

Forging Paths *for* Shared Sacred Flourishing

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THEMATIC DIALOGUE II

Climate, Conflict, and Debt

Interlinked Risk and the Responsibility to Sustain Life

According to the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations, the nexus between climate change, violent conflict, and unsustainable debt burdens has resulted in creation of a polycrisis that has disproportionately affected fragile and climate sensitive societies.

Rising temperatures, water scarcity, food insecurity, and environmental degradation are increasingly interacting with political instability, displacement, weak governance, and economic fragility. Many of these countries are often low-and-middle income countries who face debt obligations which significantly constrain their ability to address the challenges through development of long-term sustainable solutions. As a result, an endless cycle of climate shock, violent conflicts, and deep economic downturns plagues the countries.¹

Although international frameworks increasingly recognize the links between climate, conflict, and debt, responses often remain fragmented across humanitarian, financial, environmental, and security institutions.



Rapid growth in the use of renewable energy is one reason for hope in the fight against climate change. But urgent measures are needed to prevent catastrophe, experts say.

Addressing these overlapping crises will require “a whole of society” approach, accorded with the shared sacred worldview that places human dignity and shared responsibility at the center.

In this context, religious and faith actors have an important role to play in strengthening social cohesion, promoting solidarity with vulnerable communities, and advancing ethical approaches to environmental stewardship and economic justice. They hold significant moral authority and have a wide network that can reach

affected societies, making them a crucial partner in fostering dialogue, advocating for more equitable and human-centered policies, and reinforcing collective responsibility to sustain life.

¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Human Development Report 2025: A Matter of Choice: People and Possibilities in the Age of AI (2025) https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2025?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Expected Outcomes

- Increased understanding of the interconnected nature of climate change, violent conflict, and unsustainable debt burdens, particularly in fragile and climate-vulnerable contexts.
- Exchange of experiences and locally grounded approaches related to climate resilience, social cohesion, peacebuilding, and community-based adaptation in contexts affected by environmental crisis and instability.
- Greater reflection on the role of religious and faith actors in promoting solidarity, ethical stewardship, climate justice, and community resilience in the face of overlapping global challenges.
- Contribute to broader policy discussions on strengthening multilateral cooperation and collective responsibility to sustain life, protect human dignity, and support future generations.

Guiding Questions

1. How do climate change, conflict, and unsustainable debt interact to deepen fragility and vulnerability, particularly in climate-sensitive and conflict-affected contexts?
2. In what ways do rising debt burdens constrain investments in climate adaptation, peacebuilding, social protection, and long-term resilience?
3. What responsibilities do wealthier states, international financial institutions, and multilateral actors have toward countries facing compounded climate, conflict, and debt-related pressures?
4. How can religious and faith actors contribute to strengthening social cohesion, advancing climate justice, and supporting community resilience in contexts affected by instability and environmental stress?
5. What ethical and human-centered approaches are needed to ensure that global responses to climate change, conflict, and debt prioritize human dignity, solidarity, and the protection of future generations?



A woman waters a tree nursery in Mali, using water from a solar-powered borehole. Projects like this, implemented by the African Council of Religious Leaders-*Religions for Peace*, are helping communities mitigate the impacts of climate change.