*Think Piece:*

# How Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessments Can Strengthen the Evidence Base of International Policy-Making on Non-Economic Loss in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations

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## Missing Links Between Humanitarian Data and Global Loss & Damage Policy

The scale and scope of displacement taking place in the context of disasters and the adverse effects of climate change are vast and continue to grow as climate change impacts intensify. Millions of people around the world are already being displaced or could be potentially displaced in the coming years and decades due to weather and climate-related events and processes, such as cyclones, floods, droughts, desertification, riverine erosion and sea-level rise. [1]

The Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) highlighted in their 15 observations on disaster displacement and loss and damage that the "Assessment - and, if possible, quantification - of all losses and damages due to displacement is key to making them relevant for ongoing policy discussions, future mechanisms for financial and technical support, and planning of prevention, preparedness, response and recovery operations" and that "Non-economic losses may be the most significant impacts associated with displacement, but are also the most difficult to quantify." Similarly, IOM and PDD's joint submission to the 3rd Transitional Committee Meeting on Loss and Damage stressed the need to quantify displacement impacts on Loss and Damage in finance and operational responses.[2]

One way to identify and assess incurred non-economic losses (NELs) is through the lens of access to basic services. Many non-economic impacts are felt by people affected by climate-related hazards as reduced access to services and quality of service provision - including access to water, healthcare, education and various forms of protection e.g. for children and from Gender Based Violence (GBV). Climate impacts hinder displaced persons' access to basic services, while displacement itself represents a barrier to accessing essential services for those facing climate impacts. This vicious circle has severe implications on people's rights and well-being in the short and long term.

Multi-sectoral needs assessments (MSNAs) are an important source of data on people's access to services (and the barriers people face) and are relied on by UN, NGOs and other humanitarian actors for planning and prioritizing their assistance in crisis settings, especially in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCS). MSNAs capture a wide array of granular data based on household interviews, including indicators from all relevant humanitarian sectors/clusters: Data ranges from household demographics, shelter type, income and expenditure patterns, food consumption, and types and levels of access to basic services to priority needs identified by households. MSNAs are commonly led by humanitarian cluster/sectoral coordination bodies at country level, with technical support of IMPACT's

[1] https://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2023.

[2] The submission is also available on the website of the Transitional Committee at: https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/bodies/constituted-bodies/transitional-committee/submissions-to-the-transitional-committee

REACH initiative.[3] The number of annual MSNAs has grown substantially over the past decade and they are now being conducted in most humanitarian crisis settings (figure 1 below).

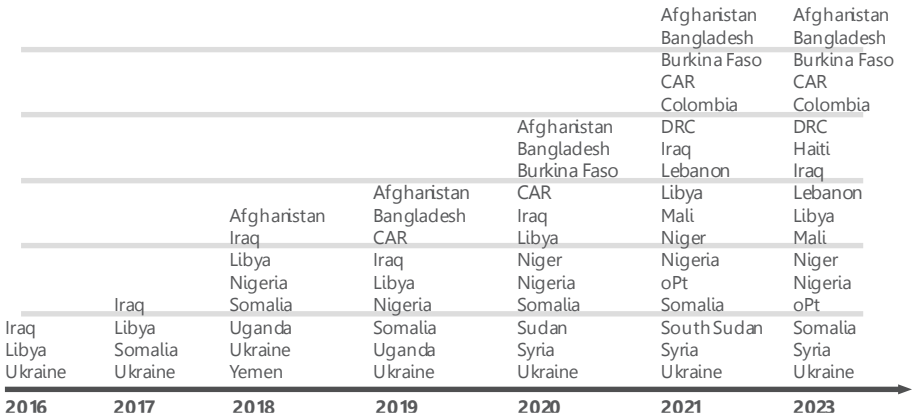


**Figure 1: Countries in which REACH has conducted MSNAs (2016-2023)**

Despite their widespread use in humanitarian planning, MSNAs have not been systematically leveraged to inform the global debate on Loss and Damage and displacement. This is a particularly significant obstacle for discussions and climate action focusing on FCS, where the scarcity of loss and damage data from other sources is acute, contributing to lack of visibility of related issues, and funding and operational gaps.

The Secretariat of the PDD and IMPACT Initiatives have embarked on a joint research project to better understand how to utilize the data gathered in MSNAs for informing the policy discussion on NEL and displacement in the context of disasters and climate change, including in FCS. This think piece provides an overview of the preliminary findings of this project, based on a review of indicators from MSNAs in Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries and an in-depth analysis of the 2023 Somalia MSNA data. During the next phase of the project, data from additional MSNAs will be analyzed.

Notably, while this project focuses on access to basic services as one aspect of NEL, MSNAs also cover other aspects relevant to the assessment of Loss and Damage, both economic and non-economic, such as food consumption, physical and mental health, and income and expenditure patterns. All these types of data are potentially relevant for the global discussion on Loss and Damage and should be explored in more depth in the future.

## State of Play: Displacement and NEL Data Collected in MSNAs

In 2023, MSNAs that included displaced populations commonly collected data on:

- **Displacement status**: Distinguishing between internally displaced people (IDPs), non-displaced people, and where relevant, returnees and refugees or migrants;
- **Location of communities of origin of displaced persons**: Administrative units 1 and 2;
- **Location of host communities of displaced persons**: Administrative units 1 and 2**;**
- **Type of location**: Official displacement site or spontaneous settlement;
- **Displacement reasons**: "Push factors" related to insecurity/conflict, livelihoods, access to services, and environmental hazards and disasters;
- **Reasons for choosing host location**: "Pull factors" related to insecurity/conflict, livelihoods, and access to services;
- **Number of times a household was already displaced**;

[3] To inform annual humanitarian planning milestones, REACH conducted 23 MSNAs in 2022, representing over 60% of global HNO/HRP processes and informing the cross-sectoral allocation of approximately 20 billion USD.

- **Duration of displacement:** Time a households has already spent in host location;
- **Movement intentions**: Intentions to stay in location, move to another location, move to another country, or return to community of origin during the following six months.

Households' exposure to and effects of climate-related hazards and disasters on their lives are commonly captured as part of:

- **Displacement reasons**[4]: In Sub-Saharan Africa, the list of response options commonly includes a few sudden onset disasters (such as flooding), and desert locust invasion. Slow onset disasters, such as drought, are often not explicitly mentioned but captured via proxies/consequences, like lack of food and water, and loss of livestock. These questions allow for analysing what role environmental hazards and their consequences play, in conjunction with other factors, in affecting people's ability to stay in their community and forcing them to leave.
- **"Shocks" during displacement**[5]: The list of responses commonly includes flooding or heavy rainfall, as well as drought or prolonged dry spell. As a follow up question, some MSNAs include a question about the perceived effects that each shock had on the household. These questions enable comparing the exposure to climate-related hazards and the loss and damage incurred as a consequence by displaced and non-displaced people.

MSNAs also measure the level to which displaced and non-displaced households can access basic services, and what barriers they face when trying to do so. Relevant services include: **prevention of and responses to Gender Based Violence (GBV), access to drinking water and sanitation, nutrition, education, and healthcare, as well as local markets**.

## Insights from the 2023 Somalia MSNA

A preliminary detailed analysis[6] was performed on the results of the 2023 MSNA Somalia survey[7] to: 1) identify the types of data that MSNAs already collect on displacement and NELs, 2) illustrate possible angles to look at the interlinkages between displacement and NELs in FCS, and 3) testing some initial data analysis approaches.

### *1) Secondary Reasons for Disaster Displacement and Selection of Host Location*

The MSNA data shows that lack of livelihood opportunities (37%) and limited access to services (27%) were key secondary displacement reasons for IDPs primarily displaced because of drought-related factors (i.e., identified in the Somalia MSNA survey as lack of food or water or loss of livestock). This group of IDPs also chose host communities where they expected availability of water (59%), presence of shelter (35%), food distribution (32%), and health services (23%). The absence of conflict in the host community was also an important pull factor (28%). These findings show the usefulness of asking

[4] Respondents from displaced households are asked what reasons mainly contributed to their decision to leave their location of origin. There is often a follow-up question to identify the single most important reason among those mentioned.

[5] Both displaced and non-displaced respondents are asked about security, social, economic, or environment-related difficulties or shocks that the household experienced in the past three months.

[6] The advanced analysis disaggregated results not only by region, district, and displacement status, but also by primary displacement reason, number of displacements, number of months in host location, household size, exposure to drought in the past three months, anomalies in precipitation levels in the district of origin and host district over the past 25 years, primary income source, and income level.

[7] This MSNA's quantitative data was collected by means of a structured household-level survey tool designed by REACH with the participation of the humanitarian clusters. A total of 10,497 IDP and non-displaced households were surveyed between 11 June and 04 August 2023 in 59 (partially) accessible districts. For more information on the MSNA methodology, please refer to the ToR.

respondents not just for the main reason but all relevant reasons for displacement, to better understand the linkages between those factors, especially in complex contexts featuring acute climate impacts alongside other risks and challenges.

### *2) Effects of Climatic Anomalies on Reasons for Displacement*

The MSNA data can be cross-referenced with climatic data to offer additional perspectives on displacement. In Somalia, IDPs from districts of origin with a larger decrease in average annual rainfall recorded during the pre-displacement period more often reported conflict and insecurity as reasons for their displacement and the absence of conflict as reasons for choosing the host location. At the same time, lack of food and water and loss of livestock were more often mentioned as a displacement reason by IDPs from districts with stable or increasing rainfall levels. This points to a possibly more complex association of precipitation levels with drivers of displacement and potentially lower insecurity in districts with higher precipitation levels.

### *3) Comparing Service Access between Disaster IDPs and Non-Displaced in the Host Location*

MSNA data can be disaggregated to highlight how displacement reflects on access to services that have implications on the non-economic impacts people suffer. In Somalia, the MSNA data revealed that 64% of drought-related IDPs had no access to GBV services, a stark contrast to the 51% among the non-displaced population. 78% of these IDPs reported having insufficient water to meet their drinking needs, as opposed to 54% of the non-displaced. A further 51% had to spend more than 30 minutes to access healthcare, compared to 36% among non-displaced individuals. This demonstrates that drought-induced IDPs often do not benefit from the same access to essential services as non-displaced individuals within their host communities.

### *4) Factors Potentially Impacting Access to Services of Disaster IDPs in the Host Location*

The MSNA data provide insights into multiple factors affecting access to services of displaced people, such as duration of displacement, displacement frequency, household size, primary income source and income level. In Somalia, the share of households displaced by drought reporting a financial barrier to education for girls was 18 percentage points higher when they already spent more than six months in the host location. Similarly, school enrolment decreased with increasing number of displacements. Access to GBV services was also found to be 10% lower when IDPs had been displaced more than once. This points to the potential, progressive erosion of access to services due to repeated displacement. Additionally, occupation of displaced persons – more than income level – seems to be associated with the ability to benefit from better service access. IDPs whose primary income sources were agriculture (80%), daily labor (80%), and livestock (76%) reported significantly more often not having enough to drink compared to those with formal employment (41%).

### *5) Exposure to and impacts of climate-related hazards on IDPs and Non-Displaced People*

The MSNA data enable a comparative analysis of experiences under similar environmental stressors. In Somalia, displaced (6-12%, depending on displacement reason) and non-displaced respondents (8%) reported similar levels of exposure to drought in the previous three months.[8] At the same time, compared to non-displaced people, IDPs more often reported that recent drought impacted their lives

[8] Notably, drought during the previous three months was most often experienced in the host location / during displacement, as only 18% of drought-displaced and only 28% of conflict-displaced IDPs were displaced up to six months.

across almost all types of basic needs and services included in the response options, especially essential non-food items (10% vs. 6%). Non-displaced persons only reported a more significant impact of drought on their access to livelihood activities (41% vs. 35%), compared to IDPs. This could likely be attributed to the fact that IDPs' livelihoods were already affected through the displacement itself and required adaptation. This suggests that, while drought affects both groups, their resilience and coping mechanisms may differ, warranting nuanced support strategies.

## Avenues for Better Utilizing NEL and Displacement Data from MSNAs

MSNAs provide a rich source of robust and granular data on displacement and NELs in crisis settings, including in FCS. The review of relevant indicators from 2023 MSNAs in sub-Saharan Africa and the analysis of the 2023 Somalia MSNA demonstrate, however, that more work needs to be done to further improve availability, international comparability and relevance of this data. The following points summarize key avenues for making MSNA data more actionable for the global discussions and decisions on Loss and Damage and displacement.

### *1) Better Standardization Across Countries and Alignment to Global Policy Frameworks*

Questions and response options capturing displacement and disasters should be more consistent across MSNAs to facilitate cross-country comparison and inform global discussions. The Somalia MSNA illustrates the usefulness of including both a question on the *single* most important displacement reason and another question on *all* relevant reasons, as together they enable to better capture interlinked and indirect drivers of displacement. It could also be useful to explicitly ask respondents to directly link the primary reason to a subset of the secondary reasons. This can help shed light on the interplay of climate change impacts and other drivers of displacement. Moreover, MSNAs should capture a more comprehensive list of hazards and which is more closely aligned to global policy frameworks on Disaster Risk Reduction and Loss and Damage. For example, the UNDRR/ISC Sendai Hazard Definition and Classification could be used as basis for such alignment. Hazards (especially related to sudden-onset disasters) on which households are likely to be knowledgeable – such as floods, storms, and wildfires – could be included as explicit response options in MSNAs. Furthermore, hazards that are listed as "shocks" during displacement should ideally be also included in the questions on reasons of displacement – and vice versa.

### *2) Specialized Measurement of Slow-Onset Disasters*

On the other hand, slow-onset disasters like drought and sea-level rise require specialized methods of data collection. Due to the absence of a clear triggering event and the creeping nature of their impacts, remote sensing methods and key informant interviews may better suited than household interviews to measure whether an area has been exposed to and affected by such environmental hazards. Such area-level data, ideally disaggregated in time series, can then be incorporated into the MSNA data to enable the disaggregation of the results of the analysis by the level of exposure to such hazards.

### *3) More (and More Specific) Data Disaggregation Criteria*

Analyses of MSNA data commonly disaggregate indicators according to displacement status, administrative units and a few additional socio-economic characteristics. Further disaggregation specifically relevant to disaster displacement can reveal complex interdependencies and contribute to more effective interventions. As this preliminary analysis has started investigating, this could include breaking down findings based on the reason for displacement, exposure to recent disasters, duration and recurrence of displacement, among others.

### *4) Triangulation with Area-Based Assessments*

Qualitative data from Area-Based Assessments (ABAs) can add context to the quantitative data collected through MSNAs. This can provide a more in-depth understanding of the NELs and other challenges that IDPs face, and compare trends in barriers to accessing essential services, land tenure dynamics, and livelihood opportunities between displaced persons and host communities. Such localized analyses can also help better understand the perspectives of local stakeholders and service providers in the areas of displacement, and measure how the inflow of displaced persons impacts their capacity to provide basic services, the availability of agricultural land, and the viability of markets to meet the needs of a growing population, affecting not only IDPs but also the overall social and economic well-being of host communities and societies. If conducted in risk-prone areas and areas of origin, such assessments can also serve as basis for understanding the environmental conditions triggering potential displacement and/or hindering the restoration of livelihoods that is essential to allow for durable return of displaced persons.

ABAs commonly consist of interviews with community leaders, host community members and service providers, and geospatial analysis, allowing to create a composite picture of the impact of displacement and environmental risks in a specific location.

### *5) Inclusion in Models to Predict Disaster Displacement and NELs incurred by Displaced People*

MSNA data could be used as input for state-of-the-art machine learning (ML) models[9] to improve the prediction of disaster displacement and NELs suffered by displaced people. MSNA data would be especially useful as it is collected at household level and on a yearly basis. Some of the preliminary findings outlined in this paper could be further explored through such models. However, further standardization of MSNA indicators across countries and harmonization with global standards on hazard measurement would be necessary to include MSNA data in ML models on a wider scale.

### *6) Integration into National and International Policy Frameworks*

Lastly, data from MSNAs on NEL and displacement must not exist in a vacuum but should be integrated into both national humanitarian planning processes and international policy formulation regarding disaster displacement. This could range from adding MSNA-based indicators on NELs and displacement to the country's Humanitarian Needs Overview or National Adaptation Plan to informing the discussions and decisions of international bodies like the UNFCCC on climate-related Loss and Damage.

[9] Examples of applications of such models can be found in Clement et al. (2021) and Niva et al. (2021).

**About the organizations contributing to this submission:**

**IMPACT Initiatives** is a leading Geneva-based think-and-do tank which aims to improve the impact of humanitarian, stabilization and development action through data, partnerships and capacity building programs. IMPACT teams are present in over 25 countries across the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. Its products inform climate, disaster, and environmental resilience programs by combining remote sensing approaches and local level knowledge from a wide portfolio of primary data gathered across our initiatives REACH, AGORA and PANDA. IMPACT increasingly provides a data-driven perspective on climate impacts in displacement contexts by utilizing the comprehensive and granular data on profiles, experiences and needs of displaced people, returnees and host communities collected through its assessments.

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The **Secretariat of the Platform on Disaster Displacement** (PDD) supports the development and implementation of the activities of the Platform on Disaster Displacement, a State-led initiative working towards better protection for people displaced across borders in the context of disasters and climate change. Under the guidance of the Chair and the Steering Group, the Secretariat works with States, agencies and other stakeholders interested in implementing the recommendations of the Nansen Protection Agenda at national, regional and global levels. The Secretariat actively contributes to the Loss & Damage discussions as a member of the Task Force on Displacement under the WiM ExCom.

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