *Journal of Cleaner Production* 123104.

⁸ Ikhuoso and others (n 7)

⁹ Ahmed A and others, 'The Impacts of Climate Change on Displaced Populations: A Call for Action' (2021) 3 *The Journal of Climate Change and Health* 100057.

¹⁰ Katrin Millock, 'Migration and Environment' (2015) 7 *Annual Review of Resource Economics* 35.

perspective.¹¹ Populations displaced by climate-related causes are usually at greater risk than others due to loss of employment, social isolation, and potential exposure to various forms of insecurity upon arrival at their destination.¹² However, the receiving community may also be subject to additional strain on its infrastructure, services, and resources due to the increased number of displaced persons.

Climate security has gained greater global and regional recognition than ever before; however, many responses to climate security remain largely technocratic and state-focused.¹³ The experience of climate security and the way it is governed within communities remains neglected. As a result, there is now a pressing requirement to "localise" climate security by focusing on resource governance through community-based approaches (e.g., participatory resource management) and the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems. The importance of community-based methods to enhance resilience cannot be overstated. Community-based methods are developed from within specific local contexts, rely on social networks, and draw on people's real-time experiences.¹⁴ In addition to developing adaptive strategies for managing environmental variability over long periods, indigenous knowledge systems also develop strategies that promote the sustainability of natural resources when integrated into inclusive governance structures and community-driven peace-building processes.¹⁵

Unfortunately, localised mechanisms to address climate insecurity are often under-recognised and/or under-integrated into formal policy frameworks. As a result, this gap demonstrates a need for new climate

¹¹ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2023* (UNDP 2023).

¹² Kristie L Ebi and Robert McLeman, 'Climate Related Migration and Displacement' (2022) 379 *BMJ*.

¹³ Jan Ahrens and Ernst Halbmayer, 'Introduction: Epistemologies of Global Warming in the South: The Social and Cultural Dimension of Climate Change in Southern Africa' in *Climate Change Epistemologies in Southern Africa* (Routledge 2023).

¹⁴ Ladaporn Kaewkitipong, Chao C Chen and Pornsiri Ractham, 'A Community-Based Approach to Sharing Knowledge Before, During, and After Crisis Events: A Case Study from Thailand' (2016) 54 *Computers in Human Behavior* 653.

¹⁵ V Jakes, 'The Role of Traditional Knowledge in Sustainable Development' (2024) 3 *International Journal of Humanity and Social Sciences* 40.

governance and security models that are contextualised at the community level and developed from the ground up. Although much has been written about climate change, conflict, and displacement, it remains unclear how climate security can be successfully "localised" (i.e., made effective at the local level) through community governance mechanisms that address the interconnectedness of these issues in an African context.¹⁶ Furthermore, while many studies have focused on the role of local institutions, indigenous knowledge systems and ordinary day-to-day governance practices in determining how climate-related resource shortages translate into violent conflicts and displacement, these issues are generally downplayed.

How does climate-induced resource stress interact with governance systems and socio-political dynamics to influence patterns of violence and displacement in African contexts? This is the key question that the article addresses. The article: examines the relationship between climate change, resource scarcity, and conflict dynamics in Africa; analyses the role of governance and institutional capacity in mediating climate-related insecurity; explores the link between climate stress and displacement from a human security perspective; and identifies the potential of community-based governance and indigenous knowledge systems in mitigating climate-related violence and displacement.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. Section 2 outlines the methodological approach and data sources used in the narrative literature review. Section 3 presents the results of the analysis, highlighting key patterns and themes emerging from the literature. Section 4 discusses the findings, focusing on governance, displacement, and community-based responses. The final section concludes the paper by outlining key implications for policy and practice.

¹⁶ Marjolein Salzinger and Sophie Desmidt, *Climate Change and Conflict in the Central Sahel: A Shared Responsibility to Support Local Resilience* (The Centre for Africa-Europe Relations 2023).

2. METHODS AND DATA

2.1 Literature Search and Selection

A qualitative narrative literature review approach is employed for this study to explore how climate change intersects with governance, violence and displacement in African contexts. Academic and policy-oriented literature was systematically searched using three main databases: Scopus, Google Scholar, and Web of Science. Databases were chosen for their ability to provide comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary, and policy-relevant publications.

The search methodology used keyword combinations, including "Climate Change", "Climate Security", "Resource Conflict", "Displacement", "Governance", "Political Ecology", and "Human Security". Regional filters were also applied to identify literature that specifically relates to an African context. Boolean operators (AND/OR) were also utilised to refine the search parameters and to identify relevant intersections among the environmental, social and governance dimensions. In addition to reviewing academic literature, select policy papers and institutional reports have been included to situate the findings within a broader developmental framework, primarily those related to climate governance and security in Africa.

Literature searches were limited to publications released from 2015 to 2024; this time frame reflects the emergence of contemporary debates regarding climate-security since the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015, and increased attention to climate-related risks within both global and African policy frameworks.

2.2 Screening Criteria

A two-stage process was used to evaluate the relevance and quality of all relevant literature.¹⁷ Titles and abstracts were reviewed during Stage One to determine if the study examined the relationship between climate change and at least one of the following: conflict, governance, or

¹⁷ Marco Seeber, Ida C Svege and Jan Ole Hesselberg, 'Improving the Efficiency of Research Proposals Evaluation: A Two-Stage Procedure' (2024) *Research Evaluation* rvac020.

displacement. After removing duplicate entries, 1,732 records were screened, and 1,467 were removed from consideration as they did not meet the relevance criteria.

During Stage Two, full-text articles were evaluated against the following inclusion criteria:

- The article focuses on an African context(s), or comparative analysis with relevance to Africa
- The article considers climate-related environmental impacts (e.g. droughts, floods, resource scarcity, etc.)
- The article includes a discussion of governance, institutional dynamics, or socio-political factors
- The article has conceptual or empirical significance to violence, conflict, or displacement

A total of 265 full-text articles were evaluated for eligibility. As a result, 248 articles were removed from further consideration due to a lack of relevance to the governance or security aspects of the topic, inadequate focus on African context(s), inadequate methodological/analytical development, or unavailability of full-text versions.

2.3 Final Data Set

A total of 17 studies were finally included in the narrative synthesis after completing the screening process and eligibility assessment. Of these, thirteen were published as peer-reviewed journal articles, and four were institutional or policy reports. This provided a balanced perspective on the academic and practical context in which climate change impacts are occurring.

These studies provide a mix of conceptual and empirical evidence that examines how the intersectionality of climate change, governance, conflict and displacement occur within different African contexts. Given the focus of this data set, a thorough thematic analysis could be conducted on the studies selected for the narrative review used in this research.

2.4 Thematic Syntheses

The thematic synthesis method was used to analyse all the selected literature. Thematic synthesis is an approach in which recurrent patterns, concepts, and relationships in the data set are identified; these are then organised into primary analytical themes based on the research questions.

A total of four primary themes were derived through thematic analysis as follows:

1. Climate-induced resource stress and environmental change
2. Governance, institutional capacity, and resource management
3. Conflict dynamics and social fragmentation
4. Displacement, mobility, and human security

This overall structure enabled the coherent consideration of how climate change interacted with governance and socio-political dynamics at the community level (the focus of this study) within the results and findings section. It also enabled the integration of various case studies on climate change in Africa to identify consistent patterns and regional differences.

2.5 Visual Summary of the Review Process

To enhance transparency and methodological clarity, the literature review process is summarised in a visual format (Figure 1). The figure outlines the stages of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion of sources, adapted from established review frameworks.

The visual summary provides a clear overview of how the initial pool of studies was refined into the final dataset, demonstrating the rigour and systematic nature of the review process while remaining consistent with a narrative synthesis approach.

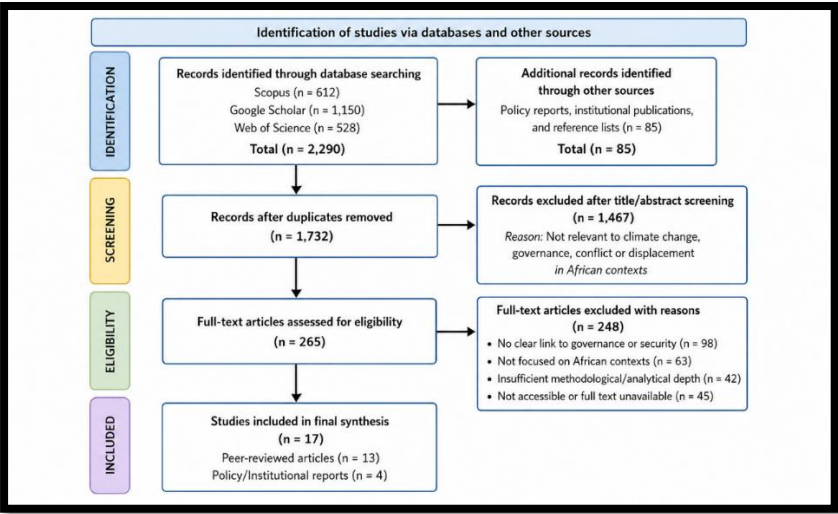


Figure 1: PRISMA-style flow diagram of the literature review process.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Climate-Induced Resource Stress and Environmental Change

Climate change impacts on the availability and reliability of natural resources (water, land, etc.) vary across African regions.¹⁸, although they are becoming increasingly evident. Changes in precipitation patterns (droughts, floods, irregular rainfall) and frequent extreme weather events negatively affect long-term rural/peri-urban livelihood systems that depend on traditional resource bases. Climate-induced changes negatively affected crop yields and freshwater availability, putting additional pressure on land use.¹⁹ Consequently, numerous communities were forced to adapt through migration, diversification of income sources, or reliance on

¹⁸ United Nations Environment Programme (n 1).

¹⁹ Khondaker F Ahmed, Guoyong Wang, Liangzhi You and Min Yu, 'Potential Impact of Climate and Socioeconomic Changes on Future Agricultural Land Use in West Africa' (2016) 7(1) *Earth System Dynamics* 151.

common property resources; however, this capacity to adapt varies widely due to broader socio-economic differences.²⁰

3.2 Governance, Institutional Capacity, and Resource Management

Resource management during local-level responses to climate-change-induced resource constraints depends on the institutional governance framework. Where institutional frameworks are weakened, fragmented, or non-legitimate, regulatory mechanisms for resource allocation and dispute mediation are significantly diminished.²¹

Research shows that weaker institutional capacities, combined with inadequate policies, create resource inequality and limit access for marginalised communities. State absence or inefficient localised governance structures created opportunities for community-based resource management systems to emerge informally. Success levels of these informal resource management systems vary widely.²²

On the other hand, institutional frameworks providing strong coordination among participating stakeholders and governance frameworks provide greater resilience. Research has shown that inclusive decision-making processes and transparent, accountable frameworks provide greater equity in resource distribution and reduce the likelihood of conflict.²³

3.3 Conflict Dynamics and Social Fragmentation

Climate-induced resource stress can lead to localised conflict, especially when competition over scarce resources intersects with existing social, ethnic or political divisions in specific locations. Most conflicts occurred

²⁰ Jennifer Belle, Tapiwa Mapingure and Samuel T Owolabi, 'Factors Influencing Rural Women's Adoption of Climate Change Adaptation Strategies: Evidence from the Chivi District of Zimbabwe' (2024) 12(11) *Climate* 191.

²¹ African Union and AFRICANA, *African Union Strategy for Better Integrated Border Governance* (African Union 2020).

²² Franklin Obeng-Odoom, 'Urban Governance in Africa Today: Reframing, Experiences, and Lessons' (2017) 48(1) *Growth and Change* 4.

²³ Emmanuel J Oyeyipo, Isaac A Oyekola, Olawale P Salako and Oluwabunmi S Babatunde, 'Understanding the Importance of Inclusive Techniques in Promoting Peace and Equal Justice' in *Sustainable Development Goals* (CRC Press 2024).

over access to water, grazing lands and agricultural resources and primarily involved pastoralist and farming communities.²⁴ However, research indicated climate change does not directly cause conflict but rather creates stressors that amplify pre-existing tensions and vulnerabilities.

For example, in the Sahel region, prolonged drought and shifting rainfall patterns have intensified competition between pastoralist and farming communities, particularly over grazing land and water resources. However, the extent to which these tensions escalate into conflict depends largely on governance structures and the presence of effective local dispute resolution mechanisms.²⁵

Additional factors include historical grievances, weak governance, and socio-politically marginalised status, which shape whether climate-induced resource constraints are met with cooperation or conflict. Additionally, in certain locations, resource constraints contributed to increased social fragmentation and decreased utilisation of traditional methods for resolving conflicts and enhancing community cohesion. Decreased community cohesion reduces communities' capacity to cooperatively address environmental stress.²⁶

3.4 Displacement, Mobility, and Human Security

A growing number of researchers report finding a relationship between climate-induced environmental changes and displacement patterns across Africa. Stressors, including drought, land degradation and flooding, have led to both short-term and long-term migrations, typically occurring internally (within national borders).

Migration due to environmental stressors is complex and fluid; individuals and households engage in migrational cycles or multiple-stage migration.²⁷

²⁴ Liam V Brottem, 'Environmental Change and Farmer-Herder Conflict in Agro-Pastoral West Africa' (2016) 44(5) *Human Ecology* 547.

²⁵ Brottem (n 24)

²⁶ Ian Townshend, Olajide Awosoga, John Kulig and Hui Fan, 'Social Cohesion and Resilience Across Communities That Have Experienced a Disaster' (2015) 76(2) *Natural Hazards* 913.

²⁷ Lori M Hunter, Jessica K Luna and Rachel M Norton, 'Environmental Dimensions of Migration' (2015) 41(1) *Annual Review of Sociology* 377.

While migration can serve as a form of adaptation, it can also introduce new vulnerabilities, especially when migrating to urban or peri-urban receiving areas with high existing demand for infrastructure and services.

From a human security perspective, displaced populations are exposed to higher risks relating to livelihoods, access to essential services and individual safety. Similarly, receiving/host communities may experience increased competition for resources, resulting in heightened tension and insecurity.²⁸ Similarly, in the Horn of Africa, repeated droughts have contributed to increased displacement, with affected populations migrating to urban and peri-urban areas in search of livelihoods and basic services. This has placed additional pressure on already strained infrastructure and resources in receiving communities.²⁹

3.5 Emerging Role of Community-Based Governance and Local Responses

There is growing empirical evidence that community-based governance and localised responses are important for addressing climate-related risks. Indigenous knowledge systems, customary leadership structures, and community-based participatory resource management practices are being recognised as valuable mechanisms for improving community resilience and decreasing conflict.³⁰

Localised approaches to climate risk allow for contextually relevant adaptations to environmental stressors, particularly in areas lacking effective formal governance structures. Examples of successful community-driven initiatives include shared resource agreements, local

²⁸ Jonathan D Pugh, *The Invisibility Bargain: Governance Networks and Migrant Human Security* (Oxford University Press 2021).

²⁹ Ahmed A and others (n 9).

³⁰ Richard Musavengane, 'Using the Systemic-Resilience Thinking Approach to Enhance Participatory Collaborative Management of Natural Resources in Tribal Communities: Toward Inclusive Land Reform-Led Outdoor Tourism' (2019) 25 *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism* 45.

conflict-resolution practices, and cooperative adaptation strategies that reduce tensions and promote social cohesion.³¹

Institutional limitations, exclusion from formal governance frameworks, and broader structural challenges constrain the effectiveness of community-driven initiatives.³² Therefore, the extent to which these approaches successfully mitigate tensions and promote social cohesion varies across contexts.

Based on the thematic synthesis of the literature, five major areas emerged, representing the connections between climate-induced resource stress, governance, and conflict/displacement in African countries. The area(s) and associated findings are outlined below in Table 1.

Table 1: Thematic summary of literature on climate change, governance, conflict dynamics, and displacement in African contexts

Theme	Key Focus	Summary of Findings	Implications for Climate Security
Climate-Induced Resource Stress and Environmental Change	Impact of climate variability on natural resources (water, land, agriculture)	Climate change is altering resource availability through droughts, floods, and erratic rainfall. This has reduced agricultural productivity, intensified water scarcity, and increased pressure on land systems. Adaptive capacity varies significantly	Resource scarcity acts as a foundational stressor, shaping livelihood vulnerability and increasing dependence on limited resources, thereby setting the stage for potential conflict and displacement.

³¹ Blake D Ratner and others, 'Addressing Conflict Through Collective Action in Natural Resource Management' (2017) 11(2) *International Journal of the Commons*.

³² Franklin Obeng-Odoom (n 4).

		across communities. ³³	
Governance, Institutional Capacity, and Resource Management	Role of formal and informal institutions in managing resource access	Weak or fragmented governance systems struggle to regulate resource use and mediate disputes, often resulting in unequal access. In contrast, inclusive and participatory governance structures improve resource distribution and resilience. ³⁴	Governance is a key mediating factor in climate security. Effective, accountable institutions reduce vulnerability and mitigate the risk of conflict, while governance failures exacerbate insecurity.
Conflict Dynamics and Social Fragmentation	Relationship between resource scarcity and localised conflict	Climate stress does not directly cause conflict but intensifies existing social, ethnic, and political tensions. Resource-based conflicts (e.g., over water and grazing land) are more likely in contexts with historical grievances and weak governance ³⁵	Climate change acts as a threat multiplier, amplifying pre-existing vulnerabilities. Conflict outcomes depend on socio-political conditions rather than environmental stress alone.
Displacement, Mobility, and Human Security	Patterns of climate-induced migration and	Environmental degradation drives both temporary and permanent	Displacement is both an outcome of climate insecurity and a

³³ Ahmed and others (n 19); Belle and others (n 20); Kew and others (n 2); United Nations Environment Programme (n 1).

³⁴ Obeng-Odoom (n 22); Emmanuel J Oyeyipo and others (n 23); Olawale A Ikhuoso and others (n 7); African Union and AFRICANA (n 21).

³⁵ Liam V Brottem (n 22); Halvard Buhaug and Nina von Uexkull (n 6); Ian Townshend and others (n 23).

	associated vulnerabilities	displacement, often within national borders. While mobility can be adaptive, it also increases vulnerability and pressure on host communities, leading to potential tensions. ³⁶	driver of new risks. Addressing human security requires integrating mobility into climate and development planning.
Community-Based Governance and Local Responses	Role of indigenous knowledge and local governance mechanisms	Community-based approaches, including traditional leadership and participatory resource management, enhance resilience and support conflict mitigation. However, their effectiveness is often limited by a lack of formal recognition and institutional support. ³⁷	Localising climate security is critical. Strengthening community governance and integrating indigenous knowledge into formal systems can reduce conflict and improve adaptive capacity.

³⁶ Ahmed A and others (n 9); Lori M Hunter and others (n 24); Jonathan D Pugh (n 25); Kristie L Ebi and Robert McLeman (n 12).

³⁷ Richard Musavengane (n 26); Blake D Ratner and others (n 27); Ladaporn Kaewkitipong, Chao C Chen and Pornsiri Ractham (n 14); V Jakes (n 15).

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Climate Change as a Contextual Driver of Insecurity

Findings support the idea that climate change provides a contextual driver of insecurity, rather than a primary source of violence.³⁸ Climate change is consistent with political ecology views; environmental strain impacts access to resources and increases inequality among individuals. But climate impacts are shaped by social, political, and economic variables. Many African societies face climate variability and other vulnerabilities stemming from poverty, marginalisation, and uneven development, thereby making them unstable.

Therefore, supporting the theory that climate-related risk must be considered within the broader framework of socio-ecological systems, which include government failure and history. Thus, the simple or causal theories of climate-conflict relationships are insufficient to describe the complexity experienced throughout various contexts

4.2 Governance as a Central Mediating Factor

One major finding from this analysis is that governance is a principal mediator of climate security. The data show that governance systems, both formal and informal, determine how resource shortages are managed, how conflicts are resolved, and how communities respond to environmental strain. This is evident in regions such as the Sahel, where similar environmental pressures produce different outcomes depending on the strength and inclusivity of local governance systems.³⁹

Where governance is weak, divided, or exclusive, resource shortages due to climate change are more likely to lead to conflict and social disintegration. On the other hand, when governance is inclusive and participatory, it allows for cooperation, fair resource sharing, and a joint response to environmental stress.⁴⁰ The results show that governance can be framed in terms of State authority; however, community-level

³⁸ United Nations Environment Programme (n 1).

³⁹ Olawale A Ikhuoso and others (n 7).

⁴⁰ Halvard Buhaug and Nina von Uexkull (n 6).

governance, including traditional leaders and informal systems, plays a large part in the management of resources and the mediation of disputes, especially in places with little or no State authority.

4.3 Rethinking Displacement through a Human Security Lens

The analysis changes the way we consider climate-induced migration and describes the process of migration as multi-dimensional. Environmental strain causes people to relocate; nevertheless, the decision to do so depends on several factors, including opportunities for livelihoods, social network connections, and governance conditions. From a human security viewpoint, displacement represents a deepening of insecurity concerning access to resources, protection and dignity.⁴¹

People who are displaced often experience new forms of vulnerability at their destination. These new vulnerabilities include competition for available resources, lack of access to services and social exclusion. Simultaneously, host communities may face additional strains as increased population numbers compete for infrastructure and resources, leading to even more tension.

Given the above dynamics, there is a need to include displacement in general climate policy and development planning, rather than viewing it as simply a humanitarian problem.

4.4 Localising Climate Security through Community Governance

An important contribution of this study is its emphasis on localised climate security through community governance. The findings indicate that localised approaches based on indigenous knowledge systems, participation in resource management, and community-based dispute resolution offer several ways to mitigate climate-related violence and displacement.⁴²

Those localised approaches typically better reflect the conditions in each area and address the social aspects of climate risk more effectively. Nevertheless, those approaches remain poorly recognised within formal

⁴¹ United Nations Development Programme (n 11).

⁴² Richard Musavengane (n 26); Blake D Ratner and others (n 27)

policy frameworks, which generally favour top-down technical solutions. Therefore, climate policies that fail to recognise and incorporate local governance mechanisms limit the ability of intervention efforts to address climate-related risks while ignoring the resilience found in communities.

To create effective localised climate security, it is necessary not just to recognise community-based systems but also to embed them in larger governance systems that enhance legitimacy, inclusiveness, and sustainability.

4.5 Bridging Policy Frameworks and Local Realities

The role of global and regional policy frameworks—such as the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union’s Agenda 2063—is vital; however, they serve primarily as guiding documents for climate action, peace, and development.⁴³ In contrast, the results of this analysis indicate a significant disconnect between the policies intended and those implemented at the local level. This disconnect will significantly hinder the effective implementation of climate security measures if local governance challenges and socioeconomic conditions are not specifically addressed in the formulation of context-based strategic plans. Therefore, it is imperative to create stronger links among policy, practice, and local knowledge systems and to place greater emphasis on participatory governance and community involvement.

5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that climate change may act as a stressor in African countries; however, it does not directly cause conflict or displacement. Rather, climate change exacerbates existing inequalities, governance challenges and socio-political vulnerabilities. Additionally, the results demonstrate that conflict or cooperation outcomes are primarily determined by local governance systems, institutional capacity, and the extent to which communities receive support to adapt to environmental changes.

In theory, this study contributes to the development of a framework that

⁴³ African Union and AFRICANA (n 21).

integrates political ecology and human security concepts by demonstrating how environmental pressures, power relations, and governance processes interact at the local level. Furthermore, this study expands upon the concept of localised climate security as a critical analytical lens to emphasise that climate-related risks and responses must be examined in light of community-specific socio-political and ecological contexts, rather than deterministic or solely environmentally driven perspectives.

Practically speaking, the results of this study underscore the importance of building strong community governance systems, recognising indigenous knowledge, and supporting participative resource management as core elements of climate security strategies. Policymakers and practitioners must go beyond technocratic and security-oriented approaches by prioritising inclusive, ground-up interventions that promote institutional accountability, support adaptive capacity, and reduce vulnerability to both conflict and displacement.

Finally, there is great potential for additional research through empirically driven, community-level studies examining the lived experience of climate insecurity and governance across many African settings. Future studies could also include comparative analyses across regions. Additional studies using an interdisciplinary methodology would help further investigate how community governance systems can be successfully integrated into national and regional policy frameworks to build resilience and foster sustainable peace. Ultimately, advancing climate security in Africa will require a transition from separate technical approaches to integrated, locally grounded approaches that connect climate adaptation, conflict prevention, and development.