Natural Resources, Conflict, and Peacebuilding

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Woodrow Wilson Center

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- Living memorial to President Wilson

- Jane Harman – 9 term L.A. Congresswoman

- Facilitate research, dialogue, and actionable ideas among academics, policy and practice communities

- #1 US think tank to watch; among top 10 in the world

- Environmental changes can exacerbate conflict—and help build peace

Three Key Points

- How are natural resources and conflict connected?

- How have these connections been managed?

- What have we been doing to contribute to international education on these topics?

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Resource Conflict

Used in cell phones and laptop computers, the 3Ts: tin, tantalum, and tungsten are also sold profitably by armed groups in eastern Congo. Seen here is tin ore.

Photo credit: Flickr user ENOUGH Project

- Allocation, management, or use of natural resources results in:
  - Violence
  - Human rights abuses
  - No access to resources so that diminishes well-being

- Rarely linear cause and effect

Resource Capture, Scarcity, and Curse

- Capture – abundance and opportunities

- Scarcity – physical scarcity or governance/distribution factors

- Curse – undiversified exports and political fragility

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Financing & Sustaining Conflict

Country	Duration	Resources
Afghanistan	1978-2001	Gems, timber, opium
Angola	1975-2002	Oil, diamonds
Burma	1949-	Timber, tin, gems, opium
Cambodia	1978-1997	Timber, gems
Colombia	1984-	Oil, gold, coca, timber, emeralds
Congo, Dem Rep. of	1996-1998, 1998-2003, 2003-2008	Copper, coltan, diamonds, gold, cobalt, timber, tin
Congo, Rep of	1997-	Oil
Côte d'Ivoire	2002-2007	Diamonds, cocoa, cotton
Indonesia - Aceh	1975-2006	Timber, natural gas
Indonesia - West Papua	1969-	Copper, gold, timber
Liberia	1989-2003	Timber, diamonds, iron, palm oil, cocoa, coffee, rubber gold
Nepal	1996-2007	Yarsagumba (fungus)
PNG - Bougainville	1989-1998	Copper, gold
Peru	1980-1995	Coca
Senegal - Casamance	1982-	Timber, cashew nuts
Sierra Leone	1991-2000	Diamonds, cocoa, coffee
Somalia	1991-	Fish, charcoal
Sudan	1983-2005	Oil

Between 1989 and 2009, at least eighteen cases of civil war and internal unrest were supported by revenue from natural resources.

(Source: UNEP, *From Conflict to Peacebuilding*)

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Undermining Peace

Economic incentives provided by the exploitation of natural resources can undermine prospective peace agreements and create barriers to political reintegration and reconciliation.

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Environmental Scarcity and Conflict Connections

- The environment is neither a necessary nor sufficient cause of violent conflict
- "Underlying, subnational, and diffuse" environmental contributions to violent conflict
- Intrastate, rather than interstate (different for territorial or transboundary disputes)
- Fisheries, arable land, water, and deforestation are the most salient renewable resources
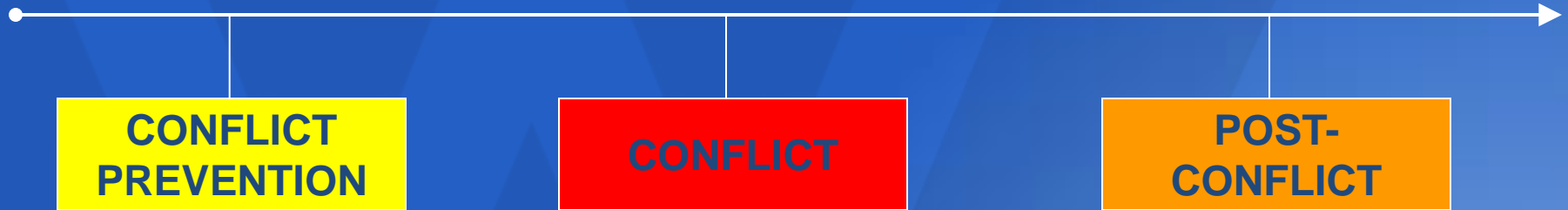- Top down or bottom up

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Some Conclusions

Environmental scarcity contributes to:

- Migration to marginal lands and urban areas
- Diminished economic activity
- Resource capture by elites
- Weakening state capacity and state legitimacy
- Exacerbating more proximate causes of conflict (ethnic and/or income divisions)
- Greater risk from threat multipliers such as climate change

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Exploring Pathways to Peace Along a Conflict Continuum

CONFLICT PREVENTION

CONFLICT

POST-CONFLICT

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Approaches

Mayors, municipal representatives, and youth from Israel, Palestine, and Jordan join hands in the Lower Jordan River to call upon their governments to rehabilitate the river.

Photo credit: Friends of the Earth Middle East

Pitfall: Forests in Nepal

Run-away deforestation in 1970s led to locally-managed resource user groups (CFUGs)

Maoist insurgency erupted in 1996, inspired by widespread inequality

Photo credits: STARS Foundation (top); Ingmar Zahorsky (bottom)

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Forests in Nepal

CFUGS are one of the country's few operating democratic organizations

CFUGs can exacerbate the inequalities that gave rise to the insurgency by sidelining marginalized groups

Photo credits: Sean Peoples (top); Natalio Perez (bottom)

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Successful Approaches

Niger

Rwanda

Iraq

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Water in Niger

History of worsening drought

Potential for farmer-pastoralist conflict over water

Past water interventions exacerbated tensions

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Water in Niger

"Wells for Peace" builds and manages wells via social agreements among local stakeholders

Violent conflict in key areas is down, and wells have become safe havens during droughts

Photo credits: flickr user etrenard (top); flickr user trust.org (bottom)

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Mountain Gorillas in Rwanda

Gorilla tourism used to be Rwanda's 3rd biggest source of foreign income – but conflict changed that

Ongoing conflict has ravaged mountain gorillas' habitats and health

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Mountain Gorillas in Rwanda

NGOs and regional governments collaborated to protect gorillas and manage parks with revenue from tourism fees

5% of fees are shared with local communities to improve their well-being, making poaching counterproductive

Photo credit: Neil Palmer/CIAT (top); Tom Gruber (bottom)

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Marshland in Iraq

Cultural and environmental importance

History of degradation under Saddam Hussein

When the Iraq War began, marshes were only 7% of their original size

Photo credits: James Gordon (left); Elliott Plack (middle); Samantha Ciaramitaro (right)

Marshland in Iraq

Aid organizations rebuilt trust with local communities by addressing their most pressing needs first

That trust creates space for longer-term conservation efforts to rebuild the marsh ecosystem

Photo credit: Gytis Cibulskis (top); Salim Virji (bottom)

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Elements of Success

- Community buy-in

- Equitable inclusion of all stakeholders

- Solutions integrate multiple sectors

- Plan for long-term sustainability

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Environment in War-Torn Societies

- Essential ingredient, not luxury item in post-conflict

- Key to restoring livelihoods and jump-starting economy

- Restoration of services key to legitimacy of the peace

- Shared management structures a means to (re)building trust among former adversaries

Potential Environmental Peacebuilding Services

1. Post-crisis environmental assessments

2. Environmental capacity building and technical support

3. Environmental recovery and clean-up projects

4. Environmental diplomacy for peace building

Environmental Pathways to Peace

- Environment as a means to a security end

- Utilize logic of environmental interdependence and need for ongoing interactions to talk across lines of tension

- Use cooperative efforts and dialogue to manage natural resources to help address insecurities between parties in dispute

- Build confidence, build trust, build peace

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International Education Efforts
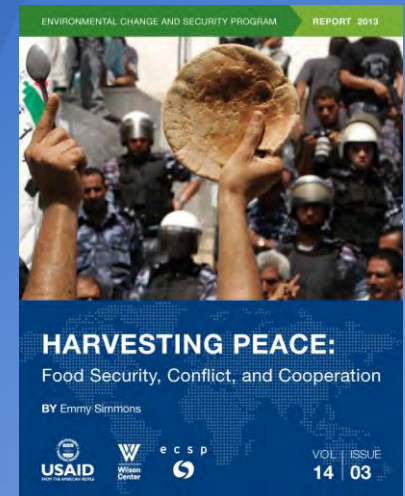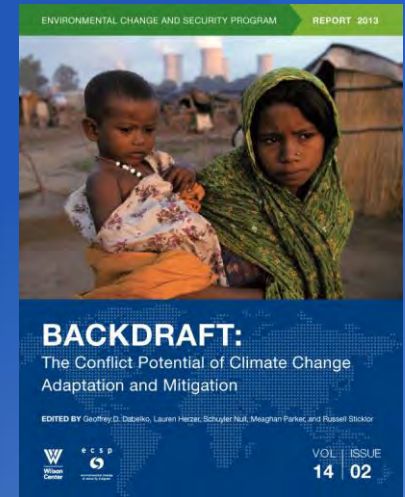
International Education Efforts

With students:

- Internships/blogs
  - West Point
- Student visits
- Student site visits
- Technical assistance
  - such as M&E
- Storytelling/documentary screenings

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International Education Efforts

With professors/colleges:

- Teaching/lectures

- Curriculum development

- Public meetings

  - Managing Our Planet series with GMU

- Scholars program

- Research projects

- Bridging communities:

  - Humanitarian and development

  - Research and diplomacy – NDU

  - Military and decisionmakers

    - CNA's military advisory board

    - G7 climate and conflict

"We have been so used in the past to see humanitarianism, development, poverty, and climate change as distinct issues… this is not a good way in looking at the problems…(we must address) the intersection of issues …where underdevelopment, climate change, scarcity of resources, and conflicts move countries from year to year…deeper into problems." Peter Maurer, Int'l Red Cross

Thank you!

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