

CLIMATE CHANGE AND AFRICAN POLITICAL STABILITY

RESEARCH BRIEF – AUGUST 2013 COMPLEX EMERGENCIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CCAPS research provides a critical overview of the literature on 'complex emergencies,' including the broad range of data and definitions available, before suggesting a revised definition and typology of this commonly used, yet poorly understood, concept. The components, causes, and consequences of complex emergencies, as well as the variation of possible responses, are explored. Co-occurring instabilities including environmental disasters, conflicts, poverty, epidemics, and migration assemble to create acute, chronic, urban, and protracted complex emergency types. Through a deductive method, this brief proposes a framework to distinguish a complex emergency from ongoing conflicts within developing regions, based on aggregation of multiple political, social, economic, and physical instabilities.

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Increasingly, crises across the developing world are regarded as exhibiting characteristics of 'complex emergencies' where conflict co-occurs with multiple additional, often intractable, demographic, environmental, economic, and social instabilities. The term complex emergencies (CEs) has no clear definition: humanitarian organizations and UN agencies use the phrase to highlight primarily how responses to modern conflicts often involve multiple stakeholders and agents, while researchers apply the term in exploring the complexity of causes and the interactions between instabilities. This research brief is mainly concerned with the latter, and intends to explore how the "four scourges of Humanity"¹ — political violence, environmental disturbances, forced migration, and epidemic outbreaks — co-occur and interact across Africa. This study of the geographical patterns will be preceded by a thorough review of present studies in order to build the most accurate definition of common CEs. Four major recent CEs are analyzed to illustrate the occurrence and dynamic interactions between multiple threats. On this basis, this research intends to identify regions more likely to experience a CE.

WHAT IS A COMPLEX EMERGENCY?

The current literature on CEs is dominated by humanitarian 'grey' literature, debating and advocating interventions into crises and largely focusing on the complexity of responses. Despite several definitions of CEs, three characteristics consistently emerge across the response-based literature: the central role of conflict, the wide-ranging consequences of acute violence, and the necessity of intervention (see Table 1).²

Conflict, warfare, and civilian risk are at the core of all CE definitions. While earlier concepts concerned the occurrence and duration of civil wars, Africa's changing patterns of violence suggest that agencies are extending their current definitions of acute political violence to address violent political instability³ by multiple agents, including militias, governments, local communal agents, and popular uprisings. Conflict co-occurs or creates multiple other instabilities, including sudden demographic shifts as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees leave affiliated areas; food insecurity as markets collapse; environmental degradation; health epidemics; and entrenched poverty and underdevelopment. Many CE definitions concern how to respond to these secondary consequences across affected populations. In addition to responding to the immediate needs of affected populations, the NGO/agency-based literature on CEs advocates coordinated interventions to build both short- and long-term stability. In this way, the present literature on CEs has a limited interest in understanding the causes and contexts beyond standard development goals (e.g. alleviating chronic poverty or furthering democratic transitions). Humanitarian literature consistently and often narrowly focuses on the intervention that should be implemented in response to the crisis.⁴ This version of the CE concept does not consider the emergence, dynamics, and differences between complex emergencies and entrenched conflict. Further, the humanitarian interpretation of CEs is designed to justify the necessity of a multifaceted response involving a broad range of international development actors.⁵

FOCUS ON UNDERLYING AND FOREGROUND CAUSES

Despite the needed focus on response, there is little research at present on the causal paths, sequencing, and creation of CEs. In an effort to expand research into the foreground factors that contribute to CEs, this brief offers an initial discussion on how to identify, classify, and predict these crises. It considers that different CEs may be due to combinations of instabilities interacting with each other. This effort is complicated by the lack of clarity into whether and how instabilities interact, and under what conditions interaction should be expected. However, this research takes the 'climate-conflict' link as a starting point: recent research into the relationship between environments and conflict posit that environmental change may instigate conflict under fragile circumstances, but conflict may also negatively affect environmental management, leading to increasingly marginal conditions. Further, disasters may both decrease⁹ or increase risk,¹⁰ largely depending on whether government responses are biased and/or insufficient.

Instead of trying to discern the exact conditions that may produce specific outcomes, CE research may be best served by acknowledging the conditions under which there is a cooccurrence of both an environmental calamity and conflict, and the secondary instabilities and risks that result. This allows researchers to focus solely on the circumstances in which they may be interactive (rather than causal or simply correlated) and the nonlinear effects between conflict and multiple instabilities, including demographic, climate, economic, or social crises.

The co-occurrence, interaction, and feedbacks between multiple instabilities can lead to dozens of variations in definition and outcomes. Hence, this brief will limit its focus to four commonly observed instabilities. This research defines *political instability* as that produced by both armed and unarmed conflict directed towards a political target or goal. *Economic instability* is reflected by poverty, vulnerability, and income

Table 1.	Current Res	ponse-Oriented	Definitions

ORGANIZATION	DEFINITION	OUTCOMES	
	"[M]ultifaceted humanitarian crisis in	"Extensive loss of life , massive displacement of population, widespread damage to societies and economies."	
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ⁶	a country, region or society where there is a total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from internal or external conflict and which requires a	"Need for large-scale, multi-faceted humanitarian assistance ."	
	multi-sectoral, international response that goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any agency and/or the ongoing United Nations country program."	"Hindrance or prevention of humanitarian assistance by political and military constraints."	
		"Significant security risks for humanitarian relief workers in some areas."	
World Health Organization ⁷	"Complex emergencies are situations of disrupted livelihoods and threats to life produced by warfare , civil disturbance and large-scale movements of people, in which any emergency response has to be conducted in a difficult political and security environment."	"[C]ombine internal conflict with large-scale displacements of people, mass famine or food shortage, and fragile or failing economic, political, and social institutions. Often, complex emergencies are also exacerbated by natural disasters."	
	"[R]ecurrent natural disasters and/or conflicts, weak governance, longstanding	"[U]ndermine livelihoods and worsen poverty ."	
Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN ⁸	food crises, the breakdown of livelihoods, and insufficient institutional capacity to react to these crises" characterize a protracted crisis.	"[C]an erode the cultural, civil, political and economic stability of societies , particularly when exacerbated by natural hazards and diseases such as HIV and AIDS."	

inequality levels within a population,¹¹ while *environmental instability* is defined by the occurrence of disasters and longterm shifts due to climate change. These shocks and changes are projected to increase with the rising global temperature and disproportionally affecting developing countries.¹² Finally, *demographic and health-related instabilities* are observed through urban population growth, complex internal displacement, and epidemics. These underlying demographic shifts are a key component to present and future CEs, as 2012 saw more refugees and internally displaced people than at any time since 1994.¹³

The identification and study of CEs is critical for future instability management for two reasons. First, CEs represent the 'worst case scenarios' of conflict-afflicted states, with high civilian mortality, a reversal of development goals, and a cycle of instability difficult to combat in post-conflict environments. Secondly, CEs may be increasing due to the combination of persistent poverty, climate change effects, demographic trends, and new types of conflicts in the poorest developing contexts. Indeed, the rise in interactive and co-occuring crises is a main trend in humanitarian situations. Since the early 1980s, African CE rates have increased substantially: in 1978, five CEs were observed, growing to fourteen by 1985, seventeen in 1992, and twenty-eight in 2008.14 Examples of spaces with commonly occurring CEs include Uganda, Chad, and Central African Republic. Yet this does not say much about the CEs themselves and even less about their similarities or differences: a broad range of instabilities and complex interactions are observed across CEs. This is why observing the range and complexity of initial factors, instead of solely consequences and responses, is a robust research effort.

While there is extensive literature about the onset and patterns of conflict, poverty, environmental, and demographic instabilities separately, few analyses aim to define which components are initial conditions and which are consequences of CEs, as well as the range of interactions taking place between these features. This research thus creates a new typology of four commonly occurring CEs based on levels, occurrence, interactions, and extent of their component environmental, demographic, political, and economic instabilities. The typology also identifies the unique consequences (e.g. food insecurity, IDPs versus refugees, and extent of affected areas) and possible responses (e.g. food aid and military intervention) for each type.¹⁵

A COMPLEX EMERGENCY TYPOLOGY¹⁶

Each type of CE is characterized here by root causes, main consequences, and potential responses (see Table 2). The root causes across CEs do not vary: each involves a conflict or political instability, an environmental component, a poverty or vulnerability dimension, and often a social or demographic factor. To be identified as a CE within this study's typology, each criterion must be met. This allows the separation of CEs from long-term or entrenched conflict situations that involve environmental, economic, or social crises as consequences (but not foreground factors).

- *Type 1*: Acute CEs are situations involving an active highlevel armed conflict, an acute environmental disaster, a high level of poverty, and complex social and ethnic geography.
- *Type 2*: Chronic CEs are situations involving persistent lowlevel armed conflict, a long-term disaster or high exposure to climate change, high regional poverty, and changing demographics between groups.
- *Type 3*: Urban CEs are situations involving contained high rates of 'civic' violence, high exposure to environmental risks, high rates of sectional poverty (through unemployment), and demographic volatility (such as migration).
- *Type 4*: Protracted CEs are situations where the central state has decayed; armed conflict is high and persistent with instability involving neighboring states and diffused violence; and there is severe vulnerability to long-term disasters and high exposure to climate change, collapse of local and national economies, and disturbed demographics.

The differences between CEs are based on the intensity, interaction, and combination of factors. Each type is associated with distinct discernable consequences and best responses as both differ according to the combination of antecedent conditions. For example, the mortality rates of civilians are markedly higher during acute (type 1) or protracted (type 4) CEs, compared to chronic (type 2) or urban (type 3) CEs. Market collapse for food is also likely to occur in regions experiencing acute or protracted CEs, although famine is more likely in a protracted crisis, whereas food prices are prohibitively high in chronic CE areas and seasonally high in urban CEs. Displacement through refugee and IDP movements is severe and long-term in type 4, intermittent and circular in type 1, low in type 2, and not applicable in type 3. In terms of spatial impacts, type 1 and 2 affect larger areas than type 3, and type 4 often extends through most of the country and neighboring states. Long-term consequences of CEs also include the destruction of property and agricultural resources, the disruption of the economic life, outbreaks of epidemics vectored by refugees, and limitation of access to clean water and food.¹⁸ As a result, the recommended responses differ around how to respond with food aid, displacement assistance, support for government or opposition groups, and service delivery for affected populations.

HOW TO IDENTIFY AND DISTINGUISH A CE?

The four instabilities found within each CE are different manifestations of similar processes. As shown in Table 3, measures for each CE are flexible to extend to multiple scenarios and account for variation in consequences and potential responses.

Political Instability

Conflict ranges from low to severe rates, distinguished by whether armed or unarmed, and measured by the number of events and deviations from long-term baseline rates, fatalities, and/or the spatial extent of activity. As many of the CEs

	Table 2.	Typology	of Complex	Emergencies	5
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MAIN TYPES OF CEs	COMPONENTS	EXAMPLES	RELATIVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT	POSSIBLE RESPONSES
Type 1 Acute	 Acute high-intensity conflict: level is higher than the country's baseline of violent events Acute environmental disaster High level of poverty Complex social and ethnic geography 	Sudan Nigeria	 Large affected area Food insecurity: price hikes High mortality rates Concentrated forms of conflict-induced displacement: refugees and IDP settlements Epidemic outbreaks 	 Food aid Short-term distribution for displaced persons Protection of refugees and IDPs Negotiation and coordination Open negotiation of a humanitarian access with all the conflict actors High coordination between the NGOs and agencies Build resilience
Type 2 Chronic	 Chronic, low intensity of armed and fatal political violence Vulnerability to climate change induced hazards High level of poverty: marginalized region Changing demographics between groups 	Sahel Region Mali	 Large affected area Medium-to-high level of displacement: internal, short term, and circular ¹⁷ Chronic food insecurity: collapse of market and price hikes 	Continued presence in the region and food aid - Short term distribution of food aid - Aid to facilitate the resumption of agricultural activities Long-term measures - Aid for long-term adaptation to climate change - Plan for integration of conflict parties
Type 3 Urban	 High level of civic violence: rioting and protesting High level of exposure to climate change hazards High level of unemployment and high percentage of under serviced population (public service) Unstable demographic dynamics: rural-urban migration and urban refugees 	Nairobi (Kenya) Freetown (Sierra Leone) Monrovia (Liberia) Harare (Zimbabwe)	 Localized affected area Epidemic outbreaks Concentrated forms of displacement Acute food insecurity: seasonal price hikes Large slum population 	 Better service delivery to population Food aid Education Vaccination programs Cooperation over the reinforcement of health institutions Improve urban governance Investment in urban employment Improved living standards for the poor
Type 4 Protracted	 Absence of central authority and large scale protracted conflict with multiple non-state actors Severe vulnerability to climate change induced: consistently re- occurring and sudden disasters High level of poverty and collapse of state and local economies Disturbed demographics 	Somalia	 Transnational with local hotspots Epidemic outbreaks Chronic food insecurity and famine: food availability Intermittent phases of displacement (e.g. Mogadishu) 	Reinstatement of a central control Large scale poverty reduction programs - Food aid distribution - Investment for agriculture productivity Resumption of public services - Reinforcement of health institutions

discussed occur sub-nationally (with the exception of type 4/ protracted), event-based conflict information is measured by its occurrence and intensity within smaller geographic regions. Particular conflict types are privileged across the four CEs in Table 2: Type 1 and 2 are often, in practice, rebel or militiabased conflicts; type 3's 'civic' conflict includes rioting and protesting by civilians; type 4 is, typically, a civil war involving multiple state and non-state actors.

Environmental Instability

Similarly, environmental instability can vary in the forms in which it is experienced. The main dichotomy presented here is between sudden onset disasters,²⁷ and the more chronic, compounded risks and exposure due to the long-term effects of climatic change. Types 1 and 4 experience the more severe manifestations of each of these types of environmental security, with type 1 CEs experiencing acute, sudden disasters and type 4 CEs experiencing chronic drought and famine risk. However, the typical experience with climate change is evident in the slow degradation experience of type 2 CEs and the high exposure to climate risks (e.g. heat islands, flood plain development) found in type 3.

Economic Instability

Economic instability concerns how populations and individuals experience poverty. The distinctions present across CEs are both spatial (for example, community-based poverty, regional variation in development, or national economic collapse) and based on the depth of deprivation (for example, proportion living on under \$1.25/day, level of unemployment, underprovision of public services, and market collapse). Each play a role in creating vulnerability to shocks across populations and limiting the coping strategies employed by populations during periods of crisis. In a type 1 CE, the sudden and heightened nature of the crisis impacts the ability of communities to respond and defend livelihoods. The local poverty rate is a critical indicator of how likely populations are able to leave and/or survive a crisis. Economic instability in a type 2 CE concerns regional long-term deprivation, relative to the poverty rates elsewhere in the state. Long-term economic marginalization limits the public services, health, education, migration possibilities, response of governments, and overall prospects of larger regions. In a type 3 CE, highly localized urban poverty rates and unemployment condition a portion of the urban population to react to targeted under-development and service provision, in comparison to wealthier urban residents. The close physical proximity of densely populated

INSTABILITY	TYPE 1 ACUTE	TYPE 2 CHRONIC	TYPE 3 URBAN	TYPE 4 PROTRACTED
Political Instability ACLED ¹⁹	Acute conflict Level of violent events higher than the country baseline of recorded events and fatalities	Low-intensity conflict Low and persistent level of violent events recorded over 5 years	Urban violence High level of riots and protests in comparison to other types of violence	Protracted conflict Constant high level of violent events and fatalities recorded with periods of over 5 years of acute conflict
Environmental Instability EM-DAT ²⁰ CCAPS ²¹	Environmental disasters Acute disasters lasting 1 to 15 days (flood, drought, storm, insect infestation, wildfire)	High level of climate- related hazard exposure Chronic & long-lasting disasters of over 15 days (drought, floods) with protracted impacts on climate features (rainfall patterns, etc.)	High level of climate- related hazard exposure (rainfall anomalies, chronic water scarcity, cyclones, wildfires, floods, and low-lying coastal zones)	High level of climate- related hazard exposure Long-lasting disasters of over 15 days (drought, floods)
Economic Instability World Bank ²²	High level of poverty High poverty headcount ratio at \$1.25 a day (PPP) (% of population)	Marginalized region (vs. rest of the country) Low GDP per capita Under-development of the region	High level of poverty High poverty headcount ratio at urban poverty line (% of urban population)	Collapse of the national economy National GDP drop High poverty headcount ratio at \$1.25 a day (PPP) (% of population)
Demographic Instability UNHCR ²³ IDMC ²⁴ EM-DAT ²⁵ WHO ²⁶	Complex ethnic geography Multiple ethnic groups Demographic pressure	Settlements in camps Refugees Internally Displaced Persons	Migrants in urban areas Epidemics outbreaks	High population of refugees and IDPs Collapse of life expectancy

Table 3. Measuring Instabilities in Complex Emergencies

poor populations makes this scenario volatile. Finally, in type 4, economic collapse is a component of state failure. Local and/or black markets frequently replace national markets and governance, but the lack of GDP and formal economic institutions allow for alternative economic actors (e.g. warlords) to create power bases.

Demographic Instability

The final instability included in each CE concerns population characteristics, health, movement, and settlements. Each provides a unique measure of the stability across communities, ethnic groups, genders, and age groups. In a type 1 CE, the ethnic geography of states can create multiple scales of conflict as locally, regionally, and nationally based conflicts can coexist and feed off each other; further, if service provision or resource use is dictated by community membership, a complex local ethnic geography has ramifications for how development and disaster response is experienced by different groups. In type 2 CEs, long-term relationships between communities regarding resource use, intra-regional mobility, and growth rates are critical considerations in marginalized areas as they reflect the sustainability of livelihoods and groups. In type 3 CEs, migration and growing urban populations both place pressure on the limited resources available to the poor, but also constitute a larger population to support civic instability. Finally, in type 4, high numbers of refugees and IDPs, high rates of infant mortality, and overall poor health experiences conspire to create a demographic crisis in failed states. The movement of populations in the context of failed states can create new areas of instability (refugee and IDP camps), areas of epidemics, and/or unstable birth and death rates. The longer-term consequences of these demographic issues are substantial.

CO-OCCURRENCE, INTERACTIONS, FEEDBACKS, AND INTENSITY

The final issue concerns how to identify the location, timing, and intensity of a CE. The simultaneous presence of all four instabilities within a country is a low threshold for CE occurrence. Instead, there are three distinct levels of occurrence and intensity that allow researchers to gauge the presence and severity of a crisis. The levels are based on the levels of interaction between antecedent causes (see Table 4). This allows for a separation between causal components and consequences.

A low-intensity CE is characterized by a co-occurrence of multiple pre-defined instabilities within the same sub-national region. In an example using a type 1 CE, the simultaneous occurrence of an intense drought during a civil war in a poor area of complex ethnic geography within the same sub-region (e.g. Darfur) would be classified as a low-intensity CE due to the co-occurrence of several instabilities. Alternatively, it is also possible for these instabilities to interact in such a way that various ethnic communities experience greater levels of poverty and resource misallocation due to conflict, and this limits the ability to cope with recurrent disasters. In another scenario, disasters may increase poverty, and resulting local competition may be a component within the larger conflict. In these ways, antecedent forces are interactive, and create greater risks, elevate mortality, and decrease the resilience of the population. This situation is a medium-intensity CE. Finally, a high-intensity CE involves the creation of feedback loops between antecedent causes and consequences and/or diffusion into new spaces. In these scenarios, food insecurity, migration, new conflict recruitment from unstable populations, and local competition create new splinters or scales of conflict, and prevent effective response to disasters. Alternatively, the CE can diffuse into neighboring areas that were initially peaceful. These feedbacks and extensions to crises create enduring, protracted events if not effectively resolved and contained.

Indeed, the aim of this research brief is to locate places that are likely to see the co-occurrence of conflict, forced migration, disasters, and epidemics. To do so, places where multiple instabilities co-occur and overlap must be identified. However, the sequencing of those dynamic instabilities is the missing part of the current research work, and yet the most crucial in terms of understanding and predicting these emergencies. Using the location-based framework, this research defines CEs as spatially overlapping crises and observes the occurrence of distinct CEs through their component parts.

These case studies in Table 5 review how CE types are formed and how instabilities interact. The main conclusion drawn from the CE typology and four examples is the crucial need to study CEs as a result of highly interacting causes at a sub-national level. Doing so informs both the particularities and similarities of CEs around the world, creating transferable knowledge to advise best practice policies.

Table 4. Interactions and Intensity of CEs

INTENSITY OF CE	LEVEL OF INTERACTION BETWEEN INSTABILITIES	
Low	Spatial and temporal co-occurrence of components	
Medium	Interactions between the components create additional mortality and decrease coping level of population	
High	Interactions between the components create feedbacks leading to 1) diffusion into new spaces and/or 2) new inputs for the CE	

Table 5. Case Studies

	SOUTH SUDAN	MALI	KENYA	SOMALIA
СЕ Туре	1	2	3	4
Region	South Sudan	Northern Region of Mali	Nairobi	Southern Somalia and Northern Kenya
Years	2003-2013	2012-2013	2007-2008	July 2011-mid 2012
Root Factors	 Severe droughts (2006, 2009) and heavy rains Acute conflict since 2011 and ethnic clashes in 2013 50.6% of population living below the national poverty line in 2009²⁸ 	 Chronic armed and fatal political violence: uprising of the MNLA, military coup, and conflict against AQIM, MUJAO, and the French Military forces in the North Chronic droughts (1973-1974 and 1984- 1986) and floods Under-development²⁹ and historic repressive marginalization³⁰ 50% of population living on less than \$1.25 a day 	 43% of population living on less than \$1.25 a day Post-electoral high level of violence: riots, protests, and violence against civilians (events/ fatalities) High-level exposure to climate change hazards (drought: 1999-2001; 2003-2006; and 2008- 2009) 45,000 to 100,000 urban refugees³¹ 33% of the urban population live below the national urban poverty line 31% of urban population with access to sanitation 	 Drought (2011-12) and floods (2013) Protracted conflict with Al Shabaab vs. Somali and African Union forces, Northern rebel groups, and communal militias 43% of the population living on less than \$1.25 a day³²
Consequences	 - 360,000 IDPs in camps, with 58,000 new IDPs in 2013 - 4.1 million people are food insecure, with 1.2 million facing crisis and emergency levels of food insecurity and receiving aid - Acute Malnutrition rate of 18.1% among children under five - Hepatitis E outbreaks in Upper Nile State Refugee Camps since mid-2012 	 467,000 displaced and 310,783 IDPs About 3.5 million people affected by food insecurity, including 1.4 million in need of immediate assistance Food prices above the five-year average by 15% in Timbuktu and 35% in Gao Cholera and Measles outbreaks (Gao) 	 600,000 IDPs in temporary camps and host families Increase in food prices, along with the global increase³³ Urban food insecurity Increasing risk for population to face epidemics³⁴ 	 1. 1 million IDPs (15% of the population) in South and 492,000 refugees in Kenya 50,000 displaced by flood and 6,400 ha of crops destroyed Acute diarrhea cases around Mogadishu in 2013 1.05 million people, including 615,000 IDPs in Somalia, are at stressed and crisis levels 258,000 deaths from famine (2010-12)
	High	High	Medium	High
Intensity	 Feedback loops between displacement and desiccation around the camps, increasing competition over resources in a context of under-development and poor governance³⁵ Complex migration patterns (returnees from Sudan) leading to inter-communal violence, and conflict over land³⁶ 	- Zones affected by the conflicts are facing food insecurity as the pastoralist livelihoods are disrupted ³⁷	 Pressure on host communities, deepening poverty High level of returnees without the means to restart agricultural activities 	 Increased conflict over resources in bordering region of Kenya Floods affecting food production and health status of the population

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ENDNOTES

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