

**IPSS**

Institute for Peace
& Security Studies
Addis Ababa University

IPSS Briefing Session Concept Note | Energy Justice and Conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa: Does Fair Energy Access Promote Peace? |

28 August 2026 | 09:30 – 11:30 AM | IPSS Conference Hall

I. Background/Rationale

In recent years, Africa has experienced a marked deterioration in its security environment, characterised by the growing activities of rebel groups, terrorist organisations, and jihadist movements (Aya, 2025). As a result, the continent remains one of the most severely affected by armed conflict worldwide. Between 1989 and 2010, armed conflicts claimed between 750,000 and 1.1 million lives across Africa (McGuirk and Burke, 2020). The situation is particularly acute in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), which accounted for nearly 24% of global civilian deaths resulting from armed conflict in 2025. Beyond their devastating human toll, armed conflicts impose substantial economic and social costs. They weaken state capacity, destroy physical infrastructure, disrupt productive activities, discourage investment, and undermine long-term economic development (Bitoto et al., 2026; Aya, 2025; Adam and Tsarsitalidou, 2022). Persistent insecurity also diverts scarce public resources away from productive sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure toward military expenditure, thereby constraining sustainable development and poverty reduction (McGuirk and Burke, 2020).

Given the magnitude of this challenge, understanding the determinants of armed conflict and anticipating its outbreak have become essential for explaining the dynamics of civil wars and designing effective conflict prevention strategies. Against this backdrop, a large body of research in the social sciences, particularly in economics, has sought to identify the main drivers of armed conflict. Broadly, this literature can be classified into three complementary strands: socio-economic, environmental, and institutional determinants. The socio-economic literature identifies poverty, economic shocks, income inequality, dependence on natural resource rents, foreign aid, migrant remittances, foreign direct investment, and military expenditure as key factors shaping the risk of armed conflict (Cramer, 2003; Stewart, 2008; Miguel et al., 2004; van der Ploeg, 2011; Dorward, 2024; Brazys et al., 2025; Aya, 2025; Bitoto et al., 2026). The environmental literature emphasises the role of climate variability, including changes in temperature and precipitation, as well as natural disasters, in exacerbating resource scarcity and increasing conflict risks (Slettebak, 2012; Koubi, 2019). Finally, the institutional literature highlights weak institutions, poor governance, and state fragility as fundamental conditions that facilitate both the outbreak and persistence of armed conflict (North, 1990; Fearon and Laitin, 2003).

Although a vast body of literature has examined the factors that motivate individuals to take up arms and engage in insurgent conflicts, the role of energy-related inequalities in shaping conflict dynamics has received comparatively little attention. This gap is particularly important in SSA, where persistent disparities in access to energy services coexist with high levels of armed conflict. Despite considerable progress over



recent decades, access to modern energy services remains a major challenge in SSA. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA, 2023), the number of people without access to electricity increased from 506 million in 2000 to nearly 600 million in 2022. Significant disparities also persist, with electricity access reaching 76% in urban areas compared with only 29% in rural areas. In addition, more than 905 million Africans still lack access to clean cooking technologies (Avom et al., 2024). As a result, reliance on traditional fuels remains widespread and contributes to more than 700,000 deaths annually due to household air pollution and related diseases (WHO, 2025).

These challenges have contributed to the emergence of the concept of energy justice, which advocates the fair distribution of the benefits and burdens associated with energy systems, together with the meaningful participation of stakeholders in energy-related decision-making processes (Sovacool and Dworkin, 2015). Energy justice is commonly conceptualized as comprising three complementary dimensions: distributive justice, procedural justice, and restorative justice. From a theoretical perspective, greater energy justice may foster peace and social stability by reducing grievances arising from unequal access to energy services, expanding economic opportunities, strengthening institutional legitimacy through more inclusive energy governance, and addressing historical injustices associated with energy development projects.

Despite the growing body of research on the economic and social implications of the energy transition (Månsson, 2015; Lomax et al., 2023), empirical evidence on the relationship between energy justice and armed conflict remains extremely limited, particularly in SSA. Existing studies have primarily focused on the role of natural resource abundance, resource scarcity, or energy poverty in shaping conflict dynamics, while paying relatively little attention to the distributional and governance dimensions of energy systems. This paper addresses this gap and makes four main contributions to the literature. First, it extends the conflict literature by introducing energy justice as a potential determinant of armed conflict. Second, it contributes to the emerging energy justice literature by providing one of the first cross-country empirical analyses of the relationship between energy justice and armed conflict and by developing a multidimensional energy justice index capturing its distributive, procedural, and restorative dimensions. Third, unlike most previous studies, we explicitly account for the persistence of armed conflict by estimating a dynamic Probit model using Heckman's (1981) two-step estimator. This approach addresses the initial conditions problem, mitigates the dynamic panel bias identified by Nickell (1981), and accounts for cross-country heterogeneity in initial conflict conditions. Finally, the paper explores whether the relationship between energy justice and armed conflict varies across countries with different levels of energy justice, institutional quality, economic development, and conflict intensity, thereby providing new evidence on the heterogeneous effects of energy justice.

With this background, the Institute for Peace and Security Studies (IPSS) at Addis Ababa University is organising a briefing session featuring the author of the research, Dr Brice Kamguia. The event will provide a platform for presenting the study's key findings, recommendations, and their implications for policy and practice.



II. Objective

The objective of this briefing session is to present and critically evaluate the research on the relationship between energy justice and armed conflict in Sub-Saharan Africa, specifically discussing the methodology, key findings, and implications for policy and peacebuilding strategies.

III. Expected outcomes

- Dissemination of new empirical findings regarding the role of energy justice, capturing distributive, procedural, and restorative dimensions, as a determinant of armed conflict.
- Critical feedback and expert discussion on the Ethiopia's perspective on energy justice.
- Enhanced understanding of the practical and policy relevance of energy justice for conflict prevention strategies in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Facilitation of collaboration and the exchange of ideas among policy analysts, academic researchers, and peacebuilding practitioners.

IV. Format

The Briefing Session will be led by Dr Brice Kamguia, ARUA 2026 Fellow at the Institute for Peace and Security Studies. The session will be highly interactive, beginning with a presentation by Dr Kamguia, followed by critical reflections from expert discussants who will offer complementary perspectives and engage with the research's methodology, findings, and broader significance. The briefing will conclude with a moderated Q&A session, providing participants with an opportunity to engage directly with the presenter and discussants, exchange ideas, and explore the practical and policy relevance of the research in greater depth. The discussions will strictly follow Chatham House Rule.

V. Target audience

- Peace and Security Policy Analysts,
- Academic Researchers,
- Peacebuilding Practitioners,
- Think-tank representatives,
- Diplomatic Community based in Addis

VI. Date and Venue

The session will take place on Friday 28 August 2026 from 09:30 AM -11:30 AM EAT at the New Conference Hall, IPSS.