

# UNVEILING CHALLENGES AND GAPS IN CLIMATE FINANCE IN CONFLICT AREAS

KAREN MEIJER AND ABEER S. AHMAD

## I. Issues related to assessing climate finance in fragile and conflict-affected settings

Conflict exacerbates people's vulnerability to climate change. Besides undermining the ability of populations to adapt to extreme climate events, conflict worsens pre-existing vulnerabilities such as food insecurity and inequalities.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, climate change can intensify the risk of conflict, highlighting the urgency of climate adaptation in conflict-affected regions.<sup>2</sup> Climate adaptation in conflict-affected settings is therefore more challenging, and undoubtedly more resource-intensive, requiring more climate finance rather than less.<sup>3</sup> However, despite the immense needs of communities in active conflict zones, conflict-affected countries fail to receive sufficient and effective climate finance.<sup>4</sup> This is problematic because people who are already highly vulnerable are left behind in international climate adaptation efforts.

This paper aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the distribution of both committed and disbursed climate finance to a range of countries, by looking at both bilateral and multilateral flows of official development assistance (ODA) to all ODA-eligible countries between 2015 and 2021.<sup>5</sup> It does so in three steps: (a) determining total climate ODA as

<sup>1</sup> Mirzabaev, A. et al., 'Severe climate change risks to food security and nutrition', *Climate Risk Management*, vol. 39 (1 Jan. 2023); and Buhaug, H. and von Uexkull, N., 'Vicious circles: Violence, vulnerability, and climate change', *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, vol. 46 (Oct. 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Tarif, K. et al., 'Insights on climate, peace and security', Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUI) and SIPRI Climate, Peace and Security Research Paper, 19 Dec. 2023; and Mobjörk, M., Krampe, F. and Tarif, K., 'Pathways of climate insecurity: Guidance for policymakers', SIPRI Policy Brief, Nov. 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Although there is no formally agreed definition, according to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), climate finance refers to all 'local, national or transnational financing—drawn from public, private and alternative sources of financing—that seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions that will address climate change'. UNFCCC, 'Introduction to climate finance', [n.d.].

<sup>4</sup> Cao, Y. et al., *Exploring the Conflict Blind Spots in Climate Adaptation Finance*, Supporting Pastoralism and Agriculture in Recurrent and Protracted Crises (SPARC) Synthesis Report (SPARC Knowledge: London, 30 Sep. 2021); International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) et al., *Embracing Discomfort: A Call to Enable Finance for Climate-change Adaptation in Conflict Settings*, Policy Brief (ICRC et al.: London, Oct. 2022); and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Climate Finance for Sustaining Peace: Making Climate Finance Work for Conflict-affected and Fragile Contexts* (UNDP: New York, 2021).

<sup>5</sup> OECD, 'ODA recipients: Countries, territories and international organisations', using OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) lists from 2015 to 2021.

## SUMMARY

● This SIPRI Insights addresses challenges related to climate finance distribution in conflict-affected countries, where vulnerabilities to climate change are significantly exacerbated. Conflict reduces the ability of populations to adapt, making effective climate finance even more critical. Despite increasing global climate finance commitments, conflict-affected countries consistently receive disproportionately low amounts of per capita climate adaptation official development assistance (ODA) compared to non-conflict-affected countries with similar income levels and climate vulnerabilities.

The paper's analysis, covering both bilateral and multilateral ODA flows between 2015 and 2021, highlights significant disparities in per capita climate adaptation funding. For example, small island developing states receive over US\$100 per capita annually, while many conflict-affected countries receive less than \$1. Methodological challenges such as those related to 'regional' or 'unspecified' funds and limited data transparency prevent accurate assessments. The paper highlights the need for improved transparency, equitable redistribution of funds and stronger donor-recipient coordination to ensure climate finance reaches the most vulnerable populations, especially in conflict settings.

**Box 1. Methodological challenges and limitations in assessing and calculating climate finance**

The assessment of flows of international climate finance to recipient countries is not easy.<sup>a</sup> First of all, there is no agreed definition of what can be counted towards climate finance. The main reason is that much of the aid marked as climate-relevant may not contribute directly to climate mitigation (reduction of greenhouse gas emissions) or climate adaptation (reduction of the impacts of climate change). Instead, the aid may represent only one of several potential indirect goals that are not necessarily met. Second, only bilateral donors that are part of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee have to report the relevance of their aid flows for climate action following the 'Rio markers' in the OECD's creditor reporting system. Other donors can do this on a voluntary basis. The Rio markers categorize projects according to whether adaptation or mitigation is their *principal* or *significant* objective. This distinction leads to further uncertainties regarding the exact amounts by which a project contributes to the climate objectives. Third, many multilateral donors report climate-related development finance separately, following a different system through which they focus on the climate component of financial flows. Fourth, although disbursements (what is actually provided) are more relevant than commitments (what is promised), the data on climate-related development finance includes commitments only (see note 10 in this paper).

In addition to these issues with climate finance reporting, recent studies on climate finance in fragile and conflict-affected regions made different choices in their climate finance analyses when assessing how much climate finance countries affected by conflict receive compared to others.<sup>b</sup> These choices pertain to which financial flows are included;<sup>c</sup> how principal and significant amounts are combined or whether only principal amounts are used;<sup>d</sup> whether commitments or disbursements are considered;<sup>e</sup> and which data sets, years and countries are included.<sup>f</sup> These choices influence the results, and transparency of choices is important for understanding which amounts are included in the represented numbers and which amounts are excluded, to draw the right conclusions. Even though underlying studies tend to be explicit about their choices, this is unfortunately not always the case when the results of some analyses are subsequently quoted by others.

<sup>a</sup> Toetzke, M., Stünzi, A. and Egli, F., 'Consistent and replicable estimation of bilateral climate finance', *Nature Climate Change*, vol. 12, no. 10 (Oct. 2022); and Falduto, C., Noels, J. and Jachnik, R., *The New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance: Options for Reflecting the Role of Different Sources, Actors, and Qualitative Considerations*, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and International Energy Agency (IEA) Climate Change Expert Group Paper no. COM/ENV/EPOC/IEA/SLT(2024)2, 22 May 2024; Jensen L. and Roniger J., 'International climate finance: Status quo, challenges and policy perspectives', European Parliamentary Research Service, Briefing, Nov. 2023; and Voïta, T., 'Is international climate finance unfair and inefficient?', French Institute of International Relations Briefing Paper, 20 June 2023.

<sup>b</sup> Falduto, Noels and Jachnik (note a).

<sup>c</sup> OECD, *Climate Finance Provided and Mobilised by Developed Countries in 2013–2022* (OECD Publishing: Paris, May 2024); and Jones, L. et al., *Closing the Gap: Trends in Adaptation Finance for Fragile and Conflict-affected Settings* (World Bank Group: Washington, DC, 19 July 2024).

<sup>d</sup> Mercy Corps, *Overcoming the Fragility Barrier: Policy Solutions for Unlocking Climate Finance in Fragile States* (Mercy Corps: Washington, DC, Oct. 2023).

<sup>e</sup> Jones et al. (note c).

<sup>f</sup> Mercy Corps (note d); and INKA Consult, *Climate Finance Shadow Report 2023: Assessing the Delivery of the \$100 Billion Commitment* (Oxfam International: Oxford, June 2023).

precisely as possible, taking into account methodological challenges and limitations (see box 1); (b) considering the variations in per capita climate adaptation ODA among conflict-affected versus non-conflict-affected countries; and (c) determining average per capita climate adaptation ODA for groups of countries according to their climate vulnerability, conflict-status and income levels.

The analysis seeks to quantify the variation in climate adaptation ODA and consider whether it is significant, and in particular whether conflict-affected countries are being left behind. The paper concludes with a discussion of the analysis in the context of the challenges for implementing and evaluating effective climate policies in the future.



## II. Total climate ODA commitments and disbursements

The goal for climate finance volumes was first set at US\$100 billion per year in 2009 and was reiterated in the Paris Agreement in 2015, with the aim of starting from 2020 onwards.<sup>6</sup> The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) claimed this goal to have been met for the first time in 2023, counting contributions from both ODA and other sources of finance.<sup>7</sup> However, other analyses disagree, suggesting such claims overestimate the climate relevance of the reported funds.<sup>8</sup>

This section looks at climate finance for climate mitigation, climate adaptation, or both (referred to here as finance with a double objective), provided as ODA (loans and grants). The analysis examines data from both public and bilateral sources spanning from 2015 to 2021, which was the most recent data available when the data retrieval process took place in April 2024.<sup>9</sup>

The analysis shows an overall increase in total climate-related ODA commitments (i.e. the amounts promised) and disbursements (i.e. the actual amounts provided) between 2015 and 2021 (see figure 1).<sup>10</sup> The total committed to climate finance increased from \$25.3 billion in 2015 to almost \$35.9 billion in 2021 with a peak of \$38.9 billion in 2020. Disbursements steadily grew until they plateaued from 2019 to 2021, but were consistently around 40 to 50 per cent below commitments, a trend observed since 2015 in which only \$13.4 billion was disbursed from a total commitment of \$25.3 billion. This pattern persisted even through the peak year of 2020 when disbursements amounted to only half of the committed sum. The causes of this difference between commitment and disbursement possibly lie on both donors' and recipients' sides.

Breaking down the finances further, bilateral flows constituted around two thirds of average annual climate-related ODA commitments in 2015–21, and multilateral flows were one third (see table 1). Bilateral mitigation efforts received the largest share, accounting for \$11.3 billion in commitment, of which almost 80 per cent was disbursed. Among the multilateral flows, adaptation finance exceeded mitigation finance. The fraction of the committed volumes that were disbursed shows a large variation between categories.

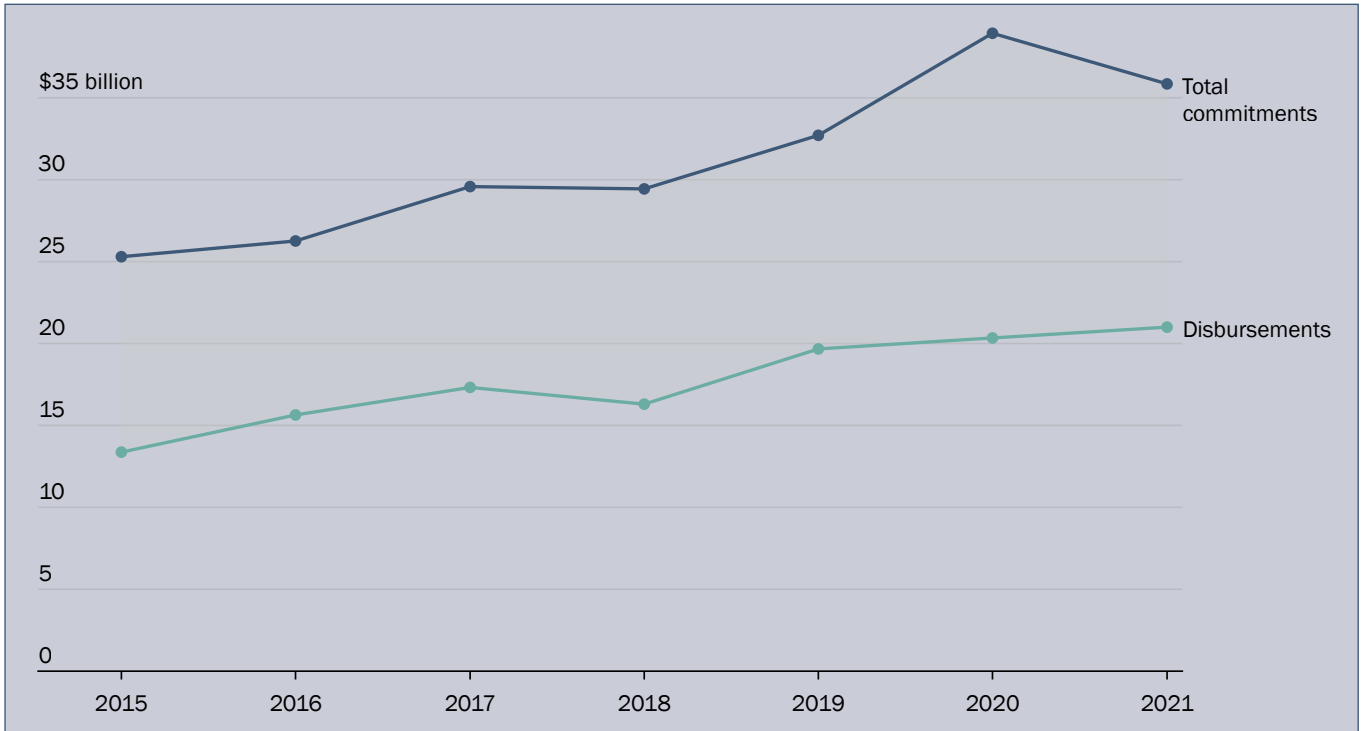
<sup>6</sup> UNFCCC, Conference of the Parties, 'Report of the Conference of the Parties on its fifteenth session, held in Copenhagen from 7 to 19 December 2009—Addendum. Part Two: Action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its fifteenth session', FCCC/CP/2009/11/Add.1, 30 Mar. 2010; and UNFCCC, Conference of the Parties, 'Report of the Conference of the Parties on its sixteenth session, held in Cancun from 29 November to 10 December 2010—Addendum. Part Two: Action taken by the Conference of the Parties at its sixteenth session', FCCC/CP/2010/7/Add.1, 15 Mar. 2011.

<sup>7</sup> OECD, *Climate Finance Provided and Mobilised by Developed Countries in 2013–2022* (OECD Publishing: Paris, May 2024).

<sup>8</sup> Toetzke, M., Stünzi, A. and Egli, F., 'Consistent and replicable estimation of bilateral climate finance', *Nature Climate Change*, vol. 12, no. 10 (Oct. 2022); and INKA Consult, *Climate Finance Shadow Report 2023: Assessing the Delivery of the \$100 Billion Commitment* (Oxfam International: Oxford, June 2023).

<sup>9</sup> Data was obtained from the OECD's creditor reporting system (CRS data) and its climate-related development finance data set (CDF data). See, respectively, OECD Data Explorer, 'CRS: Creditor reporting system (flows)', accessed 18 Apr. 2024; and OECD, 'Development finance for climate and environment', accessed 18 Apr. 2024, under the heading 'Climate-related development finance datasets'.

<sup>10</sup> Because disbursed amounts are not included in OECD CDF data (note 9), the full disbursement amounts were estimated based on the percentage difference between commitments and disbursements reported in the OECD CRS data (note 9).



**Figure 1.** Total commitments and estimated disbursements of climate-related official development assistance, 2015–21  
*Sources:* Authors’ analysis using data obtained from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development data sets (see note 9 in this paper).

**Table 1.** Average annual climate-related official development assistance in bilateral and multilateral flows for mitigation, adaptation and double objective projects, 2015–21

Flow	Project objective	Committed <sup>a</sup>	Disbursed <sup>a</sup>	Percentage <sup>b</sup>
Bilateral	Mitigation	\$11 300	\$9 028	79.9
	Adaptation	\$7 285	\$4 748	65.2
	Double	\$3 857	\$2 996	77.7
Multilateral	Mitigation	\$4 349	\$492	11.3
	Adaptation	\$5 529	\$502	9.1
	Double	\$252	\$25	9.9

<sup>a</sup> Amounts are in US\$ million.

<sup>b</sup> Disbursements as a percentage of commitments.

*Sources:* Authors’ analysis using data obtained from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development data sets (see note 9).

This variation may stem from either reporting issues from multilateral development banks or the fact that the disbursed amounts are estimated using the OECD creditor reporting system (CRS) disbursement to commitment ratios for the same projects.

In sum, while total committed climate ODA has increased in recent years, the actual disbursed amounts probably remain below the pledged \$100 billion per year target claimed to be met, although other non-ODA funds may also count towards the goal.<sup>11</sup> Focusing on the actual funds received by recipient countries shows a substantial shortfall from the committed amount. Although such discrepancies are common in ODA dynamics, this is not always the case,

<sup>11</sup> OECD, *Climate Finance Provided and Mobilised by Developed Countries in 2013–2022* (note 7).



as they depend on whether the disbursed fund falls under the humanitarian or development sectors. For example, while debt aid commitments are met promptly, sectors such as (social) infrastructure often face long delays. Other sectors such as industry aid commitments may never fully translate into disbursements and can remain unmet.<sup>12</sup>

### III. Variations in per capita climate adaptation ODA: Conflict-affected versus non-conflict-affected countries

The focus in this section shifts to climate adaptation ODA, including those flows that have a double objective (targeting both mitigation and adaptation). While global priorities emphasize mitigation to restrain global warming, adaptation in conflict-affected states is critical to reduce climate-related security risks and increase climate resilience.<sup>13</sup> There is significant variation in per capita ODA among countries. This means that when grouping countries for analysis, the average for each group depends directly on the criteria used to determine group inclusion. Consequently, providing a per capita average for a country group without any detail on the criteria used for aggregation is neither meaningful nor effective (representative) given the large variations and outliers present.

This section presents per capita climate adaptation ODA for recipient countries across three groups to test the following three assumptions:

1. Conflict-affected countries receive less climate ODA finance.
2. The most climate-vulnerable countries receive more climate ODA finance.
3. Climate ODA finance varies according to the income level of a country.

#### Country groups

To evaluate the three assumptions, recipient countries were classified into three groups according to conflict status, climate vulnerability and income level, with all per capita values weighted by the size of the combined population in each group of countries.<sup>14</sup> A description of each group and the rationale for the classification is set out below.

#### *Conflict status*

This group is designed to test the assumption that conflict-affected countries receive less climate adaptation ODA than others. The analysis distinguishes three subgroups of countries based on the number of conflict-related deaths in the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) Georeferenced Event

<sup>12</sup> Hudson, J., 'Promises kept, promises broken? The relationship between aid commitments and disbursements', *Review of Development Finance*, vol. 3, no. 3 (1 July 2013).

<sup>13</sup> Black, R. et al., *Environment of Peace: Security in a New Era of Risk* (SIPRI: Stockholm, May 2022).

<sup>14</sup> For the complete list of countries and data on average per capita climate adaptation ODA for 2015–21 see appendix A in this paper for conflict-affected ODA recipients and appendix B for non-conflict-affected ODA recipients. The list includes all ODA-eligible countries except for 6 recipients for which no per capita values could be calculated because of missing population data (Cook Islands, Montserrat, Niue, Saint Helena, Tokelau, and Wallis and Futuna).



Dataset (GED) during the period under consideration, 2015–21.<sup>15</sup> The three subgroups are: (a) non-conflict-affected countries (countries without any conflict-related deaths); (b) most conflict-affected countries (comprising the top 25 per cent of countries with conflict-related deaths); and (c) conflict-affected countries (comprising the remaining 75 per cent of conflict-affected countries). The division into most conflicted-affected countries at the 25th percentile of all conflict-affected countries set the threshold at a total average of 733 conflict-related deaths for the period.

#### *Climate vulnerability*

This group is designed to test the assumption that climate vulnerability should be the main criterion for the allocation of climate adaptation ODA and whether that explains why some countries receive more than others. Countries were divided into two subgroups based on the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) climate vulnerability component: (a) the 25 per cent most climate vulnerable, and (b) the 75 per cent least climate vulnerable, based on all countries for which ND-GAIN climate vulnerability data is available.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Income level*

This group is designed to test the assumption that climate adaptation ODA varies according to the income level of a country. That is, countries with a lower income level can be expected to be in higher need of ODA, meaning that income level could explain why some countries receive more than others. All recipient countries were divided according to income group classification, first considering whether they were on the least developed country (LDC) list during the period 2015–21, as outlined by the OECD income list of countries based on gross national income (GNI) per capita.<sup>17</sup> All countries defined as LDCs were placed in one subgroup, with the rest placed in another subgroup (non-LDCs).

### **Analysis by country group**

Looking at variations in ODA for climate adaptation among all climate-related ODA recipients, the analysis highlights the gap between the disbursed amount compared to the total committed amount during the 2015–21 period, which reinforces the findings from section II.<sup>18</sup>

The total committed climate adaptation ODA to ODA-eligible countries amounted to an average annually committed total of \$13 billion of which

<sup>15</sup> Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), 'UCDP Data Download Center', [n.d.]; Davies, S. et al., 'Organized violence 1989–2023, and the prevalence of organized crime groups', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 61, no. 44 (2024); and Sundberg, R. and Melander, E., 'Introducing the UCDP Georeferenced Event Dataset', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 50, no. 4 (2013).

<sup>16</sup> University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, 'Country Index', 2024. For 12 of the 146 countries in the data set presented in this paper, no ND-GAIN vulnerability score was available, including for the 6 countries for which no population data were available (i.e. Cook Islands, Montserrat, Niue, Saint Helena, Tokelau, and Wallis and Futuna). Sundberg and Melander (note 15); and UCDP (note 15), 'Georeferenced Event Dataset 23.1'. See also UNFCCC, FCCC/CP/2009/11/Add.1 (note 6).

<sup>17</sup> OECD, 'ODA recipients: Countries, territories and international organisations' (note 5).

<sup>18</sup> All 146 countries that were listed at least once in the 2015–21 period as ODA-eligible by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee were included in the data set presented in this paper.



\$5.6 billion was disbursed. This is \$2.5–4 billion (23–31 per cent) less than the overall total adaptation ODA including both allocable and non-allocable funds. This difference results from the fact that many climate-relevant ODA funds are registered as either ‘regional’ (exceeding a single country) or ‘bilateral unspecified’. Part of these funds for which no recipient country is specified may flow to multilateral donors who subsequently allocate to recipient countries and would have led to double counting if the bilateral donor had specified the recipient country as well. However, the fact that nearly one third of the climate ODA flow funds could not be specifically registered remains a matter of concern.

The climate adaptation ODA allocated to recipient countries shows great variation among these recipients, ranging from as little as \$0.02 per capita per year to as much as \$12 000 per capita per year. However, the median value of climate adaptation ODA commitments of \$5.8 per capita per year demonstrates that the majority of countries tended to receive small per capita sums, and that high values are outliers.

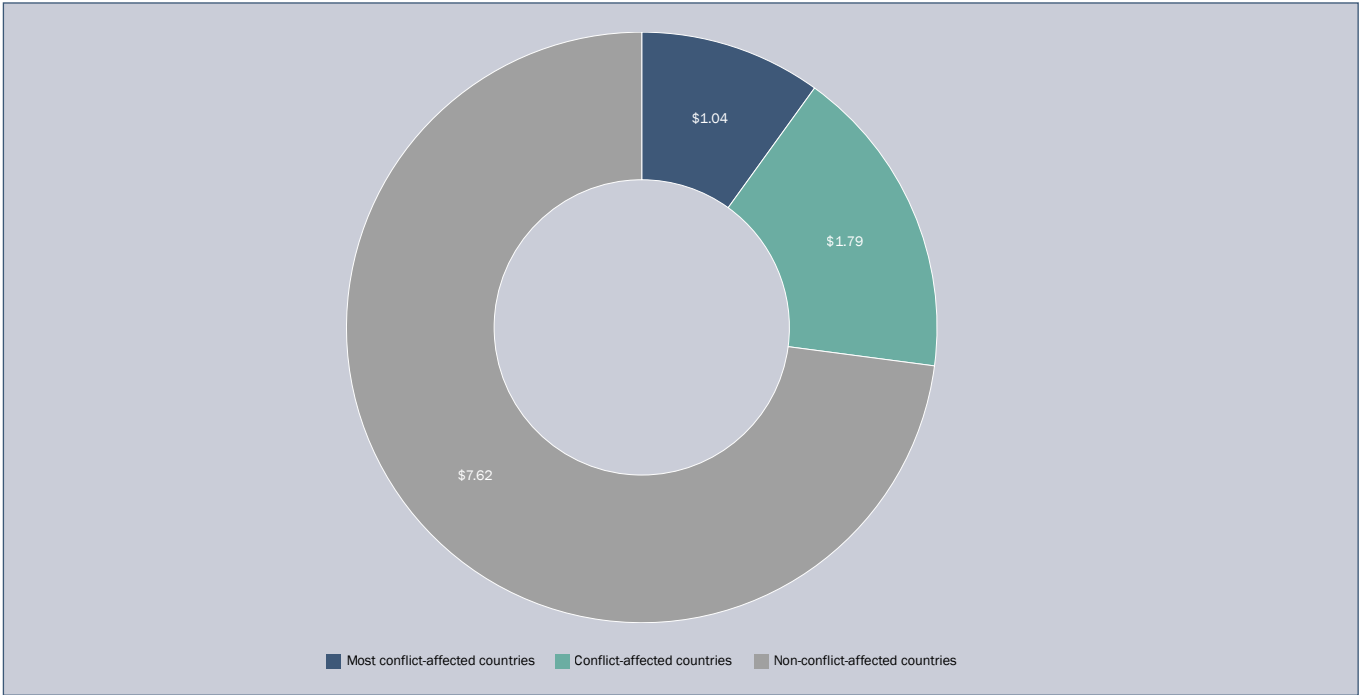
The analysis shows that some countries received very high per capita values of climate ODA. These were mainly very small countries, often small island developing states (SIDS) with small populations.<sup>19</sup> As an example, averaging the per capita climate adaptation ODA of Afghanistan (\$3.8 per capita per year) with that of Palau (\$12 868 per capita per year), without considering their respective populations, would give an average of \$6436 per capita per year. Averaging the amounts with weighting for each country’s population (3.7 million in Afghanistan versus 18 000 in Palau) gives an average of \$11 per capita per year for the two countries combined.

While the total sum of climate ODA to conflict-affected recipients exceeded that allocated to non-conflict-affected recipients, the annual per capita allocation of climate adaptation ODA reveals a contrasting pattern.<sup>20</sup> Both the committed and disbursed annual per capita adaptation ODA flows to the non-conflict-affected country recipients were higher than those for the conflict-affected and the most conflict-affected countries. Specifically, the annual committed amount to the non-conflict-affected countries was \$7.62 per capita, compared to \$1.79 and \$1.04 per capita per year committed to, respectively, the conflict-affected countries and the most conflict-affected countries (see figure 2 and tables 2 and 3). Similarly, the adaptation ODA disbursed to the conflict-affected and the most conflict-affected countries was significantly lower than that disbursed to the non-conflict-affected countries, with the most conflict-affected countries receiving the lowest per capita allocation, at only \$0.53 (see figure 3).

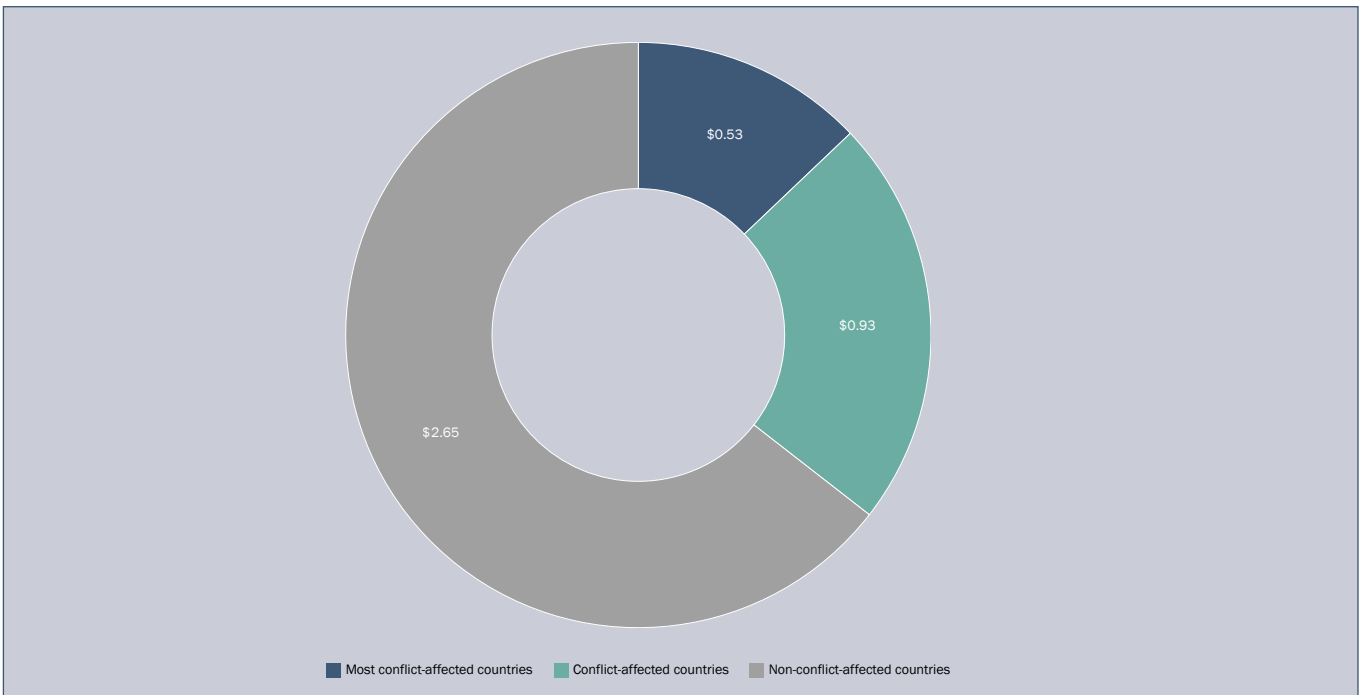
When considering climate vulnerability, the analysis highlights a disparity based on the level of conflict. Among the non-conflict-affected and conflict-affected countries, the countries with higher climate vulnerability received higher shares of climate-related ODA than those with lower climate

<sup>19</sup> SIDS are a group of 39 low-lying countries with an aggregated population of around 65 million people living across more than 1000 islands. United Nations Development Programme, ‘Small island developing states’, [n.d.].

<sup>20</sup> The total volume of climate ODA in non-conflict-affected and conflict-affected groups of countries varies significantly depending on the number of countries included in each group. Therefore, it is more useful to compare the average per capita values per country instead of total sums of aggregated groups that can be aggregated differently, potentially leading to misleading results.



**Figure 2.** Share of committed adaptation official development assistance per capita among non-conflict-affected countries, conflict-affected countries, and most conflict-affected countries (annual averages per capita, 2015–21)  
*Sources:* Authors’ analysis using data obtained from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (see note 9) and Uppsala Conflict Data Program (see note 15) data sets.



**Figure 3.** Share of disbursed adaptation official development assistance per capita among non-conflict-affected countries, conflict-affected countries, and most conflict-affected countries (annual averages, 2015–21)  
*Sources:* Authors’ analysis using data obtained from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (see note 9) and Uppsala Conflict Data Program (see note 15) data sets.





**Table 2.** Annual averages of population-weighted per capita climate adaptation official development assistance by country conflict status, climate vulnerability and income level, 2015–21

Conflict status	Climate vulnerability	Income level	No. <sup>a</sup>	Average population-weighted disbursements (commitments), US\$ per capita per year		
				By income level	By climate vulnerability	By conflict status
Non-conflict-affected	Lower	LDCs	5	2.94 (4.49)	2.15 (6.13)	2.65 (7.62)
		Not LDCs	39	2.00 (6.45)		
	Higher	LDCs	9	5.82 (13.19)	7.50 (26.37)	
		Not LDCs	7	52.95 (383.17)		
Conflict-affected	Lower	LDCs	2	3.18 (6.01)	1.02 (1.18)	0.93 (1.79)
		Not LDCs	30	0.64 (1.39)		
	Higher	LDCs	19	1.92 (2.98)	2.13 (3.43)	
		Not LDCs	4	3.38 (6.11)		
Most conflict-affected	Lower	LDCs	0	..	0.54 (1.58)	0.53 (1.04)
		Not LDCs	8	0.54 (1.58)		
	Higher	LDCs	9	1.72 (2.49)	0.48 (0.83)	
		Not LDCs	2	0.16 (0.41)		

.. = data not available; LDCs = least developed countries.

<sup>a</sup> This refers to the number of countries in the group.

Sources: Authors' analysis using data obtained from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (see note 9), Uppsala Conflict Data Program (see note 15), and University of Notre Dame (see note 16) data sets.

**Table 3.** Annual averages per capita of total, bilateral and multilateral climate adaptation official development assistance, 2015–21

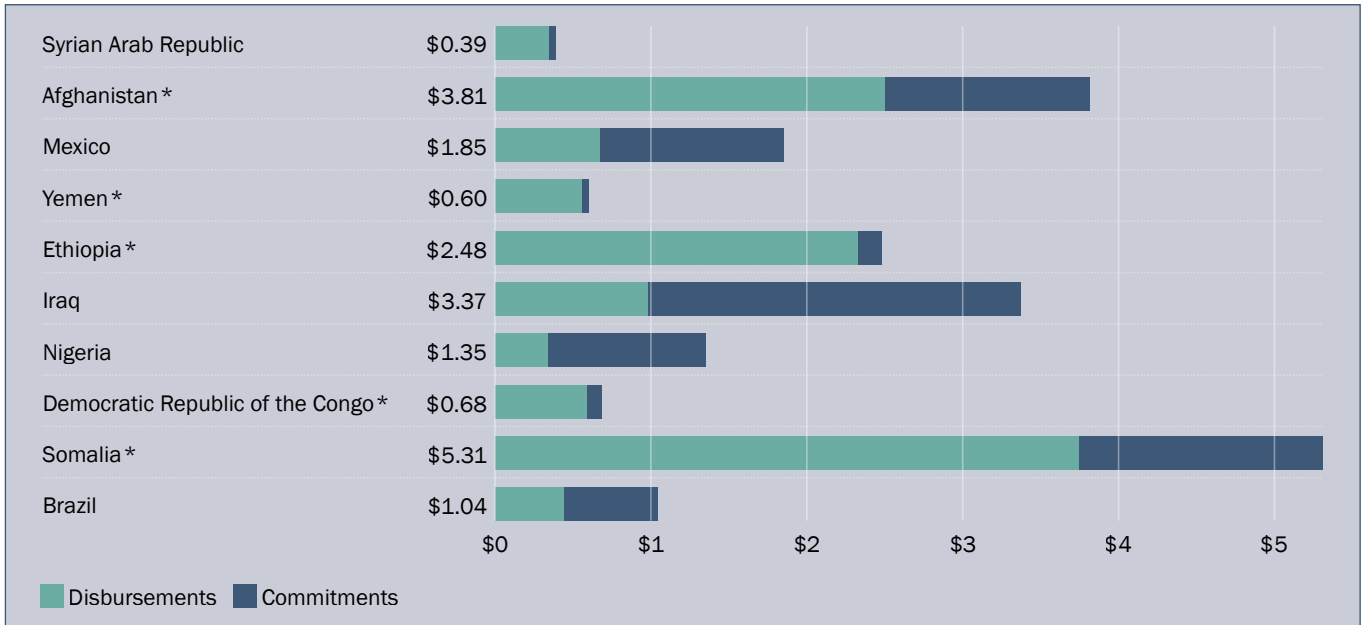
Recipient conflict status	Average disbursements (commitments), US\$ per capita per year		
	Total	Bilateral	Multilateral
Non-conflict-affected	2.65 (7.62)	2.20 (2.98)	0.52 (5.34)
Conflict-affected	0.93 (1.79)	0.90 (1.31)	0.03 (0.51)
Most conflict-affected	0.53 (1.04)	0.49 (0.73)	0.04 (0.32)

Sources: Authors' analysis using data obtained from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (see note 9) and Uppsala Conflict Data Program (see note 15) data sets.

vulnerability. Among the most conflict-affected countries, the most climate-vulnerable received less climate adaptation ODA.

Countries that experienced conflict during the 2015–21 period were ranked by conflict status, while countries not experiencing conflict-related deaths during that period were ranked based on adaptation commitments. Figures 4 and 5 show the total average per capita climate adaptation ODA for, respectively, the top 10 conflict-affected countries and the top 10 non-conflict-affected countries receiving the most ODA during the period 2015–21.

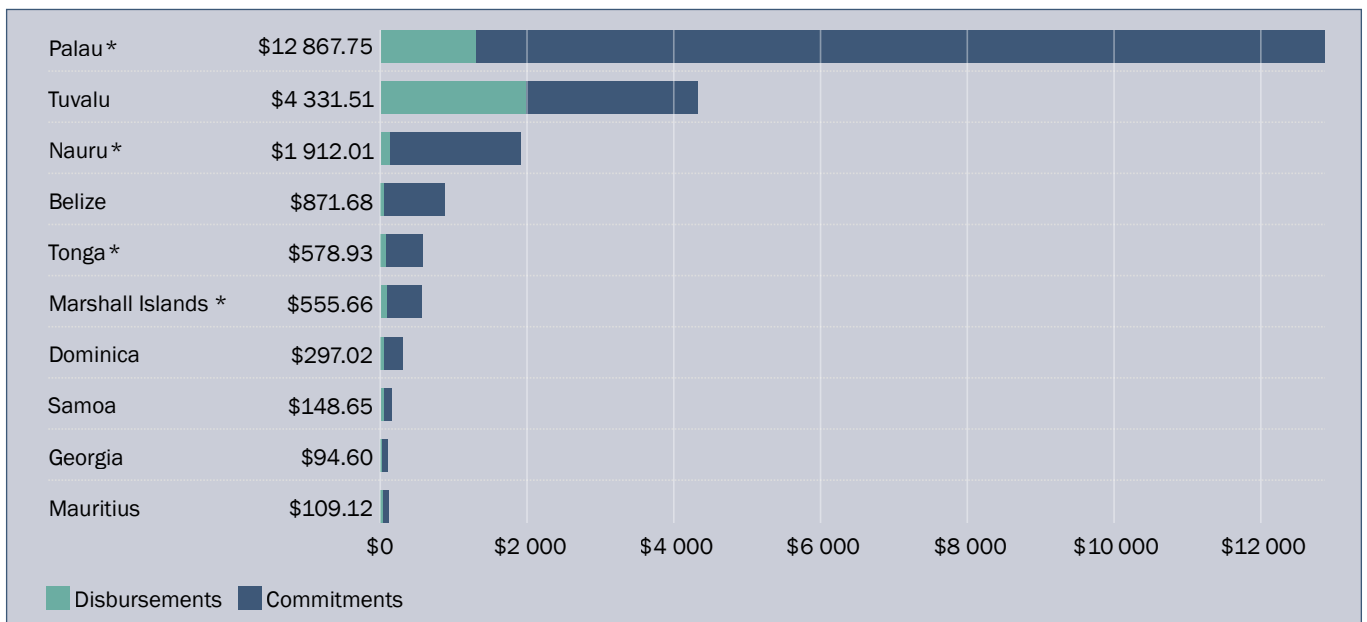
Further analysis of the data in terms of income, by countries that are LDCs and those that are not LDCs, does not show a clear pattern (see tables 2 and 3). Some conflict-affected climate-vulnerable LDCs receive more than countries that are not LDCs; for others, the opposite is true. Interestingly, the recipients of the highest per capita climate adaptation ODA are the climate-vulnerable



**Figure 4.** Total average per capita climate adaptation official development assistance (ODA) for the top 10 conflict-affected countries receiving climate ODA, 2015–21

*Note:* Conflict-affected countries are ranked from most conflict-related deaths (top) to least conflict-related deaths (bottom), for all countries with conflict-related deaths in the period 2015–21. The asterisk (\*) after the country name indicates whether a country is among the 25% most climate-vulnerable according to Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative data.

*Sources:* Authors’ analysis using data obtained from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (see note 9), Uppsala Conflict Data Program (see note 15), and University of Notre Dame (see note 16) data sets. For the complete list of countries and data on average per capita climate adaptation ODA for 2015–21 see appendix A for conflict-affected ODA recipients and appendix B for non-conflict-affected ODA recipients.



**Figure 5.** Total average per capita climate adaptation official development assistance (ODA) for the top 10 non-conflict-affected countries receiving climate ODA, 2015–21

*Note:* The asterisk (\*) after the country name indicates whether a country is among the 25% most climate-vulnerable according to Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative data.

*Sources:* Authors’ analysis using data obtained from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (see note 9), Uppsala Conflict Data Program (see note 15), and University of Notre Dame (see note 16) data sets. For the complete list of countries and data on average per capita climate adaptation ODA for 2015–21 see appendix A for conflict-affected ODA recipients and appendix B for non-conflict-affected ODA recipients.



low- and middle-income countries that are not LDCs. The lack of absorption capacity—that is, the recipient’s ability to manage and use funds—in LDCs could explain this climate finance allocation.<sup>21</sup>

The analysis in this section reveals the noticeable disparity between the committed and disbursed amounts for all ODA recipient countries. The variations among countries with different conflict-status levels and climate vulnerability show that the non-conflict-affected countries receive a higher per capita amount of climate adaptation ODA than the conflict-affected countries. Although the total volume of climate-related ODA shows a different pattern among country groups, the analysis can be misleading without highlighting the per capita variations in both the conflict-affected and the non-conflict-affected country subgroups. This serves as a reminder that grouping countries to calculate and provide average climate finance data per capita is arbitrary and heavily dependent on the countries and population numbers included in the groups. Transparency in disclosing the methods used for aggregating different groups is thus essential for future climate policy implementation and assessments.

## IV. Conclusion

This analysis reveals significant disparities in climate adaptation ODA, highlighting six key insights:

1. Although the total volume of climate finance has increased, there is a disparity between committed and disbursed amounts, with disbursements in the period 2015–21 consistently falling around 40 to 50 per cent below the pledged commitments.
2. Notable disparities in per capita climate adaptation ODA can be seen between countries, with the highest values in SIDS sometimes exceeding \$100 per capita per year, while other countries receive less than \$1 per capita per year.
3. Non-conflict-affected countries receive more climate adaptation ODA per capita compared to conflict-affected countries with similar income and vulnerability levels, even after adjusting for population size.
4. The most conflict-affected countries, especially those highly vulnerable to climate change, receive less adaptation ODA per capita than other countries.
5. A significant portion of climate ODA (20 per cent of commitments and 26 per cent of disbursements) is labelled as ‘regional’ or ‘bilateral unspecified’, contributing to gaps in accurate per capita assessments and raising concerns about fund distribution. Redistributing these unallocated funds could raise per capita values by \$0.4 to \$0.6 per year, which is particularly important for countries currently receiving less than \$1 per capita annually. However, the current uneven distribution of climate finance

<sup>21</sup> Robertson, M., *The New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance and Its Access Features: Operationalising ‘Enhanced Access’ to Climate Finance*, ODI Working Paper (ODI: London, Sep. 2024).



does not guarantee that this redistribution will be implemented effectively or equitably among the most vulnerable populations, particularly in conflict settings.

6. Data limitations and unallocated funds impede transparency and accuracy in climate finance assessments. Further, methodological issues in grouping countries for per capita calculations highlight the need for transparent and consistent reporting practices to improve the accuracy of climate finance evaluations.

This paper offers a more nuanced understanding of international climate finance distribution, highlighting the risks of an uneven transition if the most vulnerable countries are left behind due to inequitable distribution. Prioritizing funds for the most vulnerable countries is crucial. While challenges such as absorption capacity and bureaucratic inefficiencies exist, policymakers can overcome such challenges through (a) streamlining processes to enhance fund reporting, management and utilization; (b) improving transparency in reporting for effective monitoring, assessments and evaluation; and (c) improving coordination between donors and recipient countries to ensure that funds are aligned with local needs and priorities. Donors can also ensure the inclusion of climate expertise within their conflict teams. Ensuring equitable allocation based on income level, conflict status and climate vulnerability is essential for implementing sustainable climate policies effectively and achieving the committed climate finance goal.



## Abbreviations

CRS	Creditor reporting system
GED	Georeferenced Event Dataset
GNI	Gross national income
IEA	International Energy Agency
LDC	Least developed country
ND-GAIN	Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SIDS	Small island developing states
UCDP	Uppsala Conflict Data Program

## Appendix A. Average per capita climate adaptation official development assistance (ODA) for conflict-affected ODA recipients, 2015–21

Recipients are ranked from most conflict-related deaths between 2015 and 2021 to least conflict-related deaths. Figures are in US\$.

	Recipient	Disbursements	Commitments <sup>a</sup>
1	Syrian Arab Republic	0.35	0.04
2	Afghanistan *	2.50	1.31
3	Mexico	0.67	1.18
4	Yemen *	0.56	0.04
5	Ethiopia *	2.33	0.15
6	Iraq	0.98	2.39
7	Nigeria	0.34	1.01
8	Democratic Republic of the Congo *	0.59	0.09
9	Somalia *	3.75	1.56
10	Brazil	0.44	0.60
11	Myanmar	1.80	1.86
12	Sudan *	0.62	0.06
13	Libya	0.20	1.30
14	Azerbaijan	0.17	0.35
15	South Sudan	9.38	9.38
16	Mali *	4.46	3.29
17	Cameroon	1.92	2.91
18	Pakistan	0.41	0.01
19	Central African Republic *	0.70	7.89
20	India	0.12	0.28
21	Philippines	1.78	0.71
22	Türkiye	1.66	0.96
23	Egypt	0.24	0.25
24	Burkina Faso *	3.63	2.35
25	Niger *	2.97	2.03
26	Mozambique	2.75	1.26
27	Ukraine	0.28	1.48
28	Chad *	1.66	1.54
29	Kenya *	3.02	0.71
30	Colombia	4.55	1.29
31	Iran	0.05	1.03
32	Burundi *	2.19	2.19
33	Lebanon	6.54	40.33
34	Venezuela	0.05	0.57
35	Thailand	0.13	0.13
36	Haiti *	3.33	4.12
37	Algeria	0.18	0.05
38	Tunisia	5.31	9.16
39	Angola	0.05	0.59
40	Ecuador	1.72	9.44



	Recipient	Disbursements	Commitments <sup>a</sup>
41	Sri Lanka	0.94	3.73
42	South Africa	0.68	0.06
43	Bangladesh *	1.42	0.40
44	Indonesia	0.97	0.35
45	Eritrea *	1.24	1.51
46	Congo *	0.50	3.15
47	Tanzania	1.60	1.60
48	Papua New Guinea *	8.82	17.67
49	Rwanda *	5.28	0.55
50	Peru	1.75	0.49
51	Uganda *	1.89	0.79
52	Eswatini	2.95	11.41
53	Honduras	4.53	3.59
54	Côte d'Ivoire	0.52	1.70
55	Guinea *	0.39	1.47
56	Armenia	8.38	3.51
57	Kyrgyzstan	2.20	1.14
58	Jordan	14.45	7.99
59	Tajikistan	1.41	7.75
60	Madagascar *	1.38	1.24
61	Morocco	2.60	1.16
62	Guatemala	2.03	1.10
63	Zimbabwe	2.09	2.09
64	Benin *	3.68	2.22
65	China, People's Republic of	0.04	0.08
66	Paraguay	1.66	44.66
67	Djibouti	15.27	46.03
68	Senegal *	4.41	4.92
69	Liberia *	3.82	3.82
70	El Salvador	2.39	3.49
71	Bolivia	7.18	1.02
72	Malaysia	0.18	1.38
73	Togo	1.04	2.04
74	Mauritania *	3.28	2.74
75	Sierra Leone *	3.45	6.54

*Note:* The asterisk (\*) after the country name indicates whether a country is among the 25% most climate-vulnerable according to Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative data.

<sup>a</sup> Commitment figures listed here are committed but not yet disbursed amounts.

*Sources:* Authors' analysis using the following data sets: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Data Explorer, 'CRS: Creditor reporting system (flows)', accessed 18 Apr. 2024; OECD, 'Development finance for climate and environment', accessed 18 Apr. 2024; Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), 'UCDP Data Download Center', [n.d.]; and University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, 'Country Index', 2024.

## Appendix B. Average per capita climate adaptation official development assistance (ODA) for non-conflict-affected ODA recipients, 2015–21

Recipients are ranked based on climate adaptation total commitments, from highest to lowest. Figures are in US\$.

	Recipient	Disbursements	Commitments <sup>a</sup>
1	Palau *	1 305.81	11 561.94
2	Tuvalu	1 988.26	2 343.25
3	Nauru *	134.44	1 777.57
4	Belize	50.06	821.62
5	Tonga *	77.26	501.67
6	Marshall Islands *	92.67	462.99
7	Dominica	48.99	248.03
8	Samoa	51.99	96.66
9	Georgia	19.85	74.75
10	Mauritius	35.14	73.98
11	Comoros *	12.25	55.21
12	Guinea-Bissau *	5.35	39.45
13	Montenegro	11.09	36.99
14	Kiribati	62.79	31.58
15	Jamaica	13.75	29.73
16	Antigua and Barbuda	25.04	20.86
17	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	21.59	19.41
18	Suriname	3.63	18.98
19	Bosnia and Herzegovina	2.63	16.43
20	Mongolia	5.07	15.84
21	Sao Tome and Principe *	11.30	15.48
22	Guyana	14.88	14.73
23	Timor-Leste	16.25	12.82
24	Micronesia *	9.53	12.21
25	Saint Lucia	11.28	11.28
26	Lesotho	1.81	11.06
27	Turkmenistan	0.34	10.25
28	Uruguay	0.06	9.65
29	West Bank and Gaza Strip	13.41	9.55
30	Moldova	3.42	8.93
31	Namibia	8.28	7.30
32	Solomon Islands *	19.24	7.13
33	Botswana	1.13	6.02
34	Cabo Verde	15.72	5.66
35	Albania	12.90	5.54
36	Gabon	0.54	5.29
37	Uzbekistan	0.64	5.23
38	Maldives	6.16	4.83
39	Nicaragua	4.47	4.47
40	Vanuatu *	77.89	4.21





	Recipient	Disbursements	Commitments <sup>a</sup>
41	Seychelles	4.14	4.14
42	Costa Rica	0.41	4.12
43	Cambodia	5.98	4.00
44	Kosovo	3.20	3.68
45	Chile	0.09	3.58
46	Panama	2.59	3.45
47	Laos	2.91	2.99
48	Bhutan *	14.13	2.93
49	Fiji	31.98	2.87
50	North Macedonia	10.05	2.68
51	Gambia *	1.45	2.36
52	Malawi	3.37	2.18
53	Dominican Republic	2.01	1.97
54	Nepal	1.70	1.70
55	Grenada	9.81	1.38
56	Equatorial Guinea	0.46	1.36
57	Ghana	1.27	1.28
58	Serbia	6.78	0.97
59	Cuba	1.06	0.95
60	Viet Nam	1.81	0.87
61	Zambia	2.32	0.47
62	Argentina	0.04	0.15
63	Kazakhstan	0.14	0.14
64	Belarus	0.11	0.06
65	Korea, Democratic People's Republic of	0.02	0.01

*Note:* The asterisk (\*) after the country name indicates whether a country is among the 25% most climate-vulnerable according to Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative data.

<sup>a</sup> Commitment figures listed here are committed but not yet disbursed amounts.

*Sources:* Authors' analysis using the following data sets: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Data Explorer, 'CRS: Creditor reporting system (flows)', accessed 18 Apr. 2024; OECD, 'Development finance for climate and environment', accessed 18 Apr. 2024; Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), 'UCDP Data Download Center', [n.d.]; and University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, 'Country Index', 2024.



## **SELECTED SIPRI PUBLICATIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND RISK**

### **Climate Change Adaptation in Areas Beyond Government Control: Opportunities and Limitations**

Dr Karen Meijer and Ann-Sophie Böhle  
October 2024

### **From Conflict to Collaboration: Co-funding Environmental Peacebuilding in South-central Somalia**

Kheira Tarif  
September 2024

### **Burning Ground: Tackling Climate Change and Conflict in South-central Somalia**

Kheira Tarif  
May 2024

### **Leveraging Livelihood Diversification for Peacebuilding in Climate- and Conflict-affected Contexts**

Dr Farah Hegazi and Katongo Seyuba  
April 2024

### **Artificial Intelligence for Climate Security: Possibilities and Challenges**

Dr Kyungmee Kim and Dr Vincent Boulanin  
December 2023

### **Environmental Politics in Gulf Cooperation Council States: Strengthening the Role of Civil Society**

Amal Bourhrous and Emelie Poignant Khafagi  
November 2023

### **The Arctic is Hot: Addressing the Social and Environmental Implications**

Emilie Broek  
September 2023



## RECENT SIPRI PUBLICATIONS

### **Critical Minerals and Great Power Competition: An Overview**

Dr Jiayi Zhou and Dr André Månberger  
October 2024

### **Military Entrenchment in Mali and Niger: Praetorianism in Retrospect**

Dr Virginie Baudais  
October 2024

### **The Image and the Perception: Gender-responsive Strategic Communications in EU Civilian CSDP Missions**

Gretchen Baldwin  
October 2024

### **Strengthening Social Cohesion in the Nineveh Plains of Iraq: Issues of Common Concern and Local Cooperative Solutions**

Amal Bourhrous, Emelie Poignant Khafagi and Dr Alaa Tartir  
August 2024

### **Towards Humanitarian Action that Intentionally Promotes Peace in South Sudan**

Dr Simone Bunse, Dr Caroline Delgado and Marie Riquier  
June 2024

### **Assessing the Effectiveness of European Union Civilian CSDP Missions Involved in Security Sector Reform: The Cases of Afghanistan, Mali and Niger**

Dr Jaïr van der Lijn, Gretchen Baldwin, Dr Romain Malejacq,  
Dr Adam Sandor, Dr Pauline Poupart, Makama Bawa Oumarou and  
Saidou Oumarou Mahamane  
May 2024

**SIPRI** is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament. Established in 1966, SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

## GOVERNING BOARD

Stefan Löfven, Chair (Sweden)

Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas  
(Ghana)

Ambassador Chan Heng Chee  
(Singapore)

Dr Noha El-Mikawy (Egypt)

Jean-Marie Guéhenno (France)

Dr Radha Kumar (India)

Dr Patricia Lewis (Ireland/  
United Kingdom)

Dr Jessica Tuchman Mathews  
(United States)

## DIRECTOR

Dan Smith (United Kingdom)



## STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Signalistgatan 9

SE-169 72 Solna, Sweden

Telephone: +46 8 655 97 00

Email: [sipri@sipri.org](mailto:sipri@sipri.org)

Internet: [www.sipri.org](http://www.sipri.org)

SIPRI INSIGHTS ON PEACE AND SECURITY NO. 2024/03

# UNVEILING CHALLENGES AND GAPS IN CLIMATE FINANCE IN CONFLICT AREAS

KAREN MEIJER AND ABEER S. AHMAD

## CONTENTS

I. Issues related to assessing climate finance in fragile and conflict-affected settings	1
II. Total climate ODA commitments and disbursements	3
III. Variations in per capita climate adaptation ODA: Conflict-affected versus non-conflict-affected countries	5
Country groups	5
Analysis by country group	6
IV. Conclusion	11
Abbreviations	13
Appendix A. Average per capita climate adaptation official development assistance (ODA) for conflict-affected ODA recipients, 2015–21	14
Appendix B. Average per capita climate adaptation official development assistance (ODA) for non-conflict-affected ODA recipients, 2015–21	16

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Dr Karen Meijer** was a Senior Researcher in the SIPRI Climate Change and Risk Programme, specializing in international cooperation and development.

**Abeer S. Ahmad** is a Research Assistant in the SIPRI Climate Change and Risk Programme. Her research examines the intersection of health policy, climate and peace in fragile and conflict-affected settings, with a focus on enhancing health and climate resilience.



This paper is a deliverable of Mistra Geopolitics, which is funded by the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research (Mistra).