

## Data initiative on sustainable energy solutions for displaced populations in Somalia

Somalia is at the forefront of climate change. Over the past three years, the country faced five consecutive failed rainy seasons and a once-in-a-100-year flood event, pushing 1.4 million people into displacement. Yet, Somalia contributes to less than 0.01% of global carbon emissions.<sup>1</sup>

Among the effects of climate change is its impact on forest regeneration, in a country where most of the population relies on firewood for cooking energy. In a vicious circle, the use of firewood also contributes to environmental degradation.

Beyond environmental and climatic considerations, the collection and use of firewood also comes with substantial protection and health risks, in particular for internally displaced populations living in hostile areas.



*Image 1: Firewood being sold at flood evacuation site, Faraafey in Beledweyne, Hiran region, Somalia November 8, 2023. Photo Credit DRC*

**Gender-based violence and children rights' violations** - Women, central to firewood collection, as well as children who accompany them face multiple protection issues, exposed to physical risks and gender-based violence. The isolated settings and vulnerability of displacement create conditions conducive to exploitation and violence, with lasting physical and psychosocial effects on women – and extensively on social cohesion.

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<sup>1</sup> Global Carbon Budget (2022) – processed by Our World in Data: <https://ourworldindata.org/co2/country/somalia>

**Exploitation and forced recruitment** - Moreover, communities in Somalia face an added risk—armed actor groups exploit the charcoal-making industry, one of the primary income sources for non-state armed groups in Somalia.<sup>2</sup> Non-state armed groups tax charcoal makers and coerce communities into collecting firewood and making charcoal, further exacerbating the protection risks faced by vulnerable populations and fueling instability.

**Land degradation** - Unsustainable practices and reliance on firewood can accelerate land degradation, amplifying the risks of floods and droughts in vulnerable areas. Deforestation is one of the contributors to land degradation, which then disrupts the water cycle as degraded lands are often less able to hold onto water or retain it for absorption. Trees play a crucial role in regulating the flow of water through ecosystems. Their roots absorb and retain water, preventing soil erosion and maintaining groundwater levels. Deforestation can lead to altered precipitation patterns, reduced water quality, and increased vulnerability to floods and droughts.

### **Filling the data gap to pave the way for sustainable energy solutions**

There is a need for a decisive break in the cycle of vulnerability and an urgent need for the empowerment of local communities, providing them with lasting solutions.

Navigating the energy quandary in displacement sites is a shared responsibility. The major challenges facing displaced communities in accessing basic energy services also present opportunities for transformative change on how to provide clean energy solutions in a holistic way that considers the interconnectedness of energy, environment, and community resilience.

A collective impact approach promises scalable solutions, ensuring a broader reach and deeper influence. All these measures, however, need to be based on research and data, starting with the basic level of establishing the current state of access to cooking energy in displacement settings in Somalia.

#### **For more information on this initiative please contact:**

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<sup>2</sup> Charcoal trade and armed conflict in Somalia: <https://climate-diplomacy.org/case-studies/climate-change-charcoal-trade-and-armed-conflict-somalia>. Illegal charcoal trade in Somalia: <https://www.grida.no/resources/7489>