Practices at the Community Level in Kenya to Address the Intersection between Displacement and Climate Change Impacts: Key Messages from Mapping Sessions Held in Lodwar on November 23 and 24, 2023.

PLATFORM ON DISASTER DISPLACEMENT
FOLLOW-UP TO THE NANSEN INITIATIVE

GNDR Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction

The Context

One of the major humanitarian challenges facing states and the international community in the twenty-first century is displacement in the context of disasters, including the adverse effects of climate change. Every year, millions of people are displaced by disasters caused by natural hazards such as floods, tropical storms, landslides, droughts, saltwater intrusion, glacial melting, glacial lake outburst floods, and melting permafrost. In 2022 alone, an unprecedented 32.6 million displacements were associated with disasters, capping a decade that has seen an average of 23.4 disaster displacements every year.

Community Consultation Overview

As part of the Project to Avert, Minimize, and Address Disaster Displacement (PAMAD) initiated by the Platform on Disaster Displacement (PDD) in 2021, a community consultation was conducted to map the practices of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) to address displacement in the context of climate change in Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs). This consultation was held in Lodwar, Turkana County, spanning two days, from November 23 to 24, 2023. It convened representatives from over 20 CBOs representing Marsabit, Garissa, Turkana, Wajir, West Pokot, and Isiolo Counties. Notably, it was the third community consultation organized by PDD in collaboration with the Global Network of Civil Society Organizations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR), following similar meetings in Nairobi and Mombasa in August and October 2023, respectively.

This Information Note presents a compilation of key messages from the mapping sessions held in Mombasa. The key messages are a record of discussions and should not be construed as the official position of GNDR or PDD.

Key Messages

Resilience and Livelihood

- **Boosting Resilience through Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs):** VSLAs (known locally as chamas) are increasingly helping communities adapt to climate-related shocks and stresses. They are particularly helpful for the empowerment of women, increasing their ability to anticipate, plan for, and recover from climate impacts. In Marsabit, Wajir, and Isiolo Counties, for instance, VLSAs are helping women start livestock businesses, build better houses, and supplement family earnings. Savings from VLSAs are also used as security for accessing loans and grants from banks and non-governmental organizations, further boosting the resilience of ASAL families.

- **Reducing Disaster Risk through Smart Farming:** Communities in ASAL are progressively adopting small-scale smart farming practices such as efficient resource use, water-saving irrigation systems, drought-resistant crops, and greenhouse cultivation to build resilience in the face of climate change. These practices reduce disaster risk by enhancing availability and access to food, besides providing families with an alternative source of income through the sale of surplus produce

- **Enhancing Community Resilience using Moringa Tree and Aloe Vera:** Both the Moringa tree (*Moringa oleifera*) and Aloe Vera plants exhibit remarkable drought resistance, making them exceptionally suited for successful cultivation in ASALs. Both have medicinal value and pest control capabilities, and Moringa also finds wide usage as fodder for animals. Projects supporting communities to grow these plants support health, food security, income diversification and resilience.

- **Rainwater Harvesting for Climate Resilience and Reduced Loss:** To combat the impacts of climate change on water availability, including subsequent displacement, an increasing number of families and communities in ASAL counties are embracing the installation of underground water tanks for rainwater collection. These tanks provide a dependable, self-sustaining water source, reducing the challenges posed by irregular rainfall and water scarcity. Local solutions like these can improve the day-to-day lives of people living on the frontlines of climate change, addressing the conditions that can lead to displacement.

- **Enhancing Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) through Energy Efficiency:** In ASALs, energy efficiency is becoming a vital DRR tool. Communities are embracing improved *jikos*[1] for meal preparation to help reduce overreliance on local firewood. Additionally, solar water pump systems are improving access to clean water in remote or underserved areas. The systems are inexpensive to run because they use the Sun's energy, which is plentiful in the region. They are critical in improving health, sanitation, and overall quality of life for-

[1] Traditional charcoal stoves

countless ASAL communities, and helping curb instances of GBV associated with firewood or water gathering.

Disaster Preparedness

- **Enhanced Preparedness for Climate-Induced Displacement:** Communities in ASAL areas are suffering heavy loss and damage due to climate change, including related displacement. Strengthening immediate response capability at the community level is crucial, as shown recently by the heavy rains that recently hit Garissa, Wajir, and Isiolo Counties. Capacity building and coordination of civil society organizations is a key element to this process.

Women Empowerment/Gender and Inclusion

- **Empowering Women in ASAL Communities to Address Climate Displacement:** Women are increasingly accessing positions of power in ASAL areas in Kenya, as shown by the election of women as Members of the County Assembly in Wajir and Isiolo Counties during the 2022 general elections. This progressive empowerment needs to translate at all levels in increased involvement and decision-making power related to all interventions to avert, minimize and address displacement.

- **Addressing Resource-Induced Gender-based Violence Amidst Climate Change:** Climate change exacerbates resource scarcity in ASALs, leading to heightened tensions and an increased risk of GBV, particularly for women who depend on dwindling natural resources for their livelihoods or for contributing to their household's well-being. Implementing measures to reduce resource-related GBV directly contributes to preventing additional loss and damage within these communities. Technology is playing a transformative role in addressing these issues: smartphone apps now allow women to confidentially report GBV cases and quickly alert authorities about suspected banditry activities. This gives women increased access to prevention, mitigation, and protection options, and helps target responses.

- **Protecting Girls and Preventing Early Marriage in Times of Climate Crisis:** Promoting the protection of the rights of girls is key to reducing loss and damage, including displacement and its impacts, in ASAL households. Education and well-being initiatives specifically targeted to girls reduce the need for early marriages driven by resource scarcity, preventing acute short and long-term impacts on the well-being of girls – in particular those experiencing displacement and related deprivation.

- **Cultural Alternatives to Combat Climate-Induced Displacement and Loss: I**n the face of climate-induced loss and damage, and displacement, communities in ASALs are embracing culturally sensitive alternatives to practices like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). These alternatives focus on providing girls with essential life skills in remote locations before transitioning into adulthood and marriage.

Conflict and Violent Extremism/Peace and Security

- **Mitigating Deceptive Religious Narratives Aggravating Conflict, a Central Risk Factor Amidst the Climate Crisis in ASALs:** The plight of communities in ASALs that have experienced long-lasting droughts and intense flooding events during the recent El Niño season is worsened by radicalization and violent extremism (VE). Radicalization and VE divert attention, resources, and efforts away from climate change adaptation and mitigation. They also lead to social fragmentation, undermining collective action in resilience building and disaster risk management. As a countermeasure, religious and local leaders are increasingly getting involved in educating the youth, minimizing their vulnerability to misleading religious narratives that extremist groups exploit to recruit new members. These initiatives are helping reduce routine exposure to violence, allowing communities to build disaster resilience.

- **Building Inter-Communal Peace and Resilience:** Amidst displacement and climate-related resource conflicts, “mini-exchange programs” between neighboring pastoralist communities are proving instrumental in promoting peace and resilience. These programs facilitate cross-cultural understanding among school-going youth, contributing directly to peace-building efforts and reducing displacement and loss resulting from intercommunity conflicts.

- **Using Local Intermediaries to Address Climate Change-Induced Conflict:** Local intermediaries are helping mitigate intercommunal conflicts arising from competition for scarce resources among ASAL pastoralist communities. They foster dialogue, which results in consensus-driven agreements for sharing resources and overcoming differences, using their understanding of the cultural nuances and intricate social dynamics of neighboring communities.

Conclusion

The ASAL consultation gave different CBOs a chance to connect and share knowledge relating to disaster displacement in the context of climate change. Participants discussed how they contribute to the efforts to address the issues affecting their local communities. The strategies and concepts discussed throughout the consultation highlight the many creative ways CBOs are changing Kenya's ASALs.

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