MEDIATING RESILIENCE: INCLUSIVE AND CLIMATE-INFORMED PATHWAYS TO PEACE

Evidence from Uganda and Kenya

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MERCY CORPS

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Executive Summary

Climate change is threatening livelihoods, intensifying competition over natural resources, and fueling conflict worldwide, particularly in agro-pastoralist societies in developing countries.[1] In response, governments, policymakers, and development practitioners are working to improve natural resource management (NRM), support conflict mediation, and strengthen climate resilience in affected communities. There is growing recognition that sustainable NRM and effective dispute resolution—especially around land, water, and other vital assets—require inclusive processes that reflect the distinct roles, responsibilities, and influence of men, women, and youth in natural resource use and community decision-making.

Women and girls are central users and stewards of natural resources. They often hold practical knowledge and play informal roles in local dispute resolution. Yet they are frequently excluded from formal NRM decision-making and conflict mediation processes. This exclusion weakens the legitimacy and durability of local agreements and limits communities' ability to adapt to climate shocks. Inclusive approaches that intentionally elevate women's, girls', and youth perspectives—while engaging men and addressing local power dynamics—can strengthen these interventions. Such approaches enhance governance, broaden benefits across populations, and ultimately build community resilience to both climate shocks and conflict.

This report examines how inclusive, gender-responsive natural resource management and conflict mediation can strengthen community resilience at the climate-conflict nexus. It draws on two complementary programs in the Karamoja sub-region spanning Northeast Uganda (Kotido and Kaabong) and Northwest Kenya (Turkana). **The Climate Change Leaders Advancing for Peace (CCLAP) program**, funded by the Austrian Development Agency, worked to reduce structural barriers preventing women, girls, and youth from participating in climate-smart NRM and conflict resolution. **Advancing Inclusive Mediation (AIM)** conducted training-of-trainers in inclusive and climate-informed interest-based mediation and negotiation (IBMN) for the CCLAP team.

Using data from both programs, we examine whether and how inclusive NRM and conflict mediation interventions improve natural resource governance, conflict resolution, and resilience to climate shocks. Specifically, we address three research questions:

1. To what extent, and how, did inclusive IBMN and NRM affect gender attitudes and the participation of women, girls, and youth in natural resource governance, conflict resolution, and community decision-making?

2. To what extent, and how, did changes in attitudes and participation affect climate adaptation, resilience to climate shocks, and exposure to conflict and violence?

3. What are the implications for designing and implementing more inclusive, climate-sensitive approaches to conflict mediation and natural resource management in climate-conflict settings?

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[1] IPCC, 2022: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Geneva: IPCC.

These questions address critical policy and program concerns: how to include marginalized groups in climate governance, whether peacebuilding can reduce climate-related conflicts, and what approaches most effectively strengthen equitable access to natural resources and community resilience.

Key Findings

Inclusive NRM and conflict mediation improved gender attitudes, but only among women. Male respondents reported more gender-equitable attitudes than female respondents, but their views showed little change before and after the program – possibly reflecting social desirability bias rather than genuine attitude shifts. In contrast, women's views changed significantly. Women in communities with the CCLAP program expressed considerably more support for gender equality than women in communities without the program. Moreover, we found that the more a woman participated in the program, the more her attitudes shifted, even after accounting for age and education.

Strengthening women's roles in NRM increased their engagement in community decision-making. Despite its relatively short duration (two years), the program effectively increased women's involvement in natural resource management and conflict resolution. Multiple sources of evidence support this finding:

- Self-reported participation: More women reported participating in these initiatives more frequently.
- Community perceptions: There was a significant increase in the perceived participation and influence of women in community decision-making at the end of the program.
- Program dosage effects: Difference-in-difference analysis showed that more intensive CCLAP participation led to greater inclusive participation. These effects were robust and not explained by pre-existing differences in participation or general trends over time.
- Qualitative testimonies: In interviews and focus groups, respondents in program communities described a noticeable increase in women's engagement and voice in community affairs – and consistently credited these changes to CCLAP.

Inclusive NRM and mediation approaches can strengthen community resilience to crises. The program enhanced community resilience to climate- and conflict-related shocks through two pathways. The first was *direct capacity building*: teaching people new skills, providing tools, and promoting climate adaptation measures (e.g., drought-resistant crops, reduced deforestation, kitchen gardens, improved migration strategy). The second pathway was *indirect empowerment:* increasing women's participation and influence in natural resource management, leveraging their knowledge, experiences, and roles as information hubs within communities. While all communities in the region experienced declining resilience during the program period, CCLAP participants fared significantly better – the program acted as a protective buffer against these shocks. This protective effect increased with program intensity: individuals with higher participation showed stronger resilience outcomes. Our analysis indicates that inclusive NRM and mediation approaches partly explain these resilience gains. By engaging women more fully in resource management and decision-making, the program facilitated knowledge transfer and adoption of climate-adaptive practices that spread throughout communities.

Inclusive mediation strengthened conflict resolution capacities, but its effect on violent incidents was less clear. The program achieved significant improvements in conflict management capacity and engagement, including:

- Increased knowledge of mediation and dispute resolution techniques
- Enhanced awareness of local conflict resolution structures

- Greater engagement in conflict resolution processes, especially among women
- Higher perceived decline in conflict among residents of CCLAP communities

However, external violence data[2] showed limited change during the evaluation period. While community members reported improved security and greater involvement in conflict resolution, we could not conclusively detect short-term reductions in violent incidents or fatalities. This may reflect both the limits of detecting short-term changes in violent events and the reality that shifts in local dispute resolution and governance often precede measurable reductions in violence. In contexts like Karamoja and Turkana, where violence is shaped by broader security dynamics and cross-border shocks, program effects may take longer to materialize, even when underlying conflict management systems are strengthened. Overall, the evidence suggests the program built critical foundations for longer-term violence prevention by strengthening community-level conflict resolution capacities and mechanisms, and that its **consistent and measurable improvements in participation, attitudes, and resilience within a compressed timeline suggest substantial potential for deeper impact with sustained engagement**.

Recommendations

Engage men intentionally and systematically in gender-inclusive NRM and mediation efforts. Evidence from this study suggests that shifts in gender attitudes occur unevenly: women showed significant changes while men's attitudes remained largely static. Moreover, men sometimes actively resisted women's participation in certain domains, effectively acting as gatekeepers to NRM and conflict management spaces. Therefore, policymakers should require that gender-focused programs include specific, evidence-based strategies for engaging men and boys as a core component – not an afterthought. This may entail creating male-only dialogue groups facilitated by respected local leaders to discuss the concrete benefits of women's participation (e.g., better resource management), and targeted messaging that addresses specific resistance points, such as the concern about women's capacity to handle conflict or threats to traditional authority structures. These approaches create safer environments for men to examine and challenge restrictive gender norms, reducing the risk of backlash while building genuine buy-in for inclusive NRM and mediation practices.

Adopt an integrated, long-term model to build community resilience. CCLAP's effectiveness stemmed from a dual approach: directly building climate adaptation capacity (skills, knowledge, tools), while simultaneously strengthening women's participation and influence in natural resource governance. This integration created a reinforcing cycle where improved governance enhanced technical outcomes, and vice versa. Donors and practitioners should prioritize integrated program designs that link technical and environmental objectives with governance and gender equality goals. Siloed approaches—climate programs that ignore gender dynamics, or gender programs that neglect livelihood realities—are less likely to be effective. Practitioners should aim to replicate the CCLAP program's model and ensure that climate interventions aim to strengthen the participation and influence of women in decision-making processes. Interventions should therefore be designed to build technical capacity, expand meaningful participation in decision-making, and strengthen community-level governance structures responsible for NRM and conflict

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[2] We measured violence using data from the Armed Conflict Location and Events Dataset (ACLED), which captures political violence and organized conflict events (battles, violence against civilians, riots) but does not include interpersonal or criminal violence such as domestic abuse or assault.

management. At the same time, sustained engagement and longer implementation periods are crucial. Changing entrenched gender norms, shifting power dynamics, and achieving measurable reductions in violence takes time. Short-term interventions like CCLAP may build initial capacity and awareness but cannot consolidate governance changes or allow enough time for conflict outcomes to materialize.

Focus on meaningful *influence*, not just participation, to make community governance truly inclusive. While increasing women's participation in NRM and conflict mediation is essential, our findings reveal a critical gap: presence does not equal power. Women may attend meetings without genuinely shaping decisions or influencing outcomes. Programs must therefore move beyond counting participants to deliberately building pathways for women, youth, and marginalized groups to exercise authority and decision-making power. This requires investing in facilitation approaches that elevate women's voices in mixed-gender settings; creating structured roles (e.g., rotating leadership positions, co-chair models); strengthening women's economic and technical authority; and monitoring not only who is present, but whose contributions meaningfully affect outcomes. By shifting from representation to influence, programs can amplify the mechanisms our research identified as central to improved resilience and conflict reduction.

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Introduction

Climate change is intensifying competition over land, water, and other shared natural resources in pastoralist regions, fueling conflict and violence. In settings where livelihoods depend on access to grazing land and water points, disputes over natural resources are a primary driver of insecurity. Across climate-conflict settings, natural resource management and dispute resolution processes often overlook the people most directly responsible for managing land, water, and household resources. Women and girls are central users and stewards of natural resources and frequently play informal roles in local conflict mediation. Yet they are commonly excluded from formal NRM governance structures and conflict resolution mechanisms, despite their central roles in natural resource use, household survival, and informal conflict resolution. This exclusion limits whose knowledge, priorities, and lived experience shape decisions over shared resources, weakening the legitimacy and durability of natural resource management (NRM) agreements and conflict resolution mechanisms, and limiting communities' ability to adapt to climate shocks and prevent violence.

These dynamics are particularly acute in agro-pastoralist contexts, where climate variability intensifies competition over land and water and where governance systems are often fragmented or under-resourced. Inclusive approaches to NRM and conflict mediation that elevate women's, girls', and youth perspectives— while engaging men and addressing local power dynamics—have the potential to strengthen governance, broaden benefits, and improve resilience outcomes. However, there remains limited empirical evidence on whether and how such inclusive approaches translate into measurable improvements in participation, resilience, and conflict dynamics, particularly in highly insecure, climate-stressed regions.

This report examines these questions in the Karamoja sub-region of Northeast Uganda (Kotido and Kaabong Districts) and Northwest Kenya (Turkana District), semi-arid, pastoralist landscapes where climate shocks such as droughts and floods intensify competition over land and water. These environmental stresses have long fueled inter- and intra-clan cattle raids and resource disputes, driving displacement, violence, and social tension. With 60 percent of Karamoja's population living in poverty and Turkana's pastoral livelihoods similarly strained, climate change compounds existing vulnerabilities.

Local conflicts tend to be resource-based, with disputes arising over access to water-points, dry-season grazing, and pasture, particularly across the Kenya-Uganda border that separates the Dodoth, Jie, and Matheniko ethnic groups from the Turkana of Kenya. These borderland communities remain physically and politically isolated from central government services and early-warning systems, leaving them especially exposed to climate-conflict risks, pervasive banditry, and violent crime. Meanwhile, disarmament campaigns and efforts to recover stolen livestock by the Kenyan and Ugandan armed forces have fueled resistance and stoked resentment against state authorities, further complicating security dynamics.

Gender norms shape both resource governance and conflict dynamics in these settings. Men are typically the primary owners of land, livestock, and small businesses; few women own assets and are instead reliant on their fathers, husbands, or brothers. Men and women typically have distinct roles in natural resource use: men focus on securing pasture and water for livestock, controlling communal grazing lands, and overseeing NRM governance, while women focus on farming and securing water, firewood, and other resources for the household. Women are permitted to access and use natural resources but often lack ownership and voice in formal NRM and governance forums.

These exclusions also extend to conflict dynamics and security. Cattle raiding – a primary driver of violence in the region – is predominantly carried out by young men and boys, often to demonstrate masculinity and

accumulate dowries for marriage. Women and girls face distinct gendered risks during conflicts: gender-based violence (GBV) and abduction during raids, forced marriage, and loss of economic security when widowed by violence. Women also face GBV during long treks for water, early marriages due to economic stress, and heavier workloads that are exacerbated during climate shocks. Despite these realities, women are often excluded from conflict resolution and mediation processes. As a result, NRM agreements and conflict resolution structures – including informal institutions at the kraal level – do not necessarily reflect women's needs, experiences, and concerns. This exclusion prevents women and girls from contributing their local ecological knowledge and lived experience to solutions, weakening existing conflict resolution and mediation mechanisms that already struggle to effectively address both climate- and conflict-related risks.

Program Context: CCLAP and AIM

In response to these challenges, Mercy Corps and local partner organizations KAPDA, NARWOA, and SAPCONE implemented the Climate Change Leaders Advancing for Peace (CCLAP) program from November 2023 to October 2025. Funded by the Austrian Development Agency, CCLAP aimed to center women's leadership in inclusive, climate-informed mediation and resource governance to help equitably manage shared resources and forge durable pathways to peace. By facilitating and encouraging more inclusive NRM and conflict governance, CCLAP sought to empower all segments of the local population and leverage the unique skills, experiences, and perspectives that men, women, and youth bring. The primary target group for the CCLAP project was conflict-affected communities from the Jie and Dodoth clans of the Karimojong tribes in Kotido (Nakapelimoru, Rengen, and North Division sub-counties) and Kaabong Districts (Lodiko, Loyoro, Kamion, and Kalapata sub-counties) respectively, and the Turkana tribe residing across the border in Kenya (Lopur, Song'ot, and Lokichoggio Wards).

The overall goal of the program was that *"women, girls, CSOs in conflict affected communities reduce structural barriers to gender equality, contribute to climate-smart natural resource management, and strengthen climate-resilience for peace for the communities of North-East Uganda and North-West Kenya."* Specifically, the project aimed to build women's, girls', and civil society organizations' capacities by increasing awareness of climate resilience and Natural Resource Management (NRM), tackling structural barriers to change, and focusing on the following objectives:

1. Improved capacities of women, girls, and CSOs to address gender inequality and the specific vulnerabilities they face as a result of climate change and conflict issues.

2. Strengthened climate and conflict mechanisms and peace outcomes through increased women's leadership.

To achieve these objectives, CCLAP implemented a series of activities in targeted communities, including women-led participatory NRM mapping; climate resilience clubs and planning committees; negotiated NRM agreements over shared resources; interest-based mediation and negotiation (IBMN) training; and climate-adaptive livelihoods support and seed grants for cross-border initiatives.

CCLAP also served as a case study for the Advancing Inclusive Mediation (AIM) program, which adapted Mercy Corps' interest-based mediation (IBM) curriculum and resources to be more gender-responsive and inclusive. The revised curriculum was designed to enhance the participation and meaningful engagement of

women, youth, and other marginalized groups in climate-informed[3] mediation processes, ensuring that the perspectives and needs of these distinct groups can interact and contribute more effectively. It gave special consideration to emotional, cultural, and contextual aspects and communication, moving beyond a sole focus on dispute resolution to a more inclusive process that considers various intangible factors and power relations that can significantly impact outcomes. Specifically, the new IBM modules:

- Integrated gender dimensions across all mediation phases, such as analyzing how conflicts affect men and women differently and ensuring women's needs, interests, and negotiation styles are included.

- Emphasized identifying exclusion risks, countering power dynamics that silence marginalized groups, and broadening stakeholders for inclusive participation.

- Participant selection shifted to prioritize strong female representation and diverse groups, moving beyond male-dominated insider-mediator networks.

- Emphasized gendered training teams with basic requirements of gender expertise.

- Incorporated learning-by-doing approaches that carefully consider the risks of pairing men, women, and minorities in exercises

CCLAP provided an opportunity to test this new IBMN curriculum and evaluate the impact of a more gender-responsive and climate-focused mediation model on gender attitudes, women's participation, and conflict outcomes.

Theoretical Motivations

Inclusive Natural Resource Management

Research suggests that the inclusion and meaningful participation of men *and* women is critical for effective natural resource management, building resilience to climate shocks, and preventing conflict and violence. These interconnected challenges disproportionately affect women and girls, yet their unique knowledge, roles as environmental stewards, and contributions to peacebuilding remain significantly underutilized due to persistent systemic gender barriers.

Women often interact with the environment differently from men, focusing on activities that support the household, such as collecting firewood and water. This direct and daily reliance on natural resources fosters a deep, practical understanding of resource availability, sustainable harvesting practices, and community requirements.[4] This knowledge is profoundly valuable for climate adaptation strategies. However, women

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[3] By "climate informed," we mean the deliberate integration of climate risk analysis, vulnerability assessments, and local climate knowledge into the negotiation and mediation processes to ensure that solutions are sustainable, adaptive, and responsive to environmental challenges and acknowledges the significant impact of climate risks and resource pressures on conflict dynamics.

[4] Turquet, Laura; Constanza Tabbush, Silke Staab, Loui Williams, and Brianna Howell, *Feminist climate justice: A framework for action*. UN Women (2023). https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/feature-story/2023/12/new-report-shows-how-feminism-can-be-a-powerful-tool-to-fight-climate-change. Accessed 15 September 2025.

are often excluded from formal decision-making processes related to climate action and NRM.[5] As a consequence, their unique knowledge and perspectives are frequently overlooked, leading to the development of less effective, incomplete, or unequal management strategies.[6] Studies indicate that women tend to prioritize the long-term health and ecological integrity of forest ecosystems and are more likely to utilize natural resources in ways that enhance overall family welfare, reduce child malnutrition, and improve household food consumption.[7] When women have a say in how revenues from natural resources are used, they also direct them toward household and community welfare, not just profit.[8]

At the same time, evidence from collective action and common-pool resource theory highlights that inclusive governance – where all stakeholders are represented – improves rule compliance, monitoring, conflict resolution, and long-term sustainability of shared resources.[9] Heterogeneous groups can improve problem-solving when decision-making processes are perceived as legitimate and when they incorporate diverse knowledge. Excluding certain groups can reduce legitimacy, compliance, and trust, all of which are essential for managing scarce or contested resources.

Research on NRM across 20 countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia revealed a notable increase in collaboration, solidarity, and conflict resolution where women were present.[10] Mixed-gender NRM groups consistently demonstrate better conflict resolution mechanisms and foster more civil discussions.[11] Greater representation of women in NRM initiatives has been linked to improved conservation outcomes, particularly in forest management programs, and more equitable sharing of benefits derived from conservation initiatives.[12]

Despite the benefits of inclusion, deeply entrenched societal and cultural norms frequently limit women's engagement in NRM, often excluding them from decision-making processes. Women often have significantly less access to crucial resources such as land rights, credit, and other productive assets.[13] The absence of secure land tenure particularly impedes women's access to financial resources and opportunities for income generation.[14] Women are frequently excluded from formal decision-making structures and governance

[5] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). "Women, Resilience and Climate Change." Geneva: United Nations (March 2025). https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2025-04/women_resilience_and_climate_change_march_2025.pdf. Accessed 18 September 2025.

[6] This can include NRM decisions that positively affect resources for men and negatively impact women because their needs are not considered or understood. For example, negotiating water access for cattle without considering household needs, which could make it more dangerous for women and girls to access nearby waterholes. WOCAN. "Conservation and Natural Resource Management: Where Are All the Women?" WOCAN. 2021. https://www.wocan.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/conservation-and-natural-resource-management-where-are-all-the-women.pdf. Accessed 15 September 2025.

[7] United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Women and Natural Resources: Unlocking the Peacebuilding Potential. Geneva: United Nations (2017), https://www.undp.org/publications/women-and-natural-resources.

[8] Sunderland, Terry, Ramadhani Achdiawan, Arild Angelsen, Ronnie Babigumira, Amy Ickowitz, Fiona Paumgarten, Victoria Reyes-García, and Gerald Shively. "Challenging perceptions about men, women, and forest product use: a global comparative study." World Development 64 (2014): S56-S66.

[9] Ostrom, Elinor. Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action, Cambridge University Press (1990); Poteete, Amy R., Marco A. Janssen, and Elinor Ostrom. Working together: collective action, the commons, and multiple methods in practice. Princeton University Press (2010).

[10] WOCAN 2021.

[11] Leisher, Craig, Gheda Temsah, Francesca Booker, Michael Day, Leah Samberg, Debra Prosnitz, Bina Agarwal et al. "Does the gender composition of forest and fishery management groups affect resource governance and conservation outcomes? A systematic map." Environmental Evidence, 5, no. 1 (2016).

[12] WOCAN 2021; United Nations. "Why Women Are Key to Climate Action." United Nations, 2025. https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/women. Accessed September 25, 2025; Agarwal, Bina. "Gender and forest conservation: The impact of women's participation in community forest governance." Ecological economics 68, no. 11 (2009): 2785-2799.

[13] United Nations 2025.

[14] Climate Investment Funds. "Gender and Sustainable Forest Management." Climate Investment Funds. n.d. https://www.cif.org/sites/cif_enc/files/knowledge-documents/gender_and_sustainable_forest_management.pdf. Accessed September 25, 2025.

processes related to NRM.[15] This exclusion can perpetuate existing inequities, where even positive conservation outcomes may not translate into equitable benefits for women. Problems of inequality are widely recognized as a critical threat to the success of NRM.[16] It also compounds adverse effects on women. The combination of household responsibilities and risks of gender-based violence that women face in collecting resources like water and firewood makes them particularly vulnerable.[17] This vulnerability is starkly evident in disaster mortality rates: women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men during extreme weather events, largely due to limited access to information, restricted mobility, and fewer decision-making opportunities and resources.[18] In other words, women in developing contexts "face the precarious position of both being more affected by extreme weather events caused by climate change and having little say in local decision making focused on mitigation and adaptation."[19]

An important finding from prior studies indicates that decision-making bodies require the inclusion of at least 30 percent women for them to effectively influence decisions.[20] Women have relatively more influence in group deliberations when women make up a larger share of the group – a change driven by men's assessments of women's influence – which also changes the substance of group deliberations in a way that can further amplify women's voices.[21] This suggests that mere presence or tokenistic inclusion is insufficient; a critical mass of women is necessary for their voices to translate into meaningful influence and equitable outcomes. Policy efforts, therefore, should not merely aim for women's representation but actively work towards achieving a substantive proportion of women in leadership and decision-making roles, complemented by capacity building and addressing underlying power dynamics.

Moreover, if not done carefully, including women in governance can trigger backlash. According to a study of a civic education course in Mali, an inclusive engagement approach actually widened the gender gap by increasing civic activity among men while decreasing it among women. In a context where women were unwelcome in the public sphere, women "self-imposed" limits to civic participation, while men created new barriers as a form of backlash. These findings are consistent with the idea of a "resource paradox," in which increasing women's resources can produce negative outcomes when gendered social norms neutralize, or even invert, whatever benefits the resource provides to the woman. This paradox may be more pronounced in less urbanized and more traditional communities, where gender norms tend to be the strongest.[22]

Inclusion, Conflict, and Violence

Gender inequality is strongly associated with instability and conflict, both within and between countries.[23] Higher levels of gender equality correlate with increased prosperity, security, and democracy, while lower

[15] UNDP 2017.

[16] Baynes et al., 2015; Cook et al., 2023; Friedman et al., 2018

[17] Green Network Asia. "Looking Into the Gender Gap in Natural Resource Management." Green Network Asia. n.d. https://greennetwork.asia/gna-knowledge-hub/looking-into-the-gender-gap-in-natural-resource-management/ Accessed September 25, 2025.

[18] United Nations 2025.

[19] Clayton, Amanda, Boniface Dulani, Katrina Kosec, and Amanda Lea Robinson. "Representation increases women's influence in climate deliberations: Evidence from community-managed forests in Malawi." *American Journal of Political Science* (2025): 2.

[20] WOCAN 2021.

[21] Clayton et al. 2025.

[22] Gottlieb, Jessica. "Why might information exacerbate the gender gap in civic participation? Evidence from Mali." *World Development* 86 (2016): 95-110.

[23] Stienstra, Lauren R. "Gender, Climate Change, and Security: Making the Connections." Diplomacy for the 21st Century. November 23, 2021. https://diplomacy21-adelphi.wilsoncenter.org/article/gender-climate-change-and-security-making-connections. Accessed 20 September 2025.

levels are associated with instability, violence, and conflict.[24] Women and girls are disproportionately impacted by conflict, facing heightened risks of violence, forced displacement, and food insecurity.[25] They also play a critical role in preventing, mitigating, and ending conflict. There is strong evidence that women's inclusion in peace processes improves their durability and effectiveness.[26] Agreements with women signatories also exhibit higher rates of implementation and demonstrate greater longevity.[27] Women participants in peace processes tend to prioritize issues beyond the immediate spoils of war, focusing instead on reconciliation, economic development, education, and transitional justice – all critical elements for achieving sustained peace.[28] They also prioritize issues such as land rights, natural resources, and environmental degradation, which can mitigate post-conflict natural resource inequalities that might otherwise trigger a resumption of hostilities.[29] The World Bank has found that projects that included women in conflict resolution and post-conflict resource management were more successful and sustainable.[30]

Yet as with NRM, women face significant barriers to participation in peace processes and are repeatedly excluded from key roles as mediators, negotiators, and signatories to peace agreements.[31] Peace processes are frequently characterized by a patriarchal structure, with men in leadership roles and the perpetuation of exclusionary practices. Third parties involved in mediation can inadvertently act as "gatekeepers," questioning women's legitimacy or representativity, or citing cultural reasons to justify their exclusion.[32] Yet, while women may be excluded from formal, high-level peace negotiations, they are active in grassroots peacebuilding and informal mediation efforts.[33] A lack of gender-sensitive programming, therefore, risks perpetuating existing inequalities and undermining the prospects for long-term peace.

Indeed, exclusion in one domain can amplify vulnerabilities across the others. For instance, women's limited access to land rights and other natural resources directly impedes their ability to adapt to climate change and can contribute to resource-related conflicts.[34] Similarly, climate-induced disasters can lead to increased conflict and displacement, disproportionately affecting women and girls and heightening their vulnerability to violence.[35] And the systematic exclusion of women from decision-making processes in NRM and climate governance means that their unique knowledge, which could significantly bolster peacebuilding efforts, is not leveraged. This can perpetuate cycles of conflict and resource competition.[36] Thus women's inclusion in both NRM and peacebuilding can be critical to the success of these efforts.

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[24] United States Agency for International Development (USAID). "USAID Plan for Implementing the 2023 U.S. Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security." Washington, DC, February 2024. https://oursecurefuture.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/2024-USAID-WPS-implementation-plan.pdf

[25] UN Women. "Facts and Figures: Women, Peace, and Security." UN Women. 20 October 2025. https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-women-peace-and-security.

[26] USAID 2024; Krause, Jana, Werner Krause, and Piia Bränfors. "Women's participation in peace negotiations and the durability of peace." *International Interactions* 44, no. 6 (2018): 985-1016.

[27] Turquet et al. 2023.

[28] Stigant, Susan, Kathleen R. Johnson, and Megan Corrado. "The Essential Role of Women in Peacebuilding." United States Institute of Peace. November 1, 2017. https://www.usip.org/publications/2017/11/essential-role-women-peacebuilding; Krause et al. 2018.

[29] UNDP 2017.

[30] Das, Maitreyi Bordia, Cyprian F. Fisiy, and Rachel Kyte. "Inclusion matters: the foundation for shared prosperity." Washington DC: World Bank. 2013, https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/114561468154469371

[31] UN Women 2023.

[32] Ariño, María Villellas. "Women Peacebuilders in Mediation Efforts: Challenges and Pathways for Inclusion." IAI Commentary, April 14, 2025. https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/c05/women-peacebuilders-mediation-efforts-challenges-and-pathways-inclusion.

[33] Turquet et al. 2023.

[34] United Nations 2025.

[35] Turquet et al. 2023.

[36] United Nations 2025.

Drawing on this evidence, **the theory of change underpinning** the CCLAP and AIM programs is: if NRM and conflict management structures are more inclusive[37]—in terms of adopting the perspectives of men, women, and youth, and including everyone as equal participants—then communities will be more resilient to resource-based conflict and the effects of climate change, because their solutions and approaches will (a) incorporate the unique knowledge that women have about natural resources and conflict-related drivers; (b) leverage the roles that women can play and the resources they can bring as peacebuilders, and (c) will be considered more legitimate by incorporating the perspectives and needs of the entire population. Inclusivity extends beyond formal NRM governance and conflict management to encompass households, which can be viewed as institutions engaged in collective action across different generations and between various levels of nested institutions.[38] For instance, understanding how household members cooperate in managing shared resources or responding to collective challenges, such as resource scarcity, can provide valuable insights into broader community-level collective action. As such, this research examines both whether and how Mercy Corps' programs affected women's participation, collective action, and gender attitudes; and then whether and how any changes in participation or attitudes affect resilience to climate shocks, conflict management, and violence and insecurity in the study context.

Data and Methods

This study combines statistical analysis of survey data from the CCLAP baseline and endline with key informant interviews, focus groups, and a systematic review of activity reports. The baseline survey was conducted in March 2024 and the endline in September 2025. For the endline, we surveyed a total of 801 respondents. This included 370 individuals who conducted the baseline, including 103 from Kaabong, 111 from Kotido, and 156 from Turkana (see Table 1). Another 151 respondents—including 99 from Kaabong, 43 from Kotido, and 9 from Turkana – were surveyed using quota sampling, in order to ensure (a) inclusion of direct and indirect participants; and (b) broad geographic coverage. **Direct participants** are individuals who participated in program activities, including trainings, climate resilience clubs, and livelihoods support. **Indirect participants** are individuals who live in communities where CCLAP conducted activities, but who did not directly participate in these activities themselves. Finally, 280 participants were surveyed from three "control" sub-counties: Kawalakol in Karenga District, Lotithan in Moroto District, and Loreng in Turkana West. These communities did not receive CCLAP programming but were similar to those that did in terms of their size, wealth, type of livelihood activities, ethnic and tribal identity, and histories of conflict, violence, and climate-related shocks. Within these communities, participants were selected through a random walk procedure.

In addition to the survey, Mercy Corps completed 33 key informant interviews with community leaders, district and local officials, climate action negotiators and mediators, women's peace forum members, and other CCLAP participants to understand how and why program activities affected individuals, households, and community dynamics.[39] We also conducted 30 single-gender focus group discussions (FGDs) with men and women who participated in the program. KII and FGD respondents were drawn from different groups;

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[37] We use "inclusive" to mean that all stakeholder groups (especially those traditionally marginalized such as women, girls, youth) are actively invited, able to participate meaningfully, and influence decisions at every stage of natural resource management.
[38] Kelly, Lauren, and Rocio Sanchez-Moyano. "Why Gender Inclusion Matters in Post-Conflict Recovery." IEG Blog, June 28, 2021. https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/blog/why-gender-inclusion-matters-post-conflict-recovery
[39] 9 KIIs were from Kenya (5 men, 4 women), and 26 were from Uganda (15 men, 9 women).

those who participated in the survey did not attend focus groups. Focus group discussions were used to gather in-depth information and opinions from participants to build on and supplement the survey.

Key Outcomes and Measures

The primary outcomes of interest for this study, and the survey questions used to measure them, are described and summarized below. The specific survey questions are in the Appendix.

Gender Attitudes. We use an index that combines responses to several different questions, including the role that men and women should play in the household, in community governance, and the conditions under which it is justified for a husband to physically strike their wives.[40]

Women's Participation. We use a diverse array of measures to capture the frequency, quality, and perceived efficacy of women's participation in community and household affairs, particularly natural resource governance and conflict management. These include survey questions that ask women directly about their engagement in decision-making platforms, the type and frequency of engagement, perceived contributions, and barriers and challenges they face. We also included questions that asked people whether women actively participate in decision-making regarding NRM and conflict mediation and negotiation; whether women are represented in important leadership roles in their community, and how much influence women have in shaping community decisions.

Agency. We created an index based on several survey questions that are commonly used to measure self-efficacy, or people's confidence in their ability to achieve goals and control their lives. These questions include whether respondents feel they have the skills necessary to provide for themselves and their family; whether they feel they have the power to influence their lives; whether they manage to solve difficult problems, and whether their community respects them.

Empowerment. Our measures of empowerment – which also reflect women's power in the household – focus on women's control over income and household spending. We asked respondents who decides how money that they and their spouse earn is used (the respondent, their spouse, someone else) and who makes decisions about major and minor household purchases. This is meant to reflect women's input into major household decisions.

Resilience. To measure resilience, we use several questions, including:

- Whether the community manages shared natural resources peacefully
- Whether the respondent could access money quickly in an emergency, how confident they are that their household could cope with a climate-related shock, how prepared they are for a shock, and whether they could find ways to cope in times of hardship
- Whether the respondent knows of strategies to reduce climate risks, and whether they have taken action to reduce the impact of climate shocks

Conflict Management and Resolution. The survey includes questions about respondents' awareness of conflict resolution mechanisms in their communities, their perceived effectiveness and fairness, whether women participate and are represented in them, whether respondents have used them to resolve a dispute,

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[40] The latter measure draws on validated survey questions from USAID's Demographic and Health Surveys (https://www.dhsprogram.com/).

and whether they are satisfied with and trust these structures. We also asked people how confident they feel reporting conflicts to community leaders, their own experience in conflict mediation and negotiation, and whether they think they have the skills and capacity to resolve clashes or disputes peacefully.

Conflict, Violence, and Insecurity. We asked questions about how many violent conflicts or clashes people have witnessed in their community over the past year, whether conflicts or clashes have increased or decreased, what the main causes of these conflicts were, how safe respondents feel going to work and going out at night in their neighborhood, and whether insecurity has prevented respondents from working or going to the market. These measures focus on *perceptions* of violence and insecurity – including the frequency, severity, and nature of conflict. However, we also incorporated measures of the number of violent events and fatalities reported within a 10-kilometer radius of each village, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Events Dataset (ACLED).[41] Taken together, the events data and perceptions data provide a more holistic indicator of conflict, violence, and insecurity in sampled communities.

Analytical Approach

As noted above, 801 individuals responded to the endline survey, including 370 respondents who were also surveyed at baseline. This included 521 individuals in intervention or "treatment" communities (where CCLAP implemented activities) in 10 sub-counties and 280 individuals in "control" communities (where CCLAP did not implement activities) in three sub-counties. The control communities were identified by the CCLAP program team based on whether they were similar to the treatment communities in terms of size, ethnic/tribal identity, livelihoods, wealth, histories of conflict and violence, and climate threats they face. We were unable to conduct propensity score matching due to the lack of data on pre-treatment variables.

For the analysis, we first compared endline survey measures between respondents in treatment and control communities, to assess whether there were any statistically significant differences between the two groups. For many measures, we lacked baseline survey data (as the baseline focused on collecting other data), so we could only look for endline differences as potential evidence of program impact. The lack of pre-treatment data limits our ability to make strong causal claims. For this part of the analysis, we conduct t-tests to compare the average outcome for respondents from treatment communities with the average outcome for respondents in the control communities. We also run OLS regressions of the outcome variables on a treatment indicator with village fixed effects, while controlling for key covariates that could explain differences between the groups, including the gender, age, education, and occupation of the respondent.

Second, for outcomes that were collected both at baseline and endline, we estimate changes in these outcomes for this sub-section of the sample (the "baselined" sample). Improvements over time in these outcomes (or lack thereof) could also serve as suggestive evidence of program impact or lack of impact. But since data from control communities was only collected at endline, we cannot conduct a proper difference-in-differences analysis that would provide more rigorous and robust evidence of impact. While we hoped to partially address this by comparing outcomes over time between direct participants and indirect participants, a vast majority of respondents who conducted the baseline directly participated in the program (97 percent), so we lack sufficient variation in program participation to conduct a panel analysis. Rather than a binary indicator of whether a respondent participated in the program, we therefore used a measure of *dosage*, or

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[41] Raleigh, Clionadh, Rew Linke, Håvard Hegre, and Joakim Karlsen. "Introducing ACLED: An armed conflict location and event dataset." *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 5 (2010): 651-660.

the number of different program activities that respondents reported participating in, focusing exclusively on respondents residing in intervention areas.

Unfortunately, we lack personal identifiers that would be needed to link individuals' responses at endline to their responses at baseline. As a result, we are unable to perform a classic difference-in-differences design to track individual outcomes over time. We took two approaches to address this. First, we conducted an endline cross-sectional analysis to assess whether respondents who reported more intense program participation (higher *dosage*) experienced or reported statistically significantly different outcomes from those with less intense participation. Second, we conducted an aggregate difference-in-differences analysis by comparing villages with participants who reported more intense program participation with villages that reported lower levels of participation, creating a treatment variable based on whether villages were above or below the median dosage level. We then examine whether high-dosage villages experienced statistically different changes over time compared to lower-dosage villages (e.g., between baseline and endline).

This analysis is limited by the fact that we do not know whether selection of participants for different activities was random or based on certain characteristics. Although we cannot link individuals across survey waves, the two samples are similar in composition, as 71 percent of endline respondents in treatment areas also participated in the baseline. As a robustness check, we re-ran all models using only the sub-sample of respondents who conducted both the baseline and endline. We use both pooled OLS and fixed effects models that also control for respondents' gender, age, education, and occupation.

As described above, the first research question focuses on whether the CCLAP program affected intermediate outcomes of interest, such as gender attitudes and women's participation in NRM and conflict resolution. The second question then assesses whether any changes in these intermediate outcomes had an effect on the ultimate outcomes of interest: resilience to climate- and conflict-related shocks, effective conflict resolution, and less insecurity and violence. In addition to using the survey data to measure attitudes and behaviors related to violence, we explored whether actual levels of violence in each village changed during the CCLAP program using violent events data. We incorporated measures of the *number of violent events*, and the *number of fatalities*, reported within a 10-kilometer radius of each village for the 6- and 12-month periods preceding each survey wave, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Events Dataset (ACLED).[42]

As discussed in the introduction, Mercy Corps complemented the surveys with key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). We conducted semi-structured KIIs with a diverse range of informants, including traditional leaders, local government officials, NRM committee members, peacebuilders, CSOs, and program staff. The KIIs and FGDs produced rich, contextual qualitative data focused on how activities affected attitudes and behaviors, the mechanisms linking the interventions with our primary outcomes of interest, and the drivers and contextual factors that influenced the relationships between gender and participation, NRM, climate resilience, and conflict. FGDs were stratified by gender in order to capture diverse perspectives and create safe spaces for participants, especially women, to discuss sensitive topics in a setting where cultural norms might otherwise discourage open expression. The FGDs explored:

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[42] See https://acleddata.com/

- Perceptions of changes in gender roles, responsibilities, and attitudes within households and communities and the factors driving these changes;

- Detailed narratives of decision-making processes within households and communities concerning NRM, climate adaptation, and conflict resolution, exploring who makes decisions, how those decisions are reached, and how inclusion and women's participation affects these processes and outcomes;

- Personal experiences of climate and conflict shocks and the coping and adaptive strategies employed, with specific attention to how these strategies differ by gender;

- Perceptions of the effectiveness and inclusivity of local conflict resolution mechanisms, and how women's involvement has altered these processes;

- Stories of women's agency, leadership, and the challenges they face in NRM and peacebuilding efforts.

We triangulated findings from both the quantitative and qualitative components of the study to validate the study's results and provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of program impact.

Limitations

The analysis in this report has some limitations. First, our statistical tests are subject to potential sources of bias, including selection bias (respondents in control communities could be systematically different than respondents in treatment communities) and omitted variable bias, as the models only control for observable differences between respondents in treatment and control communities, and between participants and non-participants. Mercy Corps relied on local knowledge to identify suitable control communities, but unobserved differences between CCLAP and non-CCLAP communities may remain.

Second, the use of purposive sampling in the baseline and some quota sampling in the endline means that not all endline respondents were randomly selected from the larger population. As a result, the endline sample should not be considered statistically representative of the full population in the study areas. However, the sample does capture the diversity of program participants and community types, allowing for meaningful within-sample comparisons.

Third, baseline measures were limited for several key outcomes, as the baseline survey included a lot of diagnostic and open-ended questions rather than structured indicators. As a result, several baseline measures were less reliable, and some analyses therefore relied on endline-only indicators. We mitigated this by improving the quality and reliability of the questions in the endline – and by asking several different questions to measure the same outcome of interest, aggregating responses into an index where appropriate, although this limited the set of outcomes for which pre/post comparisons were possible.

Despite these limitations, the convergence of evidence across multiple analytical approaches substantially strengthens confidence in our findings. Results show striking consistency across different statistical tests, and between quantitative and qualitative data, and among various data sources – suggesting robust program effects. These findings are particularly noteworthy given the program's relatively short implementation period of only two years. This limited timeframe may have constrained the program's ability to produce detectable changes in downstream outcomes such as violence reduction and governance

transformation, which typically require longer time horizons to materialize, which may have also limited its ability to produce meaningful changes in downstream outcomes related to conflict, violence, and governance. That the program achieved measurable improvements in participation, attitudes, and resilience within a compressed timeline suggests substantial potential for deeper impact with sustained engagement.

Findings

Table 1 summarizes demographics for both the total survey sample – including baseline and endline respondents – and for treatment and control communities in the endline sample. The majority of respondents were women and between the ages of 25 and 39. Respondents in control (non-CCLAP) villages were older than those in treatment villages, and somewhat less educated. Respondents' occupation – nearly half were farmers – was consistent across treatment and control communities, though the number of people who reported lacking an income was slightly higher for control communities. Finally, comparing the incidence and lethality of violence in treatment and control communities before the program, the averages in Table 1 suggest that intervention areas were *more* conflict-prone than control villages.

Overall, some of the differences in the sample of respondents in treatment and control communities – with those in treatment villages being younger and exposed to more violence – suggest that areas targeted for CCLAP interventions may have been *more difficult to improve outcomes* in conflict, insecurity, resilience, and women's participation. Yet other differences – treatment villages being somewhat more educated and experiencing slightly lower unemployment – could make these areas *easier* to improve outcomes. Because some differences between communities pre-date the program, these characteristics may partially explain variation in endline outcomes. To account for this, all regression models control for gender, age, education, and occupation, adjusting for observable differences when comparing treatment and control communities.

Table 1: Summary Statistics

Variable		Total Sample (n = 1,202)	Treatment Villages (Endline, n = 521)	Control Villages (Endline, n = 280)
Gender	Female	62%	66%	69%
Age	15-24	21%	21%	12%
	25-39	59%	63%	55%
	40+	20%	16%	32%
Education	None	68%	63%	71%

|	Primary	21%	23%	19%
	Secondary	9%	12%	7%
	Tertiary	2%	2%	3%
Occupation	Farming	49%	48%	48%
	Pastoralism	11%	8%	14%
	Petty trade	24%	30%	23%
	None	10%	5%	7%
Violence	Events (12 months pre-baseline)	1.00 (SD: 4.93)	2.51 (SD: 3.37)	1.41 (SD: 1.92)
	Fatalities (12 months pre-baseline)	1.00 (SD: 4.99)	2.96 (SD: 2.13)	1.06 (SD: 1.44)

Gender Attitudes

To measure people's attitudes regarding gender, we created an index based on a series of questions about whether respondents thought that men and women should share household chores and whether it was inappropriate for a man to physically strike his wife under certain circumstances – a commonly-used measure of gender attitudes and norms drawn from the Demographic and Health Surveys program.[43] Those who agreed that men and women should share household chores, and said it was not appropriate for men to strike their wives under different circumstances, were given a higher index score. Higher scores thus indicated more equitable gender attitudes.

Figure 1 shows the average difference in gender attitudes for male and female respondents in CCLAP (treatment) and non-CCLAP (control) communities. Overall, male respondents exhibited *greater* gender-equitable attitudes than female respondents. This echoes findings from other studies, and could indicate social desirability bias – or men's desire to showcase more progressive attitudes about gender, regardless

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[43] See https://www.dhsprogram.com/

of their personal beliefs.[44] Yet there is no evidence that this bias was more prominent in communities targeted by CCLAP. The difference in gender attitudes between CCLAP and non-CCLAP communities for *male* respondents was small and statistically insignificant.[45] For *female* respondents, however, the difference was highly significant,[46] as women in treatment villages exhibited more equitable gender attitudes than those in control villages.

Figure 1: Gender attitudes by treatment status (CCLAP vs. non-CCLAP)
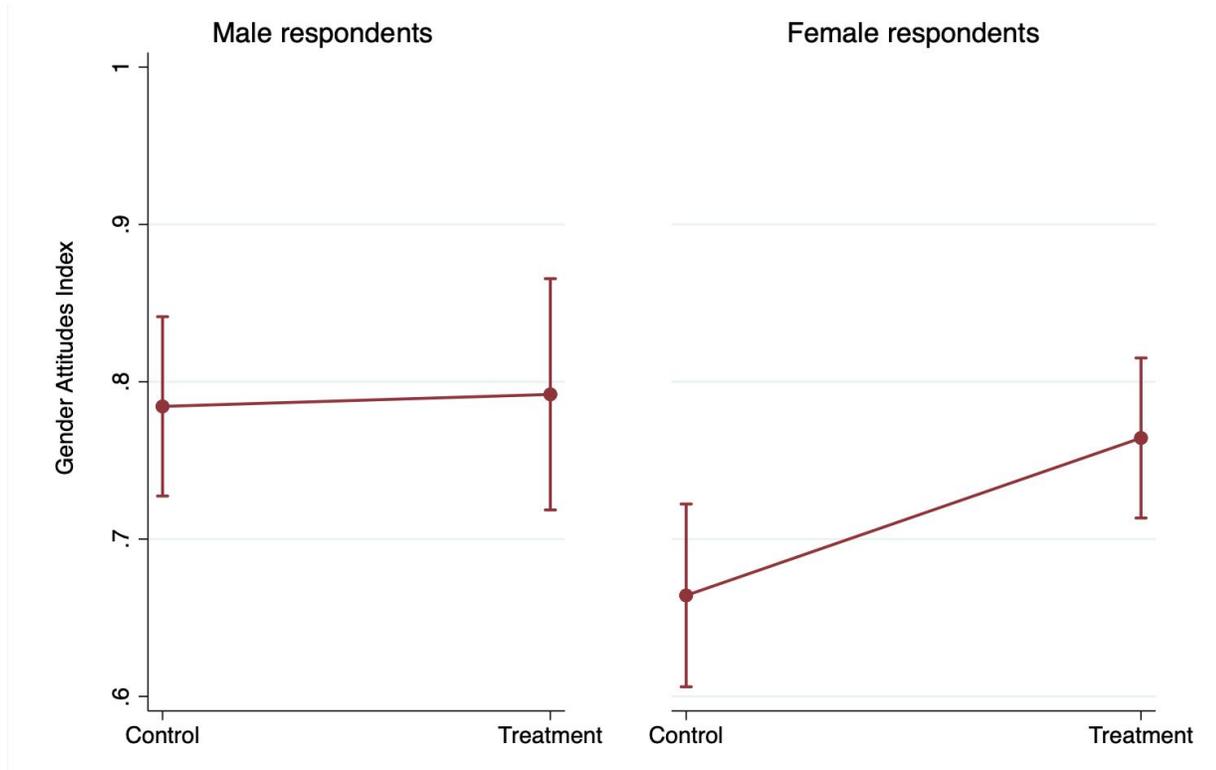
Note: Predicted probability based on OLS regressions with robust standard errors clustered by village

Comparing endline respondents within treatment communities based on *dosage* – or their intensity of participation in the CCLAP program – we found similar results (Table A1 in the Appendix). For female respondents living in intervention areas,[47] there was a positive and highly statistically significant association between more program participation and more gender-equitable attitudes, even when controlling for age, education, and occupation.[48] For male respondents, however, the results were negative and statistically insignificant. Taken together, these findings suggest that while the program may have improved gender attitudes among women, it did not meaningfully alter gender attitudes among men.[49]

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[44] See, for example, Asadullah, M. Niaz, Elisabetta De Cao, Fathema Zhura Khatoon, and Zahra Siddique. "Measuring gender attitudes using list experiments." *Journal of Population Economics,* 34, 2 (2021): 367-400; Nillesen, E., Grimm, M., Goedhuys, M., Reitmann, A.K. and Meysonnat, A., 2021. "On the malleability of gender attitudes: Evidence from implicit and explicit measures in Tunisia." *World Development*, 138, p.105263.

[45] p = 0.881.

[46] p < 0.001.

[47] In other words, for the dosage analysis we confined our tests to the sample of (endline) respondents living in CCLAP communities only.

[48] p < 0.001.

[49] It should be noted that shifts in gender norms without similar changes among men can, in some contexts, create friction or backlash within households. We did not measure the incidence of interpersonal or household violence, and we did not find evidence of changes due to

Women's Participation and Influence

In order to assess the program's impact on other observational outcomes – starting with women's participation – we conducted a series of statistical tests. First, we looked at changes over time, both for the full survey sample (without the control group, n = 922)[50] and only for people who participated in both the baseline and endline surveys (n = 771). Second, we compared responses in the endline survey only. This included comparing those in treatment (CCLAP) and control (non-CCLAP) communities and comparing those in CCLAP communities based on how many program activities they reported participating in – a measure of *dosage,* or the intensity of program participation. Third, we conducted a difference-in-difference analysis based on the average dosage of the CCLAP program for respondents within each village.[51]

Turning to women's participation and inclusion, we used both self-reported measures and community perceptions. First, we asked respondents if they felt they had the skills and capacity to resolve conflicts and disputes.[52] Second, we asked whether they participated in decision-making processes or platforms in their communities. For both of these questions, we focused on responses from female participants. Third, we looked at perceptions of women's participation in conflict resolution among all respondents, including whether women participate in conflict resolution processes and whether they are represented in key leadership roles. Fourth, we examined perceptions of women's participation in natural resource management and respondents' preferred role for women in NRM.[53] Finally, we asked respondents to rate how much influence they thought women have in shaping decision-making in their communities.

Across all measures of women's participation, we find large and statistically significant increases from baseline to endline. For example, at baseline 38 percent of female respondents said they were participating in decision-making processes or platforms in their community. This number was substantially higher (64 percent) at endline. At the same time, the rate of women's participation in CCLAP communities at endline (58 percent) was nearly double the participation rate in non-CCLAP communities (32 percent, see Figure 2). These findings were robust to the inclusion of demographic controls (Table A2 in the Appendix). Moreover, the results of the difference-in-difference analysis (Figure 3) were positive and statistically significant, further suggesting that greater participation in CCLAP was effective at increasing women's participation. These effects were robust and not explained by pre-existing differences in participation or general trends over time.

Similarly, **perceptions of women's involvement in both conflict resolution and NRM were higher in CCLAP communities than non-CCLAP communities**, and the differences were highly statistically significant (see Figure 3).[54] Finally, women's perceived *influence* in community decision-making was statistically significantly higher in CCLAP communities, and difference-in-difference analysis suggests that the program was effective at increasing their perceived influence over time. Taken together, **these results**

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differential changes in perceptions or other factors related to the program. As a general good-practice consideration, programs focused on inclusivity should pair women's engagement with thoughtful strategies to engage men and support safe participation.

[50] The logic here is that only people in CCLAP communities should be compared, since we only surveyed people in control (non-CCLAP) communities at endline. Therefore, lumping them into the sample to assess over-time changes would result in biased estimates.

[51] Since the data lacks unique respondent identification numbers needed to link panel respondents' answers at both baseline and endline, the only over-time measure of the "treatment" that we can estimate is based on the average dosage per village. We only have data from one pre-treatment period so we cannot formally test the parallel trends assumption for difference-in-difference analysis. The non-significant differences at baseline for our variables are suggestive, but not definitive proof.

[52] We created an index aggregating responses to two questions: "Do you think you have the skills and capacity to resolve conflicts/clashes/disagreements peacefully?" and "Do you have the confidence to use these skills to resolve conflicts/clashes/disagreements peacefully?"

[53] Response options range from no role, to being consulted, to providing input, to leading and making decisions about natural resource use.

[54] p < 0.001. See Table A2 in the Appendix.

suggest that CCLAP was effective at achieving its intermediate outcome: to make community decision-making processes more inclusive, particularly those focused on natural resource management and conflict resolution.

**Figure 2: Self-Reported Participation in Community Decision-making**
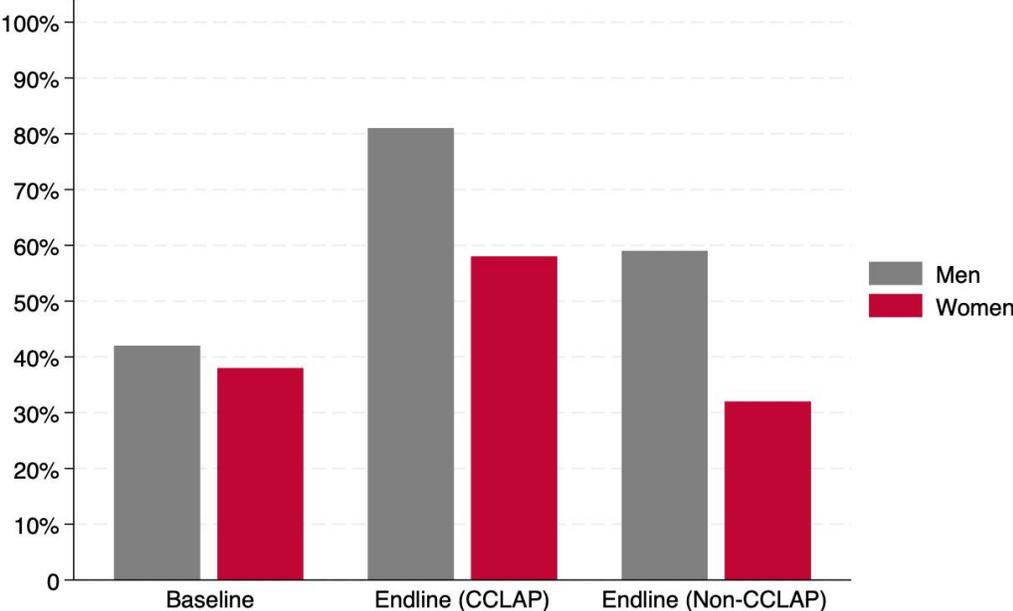
Note: Proportion of respondents who said "yes" to the question "Have you participated in any decision-making processes or platforms (e.g., committees) in your community?"

Indeed, a consistent theme across interviews and focus groups – including across different CCLAP communities and male and female respondents – was a noticeable rise in women's engagement and voice in community decision-making. Respondents also consistently attributed these changes at least partly to the CCLAP program. According to a female community leader in Turkana, "women are increasingly being engaged in peace forums and grassroots initiatives…the community is more accepting of 50/50 arrangements in decision-making, and the CCLAP project has played a vital role in amplifying the voices of women, including younger women. Men are beginning to recognize that they are not the sole members of the community; women have their own contributions. Thanks to CCLAP, we have made strides in elevating women's voices."[55] A female participant from Kotido District in Uganda echoed this sentiment: "Nowadays, whenever there is a meeting to discuss community decisions, women are involved and given the opportunity to contribute their concerns and opinions."[56] According to members of a female focus group in Kenya, "The role of women has become more prominent and impactful since CCLAP. When women talk about the challenges they face…they now have platforms to raise their concerns during public meetings. This was not the case in the past, when there were no avenues for women to discuss their issues openly, and many remained silent. Furthermore, women are actively contributing to the management of natural resources because they now have opportunities to participate. They are getting involved in businesses related to these

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[55] Interview with female community leader, Lokichoggio, Kenya, September 2025.
[56] Interview with female participant, North Division, Uganda, September 2025.

resources."[57] Another female participant also described recent changes in gender roles: "For example, in garden work, men are now participating in tasks traditionally done by women, like digging, and joint male-female work groups are common. Women are also increasingly involved in meetings and dialogues, where their attendance and opinions are now encouraged."[58]

Figure 3: Impact of CCLAP on Women's Participation and Influence (Difference-in-Differences)
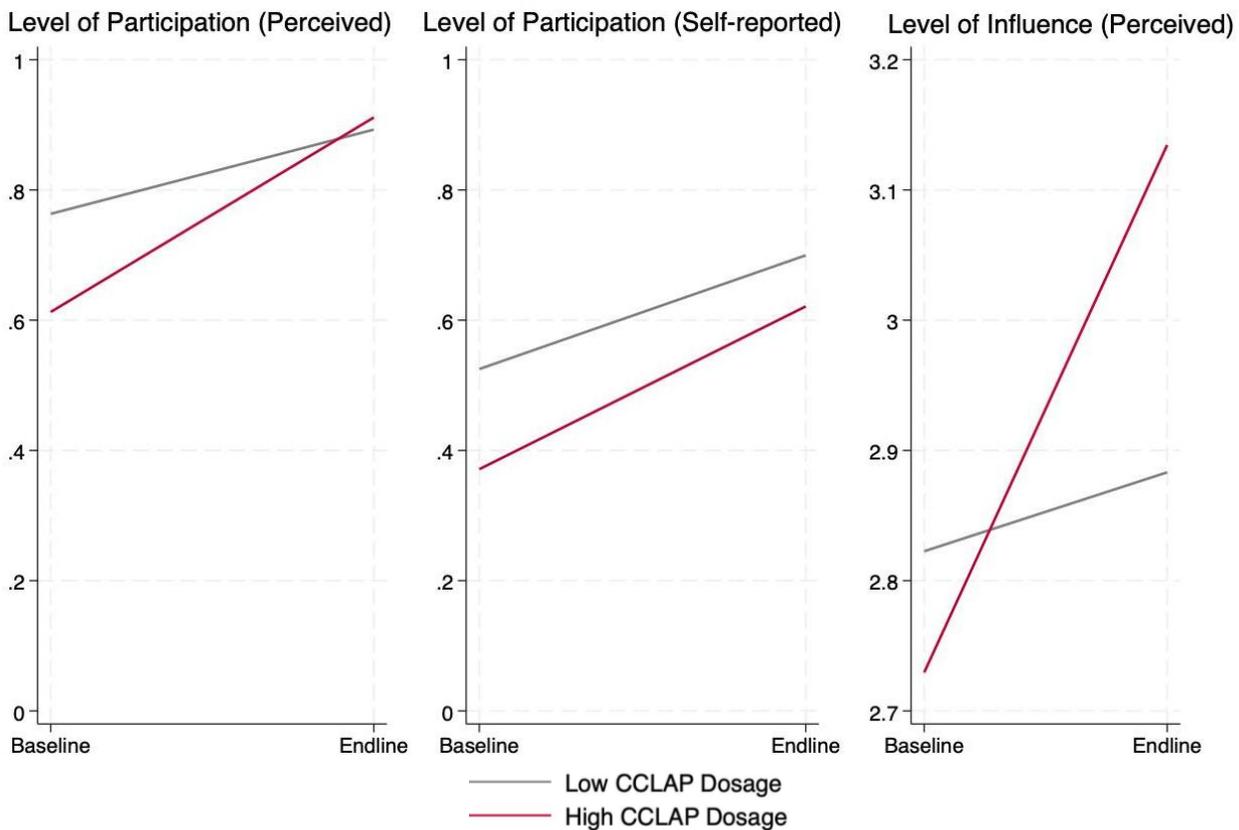
Note: See Table A2 in the Appendix for a summary table of the full results.

Focus group participants similarly explained how they were "actively involved in discussions about managing natural resources" and "taking part in peace forums and events, where we are invited to entertain guests with our peace songs." For women in these communities, they explained that "meaningful participation [means] women continue to excel, especially as they take on key positions in managing natural resources. This does not imply that women will solely dominate leadership in natural resource management, but rather that their presence will be significantly valued."[59] The community leader in Turkana recounted her

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[57] Focus Group Discussion, Lokichoggio Cultural Peace Dancer Group, Kenya, September 2025. Members of a focus group in Sogot, Kenya, made similar observations: "In the past, women were mainly tasked with watering the animals, but following [CCLAP] intervention, their roles have expanded. They now engage in a variety of household activities that were once considered the domain of men. Moreover, childcare has become a shared responsibility, with both men and women actively participating in caring for children….Women have made significant strides in livestock ownership, surpassing men in this area. Many women actively engage in political roles, not always by running for office, but by influencing decisions and shaping outcomes. Moreover, some women hold positions within the council of chiefs, mediating conflicts and addressing issues raised by both men and women in the community."
[58] Interview with female participant, Nakapelimoru, Uganda, September 2025.
[59] Focus Group Discussion, Lokichoggio Cultural Peace Dancer Group, Kenya, September 2025

involvement in three cross-border initiatives convened by CCLAP under the Women Peace Forum, focusing on issues between Dodoth and Turkana regarding shared borders. As she explained, "our approach is centered on encouraging resource sharing rather than asserting claims over territorial rights. As pastoralists, these borders are largely foreign to them, and they often don't grasp the importance of sharing resources rather than claims to ownership or control. We managed to influence both parties to collaborate, emphasizing that these resources are naturally created and are meant to benefit everyone. It's clear we need a common arrangement; however, differing national laws complicate matters, particularly when it comes to grazing patterns. It's crucial, so we initiated processes to secure permits for grazing. Thanks to our shared commitment, we have been enjoying a period of relative peace."[60]

Interviewees also highlighted the program's "multiplier" effect by facilitating mentorship among women and encouraging participants to spread the knowledge and skills within their villages that CCLAP helped impart – along with norms surrounding women's engagement. As one female participant from Karamoja explained, "We then had to sensitize other women in order to have a shared understanding on what we needed to be changed. We've been able to reach significantly more women with this knowledge, and this strengthened our ability to request for some changes. The sheer number of women we had on our side, were too significant to ignore."[61] A male district official from Kotido concurred: "There has been a positive multiplier effect not just for women but also for men. Communities are becoming more risk-aware in their livelihood choices. CCLAP's model of building clusters of women engaging in lower-risk livelihoods has been impactful in changing mindsets and traditional practices."[62] This shift in norms and practices helped reinforce the need and value of women's participation, and the women's groups and clubs the program supported provided a vehicle for both transmitting knowledge and modeling community engagement for women and girls throughout intervention areas.

Agency and Empowerment

The endline survey included a series of well-established questions to evaluate respondents' agency, or their sense of self-efficacy and ability to enact change. These questions were aggregated into an index to provide a multi-dimensional measure of agency. As shown in Table 7, women in treatment communities reported a statistically significantly higher level of agency compared to women in control communities ($p < 0.001$). While male respondents reported higher levels of agency both overall and compared to control communities, the difference was less pronounced and only moderately significant ($p < 0.10$).

The survey also included a series of questions to measure women's empowerment in the household. This is important for two reasons. First, it is possible that the effects of CCLAP may be more subtle and may have contributed to changes in gender dynamics and equity in the household, if not in the broader community. Second, changing women's roles and power in the home may be a critical first step to enhancing their participation in community decision-making, particularly on issues like natural resource management. The empowerment questions asked respondents about household decision-making and the extent to which important decisions – such as how to spend earnings or whether to make purchases – are made by men, women, or both. As with measuring agency, we aggregated responses to these questions into a single measure of empowerment. Comparing levels of empowerment across treatment and control communities,

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[60] Interview with female community leader, Lokichoggio, Kenya, September 2025.
[61] Interview with female participant, North Division, Uganda, September 2025.

[62] Interview with male district official, Kotido, Uganda, September 2025.

we find no significant difference for men or women. **This suggests that while CCLAP may have been effective at improving women's sense of self-efficacy, it did not have an aggregate effect on women's empowerment within the household.**

Across interviews and focus groups, women consistently emphasized that their growing agency stemmed largely from **expanded livelihood opportunities and economic contributions**—mechanisms widely recognized in the broader literature on inclusive NRM and peacebuilding as critical pathways for strengthening women's voice and influence. Women's contributions to household earnings were routinely cited as an important change that was evident in the program context. According to one focus group participant in Kenya, "In the past, women typically didn't venture out to earn a living, but nowadays, they have embraced various skills, such as cultivating kitchen gardens and participating in savings groups to invest in businesses, including small enterprises…CCLAP stands out as the only initiative we've participated in that has guided us on how to start and sustain a business."[63] Said another: "We've been empowered to run our own businesses – a role that traditionally belonged to men. Thanks to this project, we are now able to engage in commerce and provide for our families; without it, many of us would still be overly dependent on our husbands for support."[64] A female participant from Uganda agreed, saying "the most obvious change happening in the communities for women is their participation in trading activities…this has opened new opportunities for women to decide how funds will be used. In the past, their incomes would be grabbed and spent without the woman's consent. However, for the sale of livestock, it is still the men who control the money. This is still progress because there is some level of financial independence for the women, which wasn't the practice before CCLAP."[65]

Providing additional sources of financial security and empowering women economically was frequently credited as a gateway to women's increasing public participation and community influence. As a female community leader in Kenya explained, "Women are increasingly participating in Baraza, the traditional public assembly where community members come together to discuss and make decisions on local issues, particularly regarding climate change. **This heightened involvement stems from their roles in kitchen gardens and other areas, such as business, where women's contributions are often recognized and valued**."[66] Other female participants expressed similar sentiment: "[Women] have gained access to new income streams through the various new businesses CCLAP supported them to establish. These activities empowered women economically, giving them greater control over household resources and decision-making power within their communities."[67] Economic power, in other words, translated into political influence. One local official in Uganda summed this up well: "They [women] need to be economically empowered as well to continue to influence decisions."[68]

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[63] Focus Group Discussion, Lokichoggio Cultural Peace Dancer Group, Kenya, September 2025.
[64] Focus Group Discussion, Sogot women, Kenya, September 2025. Another participant explained, "Things have changed significantly. Previously, we had limited sources of livelihood and lacked skills in kitchen gardening. However, since the intervention began, we now have kitchen gardens at home. This allows us to grow crops that we can eat and sell, providing a balanced diet and improved nutrition for our children…Before the intervention, we relied heavily on greens and vegetables from Kitale, and we consumed a lot of beans, which could lead to health problems. Now, with our well-established kitchen gardens and the training we've received, we are doing things right."
[65] Interview with female participant, Kaabong, Uganda, September 2025. Another female participant from North Division in Uganda explained her newfound contributions to household food security: "We have our demonstration group garden, which all the members benefit from and has been a major source of financial sustenance for not only the women but also those employed to manage the garden. After selling the produce, the proceeds are used to buy food items for household consumption and to cover other household expenses. My husband has been so appreciative but also surprised by how a little demonstration plot can contribute significantly to the sustenance of our family."
[66] Interview with women leader, Lokichoggio, Kenya, September 2025.
[67] Interview with female participant, Uganda, September 2025.
[68] Interview with male district official, Kotido, Uganda, September 2025.

Figure 4: Effects on Women's Agency and Empowerment (Endline only)

Agency - Women
Agency - Men
Empowerment - Women
Empowerment - Men
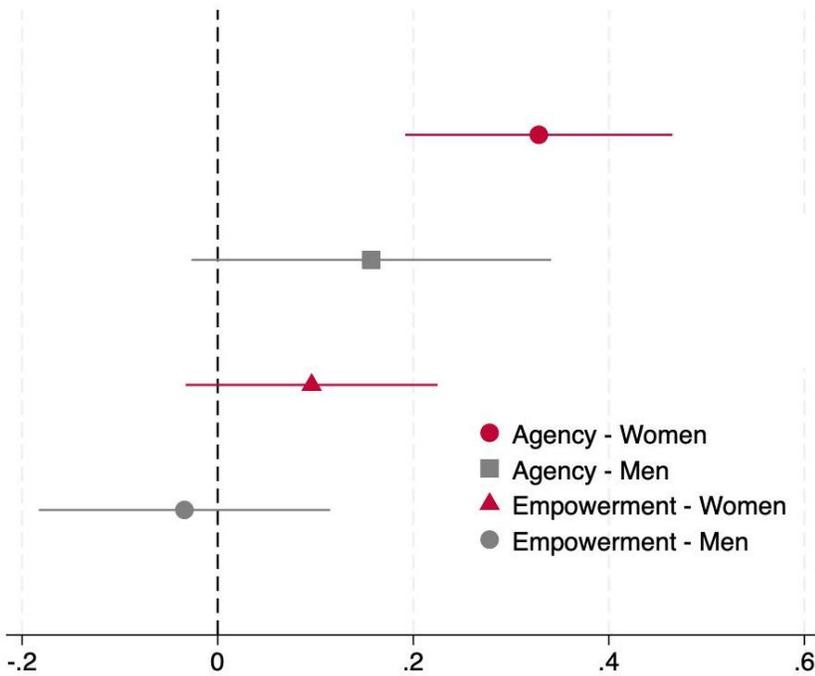
Note: Coefficient plot showing effect of treatment (CCLAP village) on agency and empowerment for male and female respondents separately. The further to the right a symbol is, the larger and more positive the effect of the program. See Table A3 in the Appendix for a summary table of the full results.

Other interviewees explained how CCLAP had provided extensive training to women on savings mechanisms like village savings and loans associations (VSLAs), which improved their ability to conduct business and contribute financially to their households and their communities: "We've learned to manage our savings more effectively…we are actively engaged in a business initiative aimed at generating income, which allows us to save and reinvest. As we progress, we are constantly learning new things about the business environment amidst the challenges of insecurity and climate. Our focus is on increasing sales from our activities, which allows us to restock our livestock after a sale. Unlike in the past, we are no longer idle; we are making strides and becoming more independent, relying less on our husbands for support."[69] As with engaging in small business activity and trade, effectively managing financial assets directly helped enhance women's role in the community. As one participant in Turkana reported, "The community view has changed because women have established groups progressing through their involvement in businesses and savings groups."[70]

These testimonies provide evidence of *how* CCLAP worked to increase women's agency, participation, and influence in their communities. While training and information on gender transformation and gender equity may have played a role, it was the knowledge and resources the program provided to help women boost their livelihoods and engage in economic activities that helped enhance their status and earned them a seat at the table. In a society where livelihoods, social status, and political power are intertwined, empowering

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[69] Focus Group Discussion, Lokichoggio Cultural Peace Dancer Group, Kenya, September 2025.
[70] Interview with female participant, Sogot, Kenya, September 2025.

women to become active players in their local economies and essential contributors to their households' earnings gave them the ability and legitimacy to become important participants in community decision-making.

Resilience and Coping

There was a substantial increase from baseline to endline in the proportion of respondents who said they personally implemented measures to reduce the impact of changes in weather patterns and climate. These measures involved taking proactive steps to mitigate and withstand the adverse effects of climate-related hazards, including changing how households use land, water, and other natural resources (focusing on conservation); diversifying their income sources; establishing kitchen gardens; and joining savings groups. While 35 percent of respondents reported adopting these measures at baseline, the proportion at endline more than doubled to 88 percent.[71] By comparison, 55 percent of endline respondents in non-CCLAP communities reported implementing these measures (see Figure 5).

Given the program's emphasis on climate-adaptive livelihoods and inclusive NRM, these results may not seem surprising – although they do demonstrate effective takeup of the intervention. The big question, however, is whether increased adoption of these measures actually translated into improved coping and resilience to climate-related threats? The results of our analysis, taken together, suggest this was the case (Figure 6). Compared to control communities, treatment (CCLAP) communities were more likely to say that their community manages shared natural resources peacefully. Both being in a CCLAP community *(treatment)* and greater participation in the program *(dosage)* are positive and statistically significant, even when controlling for gender, age, education, and occupation (see Figure 6). Moreover, a higher percentage of respondents in treatment (CCLAP) communities than non-CCLAP communities said they had started a new income-generating activity within the past year, a critical adaptation strategy. Both *treatment* and *dosage* are positive and statistically significant, even when controlling for respondent demographics. Finally, respondents in CCLAP communities were more likely to say they could access money quickly if needed for an emergency, and those with greater intensity of program participation were more likely to say they could access money.[72]

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[71] The percentage for endline respondents who took the baseline was even higher - 91 percent.
[72] See Table A4 in the Appendix for full results.

Figure 5: Proportion of Respondents Reporting Adopting Climate Risk-Reducing Measures
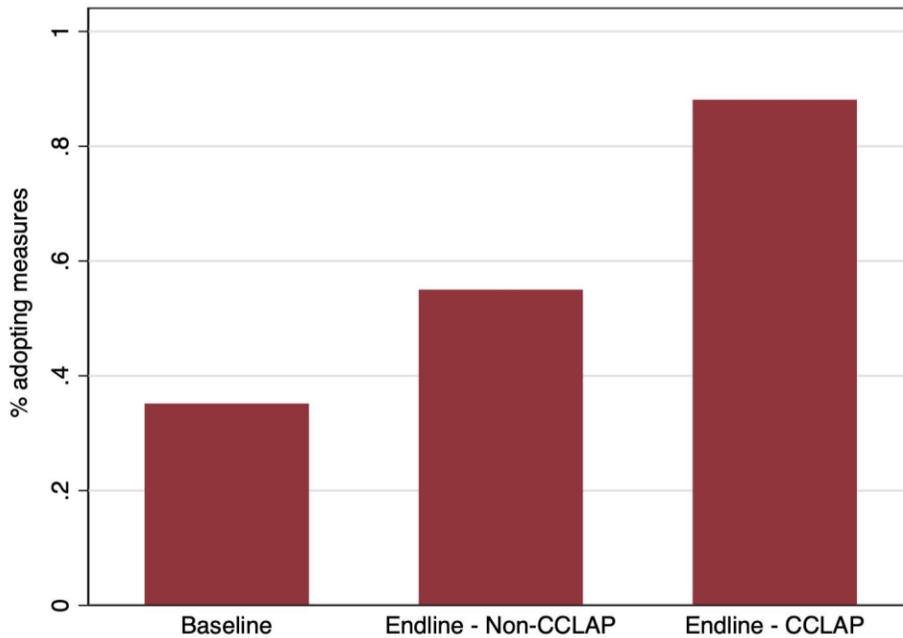
In addition to these findings, we constructed a "resilience index" based on people's responses to four questions: how prepared their community is for a climate-related shock, how confident they are that their household will be able to cope with future shocks, how much they believe their household can adapt their livelihoods, and whether they think their household could find a way to cope with threats. These questions are common measures for capturing household and community resilience. As shown in Table 8, endline respondents in treatment communities exhibited a much higher level of resilience than respondents in control communities. This difference was especially pronounced and statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) for women respondents, suggesting that interventions strengthening women's roles in NRM and decision-making may have yielded disproportionate resilience gains for women, a pattern consistent with evidence on gendered vulnerability and adaptive capacity.

Difference-in-difference analysis further confirms that **inclusive climate-NRM programming was effective at enhancing people's resilience and ability to cope with shocks and stresses.** As shown in Figure 7, a high dosage of CCLAP had a strong, positive, and highly statistically significant causal effect on resilience. While individuals from all communities in the region experienced declining resilience during the program period, CCLAP acted as a protective buffer: participants maintained significantly higher resilience levels than they would have without the program. Before CCLAP, communities that received high and low dosages of the program exhibited similar levels of resilience. But after the program, high-dosage communities fared much better.

**Figure 6: Impact of CCLAP Program on Coping Practices**
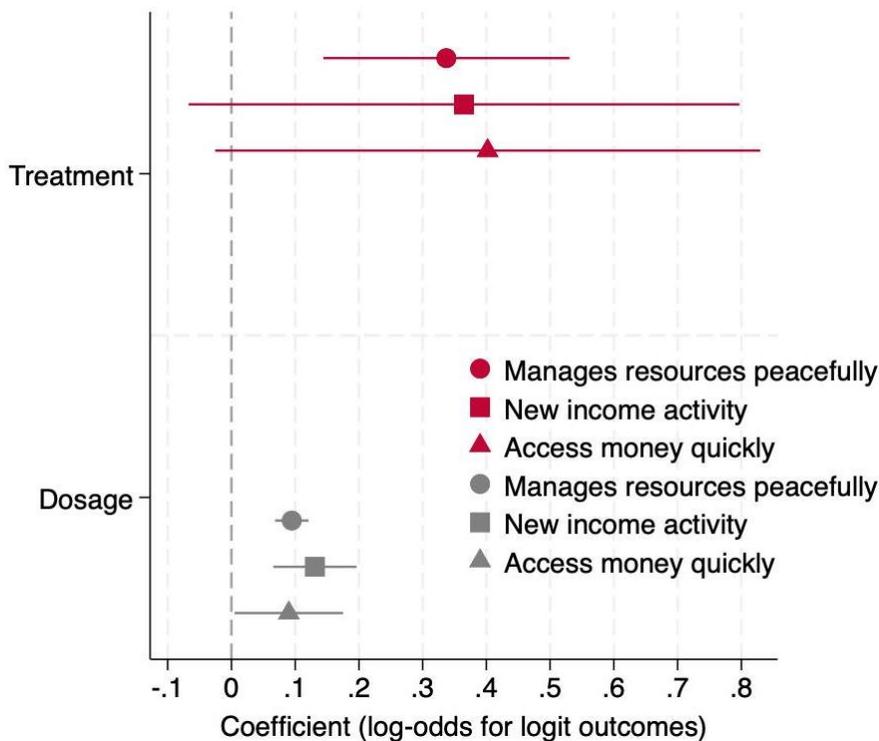
Note: Coefficient plot showing effect of *treatment* (being in a CCLAP village vs. a non-CCLAP village) and *dosage* (higher intensity of participation in the CCLAP program) on whether respondents report that their community manages resources peacefully, whether they report having adopted a new income-generating activity in the past year, and whether they could access money quickly in an emergency. The further to the right a symbol is, the larger and more positive the effect of the program. See Table A4 in the Appendix for the full results.

In order to confirm the relationship between more inclusive NRM and conflict mediation and resilience, we conducted a mediation analysis using structural equation modeling (SEM) to see whether the program's intermediate outcomes (e.g., improved women's participation) did indeed mediate CCLAP's effects on resilience and conflict.[73] The results, presented in Table A5 in the Appendix, indicate that **women's participation and influence partially mediated the relationship between the CCLAP program and resilience**. The program had both a *direct* effect on building household resilience and *indirectly* by increasing women's *influence* and *participation.*[74] This suggests that inclusive NRM and conflict management are an important mechanism through which the program improved resilience.

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[73] Since we lack unique identifiers to link individuals' responses between the baseline and endline survey, we treated the survey data as cross-sectional for the mediation analysis. Rather than modeling changes in outcomes, our analysis estimates associations at a single time point, controlling for baseline and endline differences. While this produces a weaker interpretation of causal effects than a "change score" SEM model, it still sheds light on the potential causal chain through which the CCLAP program "worked" in practice.

[74] The second and fourth columns of Table A5 in the Appendix show that the coefficients for *dosage* are positive and highly statistically significant at the p < 0.001 level (indicating a direct program impact on resilience), while women's *influence* (coefficient = 0.03) and *participation* (coefficient = 0.17), are also both highly statistically significant, indicating an indirect efficient (and thus partial mediation). In other words, higher dosages of CCLAP facilitated greater women's participation and influence in community decision-making – which, in turn, further boosted resilience.

Figure 7: Impact of CCLAP Program on Resilience (Difference-in-Differences)
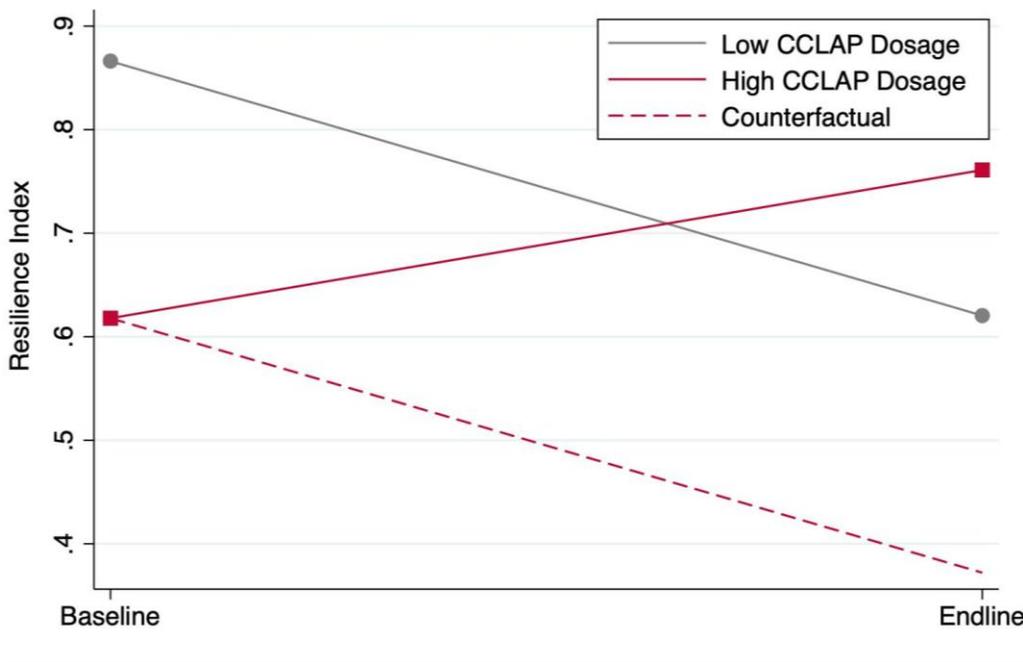
Note: See Table A4 in the Appendix for a summary table of the full results.

How do inclusive NRM and mediation interventions help produce these resilience gains? There are at least two reasons why the combination of climate-adaptive livelihood training, conflict-sensitive NRM governance, and strengthened participation of women and youth contributed to improved coping capacity.

First, it provided new knowledge, skills, and practices that are key to climate resilience. While these capacities were not only provided to women, targeted inclusion enabled women to apply their distinct ecological knowledge and household-level responsibilities toward adaptation strategies, amplifying household and community resilience. As one female participant said, "Women are directly affected by the scarcity of natural resources like water and will more likely seek out ways to resolve the issue, which CCLAP helped facilitate."[75] A local official working in disaster management echoed this sentiment: "By actively involving women, who often bear the brunt of environmental degradation, we were able to tap into a wealth of local and institutional knowledge and perspectives, leading to more effective solutions."[76]

For example, in interviews many participants highlighted the importance of their communities moving towards planting more **drought-resistant crops**: "long-held practice has been to plant maize and sorghum, but CCLAP introduced the women to less-intensive crops like peanuts and peas…We also learned about drought-resistant crops like sorghum, which thrives in dry conditions and strong sun. I've learned new, water-efficient planting techniques, allowing me to grow beans and groundnuts even during the dry season. We now have new income streams from the sale of these crops, [and they] are able to withstand the impact of harsh climate conditions"[77] The fact that these new crops enabled women – and households in general –

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[75] Interview with female participant, Kotido, Uganda, September 2025.
[76] Interview with male district disaster management officer, Kaabong, Uganda, September 2025.
[77] Interview with female participant, Kaabong, Uganda, September 2025.

to diversify their livelihoods also enhanced their coping capacity in the face of both climate- and conflict-related shocks. As one focus group participants noted, "we have adapted our way of life…[which] has become a coping mechanism for us as we face drought and changing conditions. Selling and consuming these products help sustain our family…[CCLAP] has empowered us to recognize the importance of sharing responsibilities at home…Today, both men and women share the same roles in managing community resources."[78]

Other interviewees emphasized how the program enabled them to focus on **curbing deforestation** – and the role that women played in enforcing it. As one program participant in Kenya explained, "We were taught about the importance of trees and how they contribute to the amount of rainfall we experience. We have engaged our people to avoid bush burning and the cutting down of trees. We have completely banned the cutting of forests and imposed penalties on anyone who violates this policy. Grass helps us protect the soil, and the trees give us shade."[79] A district official in Uganda concurred: "We've advocated against traditional homestead fencing practices that lead to deforestation, promoting alternatives like Kei apple trees…While changing mindsets to eliminate unsustainable traditional practices will take time, CCLAP's support has laid a foundation, and communities are gradually adopting more sustainable approaches."[80] According to another local official in Kamion in Karamoja, "We now engage in forest conservation practices through sensitization and outreach programs. Our messages are against tree felling and charcoal production, which did not happen before CCLAP. This is normal and widespread in Kamion, and both men and women are leading on this…tree felling has drastically reduced; instead we are seeing more trees being planted."[81]

> *"Women are now planting vegetables close to their homes to ensure balanced diets, and we are nurturing trees, whereas previously, we excessively cut down trees for charcoal, which significantly contributed to prolonged droughts. It is evident that the rains have become more frequent now."[82] -Kraal Leader, Karamoja, Uganda*

Other program participants highlighted the increased use of **kitchen gardens**, led particularly by local women. According to one participant, "CCLAP taught me how to create kitchen gardens and orchards, growing vegetables with proper watering for timely harvests. This has eliminated food shortages in my household."[83] Another described how women were introduced to short-cycle farming "to adapt to harsh conditions, helping families survive droughts and food shortages"[84] Men also observed this critical change in household food security practices, and its contributions to resilience: "Participating in the CCLAP program has provided significant benefits to our overall well-being, such as alleviating hunger through the kitchen garden initiatives. This has provided a source of income we never had, and it's also possible to continue all year round, regardless of the weather. We are seeing more and more women becoming attracted to it. Our

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[78] Focus group participant, male, Namon, Kenya, September 2025.
[79] Interview with male participant, Kenya, September 2025.
[80] Interview, male district official, Kotido, Uganda, September 2025.
[81] Interview with male local official, Kotido, Uganda, September 2025.
[82] Interview with male kraal leader, Karamoja, Uganda, September 2025.
[83] Interview with female participant, Karamoja, Uganda, September 2025.
[84] Interview with female participant, Karamoja, Uganda, September 2025.

engagement in these activities has given us a sense of purpose, reducing the temptation to steal, which was a viable option. So, I can now sustain my household without resorting to crime."[85]

Finally, interview respondents described how more inclusive NRM facilitated greater coordination and agreements regarding seasonal and livelihoods-related **migration**, with women directly contributing to these efforts. In some cases, this meant encouraging and enabling communities to grow and preserve pasture closer to home rather than migrating in search of it.[86] In other cases, it meant forging agreements between clans on shared water points and other common resources that can become flashpoints for disputes between farmers and herders.[87] According to one kraal leader in Karamoja, "we agreed on seasonal migration commitments, where people relocated livestock to areas with ample pasture during the rainy season to allow pasture regeneration in current areas…This strategy helped mitigate cross-border conflicts related to pasture scarcity."[88] Indeed, CCLAP led local communities and authorities in forging a variety of agreements over sustainable resource use through multi-stakeholder cross-border forums. Whether these commitments and agreements were properly implemented and followed, and what the precise outcomes of these negotiations were, was not always clear. For example, District Contingency Plans developed with the support of the World Food Programme did not receive funding when disasters happened, raising questions over the extent to which implementing plans and agreements was feasible without sufficient resources and funding.

A second way in which more inclusive NRM interventions helped improve resilience was by leveraging women's central position in social and household networks, making them highly effective transmitters of climate and NRM knowledge that enabled the diffusion of the knowledge and practices described above. According to a female participant in North Division, Uganda, women "have been at the center of promoting community awareness on environmental awareness and sensitization, which has minimized the cutting down of trees to bring to the market."[89] Interviewees routinely described how more and more women developed kitchen gardens for their housesteads, often featuring drought-resistant seedlings. As another female participant in Uganda described, "we sensitized the community through songs, dramas, and community meetings. When visiting individual homes, we shared information on weather changes, advising them to plant crops extensively between April and July due to anticipated rainfall. We also addressed land boundary disputes, advising against conflict over land. Finally, we taught the community how to adapt to weather changes….Many of the songs composed by the women featuring these lessons and practices are sung across the community today."[90]

Conflict Negotiation and Management

Moving beyond natural resource management and resilience, we also examined the impact of CCLAP's inclusive IBMN programming on conflict negotiation and mitigation in targeted communities. The analysis looked at three main outcomes: *knowledge* about conflict resolution strategies and structures, *participation* in conflict resolution, and *attitudes* towards conflict resolution structures and processes.

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[85] Male focus group participant, Namon, Kenya, September 2025.
[86] Interview, female participant, Sogot, Kenya, September 2025.
[87] Interview, male participant, Turkana, Kenya, September 2025.
[88] Interview, male kraal leader, Songot, Kenya, September 2025.
[89] Interview with female participant, North Division Uganda, September 2025.
[90] Interview with female participant, Karamoja, Uganda, September 2025.

Knowledge

A critical aspect of CCLAP was the piloting of gender-inclusive, climate-sensitive interest-based mediation and negotiation training (IBMN). To assess people's knowledge of the core tenets of IBMN, we asked them whether they agreed with the following statement: "dispute resolution is successful when one party effectively persuades the other to accept their perspective or solution." This is indeed a foundational pillar of the IBMN training. The endline found that 63 percent of respondents in treatment communities agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, compared to 48 percent of respondents in control communities. This difference was statistically significant and suggests that, as expected, people who participated in CCLAP were more knowledgeable about the principles of IBMN than those in comparable communities.

We also found a substantial increase in knowledge about local conflict resolution structures. 93 percent of respondents in treatment communities said they were aware of conflict resolution structures in their communities, a large gain from the 52 percent who reported awareness of these structures at baseline. Awareness in treatment communities was also higher than in control communities at endline. As shown in Table A6 in the Appendix, both the **increase in awareness of conflict resolution structures from baseline to endline, and the higher awareness of these structures in CCLAP communities compared to non-CCLAP communities, were statistically significant**. The findings from the difference-in-differences analysis was not statistically significant, however, **questioning the extent to which the program affected greater awareness of local conflict resolution processes.**

Figure 8: CCLAP Program Effects on Participation in Conflict Mediation
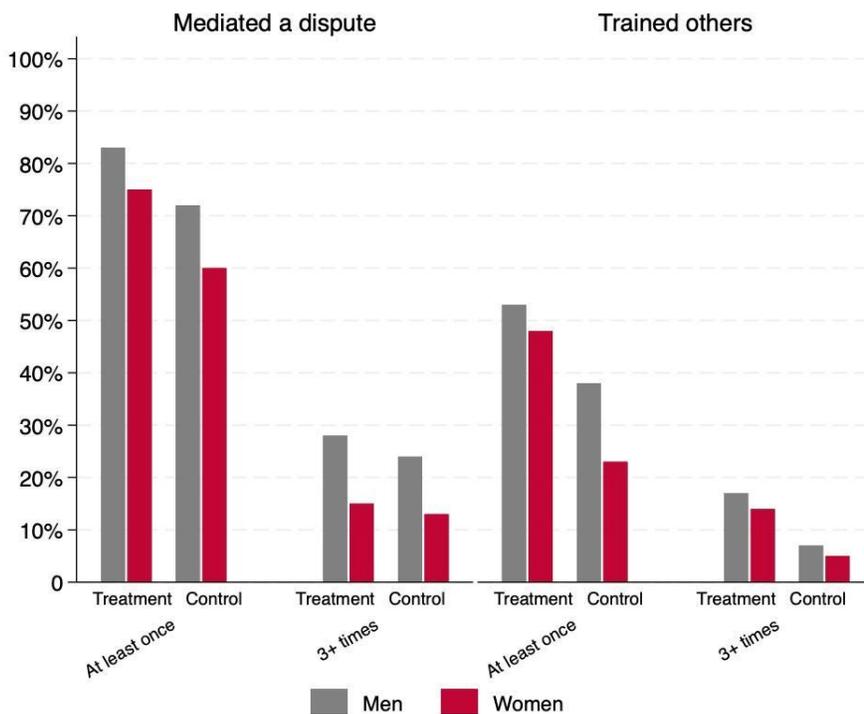
Participation

When asked about their participation in conflict resolution and mediation, respondents in intervention areas reported more frequent involvement compared to those in non-intervention (control) areas. 78 percent of respondents in treatment communities at endline said they had mediated a dispute at least once in the past six months, compared to 64 percent in control communities (see Figure 8, broken down by respondent

gender). Similarly, 50 percent of respondents in treatment communities said they had trained someone else in mediation at least once over the past six months, while 15 percent said they had done so three times or more, compared to 28 percent and 5 percent in control communities, respectively. As Table A6 in the Appendix shows, the higher levels of participation in CCLAP communities – and among those who engaged more intensively in the program – were statistically significant.[91] These differences were particularly large for female respondents. The percentage of women in intervention areas who reported training someone in mediation at least once (48 percent), was more than double the proportion in non-CCLAP communities (23 percent, see Figure 8). The gap between respondents in treatment and control communities was smaller for men (53 percent compared to 38 percent). **This suggests that CCLAP helped increase people's involvement in mediating disputes and coaching others to mediate – particularly the involvement of women.**

Indeed, in interviews and focus groups, women described their considerable roles in mediating and resolving conflicts in their communities due in part to the CCLAP program. According to one female leader, "I serve as a peacekeeper…Through mediation and fostering forgiveness, we often arrive at a resolution. For instance, I was recently involved in a case concerning potential fraud related to funds meant for the registration of one of the CCLAP-supported groups. Tensions were high, as some members were unhappy with others. To resolve this, we gathered at my house, where I helped them understand that, despite the misappropriation of funds, we can still achieve our goal of registering the group, which was the primary purpose of the financial contributions. As a leader, I facilitated obtaining the necessary certification without needing police intervention. Additionally, some members were reluctant to share minutes from previous meetings, which only added to the strife. I believe that women should not promote such disputes, and I took the initiative to help the group conduct internal elections just last week. This effort was crucial in ensuring more effective governance moving forward."[92]

> *"Women have often struggled to resolve issues related to land, but with the knowledge I have gained, I can now successfully address cases involving land grabbing. I recently intervened in a case between a pastoralist and a farmer, where the livestock of the pastoralist grazed on the farmer's land. I managed to resolve the situation by facilitating a calm conversation between them before things escalated further. We have negotiated numerous cases. While some disputes may appear unfounded, our negotiation skills allow us to uncover the truth and ensure that justice is served where it is due." -Female FGD Participant: Lokichoggio Cultural Peace Dancer Group*

Some women directly attributed their participation and effectiveness in mediating disputes to the CCLAP program. "As negotiators, we were taught to listen to parties more. If I bring them together, I should ask each one what their interest is, what they need. For example, I have a similar case in my area, where there is a tree. One party says they need shade, the other wants it for charcoal, so we were taught how to resolve it using IBN…in the community here, there were a lot of people who were fighting for land, but with the teachings on CCLAP, what I was taught and the knowledge acquired, I was able to sit them down and

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[91] At the 0.01 and 0.001 levels, respectively.
[92] Interview with women leader, Lokichoggio, Kenya, September 2025.

resolve the conflict."[93] Other program participants concurred: "Before CCLAP, we didn't know how to convince the people to act otherwise, or to tolerate their neighbors…we used to refer land conflicts to elders and, in some instances, to government authorities, police, and even the courts. Now we can resolve some of these cases without involving them, using the skills I acquired from the IBN training."[94] According to a youth leader, "CCLAP's training has empowered me to confidently mediate and negotiate conflicts, even complex land disputes and inter-community issues that I previously wasn't involved in or couldn't resolve."[95]

One reason that women were considered to be effective mediators is because of their close relationships with young men – the primary perpetrators of violence in the region. As one local leader explained, "the more women involved, the greater the impact for CCLAP, because [women] spend the most time with the younger ones who engage in violence."[96] Similarly, Mercy Corps' evidence from the Community Initiatives to Promote Peace (CIPP) program in Nigeria highlights how women's roles as mothers, wives, and community educators can give them trusted access to youth and other peace and security actors. Another Ugandan border official explained that women's "close relationships with those involved in the violence – their sons and husbands – give them unique insight, making their inclusion in finding solutions particularly beneficial for communities."[97] A district official in Kaabong, Uganda, described a similar dynamic: "Women have been very instrumental in engaging the young populations, particularly those who care for the livestock, making sure that they don't cause any conflict in the communities while grazing…An issue that women were able to tackle is reaching out and engaging with young people...and identifying likely culprits and engaging with security beforehand."[98]

Attitudes

The survey data included several measures that captured people's attitudes towards conflict and dispute resolution entities and processes in their communities. First, one question asked people whether they agreed that the conflict resolution committees in their community "are inclusive and ensure that all community members' perspectives, needs, and voices are equally considered." A second question gauged people's confidence in community authorities and leaders in reporting, responding, and resolving conflicts. According to Table A6 in the Appendix, people's comfort communicating with conflict resolution entities – and their confidence in local authorities in conflict resolution – increased from baseline to endline by a statistically significant amount. Public comfort and confidence vis-a-vis conflict resolution was also much higher in CCLAP communities than non-CCLAP communities, and among more active program participants, and the differences were highly statistically significant.[99]

Conflict and Insecurity

The conflict situation in intervention areas seemed to somewhat improve between baseline and endline. We examined both respondents' *perceptions* of conflict trends – whether they reported that conflict had increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the past year (Figure 10a) – and *actual* levels of conflict, based on the number of violent events and fatalities reported by ACLED in the 12 months preceding the survey (Figure 10b). As shown in Figure 10a, the proportion of respondents reporting that conflict decreased

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93 Interview with woman leader, Kaabong, Uganda, September 2025.
94 Interview, youth leader, Kotido, Uganda, September 2025.
95 Interview, female participant, North Division, Uganda, September 2025.
96 Interview with male local leader, Kenya, September 2025.
97 Interview, male military border officer, Karamoja, Uganda, September 2025.
98 Interview, male district official, Kabong, Uganda, September 2025.
99 p < 0.001.

in their area increased from 83 percent at baseline to 96 percent at endline, which was higher than in non-CCLAP (control) villages (88 percent). Our regression analysis found that these differences were statistically significant, suggesting a meaningful decline (see Table A7 in the Appendix). The result for program *dosage* was also negative and statistically significant for perceived levels of conflict.

Figure 9: Impact of CCLAP Program on Attitudes towards Conflict Resolution (CR) Entities (Difference-in-Differences)
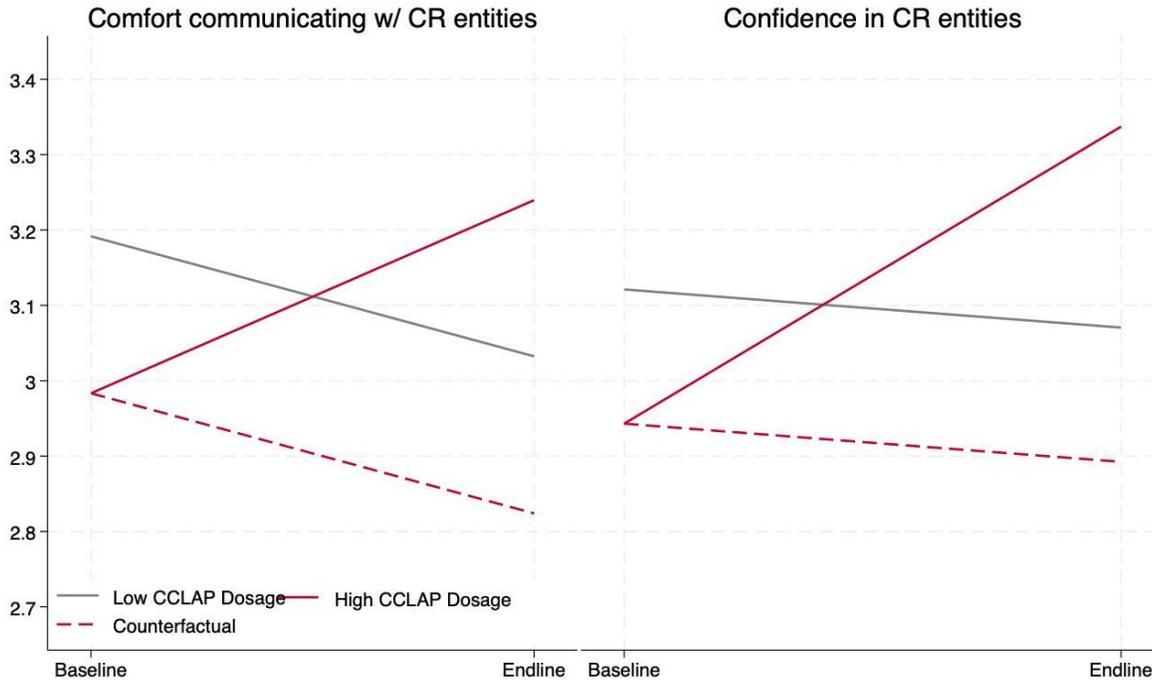

Note: Difference-in-differences results showing outcomes on level of comfort and confidence in conflict resolution entities for those who experienced high and low dosages of CCLAP. Dashed lines show the predicted counterfactual for high-dosage participants. See Table A5 in the Appendix for a summary table of the full results.

Figure 10b also suggests a decline in *actual* conflict in intervention areas over the program period. The average number of conflict events and fatalities in CCLAP villages in the prior year declined from baseline (approximately 6.7 and 7.5, respectively) to endline (to 4.2 and 2.2, respectively). Conflict in CCLAP communities was also lower than the number of incidents and deaths in non-CCLAP communities. However, our regression analysis (Table A7 in the Appendix) did not find that these differences were statistically significant. The results of our difference-in-differences analysis were also mixed. While the findings for *perceived* levels of conflict indicate that the program contributed to a large and statistically significant reductions: despite starting with higher levels of conflict, high-dosage villages reported a dramatic decrease compared to low-dosage villages. However, we did not find similar results for actual levels of conflict. For both the number of violent events and fatalities reported by ACLED, the difference-in-difference estimator is statistically insignificant.

**Figure 10a: Perceptions of Conflict**
Proportion of respondents reporting that conflict in their area has increased, decreased, or stayed the same over the past year (perceived conflict)
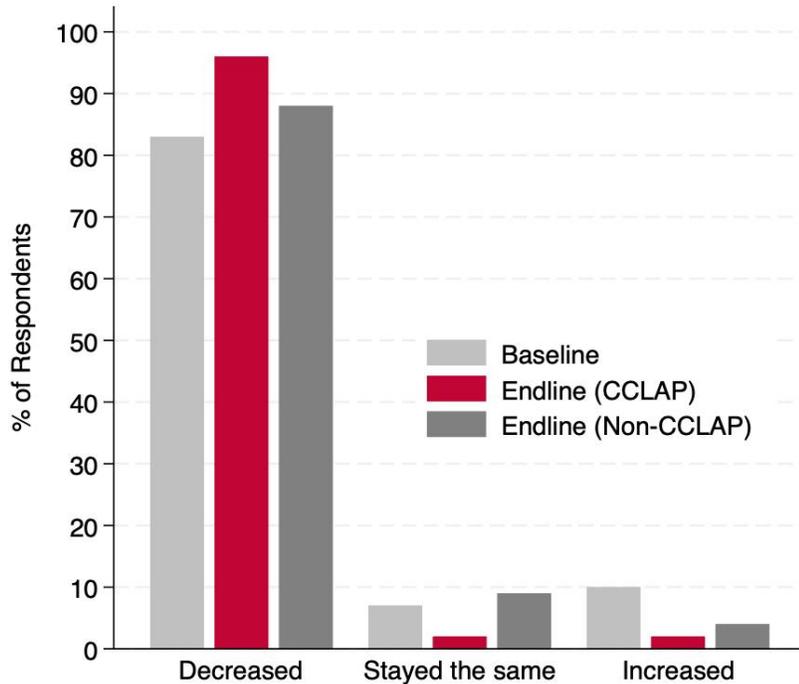
Taken together, then, there is some evidence that CCLAP's conflict management and resolution activities helped improve the security environment in targeted communities. **But it is not clear that the program actually contributed to a decline in conflicts and other security threats, if it just improved people's perceptions regarding the conflict situation in their communities – perhaps by boosting their confidence or capacity to address conflict through CCLAP's IBMN and conflict management training.**

Figure 10b: Conflict Trends
Mean number of conflict events and deaths in CCLAP and non-CCLAP (control) villages in the prior year (actual conflict)
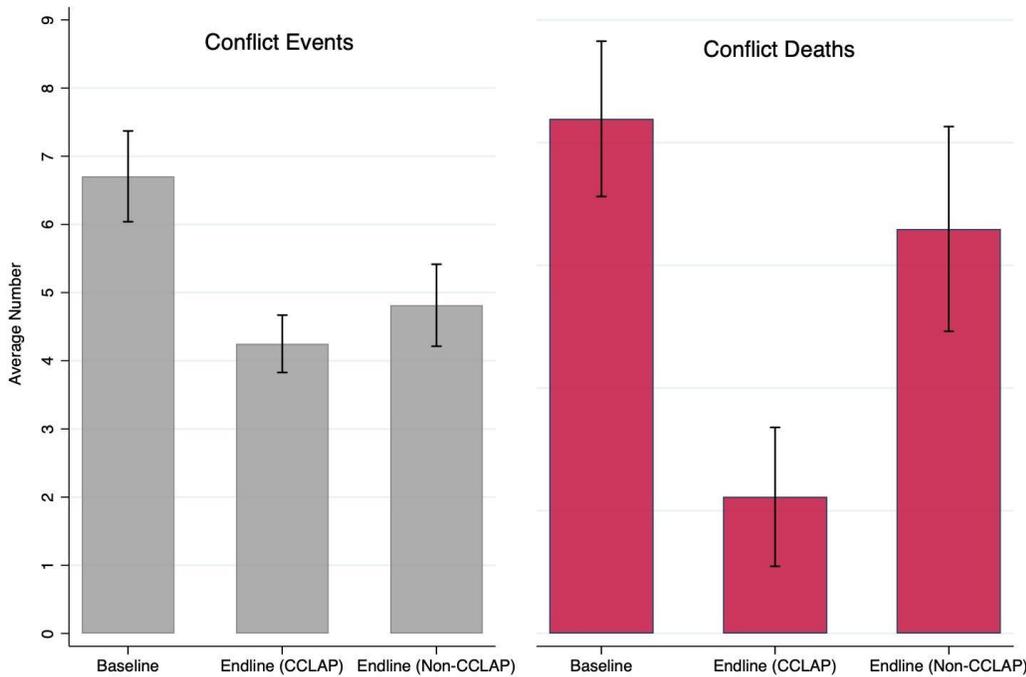
Conclusion

Evidence from CCLAP-targeted villages and comparable control communities demonstrates that strengthening women's roles in community governance can catalyze broader resilience gains. By increasing women's active participation in natural resource management and conflict resolution, the program improved gender attitudes among women and measurably enhanced community resilience against climate and conflict shocks – achieving these gains in just two years of implementation. This rapid progress is particularly notable, though it raises important questions about sustainability and downstream effects on violence and climate-related risks. Will these changes persist beyond program completion? Will enhanced governance translate into measurable reductions in conflict and improved climate adaptation over the longer term? These questions underscore the need for sustained engagement.

The program's success validates a core principle: meaningful inclusion is both an end in itself and a critical pathway to building stronger, more adaptable communities. Women's participation in NRM and conflict resolution does not merely advance gender equality – it improves the quality and durability of resource management and peacebuilding outcomes in fragile, climate-vulnerable settings. Moving forward, the next generation of programming should evolve beyond participation to focus on influence. This requires:

- **Engaging men systematically** through facilitated dialogue that addresses resistance and builds genuine buy-in for inclusive governance within households and communities

- **Building women's authority and expertise** in technical domains to enhance their credibility as decision-makers

- **Creating structural mechanisms** – such as formal leadership roles and decision-making protocols – that ensure women's voices shape outcomes.

- **Monitoring influence, not just attendance:** tracking whose recommendations are adopted and whose priorities shape resource allocation

- **Proactively managing social friction** that may arise as traditional power dynamics shift

- **Designing for longer implementation periods** (e.g., 3-5 years) to allow time for normative change, governance consolidation, and downstream effects to materialize

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