

Regional Capacity Building Workshop on Climate, Peace and Security in Central Africa

PRACTICE NOTE



Photo UNOCA/Mabaye Dia

1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

The Regional Capacity Building Workshop on Climate, Peace and Security in Central Africa was co-organized by the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA), the Department of Peace Operations (DPO), and the United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC). Held from 2 to 4 October 2024 in Ntoun, Gabon, the workshop aimed to strengthen the capacities of regional stakeholders and UN presences in analyzing and managing the complex interactions of Climate, Peace and Security (CPS) in Central Africa. The workshop brought together 35 participants (14 of whom were women), including representatives from UNOCA, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the Office of the Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region (OESG-GL), and different Resident Coordinator Offices (RCOs). The workshop also welcomed the participation of representatives from the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and several civil society organizations, including the Youth Network for Central African Forests (Réseau des Jeunes pour la Gestion des Forêts d'Afrique Centrale REJEFAC), the Group of Experts on International Relations of Central Africa (Le Groupe d'experts en relations internationales de l'Afrique centrale (GERIAC)), the Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA), and the International Crisis Group, and other technical and financial partners. This diverse representation allowed for a broad exchange of perspectives, insights, and implementation strategies.

THE WORKSHOP'S MAIN OBJECTIVES WERE TO:

- 1. ENHANCE CAPACITIES:** Equip regional stakeholders and UN presences in the region with tools and strategies to effectively assess and manage climate-related peace and security risks.
- 2. PROMOTE INTEGRATED APPROACHES:** Encourage an integrated and inclusive approach to climate and peacebuilding efforts at local, national and regional levels.
- 3. DEVELOP PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS:** Generate actionable recommendations for multilateral, regional, and national interventions that address CPS challenges in the subregion.

The workshop opened with high-level interventions that underscored the urgency of addressing climate change's disproportionate impacts on Central Africa.



Mr. Abdou Abarry, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Central Africa and Head of UNOCA.

Photo UNOCA/Norbert N. Ouendji



Dr. Honoré Tabuna, ECCAS Commissioner for the Environment, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Rural Development.

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Mr. Abdou Abarry, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Central Africa and Head of UNOCA called for collective responsibility and innovative solutions aligned with SDG 13, emphasizing the need for inclusive approaches that incorporate gender, youth, and indigenous perspectives. **Dr. Honoré Tabuna**, ECCAS Commissioner for the Environment, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Rural Development, highlighted the joint efforts between UNOCA and ECCAS to develop conflict-sensitive climate strategies, particularly in managing pastoral conflicts exacerbated by climate change, which disproportionately affect women and children.

Subsequent presentations and skill-based exercises aimed to strengthen the analysis of climate risks and CPS pathways in Central Africa. From there, discussions advanced to action-oriented solutions, co-creation, and exchanges of ideas and good practices that already exist in the sub-region. Key themes discussed included: (i) the need to strengthen regional cooperation and cooperation between different UN entities in order to tackle the intensifying climate-related peace and security challenges in Central Africa; (ii) the potential of using data to enhance the analysis and responses on the interlinkages between climate change, peace and security; and (iii) the objective to continue including a diverse range of voices – including from civil society, women’s organizations, youth leaders, and indigenous groups – to shape holistic peacebuilding solutions that address the climate crisis and conflict risks in lockstep.

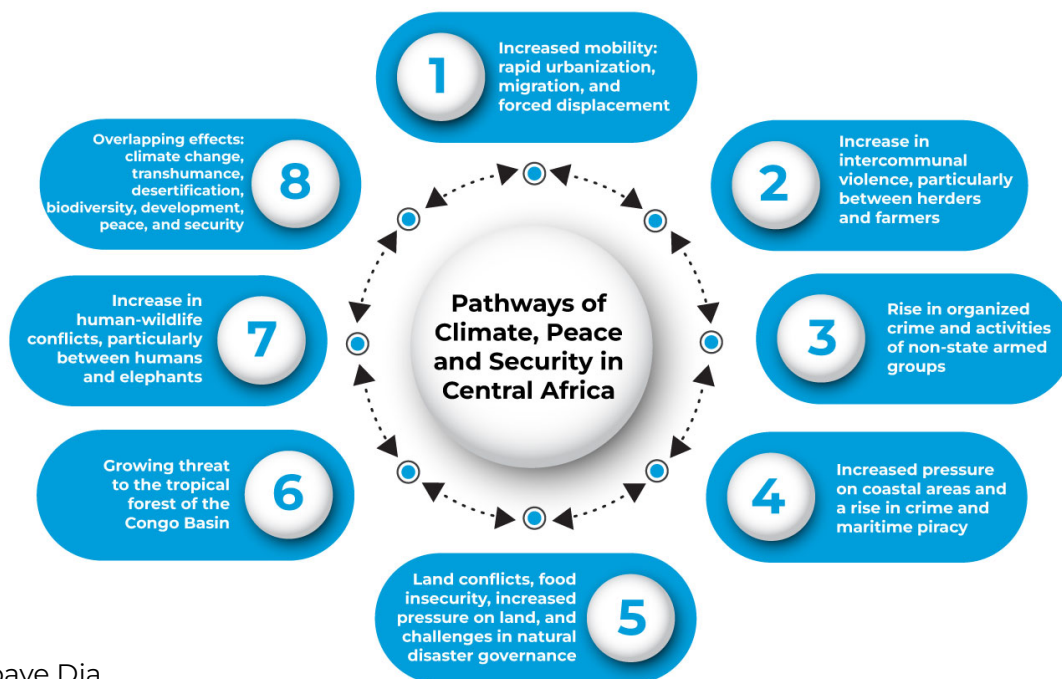
2. OVERVIEW OF CPS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

Central Africa is already experiencing significant [adverse impacts](#) of climate change, such as increases in temperatures, irregular rainfall patterns, land degradation, accelerated sea-level rise and increasingly frequent extreme weather events such as floods and droughts. The consequences – such as widespread [displacement](#), intercommunal conflict, food insecurity, and loss of livelihoods – add to existing socio-economic challenges and vulnerabilities in a sub-region already facing concurrent crises.

At the same time, the sub-region’s [biodiversity](#), especially the Congo Basin rainforest, are unique resources for efforts to tackle global climate change. Yet environmental degradation, spurred by [agriculture, logging, and illegal mining](#) and exacerbated by the impacts of climate change, erodes and threatens the rich ecosystems at a significant scale. Armed groups are often involved in [exploiting](#) natural resources to fund their activities. As wildlife’s natural habitat shrinks, animals might increasingly enter areas where local populations live and cultivate crops, leading to an [additional](#) dimension of challenges emerging from climate stress, including pandemics.



The workshop featured a range of diverse interventions that helped identify the different pathways that link climatic changes with peace and security in different countries and zones in Central Africa. Specific insights included detailed analysis from participants of how traditional [transhumance](#)-governance systems have been weakened by climate change, and how water scarce regions have experienced heightened [intercommunal](#) tensions as competition over water and land has increased. Other contributions detailed how women and young people, in particular, face heightened risks of exploitation due to climate-induced displacement and economic hardship.



UNOCA/Mabaye Dia

3. COMMON THEMES, KEY MESSAGES AND INSIGHTS

I. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ON CPS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

Recognizing the transboundary impact of climate change, a recurring theme in the workshop was the need for increased regional and international cooperation, including among UN missions and entities. Considering the size and geographical diversity of Central Africa, the manifestations of CPS challenges differ significantly from country to country. By bringing together experts and practitioners from across the sub-region, the exchanges supported progress towards a common understanding of and taxonomy for CPS in the sub-region, which could be a steppingstone in facilitating broader support for the topic.



Workshop participants with SRSG Abarry and Dr. Honoré Tabuna, ECCAS Commissioner for the Environment, at the opening of the workshop.

Photo UNOCA/Norbert N. Ouendji

For example, the importance of recognizing and presenting Central Africa's unique position as a sub-region that is characterized not only by CPS vulnerability, but also one that offers solutions to CPS risks and global climate change came up frequently. The Congo Basin's crucial role as one of the world's largest carbon sinks and home to significant biodiversity is a case in point.

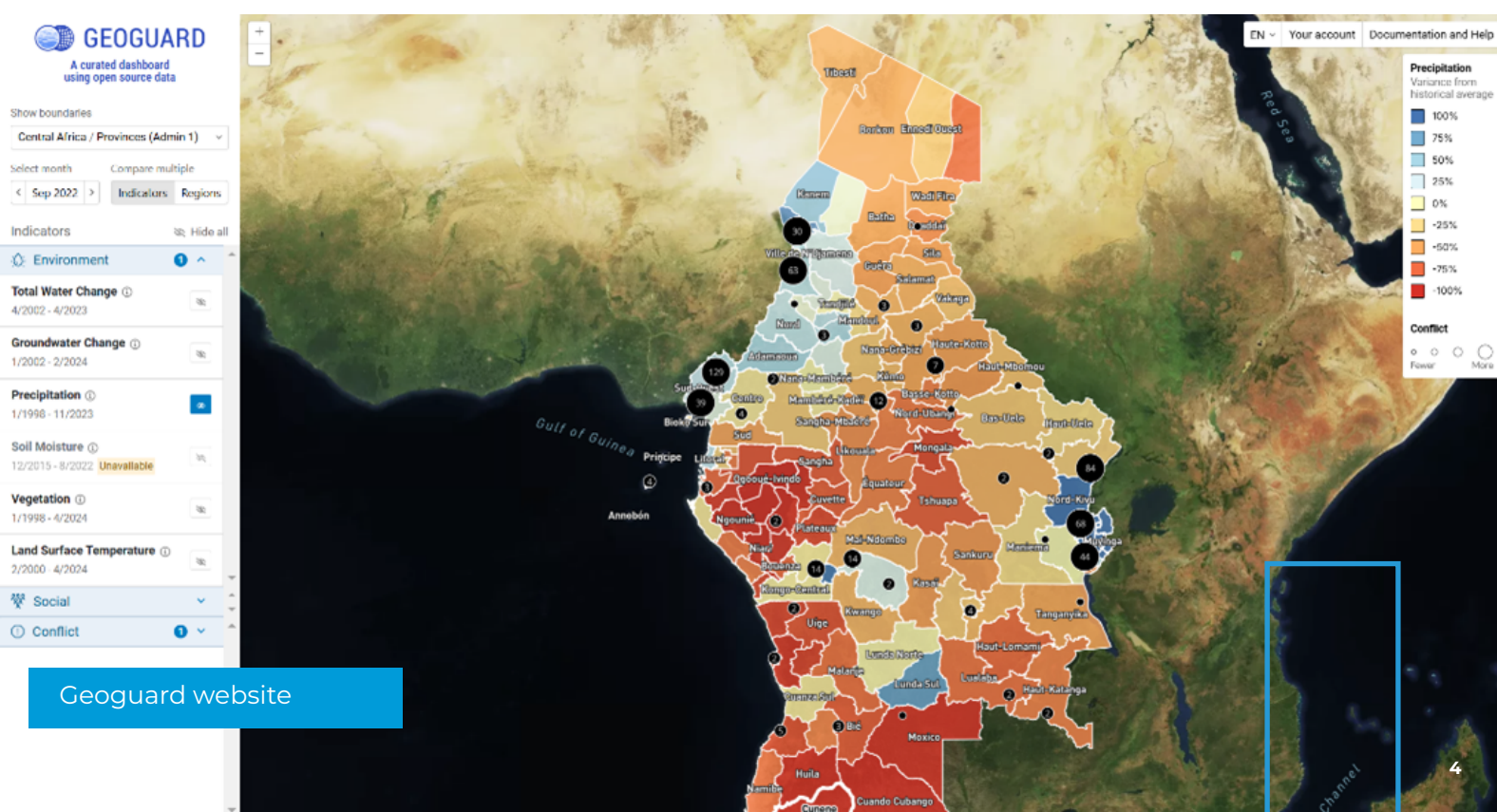
Another discussion highlighted the unique role that ECCAS and its Commission can play in advancing CPS discussions in Central Africa – not least through its understanding of CPS, standing capacity, and convening power. The ECCAS Regional Strategy for Climate and Resilient Development currently under preparation was repeatedly highlighted as a way to galvanize further action.

One value-added of the workshop was the interconnections established between participants from various countries, institutions and organizations, which can facilitate future exchanges and CPS efforts across Central Africa. For example, attendees exchanged experiences on mobilizing funding for CPS initiatives and discussed the co-creation of joint proposals through avenues such as the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and international financial institutions (IFIs). Reflective of the high interest in fostering these connections, the workshop successfully prepared the ground for a community of practice on CPS in Central Africa – which is set to promote ongoing exchange and support collaborative future actions.

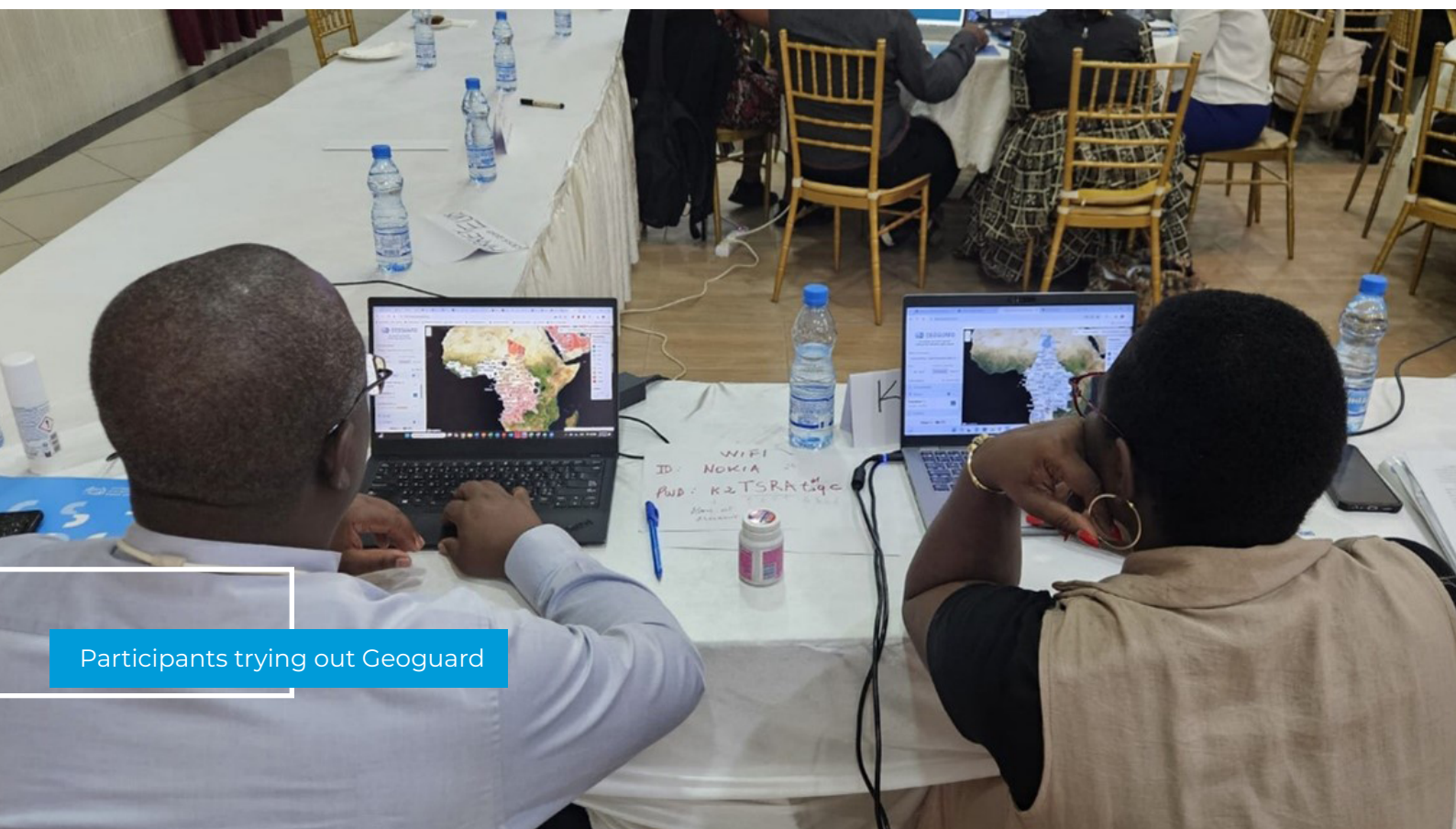
II. THE USE OF DATA FOR CPS: THE EXAMPLE OF THE GEOGUARD CLIMATE SECURITY DASHBOARD IN CENTRAL AFRICA

Throughout the workshop, discussions highlighted the importance of data-driven decision-making, emphasizing how real-time monitoring, geospatial analysis and risk mapping can improve CPS analysis and peacebuilding efforts. One integral tool discussed during the workshop was Geoguard (UNOCA Climate Security Dashboard), a dynamic data platform developed by the DPPA Innovation Cell in collaboration with UNOCA.

This dashboard provides geospatial monitoring and early warning information, combining climate data with peace and security indicators. It relies on curated open-source data, which provides historical records dating back over multiple decades. Geoguard aims to support Central African governments, UN missions, ECCAS and local communities in proactively managing climate-related peace and security risks through data-driven decision-making. A practical exercise supported participants in familiarizing themselves with the dashboard, and examples showing how it can guide policies, programmes and interventions in areas impacted by climate change and conflict were discussed.



Overall, participants discussed the role of data within CPS efforts, including opportunities and risks, and expressed the need for a stronger framework for joint data collection and response through a regional network, leveraging platforms (such as Geoguard) to share information for early warning and crisis response. Here, participants identified the need for more robust data on climate-security interactions, emphasizing the importance of integrating this data into national and regional policies.



Participants trying out Geoguard

III. INCLUSIVE APPROACHES TO CPS: CONVERSATIONS AROUND THE INVOLVEMENT OF WOMEN, YOUTH, AND INDIGENOUS/MARGINALIZED GROUPS IN CPS

An effective CPS agenda requires inclusivity. Workshop attendees stressed the need to incorporate gender, youth and indigenous perspectives into policies and programming. This not only ensures that the varied impacts of climate change across Central African communities are reflected and addressed – but also builds resilience across all segments of society, acknowledging the different vulnerabilities faced by each group.

The workshop also featured dynamic discussions on women- and youth-led initiatives. Attendees highlighted the unique insights and contributions that these groups bring to CPS initiatives – and explored practical ways to actively amplify them through CPS interventions at local, national and regional levels. In his opening speech, SRSG Abarry underscored the need for more such initiatives, while the PBF presented its Gender and Youth Promotion Initiative (GYPI) and emphasized its commitment to funding inclusive CPS efforts. As the CPS agenda is beginning to take shape across the Central African sub-region, these discussions aligned well with broader efforts towards a more youth- and gender-sensitive agenda.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR KEY STAKEHOLDERS

To operationalize the workshop insights, the following recommendations were developed for each stakeholder group:

ECCAS Member States:

- **Inclusive national policies:** Develop policies that account for climate risks in conflict prevention, mitigation and resolution, ensuring that the needs of women, youth and vulnerable communities are addressed.
- **Strengthen crisis prevention mechanisms:** Build and expand national mechanisms for preventing and managing climate-induced crises, utilizing platforms such as Geoguard for real-time risk assessments and decision support.

ECCAS:

- **Regional climate-security coordination:** Lead a coordinated approach to climate integration within peace and security agendas, facilitating the exchange of best practices among member states.
- **Develop and implement regional strategies:** Finalize the ECCAS Regional Strategy on the Impacts of Climate Change and Resilient Development and ensure its alignment with the adoption of the Regional Transhumance Protocol in Central Africa.

United Nations:

- **Support for local initiatives:** Increase financial and technical support for local CPS initiatives, with an emphasis on empowering communities most affected by climate change. For existing initiatives, ensure and consolidate a strong integration of CPS aspects into peacebuilding projects.
- **Institutionalize CPS advisor roles:** Establish CPS advisor positions in UN peace operations. The advisors can play a key role in conducting analysis and ensuring stronger collaboration, including on regional and cross-border CPS issues, across UN missions and entities.
- **Promote high-impact programmes:** Develop impactful programmes to build climate resilience, partnering with regional stakeholders to amplify reach and engagement.

Civil society organizations:

- **Capacity building:** Enhance the capacity of local communities to understand and address the impacts of climate change on peace and security, with a focus on vulnerable groups.
- **Local dialogues and collaboration:** Facilitate dialogues among climate-affected groups, such as farmers, herders and fishers, promoting community-based solutions to reduce conflicts over resources.

Technical and financial partners:

- **Increased financial support:** Scale up funding for CPS initiatives, ensuring that gender and youth considerations are integrated.
- **Technical assistance:** Provide technical support for implementing inclusive climate risk management systems, using tools such as Geoguard to guide investment in scalable, evidence-based solutions.

5. NEXT STEPS

To build on the workshop's progress and ensure sustainable outcomes, the following steps were identified:

4. **Consolidate the community of practice:** Facilitate member engagement to promote collaboration, share expertise and advocate for the community's role in addressing CPS challenges.
5. **Regular meetings:** Conduct regular meetings, both virtual and in-person, to evaluate developments, share lessons learned and adapt strategies based on emerging data and insights from tools such as Geoguard.
6. **Policy advocacy:** Mobilize ECCAS member states' foreign affairs ministries to support the CPS agenda utilizing established platforms such as the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (UNSAC) to strengthen regional buy-in.

6. CONCLUSION

The Regional Capacity Building Workshop on CPS in Central Africa marked an important milestone in advancing the CPS agenda in the sub-region. By fostering regional collaboration, integrating data-driven insights from tools such as Geoguard and supporting inclusive and resilient policies, Central Africa will be better equipped to handle the far-reaching impacts of climate change on peace and stability. Sustained partnerships, continued data integration and strategic investments in local capacities will be essential in translating the workshop's recommendations into long-term resilience and security solutions across the sub-region.

