Data & Information Sharing for Humanitarian-Development-Peace Coherence:

PRACTICAL CASE STUDIES FROM MADAGASCAR, THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, & ETHIOPIA

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Acronyms

ACLED Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project

ALNAP Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance

BHA Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance

BRCiS Building Resilient Communities in Somalia

CAT Crisis Analysis Team

CRS Catholic Relief Services

DRC Democratic Republic of the Congo

ECHO The European Commission Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection

EWS Early warning system

FAO Food and Agriculture Organization

FCDO Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office of the Government of the United Kingdom

FEWS NET Famine Early Warning Systems Network

GAINS Graduating to Sustainable Agriculture, Income, Nutrition, and Food Security

GoE Government of Ethiopia

HDP Humanitarian-development-peace

HRP Humanitarian Response Plan

IDEAL Implementer-Led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning Activity

IP Implementing partner

IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification

INSO International NGO Safety Organisation

IOM International Organization for Migration

JEOP Joint Emergency Operation

KII Key informant interview

KSS Knowledge Sharing Series

M23 March 23 Movement

MEL Monitoring, evaluation, and learning

MIRA Monthly Interval Resilience Analysis

MIS Management Information System

NGO Non-governmental organization

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OFDA Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance

P-DEC Partnership for Development of Eastern Congo

PACE Providing Assistance to Communities in Eastern DRC

PREG Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth Initiative in Northern Kenya

PReSERVE Poverty Reduced Sustainably in an Environment of Resilient and Vibrant Economy

PSNP Productive Safety Net Programme

RFSA Resilience Food Security Activity

RIMA Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis

RiPA Resilience in Pastoral Areas Program

RFMS Rapid feedback monitoring system

RMS Recurrent monitoring system

SAfER Sustainable Agriculture for Enhanced Resilience Project

SHAEPES Security, Humanitarian, Access, Environmental, Political, Economic and Social Operational Stability Score

SPIR II Strengthen PSNP5 Institutions and Resilience

SWASSA Sustainable Water and Sanitation Systems Activity

UN United Nations

UNOCHA United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

USAID United States Agency for International Development

WASH Water, sanitation, and hygiene

WFP World Food Programme

Sedera Ramanitra / CRS, Madagascar

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2022, the Implementer-Led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning (IDEAL) Activity convened humanitarian and resilience practitioners for a peer-to-peer Knowledge Sharing Series on Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Coherence. The series of online sessions provided the implementing community an opportunity to create a shared understanding around HDP coherence and explore current practices and enabling factors for HDP coherence in different contexts. During this series, data sharing was identified as a key practice for HDP coherence. Accordingly, IDEAL has documented three case studies in which implementing partners (IPs) have made a concerted effort to share data and information across HDP pillars, examining approaches within a single activity (intra-activity), between separate humanitarian, development, and peace activities (inter-activity), or within a single organization (intra-organization). By identifying and documenting promising practices of HDP coherence, IDEAL hopes to contribute to the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) goal of *"moving beyond silos, prioritizing a common agenda, and enhancing coordination across types of assistance in a way that puts local communities and people (including those that are traditionally excluded) front and center, through more intentional HDP coherence."* [1]

This report examines data sharing efforts relevant to HDP coherence in Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Ethiopia. Each case study provides a brief overview of how several organizations share data and information both within their organizations and with outside partners to improve program efficiency that reflect the needs of populations in different operating contexts, such as protracted conflict in the DRC, ongoing climate crises like drought and cyclones in Madagascar, and continuous cycles of climate and conflict crises in Ethiopia. The case studies highlight key enabling factors for sharing data across HDP actors and underscore at least one of the following core USAID principles on HDP coherence:

- Utilizing common platforms for data sharing/learning across various kinds of assistance
- Strategically sequencing, layering, and integrating assistance where appropriate
- Promoting shock-responsive programming and data-driven adaptive management

In each case study, implementers across HDP pillars note benefits, obstacles, and lessons learned for other activities to consider as they facilitate data sharing for HDP coherence in their own context.

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1   USAID Resilience Leadership Council and Technical Working Group (2022).

Benefits of Data Sharing Across HDP Pillars

Several benefits of data and information sharing emerged during the production of this report, including an overall improved understanding of food security conditions across HDP pillars. The box below shows what benefits were mentioned in one, two, or all three case studies.

BENEFITS OF GREATER DATA AND INFORMATION SHARING ACROSS HDP PILLARS

Reduced duplication of effort. Shared data dashboards, assessment documents, and conflict analyses were used to help activity staff understand where food assistance had already been delivered to reduce double coverage or to eliminate the need to recreate gender or conflict assessments for newer activities in shared geographies.

Improved activity efficiency. In all three country contexts, leveraging existing value chain, gender, and conflict assessments, market data, and staff and infrastructure have allowed activities to accelerate the start-up of new interventions or purchase goods for distribution at more advantageous prices.

Improved population selection and planning to ensure that activities are responsive to community needs. In Madagascar and the DRC, the creation of shared data platforms that house data for all communities has improved all activities' understanding of food security conditions, shocks and stresses, and coping mechanisms for different target groups. This has allowed HDP actors to target the most vulnerable populations for immediate assistance, determine when longer-term development activities are most likely to take hold, and play different roles to accomplish shared goals.

Improved adaptive management capabilities. By taking advantage of lessons learned from shared gender assessments, conflict scenario reports, and non-governmental organization (NGO) perception trackers, different humanitarian and development activities in the DRC and Madagascar cited an ability to make earlier programming adaptations to address gender barriers or projected disruptions emerging from potential displacement or NGO credibility issues.

Better activity sequencing and layering to protect programming gains. By utilizing shared data dashboards, Madagascar activity staff have been able to determine and target community needs to better sequence interventions, ensuring that longer-term development programming gains are not disrupted or lost when communities' basic needs are not met.

Reduced data analysis disruption. In the DRC, utilizing funding for shared data collection from multiple activity budgets instead of tying it to one activity helped mitigate disruptions in context monitoring which allows activities to adjust interventions as needed.

More timely identification of problems. In Ethiopia, partners used shared data dashboards for the timely identification of conditions that could impact all humanitarian and development interventions.

Challenges to Effective Data Sharing Across HDP Pillars

Donors, partners, and researchers have documented challenges to achieving greater coherence that have been echoed in the case studies. Although not exhaustive, some of the more persistent challenges that implementers have either overcome or confronted to varying degrees include:

- A lack of geographic overlap in populations can make cross-utilization of shared data and information difficult and less relevant,
- Data used for conflict can become outdated and requires upkeep to remain useful,[2]
- A lack of investments in data collection and sharing,[3]
- A lack of staff capacity to interpret and use data across activities,
- A lack of access to data and analysis,[4]
- Lack of a standardized process for sharing data across organizations,[5]
- Difficulty in monitoring progress on improved HDP coherence due to an absence of a strong evaluation framework.[6]

Key Lessons for Enabling Data Sharing Across HDP Pillars

The three case studies highlight several practical lessons for promoting improved data sharing among HDP actors. Regardless of whether activities use formal or informal processes and platforms, the following key takeaways or recommendations point to ways implementers can facilitate greater sharing within and across humanitarian, development, and peace activities:

Visionary leadership can drive data sharing across HDP pillars.

Leadership demonstrated the importance of data sharing by marshaling resources, identifying and supporting champions within organizations, creating cross-functional activity teams, and dedicating staff to promote data sharing initiatives and create spaces for information sharing.

Identifying common goals through a systematic review of collective outcomes across HDP pillars is an important starting point for data sharing.

By reviewing shared goals, HDP actors can determine where overlapping mandates exist and identify collective outcomes and data needs, giving implementers a chance to discuss which metrics are important, information gaps, lessons learned across activities, and opportunities for collaboration and complementarity.

Regularly covening HDP actors to share context changes and monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) data is key for better coherence.

As evidenced by the case study implementers, regular data sharing meetings help coordinate across humanitarian, development, and peace programming, especially where overlapping mandates occur. They can also help validate and disseminate information, providing opportunities for collaboration, complementarity, and adaptation in data collection, analysis, or activities.

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2   FAO (2021).
3   USAID Resilience Leadership Council and Technical Working Group (2022).
4   Oelke, S. and Scherer, A. (2022).
5   IDEAL (2022, June 14).
6   Interview with Susanna Morrison-Metois, ALNAP, August 4, 2023.

Establishing and utilizing shared data platforms and analyses can result in more accessible and effective learning.

Shared data systems and platforms like CommCare (data collection) and Power BI (data visualization) can reduce costs and duplication of effort, while supporting staff to adjust programming or locations based on crisis contexts and to address community needs.

Leveraging shared assessments across HDP pillars can improve activity delivery.

Sharing assessments, such as gender and value chain assessments, from already established activities with others, especially those in the same geographic area, reduces duplication and builds on existing knowledge to better focus interventions, navigate local contexts, and launch activities quickly.

Centralizing organizational structures and budgets can cut costs and promote shared data resources.

Operational decisions like co-locating activity offices, pooling budgets, and sharing staff, can encourage more data sharing, strengthen staff capacity, and accelerate start-up time for new activities.

Early and continuous engagement can ensure data sharing is meaningful for all parties.

Engaging the end-users of the data from the onset is important to understand what information, indicators, and metrics are most useful for activities. As platforms are developed, communication with partner end-users should be ongoing to understand how needs evolve and what new staff and activities may need.

Partnerships can be utilized to make data sharing more efficient.

Leveraging external partnerships around data can improve the efficiency of data collection, encourage regular exchanges of information with partners in formal and less formal ways, and enhance visibility of where other organizations are working to better prevent duplication of effort.

Emnet Dereje / World Vision, Ethiopia

Sarah Hurlburt / CARE, Ethiopia

INTRODUCTION

The number of conflicts and conflict-related crises around the world has risen sharply in recent years. In many countries contexts have also become more dynamic, with protracted cycles of insecurity and increased internal displacement exacerbated by environmental shocks, like prolonged drought. On top of extreme weather and conflict-related shocks, economic inequality is widening in many parts of the world. The fluidity of shocks and vulnerability within local contexts necessitates a greater focus on adaptive management, data sharing, flexibility, and coordination among donors and humanitarian, development, and peace actors so that both the immediate emergency needs and longer-term root causes of crisis for populations at risk can be met.

Humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) coherence (also referred to as HDP nexus) considers three different pillars to address needs of affected populations: (1) the immediate (humanitarian), (2) the longer-term (development), and (3) the root causes of conflict (peace). Donors like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) emphasizes the importance of HDP coherence, especially in fragile and crisis-affected countries. They have highlighted the need for greater coordination and complementarity to maximize the impact and sustainability of programs and reduce the need for humanitarian assistance over time.[7] Meanwhile, USAID had already adhered to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, which emphasizes that the HDP nexus "approach seeks to capitalize on the comparative advantages of each pillar—to the extent of their relevance in the specific context—in order to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict."[8]

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7   Fitzpatrick, M., Spears, K., et al. (2021).

8   Ibid.

While in conflict settings it is possible to integrate short-term humanitarian, long-term development, and peace interventions into a single activity, many interventions are focused on a single pillar within the nexus. Therefore, coherence and coordination across international assistance implementers are critical to ensure activities are responsive to changing operational contexts and community needs.[9] Similarly, when multiple actors or activities are operating in the same geographies, information and relevant data sharing about changing realities and coverage areas can increase understanding of food security conditions as well as prevent duplication of effort.

Data and information sharing are important for HDP coherence and are, in part, a function of strong monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) interventions and knowledge management systems. However, these systems are not sufficient by themselves. Given the necessary role of each actor or entity across the HDP pillars, organizations need a collective understanding of the context and food security and resilience metrics and, in many situations, the actual or potential for conflict in the communities where they operate. Working from a shared knowledge base makes the probability of HDP coherence more likely.

This report is providing examples of how organizations have developed their data sharing capabilities and the benefits realized from improved data sharing within a single activity (intra-activity), between separate humanitarian, development, or peace activities (inter-activity), or within a single organization (intra-organization). Following a brief review of the methodology used in this analysis, three case studies from Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Ethiopia highlight efforts to share data across the HDP pillars. The report provides an overview of each activity, identifies the data types and key methods used to share that data, lists the enabling factors that allowed for greater data sharing, and summarizes the benefits of data sharing in each case. The document then provides a brief description of other data sharing efforts and initiatives from other implementers. The conclusion synthesizes the benefits, obstacles, and key lessons that contribute to greater data sharing.

Methodology

This report was compiled using a variety of methods, including a literature review and key informant interviews (KIIs) with implementing partner (IP) staff, activity partners, and researchers, augmented by a review of relevant activity documents and learning event presentations. The literature review was used to identify other examples of data and information sharing practices from organizations and implementers in various contexts to supplement the case study findings.

Case studies were drawn from examples shared during IDEAL's Knowledge Sharing Series (KSS) on HDP Coherence in 2022. The research team held several exploratory calls in May and June of 2023 to gauge the interest and availability of partners and stakeholders and to identify any progress since the KSS that could be documented in a case study. Following these exploratory calls, the team developed a KII guide and began interviewing the activity staff who had participated in the KSS. The initial interviewees recommended others on the team who could contribute time and knowledge and these additional interviews took place from late June to mid-August of 2023. In total, the team interviewed over 30 individuals for the three case studies (see Annex A for a list of consulted organizations).

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9   Siddiqui, N. and Nguya, G. (2020).

To identify best practices in data and information sharing across international aid programming, the research team searched the following terms during the literature review, with a specific focus on the three case study countries: HDP nexus; HDP nexus platforms; HDP coherence; best practices in HDP coordination; planning; data analysis and monitoring strategies; data sharing; collaboration and collective impact; collaboration, learning and adapting; and backbone mechanisms. The following resource libraries and sites were consulted in the process.

- ResilienceLinks
- AgriLinks
- Food Security and Nutrition Network
- Development Experience Clearinghouse
- Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP)
- ReliefWeb
- Beam Exchange
- USAID Learning Lab

Sarah Hurlburt / CARE, Ethiopia

The research team supplemented this information with publications and activity document searches on IP sites, such as Mercy Corps, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), and World Vision. Other websites included the BHA-funded Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) and international organizations like the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN), UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), UN World Food Programme (WFP), World Health Organization (WHO), OECD, International Organization for Migration (IOM), and Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

Activity staff also shared unpublished activity documents with the team that provided more context or documentation to support the examples. The literature scan provided background and context for this report, and many resources are included in the reference section.

CASE STUDIES

The following case studies examine enabling factors, benefits, and challenges to effective data sharing across humanitarian and development pillars, including peace interventions where relevant, in Madagascar, the DRC, and Ethiopia. Although the case studies did not focus explicitly on peace activities, some of these activities work alongside peace actors. The conclusion highlights key lessons learned for implementing organizations to consider in their efforts to improve HDP coherence. The Madagascar and Ethiopia case studies are examples of inter-activity HDP coherence while the DRC case study is an example of intra-organization HDP coherence. The following summaries give an overview of each of the case studies.

In Madagascar, Catholic Relief Services' (CRS) Tabiry and RIMA emergency activities were able to capitalize on demographic and market pricing information collected by the CRS-led and development-focused Maharo Resilience Food Security Activity (RFSA) (2019-2024), as well as the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), and World Food Programme (WFP) food security clusters. They used this information to improve population selection, reduce overlap, and make better programming decisions related to timing of food and livestock distribution. Due to protracted acute food insecurity, Maharo's interventions were adjusted to address humanitarian needs, targeting acute malnutrition in children while also supporting longer-term development goals to help households protect assets and mitigate against climate shocks. Using regular meetings, shared data dashboards, shared evaluations, and in some cases shared staff, CRS increased coherence and collaboration across its activities under these two pillars.

In the DRC, Mercy Corps' country leadership understood that monitoring issues like conflict and population displacement was key for its activities. As a result, in mid-2022, the leadership elevated the Crisis Analysis Team (CAT) to the leadership level to better serve its program portfolio's needs. The CAT conducts context monitoring of the rapidly changing security situation in eastern DRC and tracks community perception of and responses to shocks like COVID-19 or the March 23 Movement (M23), an armed group. To better support context monitoring for longer-term development and peace activities, the CAT also expanded its assessment tool to monitor other external factors, such as trends in displacement and political instability that could affect the activities' impact over time.

In Ethiopia, early warning data on weather patterns, food and livestock prices, and coping strategies is collected by the Joint Emergency Operation (JEOP), an emergency food distribution program implemented by a consortium of agencies led by CRS. This information is useful both to JEOP consortium and local partners as well as development activities operating in the same areas. For example, three RFSAs that are implemented by CRS, World Vision, and Food for the Hungry in the same areas utilize JEOP's data on market prices and coping behaviors to inform adaptive management strategies in their development activities. The CRS humanitarian and development data teams work closely together—in some cases sharing the same workspace—to strengthen analysis skills, jointly review the implications of the shared datasets, and discuss additional data sharing opportunities. The CRS-led Ifaa RFSA also shares resilience monitoring data across the JEOP consortium, such as the most important shocks faced by the targeted populations.

To Fy Rabenandrasana / CRS, Madagascar

Creating & Strengthening Communication, Coordination, & Learning Platforms Across Different Kinds of Assistance in Madagascar

This inter-activity case study discusses how common data platforms and evaluation sharing across humanitarian and development activities have provided opportunities to strategically sequence and layer humanitarian and development interventions and improve population selection.

The Maharo RFSA in Madagascar works in the development and humanitarian pillars and focuses on acute food insecurity reduction, agricultural and livelihoods development, natural resources management, and disaster risk reduction.[10] However, given its needs-based approach and the backdrop of persistent climate crises and ongoing drought in the region, the activity has had to be opportunistic about its engagement in longer-term development work. Maharo's design capitalizes on CRS' long-standing food security and nutrition programming experience in the southern part of the country and runs concurrently with two other CRS-led humanitarian activities—

Southern Madagascar Programming by HDP Pillar

Humanitarian & Development:
Maharo RFSA | 2019–2024
Funded by USAID/BHA
Focus areas: Acute food insecurity prevention, agricultural and livelihoods development, natural resources management, and disaster risk reduction.

Humanitarian: RIMA (Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis) | 2022–2024
Funded by USAID/BHA
Focus areas: Emergency food assistance, nutrition, economic recovery, and market systems development.

Humanitarian: Tabiry | 2021–2024
Funded by USAID/BHA
Focus areas: Emergency food assistance, seed distribution, and agricultural assistance.

Tabiry and RIMA—in overlapping geographies. A sustained drought in 2021 led Maharo to shift its development interventions to focus on emergency needs. This made CRS' leadership recognize a need to think about sustainability and coordination among activities to avoid duplication of effort, respond effectively to urgent population needs, and reduce vulnerability.

A degree of coherence across CRS-led development and humanitarian activities in Madagascar emerged due to the creation of intentional infrastructure and recognition of data sharing opportunities across activities. CRS shares useful data collected by the Maharo RFSA via dashboards and utilizes regular coordination meetings to facilitate information sharing across the Maharo, Tabiry, and RIMA teams working in the same region.

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10   CRS Maharo Activity Detail. Accessed on September 16, 2023. https://www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/program-areas/agriculture-and-nutrition/food-security-resilience/madagascar.

FIGURE 2: Map of CRS activities in Madagascar[11]

Monthly Interval Resilience Analysis (MIRA) is CRS' approach to actionable food security data.[12] After previously launching its MIRA tool in Malawi, the organization was eager to test its usefulness in another country context. Beginning in 2018, CRS Madagascar recognized that the protracted food insecurity within the country required a rapid data monitoring system that would provide real-time data beyond what it typically collected during baseline, midline, and final assessments. Given its previous experience in Malawi, CRS believed MIRA would be helpful to its Maharo RFSA in Madagascar by providing better surveillance of changing implementation conditions and population needs.

Initially piloted in five communes in southern Madagascar in the Beloha and Tsihombe districts, MIRA collected monthly household data on food security and shocks, as well as quarterly data on livelihoods, infrastructure, water resources, and market pricing.[13] The Maharo RFSA was already underway when CRS designed and secured funding for Tabiry (2021-2023), a humanitarian assistance activity providing emergency food and seed distribution and agricultural assistance to overlapping geographies. Meanwhile RIMA (2022-2023), a follow-on to the humanitarian assistance activities under Firanga I and II (2020-2022),[14] launched after both Maharo and Tabiry had begun. RIMA aims to support many of the same populations as Maharo and Tabiry in southern Madagascar with emergency food aid and nutrition counseling, while also focusing on economic recovery and market system development.

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11   https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/crs-files/map_of_crs_madagascar_projects.jpg.

12   www.crs.org/our-work-overseas/research-publications/monthly-interval-resilience-analysis-mira.

13   Upton, J. (n.d.).

14   CRS Firanga II Project Factsheet. https://www.crs.org/sites/default/files/firanga_ii_one_pager_eng.pdf.

CRS leveraged existing data and knowledge collected under the Maharo RFSA when designing and planning the humanitarian-focused Tabiry and RIMA activities. Data and information sharing between these activities were done intentionally with shared data dashboards, mandated data sharing meetings, shared staff, and cross-utilization of community infrastructure. Increased coordination has helped the activities to time food and seed distributions so that they benefit and do not undermine development gains. For example, Maharo's coordination with Tabiry allowed them to sequence seed delivery to occur after food distribution so food insecure households would not sell or eat legume seeds instead of planting them.[15] Conversely, Maharo sequences its longer-term interventions, such as developing market feeder roads and reforestation programs, to occur after emergency food distribution. This ensures that the population's basic needs are met, and development investments can be utilized and protected. If populations are experiencing food insecurity, they may resort to cutting forests for charcoal to earn money or, if market feeder roads precede basic needs, they may not be used for trade.

KEY METHODS OF SHARING ACROSS ACTIVITIES

Shared and Open Data Dashboards

MIRA food security data collected monthly under the Maharo RFSA provides real-time information on household food consumption, hunger, and reduced coping strategies at the community level. Since there was often significant overlap in target populations, MIRA data has helped staff across Maharo, Tabiry, and RIMA to better target the most vulnerable populations and determine where and when to focus interventions.
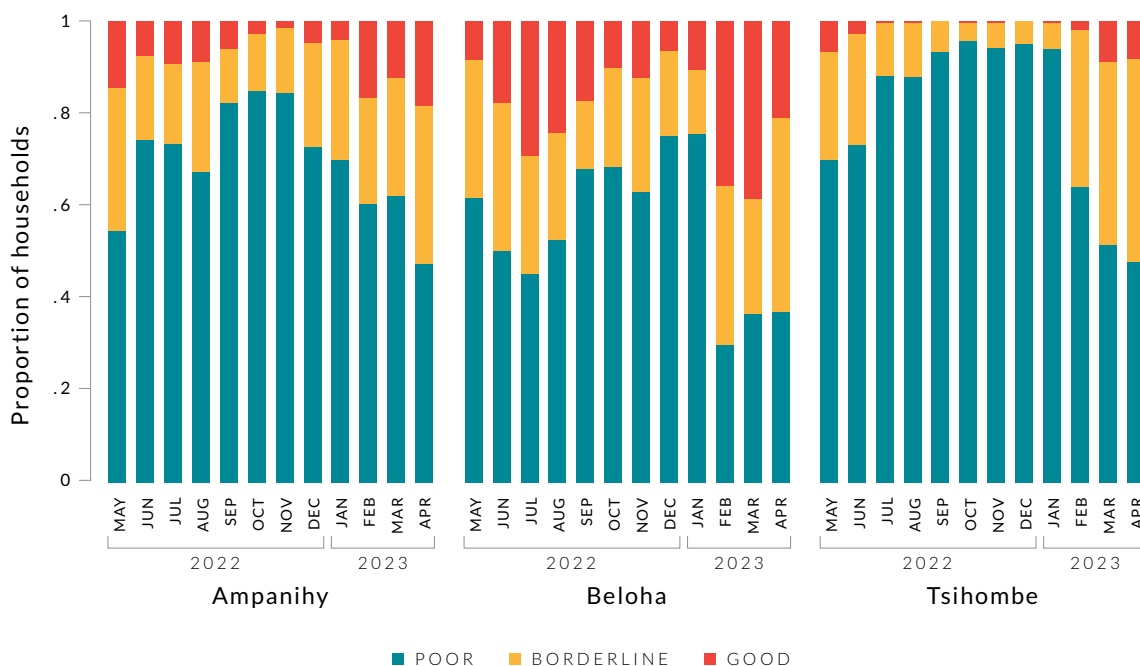
FIGURE 3: MIRA Analysis from Cornell University Food Consumption Score by district (May 2022-April 2023)[16]

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15   Based on learnings from OFDA-funded emergency programs in the zone, Havelo and Lova (2017–2018).

16   Upton, J. (n.d.).

As shown in **Figure 3**, MIRA allows activities to view community-level data for indicators like the food consumption score, which shows where populations are most in need and allows the activities to shift their interventions to target populations in those areas. Maharo's MIRA market data on staple food prices and livelihoods has improved the Tabiry humanitarian activity's decision-making about when to purchase local goods for its emergency distribution, allowing them to buy when market prices are lower and increase the number of households served.

Post-distribution monitoring reports are another example of data sharing across CRS' humanitarian and development activities. Prepared by the Tabiry activity with the support of the Maharo RFSA's MEL team, these reports collect data on community indicators post-food and seed distribution to determine whether interventions have successfully improved MIRA indicators, such as reduced negative coping strategies.

FIGURE 4: Maharo Madagascar MIRA Microsoft Power BI Dashboard[17]

Sharing Key Analysis Documents

Cross-utilization of the Maharo RFSA's existing assessments and baseline household census data has also allowed the two emergency activities, RIMA and Tabiry, to avoid duplicating these efforts and focus their short-term resources on deploying humanitarian assistance more rapidly. For example, when Maharo's gender assessment showed that some women have limited seed access within households, Tabiry used this information to select female participants for its seed distribution. Similarly, Maharo's value chain analysis helped the Tabiry activity to determine which seeds to purchase by identifying which seeds were needed and valued by the target recipients. Maharo's partner Land O' Lakes Ventures 37 also highlighted how information from the gender assessment helped them to revise expectations for their animal veterinary officer training program when they learned that there was low community acceptance of female veterinarian technicians due to social and cultural norms.

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17   https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNmM5NzExNjYtYjgzNy00MDZjLTk3ZGItOTM3MWE3YWVkNjAxIiwidCI6ImI4MGMzMDhjLWQwOGQt NGIwNy05MTVjLTExYTkyZDljYzZiZCIsImMiOjF9.

Leveraging External Data Sources

Time lags in the availability of external data limited its usefulness to activities, as compared to more frequently collected MIRA data. Consequently, both Maharo and Tabiry activity staff noted the strategic but limited use of other resources, including the IPC population district data on gender-based violence and national cluster level data from the WFP and UNICEF. For example, quarterly cluster health and status reports, evaluations spotlighting communes in crisis, and implementation mapping are used by the three CRS Madagascar activities to adjust which communes they are working in at a given time to avoid duplication of effort where other organizations are working. Both the Maharo RFSA and the RIMA humanitarian activity also noted how information shared by other programs, like the mobile nutrition/health program implemented by Africa Child Policy Forum, has helped them to layer food distribution with other nutrition-focused activities. However, Maharo, Tabiry, and RIMA staff noted that they more often relied on MIRA data, due to its high frequency of collection and real-time production of information.

> ## Information Sharing Across Humanitarian and Development Pillars to Facilitate Seed Distribution in Southern Madagascar
>
> Prior to 2021, seed system development fell under the purview of longer-term development activities, while seed distribution was coordinated by emergency progams. Due to this division of responsibilities humanitarian-focused programs did not have visibility into local seed distribution chains and were forced to pause distribution when drought disrupted local supply. After concerted information sharing efforts began in 2021, Maharo development assistance teams were able to provide early alerts to humanitarian programs, donors, and other external organizations regarding inadequate local seed supply, which allowed the Tabiry team to secure an additional two years of USAID funding to purchase seeds from external markets.

Shared and Coordinated Staff

CRS' decision to have one MEL team provide analysis across the three activities in southern Madagascar has helped to facilitate sharing across teams. The Tabiry humanitarian activity was able to start up more quickly and efficiently by utilizing field agents from the Maharo RFSA for the onset of their activity. Interestingly, staff noted that this initial collaboration led to data and information sharing continuing even after Tabiry hired its own field staff.

Routine Data Sharing Meetings

All three activities have utilized bi-monthly and sometimes monthly data sharing meetings that include the Maharo RFSA's Food Security Technical Coordinator and other Maharo specialists to ensure that all activities are aware of each other's interventions and can apply relevant information to guide their own interventions. As seen in the example above (**see blue text box**), Maharo's communication on the lack of seed availability allowed humanitarian teams to secure funding for outside seed purchases. Another recurring meeting that has been helpful for information sharing is the national cluster meeting, which combines both humanitarian and development actors, WFP, and UNICEF. In those, partners have shared information about their interventions, discussed coordination, population targeting, and sequencing interventions, helping to eliminate overlap among implementers. As evidence of this, interviewees suggested that prior to 2016 there was a lot of overlap between CRS and WFP activities. However, following the initiation of data sharing meetings, they have been able to eliminate this overlap and sequence their interventions to support the resilience activities. They also highlighted that data sharing at meetings for the World Bank-supported Social Safety Net Support program have helped Maharo staff to understand where they no longer need to focus on food distribution, allowing them to pivot to development interventions.

KEY ENABLING FACTORS FOR DATA SHARING

Several key enablers have helped to facilitate data and information sharing across CRS' activities in Madagascar. While some of these have been context-driven and may be difficult to duplicate, others, such as strategic leadership and shared organizational structures and budgets, have helped to create environments where data sharing is well resourced and often occurs more naturally. As some of these activities approach their conclusion or secure funding for new activities, it will be interesting to see whether the sharing of resources continues.

Established RFSA Activity

CRS already had established the Maharo RFSA in southern Madagascar, which encouraged the Tabiry and RIMA humanitarian activities to take advantage of existing knowledge and data collection infrastructure, especially since all these activities were led by one implementing agency. Though data and information sharing are not a given within an organization, this reality made it possible for collaboration to occur.

Shared Organizational Structures and Budgets

More importantly, operational overlap was key to ensuring collaboration and coherence across development- and humanitarian-focused teams. Due to the timing of activity launches, the Tabiry humanitarian activity was able to utilize the Maharo RFSA's existing organizational infrastructure from the onset by sharing offices and staff members, including field agents. This allowed easier identification of synergies since shared staff and field agents were already aware of other activity interventions or challenges from shared geographies, allowing the humanitarian programs to more easily leverage lessons learned from Maharo and, in some cases, initiate interventions faster. Shared MEL resources also helped to centralize data analysis across the programs and ensure greater data sharing and coordination among activities.

Context

Persistent climate crises and drought in southern Madagascar have required the Maharo RFSA to prioritize emergency food assistance. This has resulted in greater overlap between the activities and goals in the region, and an obvious need for greater coordination across activities to avoid duplication of effort and ensure coverage of vulnerable populations. This context made it easier for activity staff to see the importance of sharing information with each other.

Overlapping Geographies

Staff were also more attuned to the importance of data sharing when there were clear areas of geographic overlap of activities. Although this did not guarantee data sharing and collaboration, it was viewed as an important precursor to sharing.

Strategic Leaders

The importance of leaders with a strategic vision to incentivize and facilitate greater data sharing and collaboration cannot be emphasized enough. Leadership created the space for joint data and knowledge sharing through routine data sharing meetings, mandating sharing within staff roles, identifying and marshaling resources to create shared data platforms open for all activity staff to view, and making sure that shared data analysis also addressed specific needs of each activity.

BENEFITS OF DATA SHARING

In Madagascar, the main benefits mentioned include:

- **Better population targeting and planning.** The use of shared data platforms like MIRA has improved understanding of food security conditions across pillars and helped determine which populations are most vulnerable and in need of specific interventions.

- **Reducing duplication of effort.** Through the data dashboard and information shared during different cluster meetings, CRS Madagascar can determine which populations have already received food assistance and focus attention on communities still in need, whereas in the past, information lags or gaps resulted in double coverage of some communities and neglect of others.

- **Sequencing interventions.** Utilizing the information from the MIRA and data dashboard, the Maharo RFSA staff have been able to better sequence longer-term development interventions, such as livestock or seed distribution, to follow emergency food distributions. This has helped solidify programming gains that may be lost when communities whose basic needs are not yet met are forced to sell goods for food.

- **Improved activity efficiency.** The Tabiry and RIMA humanitarian activities were able to start up more quickly and save costs by utilizing Maharo RFSA staff, such as MEL and field officers, and Maharo activity assessments, like the gender analysis. In addition, market price data sharing has helped Tabiry and RIMA to time their purchases of goods for distribution from local markets so that activity funds are stretched further.

- **Improved adaptive management capabilities.** Leveraging learnings from the Maharo RFSA's gender analysis helped its partner, Land O'Lakes Ventures 37, to adjust expectations for its female animal veterinary technician training program based on social and cultural norms. It also allowed the Tabiry humanitarian activity to adjust its criteria for female seed recipients when data showed that some women had less access within households.

Ezra Millstein / Mercy Corps, DRC

Promoting Shock-Responsive Programming & Data-Driven Adaptive Management in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

This intra-organization case study highlights the Mercy Corps Crisis Analysis Team (CAT) which provides context monitoring and timely analysis to assess risks and inform decision-making across its activities in the DRC.

Mercy Corps' CAT supports HDP coherence by monitoring the rapidly changing security situation in eastern DRC and tracking community perception of and responses to shocks like COVID-19 or M23, an armed group. The CAT also developed a risk assessment tool, the Security, Humanitarian, Access, Environmental, Political, Economic and Social Operational Stability Score (SHAEPES), to monitor external factors that can affect activities, such as armed conflict, environmental hazards, and access to basic products and functioning markets.

Initially, rapid context monitoring was tied to Mercy Corps' emergency/rapid response activities in eastern DRC since these activities had an urgent need for more frequent and accurate information about their operating contexts.[18] But as the security situation deteriorated and the implementation environment became less stable, this context monitoring became important for development and peace activities as well.

DRC Programming by HDP Pillar

Humanitarian: Providing Assistance to Communities in Eastern DRC (PACE) early recovery program | 2022–2024
Funded by USAID/BHA

Humanitarian: Strategic Assistance for Emergency Response (SAFER) Consortium | 2022–2024
Funded by USAID/BHA, FCDO, and ECHO

Development: Food Security Program (FSP) in South Kivu, RFSA | 2016–2023
Funded by USAID/BHA

Development: Sustainable Water and Sanitation Systems Activity (SWASSA) | 2020–2025
Funded by USAID

Development: Graduating to Sustainable Agriculture, Income, Nutrition & Food Security (GAINS) RFSA | 2023–2028
Funded by USAID/BHA

Peace: Partnership for Development of Eastern Congo (P-DEC) | 2021–2026
Funded by USAID

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18   IDEAL (2022, June 12).

BACKGROUND

In the initial phase of the CAT's work, context monitoring data was prepared and shared only with the country office leadership and humanitarian activities, such as Providing Assistance to Communities in Eastern DRC (PACE) and the Strategic Assistance for Emergency Response (SAFER) consortium, focused on coordinating the provision of basic needs and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services. It tracked population displacement that occurred because of armed conflict, enabling emergency teams to be more responsive to changes in the security situation and to identify communities most in need of humanitarian assistance. For example, CAT analysis forecasted that movements of non-state armed groups were likely to cause displacement in certain areas, which helped teams understand and plan for the subsequent impact on harvests in those areas.

During the last Ebola outbreak, from 2018-2020, the CAT collected feedback from community focal points (like medical personnel, teachers, community leaders, and youth representatives) about rumors, perceptions, and questions that the community had about how to treat or prevent Ebola. The focal points also gauged how the community felt about the humanitarian response overall. These reports on community perception helped shape Mercy Corps' interventions and were shared more broadly with partners operating in the same area to help them design more effective interventions.[19] The perception tracker was later adapted for other uses, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the M23 crisis. By tracking social media and local radio broadcasts and using transcriptions and keyword searches on terms like M23, the tracker surfaced community concerns, perceptions, and ground truthed intervention approaches.

As the security situation deteriorated and the implementation environment became less stable, this type of context monitoring and perception tracking became increasingly important also for the development and peace activities in the DRC, including the South Kivu Food Security Project (FSP) RFSA, the new RFSA called Graduating to Sustainable Agriculture, Income, Nutrition and Food Security (GAINS) in the Kasai Province, and the Partnership for Development of Eastern Congo (P-DEC), which implements Mercy Corps' peacebuilding interventions.[20] Mercy Corps' CAT expanded its role to also support the USAID-funded Sustainable Water and Sanitation Systems Activity (SWASSA), a development activity, by monitoring trends in the political, economic, and security contexts that could disrupt assumptions made in the activity's MEL log frame and negatively affect the impact of its interventions. **Figure 5** gives an overview of the CAT's current approach to providing monitoring support to activities.

Ezra Millstein / Mercy Corps, DRC

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19   Hoffman, C. and Petryniak, O. (2021).
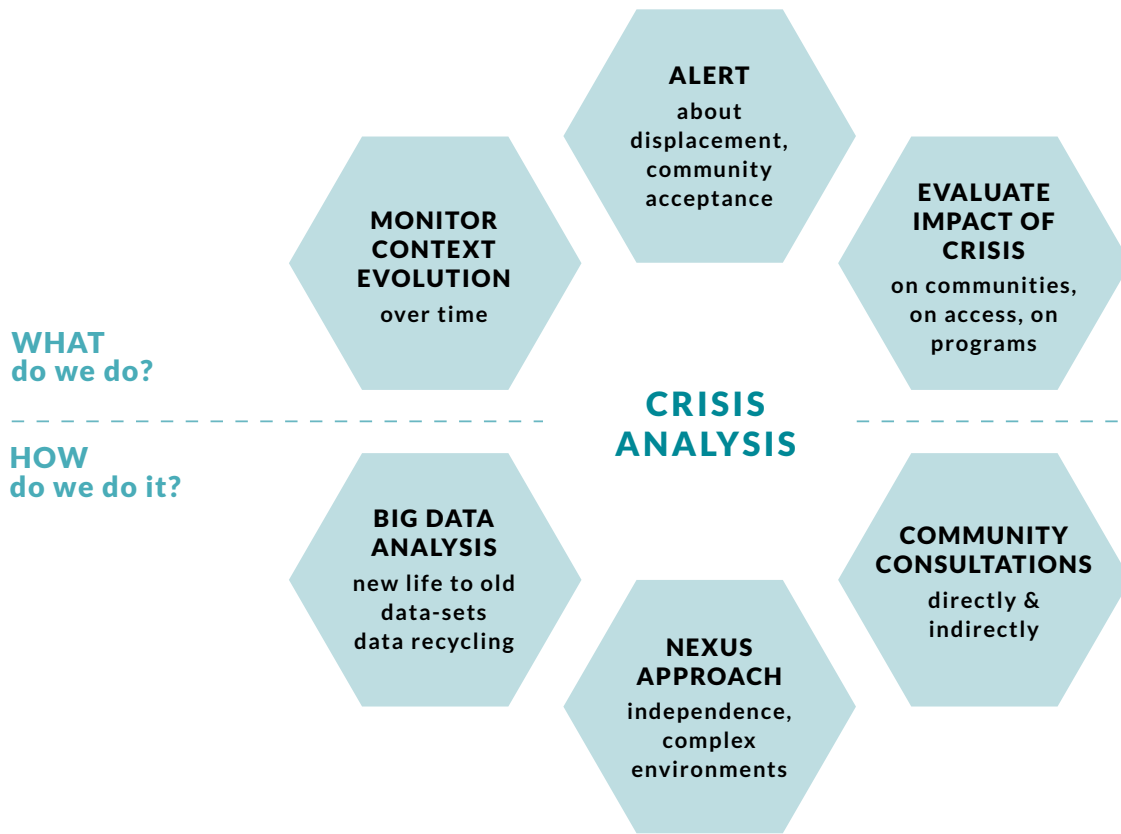
20   USAID (2023).

ALERT about displacement, community acceptance

MONITOR CONTEXT EVOLUTION over time

EVALUATE IMPACT OF CRISIS on communities, on access, on programs

WHAT do we do?

HOW do we do it?

CRISIS ANALYSIS

BIG DATA ANALYSIS new life to old data-sets data recycling

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS directly & indirectly

NEXUS APPROACH independence, complex environments

FIGURE 5: CAT DRC's approach[21]

First piloted with SWASSA, SHAEPES presents a multidimensional overview of operating contexts, assessing triggers for instability in their intervention areas and determining the degree of operational stability due to issues like increased displacement. The SHAEPES tool provides activity teams (sector-specific staff, field staff, and activity leadership) with up-to-date data and metrics to help them determine when interventions require shifts to adapt to trends in political or economic instability.[22] SHAEPES provides an index which relies heavily on secondary quantitative data from humanitarian partners like the International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO)[23] and Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project (ACLED).[24] Before SHAEPES, development activities like SWASSA had to monitor these assumptions through lengthy qualitative data collection and analysis processes. To expedite its analysis and increase its relevance to partners, Mercy Corps' SHAEPES score primarily leverages quantitative data from secondary sources and utilizes qualitative analysis (such as KIIs) to contextualize the quantitative data for cases when the SHAEPES score is either very high or very low.

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21   CAT DRC website: https://rdc-analyse.org/. Please create an account to access the dashboards and maps at this link: https://rdc-analyse.org/tableaux-de-bords/impact-humanitaire-des-crises.
22   Mercy Corps Crisis Analytics Team (2022).
23   INSO Website: https://ngosafety.org/.
24   ACLED website: https://acleddata.com/.

Mercy Corps' SHAEPES score is a mixed-methods tool used to determine the degree of operational stability. For the application of the SHAEPES index in the DRC, these dimensions have been identified as the main drivers of stability/instability of a particular geographical area. This assessment can provide activities with a baseline understanding of potential constraints and areas in need of adaptation. When repeated, it allows activities to understand the evolution of the context over time and adapt interventions. The seven dimensions, made up of 59 indicators, make up the overall stability score for a territory. A score of 0–1.5 means that the context is stable, and access remains regular with exceptional, sporadic interruptions. However, a score over 4.5 indicates the context is volatile and unpredictable; it requires constant monitoring, and access to sites and/or implementation is regularly disrupted.
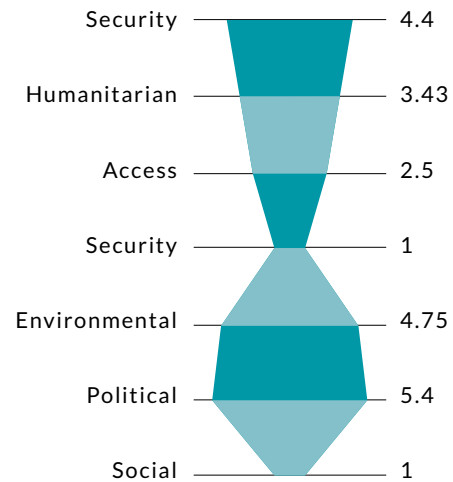

Dimension	Score
Security	4.4
Humanitarian	3.43
Access	2.5
Security	1
Environmental	4.75
Political	5.4
Social	1

FIGURE 6: SHAEPES Stability Score (3.56) for Uvira territory January-December 2022

The CAT's monthly displacement report relies on both primary and secondary data sources, like UNOCHA's internal displacement data,[25] UNOCHA's Humanitarian tool alerts,[26] and INSO alerts,[27] and triangulates the data with interviews to help teams understand rapidly changing contexts and plan the movement of resources (people, cash, vouchers, and emergency WASH interventions). Primary research includes weekly interviews with local administrative officials, health personnel, representatives of the army and armed groups, and humanitarian organizations active in Ituri, North Kivu, South Kivu, Tanganyika, and Maniema.[28] Continuous monitoring of displacement has allowed activities like SWASSA to make pivots after data showed an influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in North Kivu due to conflict. This led to an increase in free water distribution by other humanitarian actors and made the environment less suitable for SWASSA's private sector-based clean water access initiative.
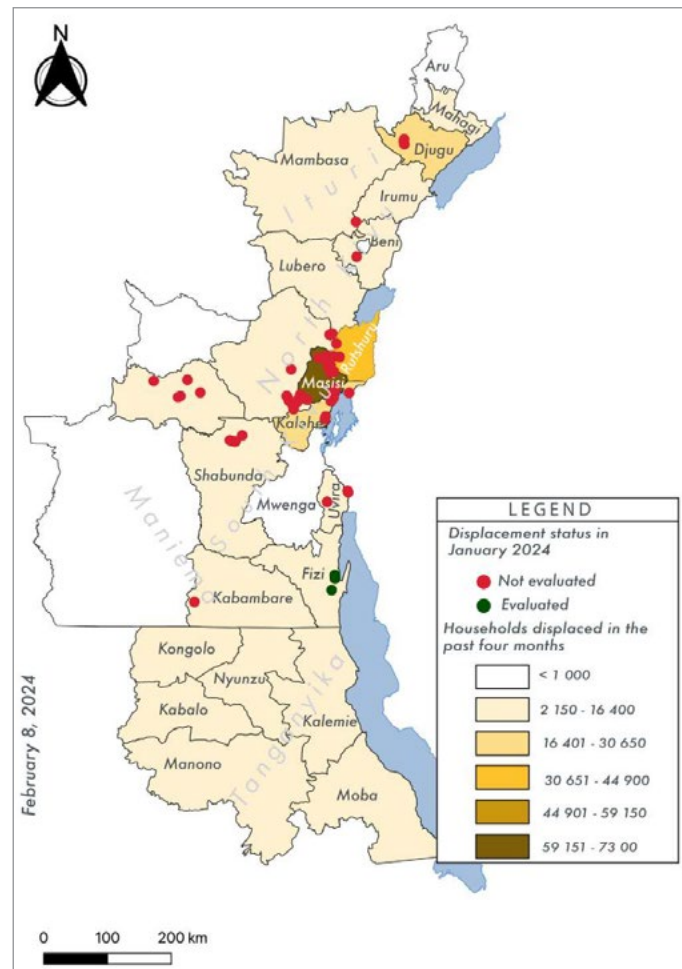

FIGURE 7: CAT monthly displacement reports

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25   UNOCHA. Internal Priorities – Internal Displacement.
26   UNOCHA Humanitarian Tools. Accessible here: https://ehtools.org/.
27   INSO Analysis Reports. Accessible here: https://ngosafety.org/analysis-reports/.
28   Mercy Corps (2023a).

The CAT also produces scenario reports from its forecasting tool (created from a variety of data sources) to help activities plan for different conflict scenarios based on their respective probability and severity.

The Scenarios for 2023 report drafted by the CAT presents a predictive model of four conflict-related crises that have significantly increased humanitarian needs in eastern DRC. These crises were identified through quantitative analysis of security incidents (i.e., incidents that restricted humanitarian access and/or caused large-scale displacement). Scenario reports are intended to guide strategic discussions with partners and donors on pre-planning and pre-positioning for the possible crises anticipated in the reports.[29]

FIGURE 8: Scenario report: Key drivers of insecurity and humanitarian crisis in eastern DRC

Due to an expanded mandate to provide direct support to Mercy Corps' development activities, the CAT expedited analysis by moving away from primary data collection and relying more heavily on secondary data sources from other humanitarian actors. A few staff members noted the efficiencies gained by this, but also emphasized a gap in routine analysis of the available data. CAT's analysis helps to fill that gap, and in circumstances where the CAT needs to further contextualize the results from secondary data sources, it can follow up with primary data collection via KIIs to better understand contextual dynamics.[30]

KEY METHODS OF SHARING ACROSS ACTIVITIES

The CAT employs several tactics to disseminate the trends in security, humanitarian access, market access, natural hazards that it has compiled from the SHAEPES index monitoring and other monthly monitoring reports to donors, activity and operational staff, and partners. Primary methods include organized debriefs, presentations, and reports, like scenario reports.

Data Analysis Presentations

The CAT debriefs activity teams and country leadership when data analysis for a country or regional context is completed. Because there is so much information that activities need to monitor, the CAT debriefings emphasize what is most relevant for each activity's interventions. While debriefing meetings can happen on a more ad hoc basis, the CAT is striving to strengthen the internal capacity of staff to utilize these reports independently. The CAT also provides debriefings to donors and takes part in quarterly and monthly monitoring donor meetings for activities like SWASSA. These debriefings give donors a better understanding of the changes in the conflict dynamics, especially in rapidly evolving areas like eastern DRC, where security issues may prohibit donors from visiting projects.

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29   Mercy Corps (2023b).

30   Ibid.

Centralizing Data

All the CAT's data analyses and reports are aggregated and organized on an internal DRC CAT website, which allows activities to access all relevant information by using a registration key (to protect sensitive data). Having the data accessible internally in one place can also encourage usage across activities.

Donor Reports

The CAT feeds into regular reporting to help make the linkage between shifting conflict dynamics, humanitarian access, and how this impact activity interventions and communities. SWASSA relies on the evidence-based scenario reports that the CAT produces to meet reporting requirements and to update assumptions and forecast changes in interventions.

Pause and Reflect Sessions

The SWASSA team has also used Pause and Reflect sessions to reflect on the CAT's monitoring data, asking teams to review activity assumptions from its log frame considering economic, social, and political changes.

Bi-Monthly Meetings

The CAT takes part in bi-monthly Director of Programs meetings alongside the Emergency Program Directors, the Chiefs of Party for development and peace activities, and the Program Performance and Quality Director to share information and make connections across activities.

Ezra Millstein / Mercy Corps, DRC

KEY ENABLING FACTORS FOR DATA SHARING

Several key enablers have helped to facilitate data and information sharing across Mercy Corps' DRC activities. Forward-looking leadership and dedicated resource support for the cost of data analysis have helped to create environments where data sharing is more systematic, up to date, valued, relevant, and less susceptible to activity funding disruptions.

Visionary Leadership
By reorganizing where the CAT sits within the organization, Mercy Corps hopes to promote robust and timely crisis analysis across activities to prevent backsliding, improve activity efficiency, and better anticipate participant needs. Now reporting to the DRC Country Director, the CAT Director is also part of the leadership team and can ensure that crisis analysis is plugged into higher-level discussions. This allows the CAT to engage directly with donors and repositions the CAT as a core element of activity support, similar to the Program Performance and Quality team and Technical Support teams, which support portfolios of programs. This structural change also made it easier for the CAT to spot new opportunities for collaboration with activities.

Overlapping Geographies
The CAT is trying to take a geographical approach to its support, as in Beni, where SWASSA, P-DEC, and the humanitarian activities all operate. These activity teams already co-locate offices and update each other on their interventions, which promotes a shared geographical approach.

Shared Resources for Conflict Analysis
While Mercy Corps currently spreads the cost of funding the CAT across multiple activities, it was previously tied to distinct activities. Internal advocacy is ongoing to independently fund its work and distribute its operational cost across the various activities it supports, pointing to the value it could have for the broader humanitarian community. The CAT learned that for their analyses to have more impact, reports also need to be shared with the operations and human resources teams, whose work is also impacted by changing contexts. Adapting existing interventions is difficult and having the support of an informed operations and human resources team can make this process smoother.

External Partnerships
The CAT's partnerships with REACH (market data),[31] UNOCHA (displacement alerts), and IOM (displacement tracking matrix)[32] are important to making data collection more efficient when feeding into displacement reports and monitoring tools like SHAEPES. For example, the SHAEPES indicators incorporate publicly available information from REACH on the percentage of price change of the Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) over the past three months and from UNOCHA on the number of protection incidents reported per 100,000 inhabitants.

In addition to relying on each other's data and information, there is a regular exchange of information with partners. This exchange happens at the protection cluster meetings where the UNOCHA and the CAT share displacement reports, and at working groups, such as the needs assessment group co-led by UNOCHA and REACH or the Accountability to Affected People group. More informal "coffee meetings" also take place bilaterally with partners or in small groups where the CAT shares specific studies, like the M23 Community Perception Tracker, and discusses what they mean for implementers. External partners who attended these coffee meetings found them to be important spaces for breaking down barriers between organizations that may feel like competitors and offering a space for collective problem-solving. Mercy Corps hopes that by sharing the CAT work with partners, they can help decrease the duplication of efforts in the sector.

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31   REACH Resource Center. Democratic Republic of Congo Country Overview.
32   UN IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix, available here: https://dtm.iom.int/.

BENEFITS OF DATA SHARING

In the DRC, the main benefits mentioned include:

- **Improved adaptive management capabilities.** Using shared data like context analyses and perception trackers has improved activities' understanding of security conditions and community perceptions of programming interventions that have the potential to disrupt activity effectiveness. This has allowed them to adjust where they are intervening in the case of armed conflict or focus efforts on building community acceptance when needed. Scenario reports also help activities anticipate conflict to be ready to pivot to new areas when needed.

- **Reducing duplication of effort.** By centralizing crisis analysis through the CAT, Mercy Corps has been able to streamline conflict monitoring to support all its humanitarian, development, and peace activities instead of having each activity perform its own analysis.

- **Improved activity efficiency.** Mercy Corps' CAT has expedited its data analysis process by prioritizing the use of secondary data sources. This has also reduced the cost of data collection and the time needed to produce analysis, making it more actionable for activities.

Ezra Millstein / Mercy Corps, DRC

Emnet Dereje / World Vision, Ethiopia

CASE STUDY 3:

Improving Programming Through Joint Data Sharing Activities in Ethiopia

This inter-activity case study highlights how the CRS-led emergency activity Joint Emergency Operation (JEOP) expanded its data sharing role beyond its humanitarian-focused consortium to other development-focused activities in Ethiopia. It details which JEOP data has been most useful for the Ifaa, SPIR II, and PReSERVE RFSAs, which operate in overlapping geographies with JEOP, how data sharing flows between partners and activities, and key factors for data sharing in this context.

JEOP is led by CRS and implemented by a consortium of partners, including CARE, World Vision, Food for the Hungry, the Relief Society of Tigray, the Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara, and local church partners Meki and Hararghe Catholic Secretariats. JEOP coordinates closely with the Government of Ethiopia's (GoE) Disaster Risk Management Commission to respond to emergency food assistance needs in four conflict- and drought-affected regions of Ethiopia. JEOP serves more than 8.5 million people and has been providing emergency food assistance over the last decade.[33] Together with the WFP and the GoE, JEOP is one of the largest food operators in the country.[34]

Ethiopia Programming by HDP Pillar

Humanitarian: Joint Emergency Operation (JEOP) | Latest iteration, 2008–ongoing
Funded by USAID/BHA

Development: Ifaa, RFSA led by CRS | 2021–2026
Funded by USAID/BHA

Development: Strengthen PSNP5 Institutions and Resilience (SPIR II), RFSA led by World Vision | 2021–2026
Funded by USAID/BHA

Development: Poverty Reduced Sustainably in an Environment of Resilient and Vibrant Economy (PReSERVE), RFSA led by Food for the Hungry | 2021–2026
Funded by USAID/BHA

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33   U.S. Department of State (2023).
34   Tadesse, M. (2021).

In addition, three USAID/BHA-funded RFSAs in Ethiopia, Ifaa,[35] SPIR II, and PReSERVE are managed respectively by CRS, World Vision, and Food for the Hungry. All three RFSAs run from 2021 to 2026 and support the GoE's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP5) with cash and food assistance, along with complementary livelihood, nutrition, and climate resilience interventions.

JEOP's data sharing activities developed organically, starting with a joint group email to share challenges and discuss solutions across HDP pillars and organizations. This evolved into a more structured approach that has served to develop the data management and analytical capabilities of various actors and further expand data sharing where opportunities arise. JEOP has committed to share data, such as retail and wholesale price monitoring and fast onset hazards, not only across its own consortium partners but also with the three RFSAs implemented separately by JEOP consortium members. This commitment was reinforced in the February 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), a coordinated strategy among humanitarian actors working across Ethiopia with the strategic objective of "starting recovery efforts and linkage to development actors."[36]

More recently, CRS' Ifaa RFSA has begun to share additional food security data from their MIRA resilience monitoring data collection tool with JEOP partners, leading to additional humanitarian programming benefits.
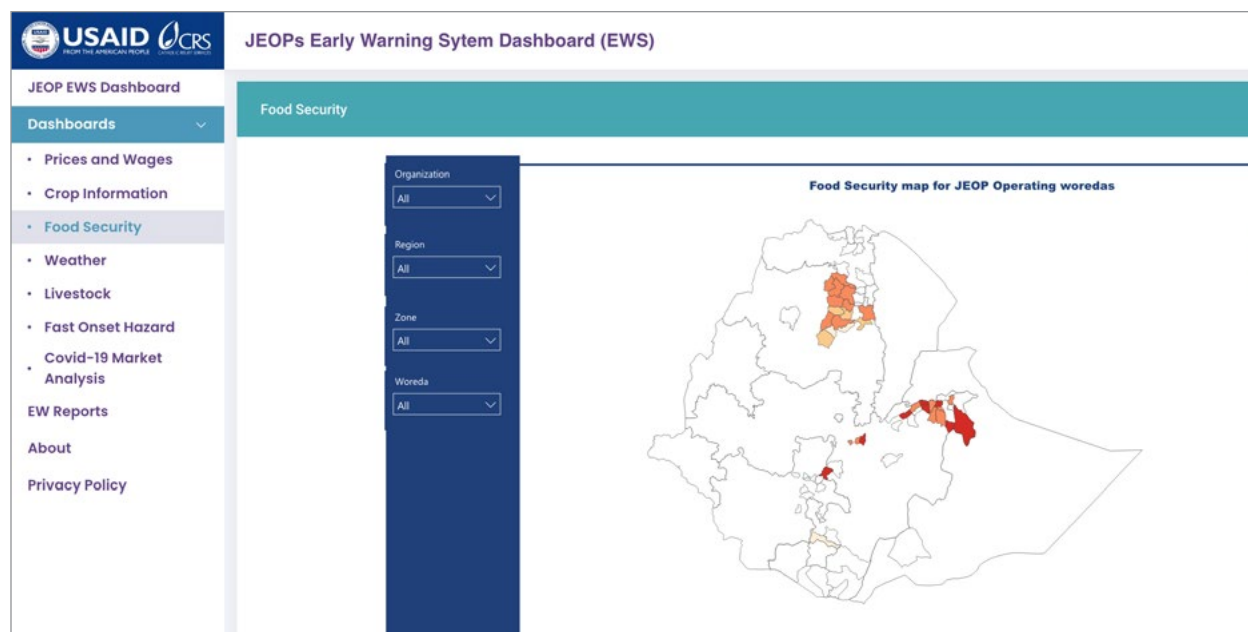
BACKGROUND

JEOP Data Sharing

FIGURE 9: JEOP early warning system dashboard: Food security map (Feb. 2023)

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35   Ifaa is Afaan Oromo for "light."

36   Humanitarian Response Plan Ethiopia: Humanitarian Programme Cycle. (2023, February 28).

JEOP currently shares information on food security status, livestock and food prices, weather patterns, and coping behaviors across the consortium and with the RFSAs. JEOP data also enables RFSA partners to triangulate with WFP and Ethiopian Statistics Bureau data to understand price trends by commodity and context.

During a KII, a RFSA staff member mentioned that triangulating their disaster risk reduction data (tracking shocks and weather patterns) with JEOP's early warning systems (EWS) data to spot outliers was immensely helpful. Combining data on commodities with shock monitoring in the region can trigger shock-responsive programming, such as seed distribution and other recovery interventions. Another key informant gave an example of learning about a locust outbreak through the dashboard, helping them to prepare for a response in their area. One interviewed RFSA staff member stated that JEOP EWS data can also be shared with the communities where RFSAs operate to warn them about shocks.

Ifaa RFSA Data Sharing

Similarly to the CRS RFSAs in Madagascar, Ifaa regularly shares data from MIRA with the other RFSAs in Ethiopia, SPIR II and PReSERVE,[37] as well as with JEOP teams implementing emergency interventions. Prior to launching MIRA data collection, Ifaa carried out a month-long consultation with partners and CRS staff via survey and in-person meetings on what information they needed, what was missing, and what would be useful for their work, to ensure the acceptance of the MIRA data by different stakeholders. CRS also consulted the GoE's early warning departments in the design process, who provided input into the survey questionnaires. This process helped the woreda (district)-level government understand what was possible to learn from MIRA and led to them expressing interest in using MIRA to complement their EWS information.

MIRA data includes food security indicators (e.g., dietary diversity scores, household food consumption score), the incidence and types of shocks and stresses faced, coping strategies, and livelihood strategies (e.g., asset ownership, income, access to credit), as well as how activity interventions impact households. It is collected on a monthly or quarterly basis, depending on the indicator. In collaboration with their learning partner Cornell University, CRS examines trends in the MIRA data, such as increases in negative coping strategies or increases in food insecurity, which informs necessary programming pivots.

Ifaa's MIRA data was useful to the JEOP team to identify the rise of fall armyworms, a crop pest, and to develop emergency programming to support responses to the pest damage in a timelier fashion than it would have otherwise. Ifaa also acted on this information to develop longer-term adaptations to this pest. MIRA data is shared through a dashboard during the MIRA monthly zonal meetings and at periodic technical sector working group meetings.

The MIRA data is collected in the areas where Ifaa operates and is, therefore, most useful for those who work in the same regions. However, USAID encourages CRS to share this information with activities beyond the RFSAs, such as the USAID Feed the Future Ethiopia-funded Resilience in Pastoral Areas (RiPA) North activity led by Mercy Corps. Collaboration across these activities, however, has not yet been realized due to the lack of overlap at the woreda level.

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37   USAID (2021).

FIGURE 10: MIRA Ethiopia dashboard: Most important shocks by woreda[38] [39]

KEY METHODS OF SHARING ACROSS ACTIVITIES

Technical Working Groups

JEOP formed a technical working group made up of representatives from each of its consortium members to jointly plan which indicators to measure, which data collection tools to use, and what reports were needed by various stakeholders, including the GoE. Based on feedback given in recent technical working group meetings, JEOP recently added a conflict indicator and hazard indicator to the dashboard. JEOP is also exploring nutrition interventions in the near future, which makes exchanging nutrition information with RFSAs more pertinent. The importance of this JEOP technical working group for coordination is highlighted in Ethiopia's most recent HRP, in which implementers committed to advancing HDP coherence by creating a technical-level HDP Nexus Task Force across all types of IPs with the aim to "promote overall coordination, shared analysis, implementation, and learning."[40]

Shared and Open Data Dashboards

In April 2023, JEOP launched a new interactive public data dashboard to display EWS data collected by the consortium. JEOP consortium partners regularly collect 28 indicators using a shared template which they then upload and analyze in a central database. The database and analysis are accessible to all consortium members, RFSAs, and other food security stakeholders for their own planning purposes. The main goal is to analyze the food security situation and to identify the participants to collectively target with interventions.

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38   District level.

39   CRS MIRA Dashboard: https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiNmM5NzExNjYtYjgzNy00MDZjLTk3ZGItOTM3MWE3YWVkNjAxIiwidCI6ImI4MG MzMDhjLWQwOGQtNGIwNy05MTVjLTExYTkyZDljYzZiZCIsImMiOjF9.

40   Humanitarian Response Plan Ethiopia: Humanitarian Programme Cycle (2023, February 28).
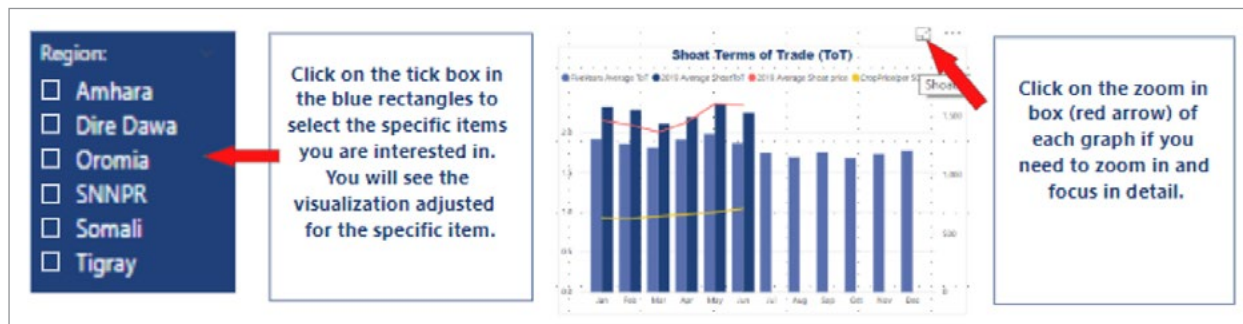
FIGURE 11: Screenshot of JEOP's early warning system dashboard[41]

The EWS dashboard aggregates data collected weekly by phone from 66 operational woredas in four regions. It includes information on market prices, wholesale prices, and fast-onset hazards. The dashboard's features allow for easy navigation of the site and enables users to delve deeper into the datasets by woreda and region or by factors like crop type. In addition, there are graphs that display indicators and trends on food security, weather patterns, and livestock prices.[42] The dashboard includes data visualizations conveyed through various dissemination channels regularly.

Monthly Zonal Meetings

JEOP organizes monthly zonal disaster meetings attended by humanitarian and development staff from various implementing agencies. Government representatives, implementing partners, WFP, UNOCHA, and USAID representatives are all invited. The zonal meetings have two main objectives: (1) to validate and triangulate JEOP's EWS dashboard data with implementers; and (2) to socialize the data on shocks and other indicators so activities can adjust their interventions and use the data for advocacy purposes. These monthly meetings also provide implementers with more information to support participant selection, as well as opportunities to discuss the previous month's jointly collected partner data. By monitoring, analyzing, and identifying trends, implementers have been able to anticipate and plan for lean seasons, improve population selection, and make decisions about the type and amount of support communities need. In addition, the meetings offer a space for organizations to help each other building skills around methods for data collection, data visualization, data cleaning, and data analysis. As of March 2023, these meetings have become the main channel for sharing MIRA data externally.

Implementers have also committed under Ethiopia's 2023 HRP to convene regular high-level meetings between the Development Partners Group (DPG) and the Humanitarian Country Team and to expand engagement between humanitarian and development clusters and working groups to address root causes of humanitarian need, bridging the gap between short-term and long-term needs.

Monthly Analytical Reports and Newsletters

JEOP publishes monthly analytical reports on the EWS dashboard site and sends out monthly newsletters that distill EWS data, market price data, food security and nutrition trends, and coping strategies, highlighting recommended interventions for each context. Key informants reported that the analysis in these publications greatly helped them understand the information reported in the dashboard.

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41   To access the dashboard, please create an account at this link: jeopews2.azurewebsites.net/.
42   Ibid.

However, key informants also recommend expanding the reach of JEOP data to all areas where the RFSAs operate, aligning it with other data sources (such as FEWS NET forecasts and WFP rapid assessments) and sharing it on a more expedient basis to make it even more useful. Quality analysis takes time, but there have been discussions about finding ways to disseminate information faster by both automating the data more and sharing raw data with partners.

Shared Management Information Systems

JEOP and RFSA implementers have exchanged knowledge and experience around MEL technology and systems. Ifaa worked with PReSERVE to develop a management information system (MIS) similar to the one Ifaa uses. To develop the MIS, Food for the Hungry met with CRS and World Vision to understand the various components of the system, such as CommCare for data collection, SQL for database management, and Power BI for data visualization. These exchanges strengthen the relationships between partners and encourage continued dialogue and sharing.
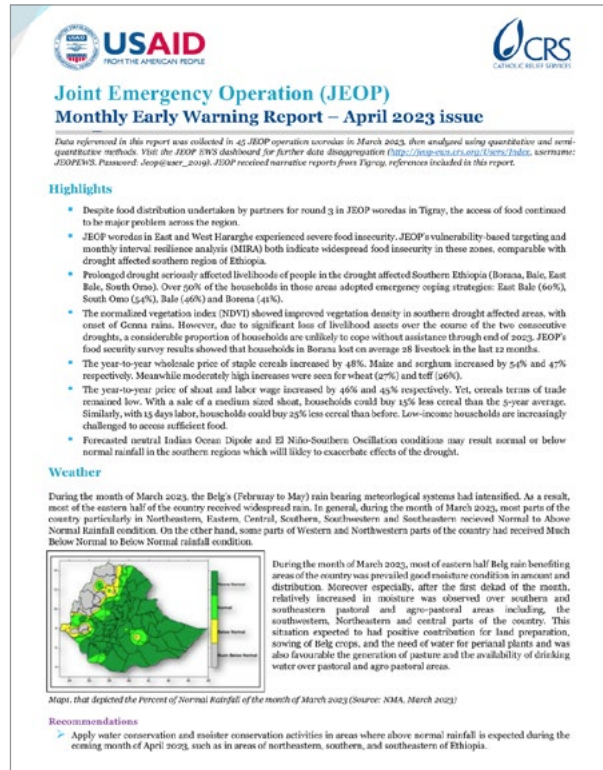

FIGURE 12: JEOP's monthly analysis report from April 2023

Emmet Dereje / World Vision, Ethiopia

KEY ENABLING FACTORS FOR DATA SHARING

Several key enablers have helped facilitate data and information sharing across the JEOP and RFSA teams in Ethiopia. Collaborative context-specific efforts such as creating specific budget lines for data sharing, prioritizing feedback mechanisms, and donor incentivization have helped facilitate an environment where data and information sharing is better resourced, relevant, and coordinated across various IPs and activities.

Budget Line Items for Data Sharing

A key enabler of data sharing across JEOPs and RFSAs is that many organizations have prioritized data sharing by creating distinct budget lines for these activities and including the data collection in job descriptions.

Prioritizing Feedback Mechanisms

As seen in JEOP Technical Working Group meetings, providing the space for IP feedback has made data collection more relevant to activities and can broaden its appeal for other international aid activities.

Country and Donor Incentivization

There has been a concerted effort by the GoE and USAID to incentivize greater coordination across HDP actors in Ethiopia through the establishment of key mechanisms like the HRP. As a response, implementers have invested in shared data platforms, technical working groups, and data sharing opportunities or events to create greater efficiencies in programming, reduce duplication of effort, and improve population targeting for interventions.

Stakeholder Overlap

Whether intentional or not, stakeholder overlap between JEOP and RFSA implementers meant that leadership at CRS, World Vision, and Food for the Hungry was aware of existing JEOP data collection infrastructure and could identify areas for expansion that would benefit RFSAs, though informants highlighted that these synergies were limited to activities with overlapping geographies.

Overlapping Geographies

As outlined in **Table 1** on the next page, there is considerable overlap in the operating areas of JEOP and the RFSAs led by JEOP members. This overlap has helped facilitate data sharing by raising awareness of JEOP's data collection efforts and encouraging data sharing among these activities working with target populations in the same areas.

Emnet Dereje / World Vision, Ethiopia

REGION/ZONE	WOREDA	JEOP	IFAA RFSA	SPIR II RFSA	PRESERVE RFSA
Oromia/ East Harage	Meta	x	x	x	
	Melka Belo	x	x	x	
	Midega Tola	x	x	x	
	Deder	x	x	x	
	Chinaksen		x		
	Fedis		x		
	Babile	x	x	x	
	Gursum		x		
	Jarso		x		
	Girawa	x		x	
	Kurfa Chele	x		x	
Oromia/ West Hararghe Zone	Chiro	x			
	Doba	x			
	Gamachis	x			
Amhara	Tsagbji	x		x	
Amhara/ North Wollo Zone	Bugna	x		x	
	Lasta	x		x	
Amhara/ Wag Hemra Zone	Dehana	x		x	
	Gazbibla	x		x	
	Soqota	x		x	
Amhara/ Southj Gondor Zone	Lay Gayint	x			x
	Simada	x			x
	Tach Gayint	x			x

TABLE 1: RFSA programming and geographic overlap (Woreda level) with JEOP

Strategic Leadership   Transforming a joint email into regular data sharing meetings involving humanitarian and development activity staff requires forward-thinking leadership that can see the efficiencies to be gained and can mobilize the necessary actors for planning and operationalizing data sharing.

Since MIRA analysis of food security indicators, shocks, and coping responses has been beneficial for Ifaa, expanding the collection of MIRA data and analysis to other woredas might make it useful to other implementers. In fact, efforts are underway to expand MIRA beyond Ifaa to include all the JEOP activity areas, and later to expand to 200 total woredas in Ethiopia. Securing funding for this expansion will be essential to realizing the goal of data and information sharing with more than one implementing partner or one consortium of partners. Increased socialization of the MIRA dashboard with partners could help to find use in indicators such as tracking shocks in similar agro-ecological areas (highland or lowland). Being open to further adjustments to the type of information collected and analyzed on either the JEOP or MIRA dashboards will be important to optimize its usefulness to other IPs. As MIRA collects more rounds of data and can better analyze trends, this information will become increasingly valuable to other partners.

BENEFITS OF DATA SHARING

In Ethiopia, the main benefits mentioned include:

- **Better population targeting.** The use of shared data platforms like Ifaa's MIRA and JEOP's EWS dashboard to improve understanding of food security conditions, shocks and stresses, and coping mechanisms has helped to refine household targeting and specific geography targeting based on need. For example, while JEOP and RFSAs overlap geographically and work within the same woredas, they target different participants with food and cash aid. JEOP targets the most vulnerable populations while RFSAs target less vulnerable populations.

- **More timely identification of problems.** As in the case of JEOP using MIRA data to identify the rise of fall armyworm infestation, sharing data across pillars can help activities identify needed interventions sooner to protect household livelihoods and assets.

- **Reducing duplication of effort.** JEOP's centralized data collection and assumption of the responsibility for analyzing market pricing (newly required for USAID RFSAs) have reduced duplication of effort and standardized analysis so that individual RFSAs did not have to develop their own data collection and analysis for this information.

- **Improved activity efficiency.** JEOP's basic market data on livestock prices and food distribution points has helped the SPIR II and PReSERVE RFSAs understand when to take goods to market and set expectations for pricing. JEOP information on food inflation has also been especially useful to RFSAs engaged in cash transfers to ensure that interventions are responsive to local prices.

Michael Mulford / World Vision, Ethiopia

OTHER EXAMPLES OF DATA SHARING

In addition to the examples in the case studies, USAID, other donors, and implementers have successfully leveraged data and knowledge sharing forums and platforms to help practitioners identify opportunities and tackle challenges to greater data sharing. Some examples include:

- ALNAP and FAO's Joint Learning Exchange—Evaluating the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus provided a forum for members (including donors, the UN, and NGOs) to discuss approaches to defining, measuring, and evaluating progress across HDP nexus programming, as well as difficulties in designing evaluation frameworks. This culminated in a synthesis paper on evaluation approaches, which builds on ALNAP's work to take stock of current HDP nexus efforts, highlighting the importance of defining collective outcomes across HDP pillars and the use of joint assessments. Ongoing challenges include the need for clearer operational guidance for HDP coherence, better integration of peace into strategies, tools, and partner guidelines and more 'trilingual' staff with the skills to work in fragile contexts.[43]

- IDEAL's Knowledge Sharing Series on HDP coherence in the Spring/Summer of 2022 brought humanitarian and resilience practitioners together for peer-to-peer learning exchanges to create shared understanding of HDP coherence, explore current practices and enabling factors for HDP coherence in different contexts, and problem-solve critical issues with peers. Under the thematic area of "Data for Decision-Making in HDP Coherence," sessions explored the use of context monitoring, resilience monitoring, crisis analytics, and local early warning systems to produce more timely decision-making in crisis-affected areas. Another session, Organizing for HDP Coherence: Country Teams' Perspectives, gave the example of a joint management unit for country offices in Jordan and Yemen which rotated management staff from humanitarian to development activities and vice-versa.[44]

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43   Morinière, L., Morrison-Métois, S. (2023).
44   Hiba Tibi, CARE (2022).

- The Ethiopia Resilience Learning Activity[45] and the Sahel Collaboration and Communication Activity[46] have been used to support greater coherence, cooperation, and coordination among partners in the same region or country. These USAID backbone support mechanisms promote joint work plans, harmonized results frameworks, evidence generation, and collaborating, learning, and adapting practices to support HDP-coherent programming.[47]

- The Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) Initiative, a backbone support mechanism in Northern Kenya, brings together national, regional, and local government entities, USAID partners, the Kenya National Drought Management Authority, and other implementers focused on resilience in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) districts to create a common results framework. PREG's model connects humanitarian, development, and peace activities in the same region, allowing them to share knowledge and resources around strategies, including conflict management and promotion of gender-responsive programming.[48]

- The Knowledge Sharing Platform on Emergencies and Resilience (KORE)[49] was developed by FAO and the OECD and aims to improve resilience against food insecurity and malnutrition by bringing actors involved in resilience work, data and information providers, analysts, and users, as well as MEL, knowledge management, and program specialists, together and shares best practices, strategies, and methodologies from resilience-focused FAO programs and other agencies to facilitate integration. Similarly, the Belgian government and IOM initiatives to coordinate in-country workstreams have improved coherence, collaboration, and coordination across different activities.[50]

- The UNOCHA Humanitarian Data Exchange is an example of a data platform that has been designed to accommodate multiple data types and structures, making the data available for any user to re-analyze for a variety of purposes.[51] The IPC Acute Food Insecurity, Acute Malnutrition, and Chronic Food Insecurity scales were designed to project and evaluate the severity of food security crises and the scope of the populations impacted, and to identify which interventions will be most effective.[52] This data is available for use by any food security practitioner operating in IPC countries. As a member of IPC, FEWS NET provides acute food insecurity data, as well as market pricing and agro-climatology, among others.[53]

- The Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCiS) activity's Community Real-Time Risk Monitoring System provides a unique example of a consortium's collaborative efforts to improve data collection, standardization, and decision-making. The system collects qualitative and quantitative indicators to measure warning signals of shocks and impacts from shocks to "harmonise members' internal early warning systems, encourage joint periodic shock monitoring and analysis, increase information value through synergy and adopt a common approach to triggering early action and the Crisis Modifier."[54]

45   ResilienceLinks (2023a).
46   ResilienceLinks (2023b).
47   USAID Resilience Leadership Council and Technical Working Group (2022).
48   USAID. Resilience Fact Sheet: Collective Impact and Resilience.
49   See FAO: https://www.fao.org/in-action/kore/background/es/.
50   OECD (2022).
51   Humanitarian Data Exchange: https://data.humdata.org/.
52   Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (2022).
53   FEWSNET. Accessed September 28, 2023: https://fews.net/data/acute-food-insecurity.
54   BRCiS (2021).

CONCLUSION

The three case studies in this report provide concrete examples of the data platforms, infrastructure, and mechanisms that activity implementers have utilized to improve coherence and coordination across HDP pillars. Ranging from shared dashboards and regular joint meetings to centralization of data collection and overlap in personnel, the organizations and activities mentioned have facilitated better data and information sharing across different HDP pillars.

Benefits of Data Sharing Across HDP Pillars

In all the case studies, two key benefits of data sharing across HDP pillars were explicitly mentioned by all interviewed staff: reduced duplication of effort and improved activity efficiency. Meanwhile, improved population selection and planning and adaptive management were mentioned by staff of organizations from two out of three case studies. Additional benefits included: better intervention sequencing and layering to protect project gains, reduced data analysis disruption, and more timely identification of problems.

BENEFITS MENTIONED IN ALL THREE CASE STUDIES

Reduced duplication of effort. A shared Power Bi dashboard was helpful for CRS Madagascar to identify which populations had already received food assistance and reduce duplication or double coverage of communities, especially when activities and interventions had begun to overlap with one another due to prolonged drought conditions and significant need. Similarly, CRS Madagascar's ability to leverage data/information like gender assessments or MIRA data from the Maharo RFSA, enabled RIMA and Tabiry to spend resources on providing more food aid instead of producing their own reports. In the DRC, by centralizing crisis analysis through the CAT, Mercy Corps could streamline conflict monitoring to support all its activities instead of having each one perform its own monitoring and analysis. Meanwhile, the JEOP activity in Ethiopia has demonstrated how centralizing market pricing information obviates the need for the individual RFSAs to develop their own data collection and analysis for this USAID-required information by standardizing it for Ifaa, SPIR II, and PReSERVE.

Improved activity efficiency. By utilizing Maharo RFSA staff (such as MEL and field officers) and other Maharo information (like the value chain and gender analysis), CRS' humanitarian-focused activities (Tabiry and RIMA) have been able to start up more quickly, achieve cost savings, and adjust interventions even before piloting them. In addition, Maharo's market price information has helped Tabiry and RIMA decide when they should purchase goods from local markets for their distribution programs, allowing activity funds to stretch further. In the DRC, Mercy Corps' CAT has expedited its crisis analysis output by leveraging data shared from secondary data sources for its context analysis, thereby reducing the cost of data collection and the time lags that often occur when waiting on primary data for analysis. This has allowed DRC activities to act more swiftly and efficiently.

BENEFITS MENTIONED IN TWO CASE STUDIES

Improved population selection and planning to ensure that activities are responsive to community needs. Interviewees from the Madagascar and Ethiopia activities noted that the use of shared data platforms, like the MIRA and JEOP's EWS dashboard, has improved understanding of food security conditions, shocks and stresses, and coping mechanisms across all pillars. This has helped humanitarian activities focus emergency aid on the most vulnerable communities and development activities decide where long-term interventions will have the most likelihood of having an impact. In Ethiopia, although JEOP and RFSAs overlap geographically, they target different participants with food and cash aid within the same woredas, with JEOP targeting the most vulnerable populations and individual RFSAs working with less vulnerable populations.

Improved adaptive management capabilities. In Madagascar, Tabiry was able to leverage learnings from the Maharo RFSA' gender analysis to adjust in its own activities. This included modifying selection criteria for female seed recipients after the gender analysis highlighted that some women have limited seed access within their households. In the DRC, using shared data like context analysis and perception trackers has improved activity teams' understanding of security conditions and community perceptions of programming interventions that have the potential to disrupt activity effectiveness, allowing them to adjust where they are intervening in the case of armed conflict, or focus efforts on building community acceptance when needed. Scenario reports also help activities anticipate conflict to be ready to pivot to new areas when needed.

UNIQUE BENEFITS MENTIONED IN ONE CASE STUDY

Better intervention sequencing and layering to protect programming gains. Utilizing the information from the MIRA and Power BI Dashboards, Maharo RFSA staff have been able to better sequence longer-term development interventions, such as livestock or seed distribution, to follow emergency food distributions. This has helped to solidify programming gains that may be lost when communities whose basic needs are not yet met are forced to sell goods for food.

Reduced data analysis disruption. In the DRC, Mercy Corps reduced disruptions to ongoing conflict analyses by sharing analysis across all activities and utilizing funding for data collection from multiple activity budgets instead of tying it to one activity's budget.

More timely identification of problems. In Ethiopia, JEOP partners used MIRA data to identify the rise of fall armyworm infestation and demonstrated how sharing data across pillars can help activities identify needed interventions sooner to protect household livelihoods and assets.

Challenges to Effective Data Sharing Across HDP Pillars

The difficulty in achieving greater coherence across humanitarian, development, and peace programming has been well documented. Many of the following core challenges identified by the global data community have also been echoed in the case studies. Nevertheless, efforts by the case study implementing partners and others demonstrate how implementers and partners are attempting to overcome some of these challenges.

- **Lack of geographic overlap in populations makes cross-utilization of data and information sharing difficult and less relevant.** Because data is often contextual and population-specific, it can be challenging to identify the usefulness of broadly shared information/data from other activities or interventions, especially when target populations vary, or data collection methodologies or indicators differ. This was noted in the case of data sharing across the three RFSAs in Ethiopia, Ifaa, SPIR II, and PReSERVE, which focus on distinct geographic areas. However, stakeholders in Ethiopia agreed that expanding the collection of MIRA data to other woredas would make it useful to other implementers. Efforts are underway to extend MIRA to the entire JEOP activity area and eventually to all 200 woredas in Ethiopia.

- **Data used for conflict can become outdated and requires upkeep to remain useful.** The time lag between data collection and analysis has often reduced activities' ability to leverage existing data sharing efforts and impact intervention planning. In the DRC, the CAT's routine context monitoring seeks to overcome this challenge of stagnant analyses through punctual conflict monitoring, scenario analysis, and periodic monitoring of trends in political stability, environmental hazards, market access, and prices that can inform activity assumptions.

- **Lack of investments in data collection and sharing.**[55] Funding remains a challenge, since using activity- and budget-specific resources can limit their usefulness when only focused on a set of activities and cause data disruption. In the DRC, where Mercy Corps has moved away from tying CAT support to specific activities by expanding its funding sources, several key informants re-emphasized the need for data collection and analysis funding that is independent of specific activities to prevent disruption and encourage more uptake of analysis by the humanitarian community.

- **Lack of staff capacity to interpret and use data across activities.** Staff capacity to interpret and use data is an obstacle shared in several of the case studies and was underscored in ALNAP's recent mapping of HDP nexus evaluations.[56] JEOP's EWS data dashboard or CRS' MIRA are useful for displaying the data and some analysis; however, they may not provide sufficient analysis to be relevant without further translation for staff. In the DRC, the CAT occasionally debriefs activity teams with their analysis and would like to strengthen the team's internal capacity to utilize these reports independently.

- **Lack of access to data and analysis.** Activities expressed concerns about maintaining data privacy and data integrity, especially when multiple parties can access platforms and analysis. Nevertheless, several key informants expressed concerns that the effectiveness of sharing data between activities could often be personality driven. Consequently, they recommended that activities expand access to shared data dashboards and analysis to ensure that more staff can engage with the data and are encouraged to do so.

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55   USAID Resilience Leadership Council and Technical Working Group (2022).
56   Morinière, L. & Morrison-Métois, S. (2023).

- **Lack of a standardized process for sharing data across organizations.**[57] Different reporting requirements can make it challenging to share information across organizations. However, efforts such as JEOP's data collection harmonization efforts in Ethiopia and other examples like CRS' Rapid Feedback Monitoring System (RFMS) in Malawi are unifying data and making data collection and analysis independent of activity budgets. RFMS, a rapid resilience monitoring system, combines MIRA and the World Bank's Survey of Well-Being through Instant and Frequent Tracking (SWIFT) data. RFMS uses representative sampling of the entire population so that it can be leveraged by the World Bank, USAID, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, CRS, and the Malawi National Statistics Office.[58]

- **The importance of monitoring progress on improved HDP coherence is not yet a priority for implementers.** ALNAP's recent mapping of HDP nexus evaluations found that further investments are needed in joint analysis and inter-organizational assessments. The mapping also called out the need for a collective monitoring or accountability framework with practical advice on indicators and how to document progress and for more investments in joint analysis and inter-organizational cooperation.[59]

Keys Lessons for Enabling Data Sharing Across HDP Pillars

The case studies included in this report demonstrate several practical lessons for promoting improved data sharing among humanitarian, development, and peace actors. Activities have created both formal and informal opportunities for greater sharing across HDP pillars by: (1) elevating the importance of data sharing through visionary leadership and dedicated staff; (2) conducting a systematic assessment of collective outcomes as the basis for data sharing; (3) routinely sharing context changes and monitoring with actors across the HDP spectrum; (4) establishing and utilizing shared data platforms and shared data analyses; (5) leveraging shared assessments to improve activity delivery; (6) utilizing shared organizational structures and budgets; (7) engaging early and continuously to ensure data sharing is meaningful; and (8) prioritizing external partnerships.

Visionary leadership can drive data sharing across HDP pillars.

Many respondents for the case studies highlighted that the impetus or success of data sharing initiatives was often based on champions within organizations. CRS' country level management in Madagascar underscored the importance of sharing and collaborating by instituting a cross-activity monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) team, establishing a data sharing mandate for its Maharo RFSA with others working in the same area, creating shared spaces for information sharing, and identifying resources for this effort. In Ethiopia, several implementing agencies appointed dedicated staff to collect data jointly, such as for EWS data, signaling the importance of collaboration across activities. In the DRC, leadership elevated the CAT to management level in the country office to demonstrate how crucial context monitoring is for all their activities.

Identifying common goals through a systematic review of collective outcomes across HDP pillars is an important starting point for data sharing.

CRS' regular data sharing meetings in both Madagascar and Ethiopia help coordinate across programming, determine where overlapping mandates occur, and identify collective outcomes, especially in fragile contexts where development and humanitarian activities both operate. These meetings offer opportunities for dialogue about which metrics are important to capture progress toward those goals and lessons and information gaps, that are applicable to more than one activity, as well as identification of new opportunities for collaboration and complementarity across data collection, analysis, or interventions.

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57   IDEAL (2022, June 14).
58   Yoshimura, K et al. (2022).
59   Morinière, L. and Morrison-Métois, S. (2023).

Regularly covening HDP actors to share context changes and MEL data is key for better coherence.

Regular meetings in Madagascar between development-focused Maharo staff and humanitarian-focused Tabiry and RIMA staff enabled the latter activities to learn about and utilize local structures that Maharo either supported or established for their own work. In Ethiopia, JEOP's early warning data on food and livestock prices and coping strategies is used by both the JEOP consortium and the local development activities operating in the same areas to monitor context changes that could impact their interventions. In the DRC, the CAT shares reports with the operations, human resources, and activity teams and has found that briefings are more effective than reports in getting staff to engage with the information shared.

Establishing and utilizing shared data platforms and analyses can result in more accessible and effective learning.

Sharing and consolidating data analysis and dashboards across activities can help reduce costs and duplication of effort. For example, highlighted in all the case studies, was the use of shared data systems and platforms like CommCare and Power BI to share data from JEOP's EWS dashboard, CRS' MIRA, and Mercy Corps' CAT informs decisions to adjust programming or locations based on context changes and urgent needs of communities, according to study respondents. Consolidating data analysis and dashboards can help reduce costs and duplication of effort, as in the case of the JEOP consortium. Although the use of real-time data via Power BI dashboards is still evolving and requires additional staff training, MEL staff and/or research partners report using the data to produce regular reports and analyze the data collected to support staff with their work.

Leveraging shared assessments across HDP pillars can improve activity delivery.

Although less formalized, the case studies highlight how implementers are sharing assessments from already established activities with others. The Tabiry and RIMA humanitarian activities in Madagascar, which share the same geographic and population focus, have leveraged Maharo's gender and value chain assessments. Using these assessments obviated the need to conduct their own and allowed them to build on existing knowledge to better focus interventions, navigate local contexts better, and launch more quickly. Since humanitarian programming is often short-term and based on one-year cycles, performing intensive gender or value chain assessments could have delayed the activities' ability to roll out quickly. Pre-established development programming can also alert humanitarian teams to unanticipated issues that may disrupt aid distribution.

Centralizing organizational structures and budgets can cut costs and promote shared data resources.

Operational decisions, such as co-locating or sharing activity offices, can informally provide opportunities for humanitarian, development, and peace activity staff to share experiences and knowledge, including on conflict sensitivity approaches that consider conflict and peace dynamics. In Madagascar, development-focused Maharo staff not only share office space with humanitarian-focused Tabiry and RIMA staff, but in certain instances staff members worked across multiple activities. As mentioned earlier, utilizing existing staff from Maharo helped to accelerate start-up time for newer humanitarian activities. The fluidity of staff between these three activities encouraged more data sharing across activities and also helped Tabiry and RIMA capitalize on lessons learned by Maharo.

Pooling budgets to provide cross-cutting support, such as monitoring data, to activities ensures they are well placed to make connections and understand when data could be used by various activities working across the HDP pillars. In the DRC, the Mercy Corps' CAT works across humanitarian, development, and peace activities. In the Ethiopia, humanitarian and development data teams work closely together, even sharing the same workspace in some cases, strengthening their capacity by participating in routine joint meetings to review the implications of their shared datasets and discussing additional data sharing opportunities.

Early and continuous engagement can ensure data sharing is meaningful for all parties.

To ensure that data and information are relevant and valuable for USAID-funded activities, like PReSERVE, SPIR II, and RiPA North, coordinating bodies like JEOP not only need to engage implementers from the onset to understand what information, indicators, and metrics are most useful for activities, but also to communicate with partners as platforms are developed to understand what new members and activities need and how their needs evolve. JEOP has shown that centralizing certain types of data collection and analysis, as with their EWS dashboard, is possible across consortium members. Further, working to standardize data collection and harmonize indicators across partners ensures that data can be fully utilized and allows activities and donors to better assess which interventions are working best in specific contexts. Importantly, the joint planning and coordination of targeting for cash disbursement activities under JEOP provided a foundation that the consortium can build on for collective action.

Partnerships can be utilized to make data sharing more efficient.

Leveraging external partnerships for formal and informal data sharing can lead to important efficiency gains. For example, Mercy Corps' CAT leveraged external data through partnerships with REACH, UNOCHA, and IOM to improve the efficiency of data collection for its displacement reports and SHAEPES monitoring. In addition, the CAT regularly exchanges information with partners in formal and less formal ways, through cluster meetings, and working groups, and ad hoc meetings, that increased the reach of its data analysis and resulted in minimizing duplication of efforts in the sector. In Madagascar, activity staff from both the development-focused Maharo and humanitarian-focused Tabiry noted the practice of using IPC data and National Cluster information, as extremely useful in preventing duplication of effort where other organizations are working.

Michael Mulford / World Vision, Ethiopia

Case Study Consultations

ORGANIZATION	ACTIVITY/PROJECT	COUNTRY
Mercy Corps	Crisis Analytics Team (CAT)	Democratic Republic of the Congo
Mercy Corps	DRC Country Office	Democratic Republic of the Congo
CRS	Ifaa RFSA	Ethiopia
CRS	JEOP	Ethiopia
Food for the Hungry	JEOP	Ethiopia
CRS	Maharo	Madagascar
CRS	RIMA	Madagascar
Land O'Lakes Venture 37	Maharo	Madagascar
CARE	SPIR II	Ethiopia
Cornell Univ	MIRA	USA
UNHCR	Protection Monitoring	Democratic Republic of the Congo
Mercy Corps	Resilience in Pastoral Areas (RiPA) North	Ethiopia
World Vision, Ethiopia	SPIR II	Ethiopia
Mercy Corps	Sustainable Water & Sanitation Systems Activity (SWASSA)	Democratic Republic of the Congo
Mercy Corps	T4D and Crisis Analytics	USA
CRS	Tabiry	Madagascar
LINC	USAID Ethiopia Resilience Learning Activity	Ethiopia
Mercy Corps	Sahel Collaboration, Communication and Coordination	West Africa Region
ALNAP	Research	UK

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