BRIEF

Somalia | Household-Level Loss and Damage from the 2025–2026 Drought

April 2026

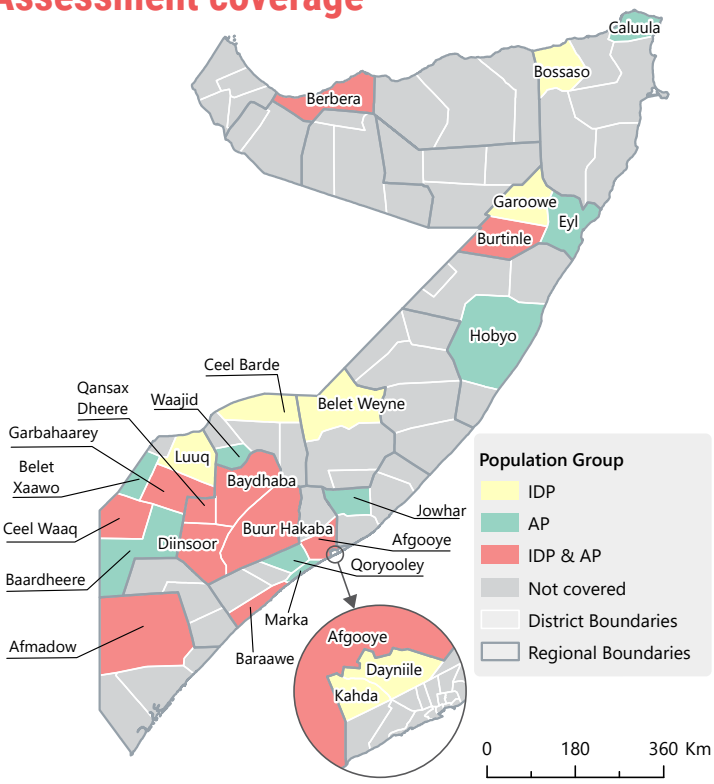
CONTEXT & RATIONALE

In late November 2025, the Federal Government of Somalia formally declared a drought emergency. By December 2025, OCHA reported that 4.61 million people had been affected by the drought nationwide, with at least 120,000 people displaced from the most affected areas between September-December 2025, and at least 75,000 students forced to drop out of school (OCHA, 2025). The most affected regions were located across northern, central, and southern Somalia. The drought affected households that had not yet recovered from losses associated with earlier droughts.

Somalia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC 3.0) and National Adaptation Plan estimate past climate-related losses at 3.3% of GDP, while recognising that national-level figures can obscure the impacts borne by pastoral and agropastoral households. Both frameworks call for better documentation of the poverty traps and negative coping strategies associated with recurrent droughts. Access to loss and damage finance and its equitable allocation to affected populations, depends on evidence at household level.

REACH therefore piloted a household survey to measure economic loss and damage (ELD) and document non-economic losses (NELs), helping bridge the gap between national loss estimates and household experiences.

Assessment coverage



IDP: Districts in which drought-displaced populations were assessed

AP: Districts in which existing populations affected by the drought were assessed

IDP & AP: Districts in which both drought-affected existing populations and drought-displaced populations were assessed

KEY MESSAGES

66-74%

of farming households did not plant during the 2025 Deyr season, and most of those who did harvest produced less than half of a typical year's yield.

91-98%

of livestock-owning households reported livestock losses, with average herd sizes declining from 33 to 8 animals in one year.

65%

of IDP households, as of April 2026, on average across nine resilience statements, did not believe that they could withstand another drought.

18 USD/month

average gap between household food spending and the minimum food basket required to meet basic food needs (April 2026 compared with April 2025)

Methodology

Between 12–27 April 2026, REACH surveyed 3,852 households across drought-affected districts, including 2,051 drought-affected non-displaced households and 1,801 drought-displaced IDP households. Districts were selected using the FAO SWALIM Combined Drought Index (CDI) and displacement trends, targeting areas most affected by drought, arrival districts, and both. The survey documented ELD and NELs and assessed resilience and coping strategies. Findings are representative at district level (90% confidence level, 10% margin of error). Results should be interpreted with caution due to reliance on retrospective recall and the exclusion of some inaccessible districts.

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KEY FINDINGS

1. Resilience perception: IDPs far less prepared for the next shock

Drought was the main reason for displacement (99%). Among IDPs, more than half of households (55%) reported that some members of their household had remained in their previous location, along with some assets that they now considered lost (see table below). In addition, 40% of households reported that their previous location was in one of three main districts: Baydhaba (15%), Afgooye (13%), or Qoryooley (11%). Pull factors that led households to choose their current location included access to food and water, opportunities for economic activities and improved security.

Households reporting they do not feel...	*Non-displaced*	*IDP*
...prepared for another drought	*45%*	*76%*
...able to bounce back in livelihoods and income	*48%*	*75%*
...they have access to financial support if needed	*47%*	*71%*
...they can rely on support from family and friends	*43%*	*65%*
Average across all nine resilience statements	***45%***	***65%***

Vulnerability accumulated before the 2025 drought

The results indicate that many households, particularly IDPs, did not enter the 2025 drought with fully recovered resources from previous droughts. Respondents frequently described losses from previous droughts, displacement, and livelihood disruptions from which they had never fully recovered. As a result, households often face the new drought with already depleted assets, income sources, social networks and coping capacity. This complicates loss and damage assessments: measuring losses only from the latest shock risks overlooking the cumulative impacts of repeated crises.

Implications for loss and damage compensation

The findings suggest that support should not be based solely on losses incurred during a single drought event. For many households, particularly drought-displaced households, resilience has already fallen below the minimum conditions needed to cope with future shocks. Loss and damage financing may therefore need to consider both recent losses and existing recovery gaps, helping households maintain the minimum assets, income and services required to withstand future climate shocks.

2. Understanding drought-related losses and damages

Economic loss and damage (ELD) refers to impacts that can be measured in monetary terms, such as lost income, damaged productive assets, or higher household expenditures. Non-economic losses and damages (NELs) are impacts that cannot be fully valued in monetary terms, including health, social ties, cultural practices, and sense of place. The table below illustrates how household-level drought impacts reported in this assessment span both economic and non-economic dimensions.

	Economic (monetisable)	Non-economic (non-monetisable)
Damages: infrastructure, assets and stocks	• Livestock deaths and herd depletion • Failed harvests and crop losses • Housing / shelter damage (roofs, walls) • Soil degradation and loss of productive land • Drying of water sources	• Homes and land left behind through displacement • Degradation of ecosystems that support livelihoods
Losses: income, services, wellbeing or opportunities	• Loss of livelihoods and household income • Reduced livestock revenue and falling animal prices • Food expenditure gap below minimum food basket requirements • Increased water, health and education-related costs • Reduced agricultural production	• Loss of place attachment and community identity • Heat-related illness among household members • School dropout and learning loss • Displacement and loss of territory • Family separation and weakened social networks • Loss of traditions and indigenous knowledge • Reduced sense of security, dignity and belonging

3. Household drought impacts across sectors

ECONOMIC LOSSES & DAMAGES (ELD)

Livelihood & Income

	Non-displaced	IDP
Income or livelihoods disappeared	**67%**	**72%**

Named by 69% of households overall as the single biggest impact of the drought

Agriculture & Livestock

	Non-displaced	IDP
Did not plant in the 2025 Deyr season	**66%**	**74%**
Harvested less than half, or nothing, of a typical year	**73%**	**89%**
Lost livestock	**91%**	**98%**

Herd sizes fell from an average of 33 to 8 animals per household in a single year, while selling prices fell too (goats $60-50). Households lost value and volume at the same time. Livestock revenue fell by $42 per household over six months.

Food Security

	Non-displaced	IDP
Household monthly food expenditure decrease (April 2026 vs April 2025)	**8%**	**33%**

Overall, average monthly food expenditure decline by approximately 20%, from USD 79 in April 2025 to USD 63 in April 2026. The decline was considerably larger among IDP households (USD 82 to USD 55) than among non-displaced households (USD 75 to USD 69). Average food spending remained USD 18 per month below the minimum food basket.

Water

	Non-displaced	IDP
Not enough water for household needs	**52%**	**65%**
Water simply not available	**26%**	**30%**

Water prices remained stable for non-displaced households and declined among IDPs, likely reflecting increased reliance on free or lower-quality water sources rather than improved access.

Shelter & Housing

	Non-displaced	IDP
Shelter damage reported: roofs, walls, etc.	**95%**	**99%**
Cannot afford to repair the damage	**60%**	**75%**

Among IDPs, home ownership fell sharply following displacement, with most households now living in hosted accommodation. Shelter losses were often absorbed through poorer living conditions and less secure tenure rather than repaired.

Health

	Non-displaced	IDP
Health facilities reporting water shortages that disrupted operations	**36%**	**47%**

More than half of all households reported increased health-related spending, though exact amounts were not captured in this pilot assessment.

NON-ECONOMIC LOSSES (NEL)

Life and well-being

	Non-displaced	IDP
Household members felt ill or unwell due to heat (sometimes/ often)	**75%**	**85%**
Children not attending school because of the drought	**92%**	**97%**

More than half of households reported repeated heat-related illness, most commonly dehydration and heat exhaustion, particularly among children and older persons. Meanwhile, 67% faced greater difficulty accessing healthcare, 64% lacked a health facility within one hour walking distance, and 53% reported higher health-related spending.

School absences and learning losses were also widespread.

Human mobility and territory

	Non-displaced	IDP
Displacement named among the drought's biggest impacts	**20%**	**58%**
Village disappeared as a result of mass displacement	**5%**	**13%**

Displacement was perceived as the second-biggest impact overall, right after the collapse of income and livelihoods. At least 120,000 people were displaced nationally between September and December 2025 (OCHA).

Sense of place and social cohesion

	Non-displaced	IDP
Family separation	**17%**	**34%**
Separation from neighbours and friends	**15%**	**32%**

The support networks households most often rely on in a crisis were disrupted by displacement, weakening the safety net that would normally help them cope.

Cultural heritage & indigenous knowledge

	Non-displaced	IDP
Stopped practicing traditions, or lost them altogether	**3%**	**6%**

Livestock ownership in Somalia carries meaning well beyond its market price - it is a marker of identity and status, so its loss is a cultural loss, as well as an economic one.

Biodiversity and ecosystem

	Non-displaced	IDP
Loss of soil on household land	**2%**	**2%**

Land degradation can have lasting effects by reducing agricultural productivity even after drought conditions have ended.

4. Household losses and damages: a cost summary

The table below translates survey findings into cost items relevant for assistance, compensation and future Loss and Damage assessments. While several important cost categories could not be monetised, the findings point to a substantial household-level economic burden.

Livestock-owning households alone reported average asset losses of approximately $1,000-$1,080, in addition to losses in income, agricultural production and food security. The estimates presented here should therefore be interpreted as a conservative lower-bound estimate of household economic loss and damage.

Sector	Cost item	Cost category	Cost estimate	Cost description
Livestock	**Herd mortality** (replacement value of animals lost)	Asset replacement [ELD]	**~$1,000–$1,080** per livestock-owning household	Based on reported reduction in herd sizes and median livestock prices. Excludes camels, cattle and donkeys.
	Foregone livestock income (milk, meat, eggs and livestock sales)	Revenue loss [ELD]	**$42** per household over six months	Estimated decline in livestock-related revenue between October 2025 and April 2026 (95% CI: $29–$57).
	Emergency fodder, water trucking, veterinary care	Emergency response burden [ELD]	Not costed	Reported by 13–36% of livestock-owning households; expenditure amounts were not collected.
Agriculture	**Failed Deyr 2025 harvest**	Production loss [ELD]	Indicative estimate: **~$85–$120** per farming household	Survey data showed that 81% of farming households harvested less than half of a typical year's production. Applying FAO estimates that Deyr 2025 production was approximately 75% below average, together with an assumed cultivated area of one hectare per household, typical smallholder yields and prevailing cereal prices, suggests losses of this magnitude. As cultivated area, harvest quantities and prices were not collected, this estimate should be treated as indicative.
	Drought-response investments (irrigation, boreholes, water trucking, soil restoration)	Adaptation expenditure [ELD]	Not costed	Identified among 9–21% of farming households; expenditure amounts were not collected.
Water & sanitation	**Increased cost and reduced access to drinking water**	Household financial burden [ELD]	Not costed	Water access deteriorated, but available data do not support a reliable household-level monetary estimate.
Food security	**Gap between food expenditure and the Food Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB)**	Unmet minimum needs [ELD]	**~$108** over six months	Household food expenditure remained, on average, $18 per month below the minimum food basket, indicating the additional resources required to meet minimum food consumption standards.
Shelter & housing	**Dwelling lost through displacement**	Asset loss [ELD]	Not costed	61% of displaced households reported losing access to a house and 51% to land considered unrecoverable.
	Roof and wall damage to dwellings	Reconstruction [ELD]	Not costed	Housing damage was widespread (95–99% of households), but repair costs were not collected.
	Household assets left behind or considered unrecoverable	Asset replacement [ELD]	Indicative estimate: **~$70–$145** per IDP HH	Based on indicative replacement costs for commonly reported unrecoverable household assets among displaced households, including clothing (33% of IDP households), sleeping items (33%), kitchen utensils (30%) and baby items (19%).

Sector	Cost item	Cost category	Cost estimate	Cost description
Life & health	**Increased health expenditure**	Household financial burden [ELD]	Not costed	More than half of households reported increased health-related expenditures, but expenditure amounts were not collected.
	Drought-attributed deaths and widespread illness	Life and health loss [NEL]	Not costed	Approximately one in five households reported a drought-related death; 75–85% reported heat-related illness or poor health.
Education	**School absence, withdrawal**	Human capital loss [NEL]	Not costed	Between 92-97% of households reporting school absence among children indicated that the absence was due to drought.
Human mobility & territory	**Displacement,** village disappearance, loss of land access	Human mobility and territory loss [NEL]	Not costed	Displacement was identified as one of the drought's largest impacts, particularly among IDPs.
Sense of place & social cohesion	**Family and social network separation**	Social cohesion loss [NEL]	Not costed	Family separation was reported by 24% of households and separation from neighbours or friends by 23%.

CONCLUSION

The 2025–2026 drought imposed substantial economic and non-economic losses on households across Somalia. Beyond widespread crop failure, livestock losses, food insecurity and displacement, findings show that many households entered the drought already weakened by previous shocks. Drought-displaced households were consistently less resilient than non-displaced households, suggesting that losses are accumulating across successive droughts rather than being fully recovered between events.

The pilot assessment demonstrates that household-level Loss and Damage can be systematically measured and linked to sector-specific impacts and costs. It also shows that assessments focused solely on the most recent drought risk underestimating the cumulative losses experienced by households over time.

The assessment also demonstrates how household-level surveys can strengthen Loss and Damage estimation. By combining the proportion of households reporting specific losses with market prices, replacement costs, and population statistics, household-level findings can be used to estimate losses at district, regional, and national levels. This approach helps translate reported impacts into indicative economic values and provides a clearer picture of who is affected, what they lose, and where losses are most concentrated.

Key implications

1. Drought losses extend beyond the most recent shock.

Many households reported entering the 2025–2026 drought before fully recovering from previous crises, suggesting that Loss and Damage assessments should consider accumulated impacts over time.

2. Drought displacement is associated with higher levels of loss and lower resilience.

Across livelihoods, assets, social support and resilience indicators, drought-displaced households consistently reported worse outcomes than non-displaced households.

3. Household-level evidence is essential for understanding Loss and Damage impacts.

National loss estimates provide an important overview of economic impacts, while household-level assessments help identify who bears losses, how impacts differ across population groups, and where recovery gaps remain.

4. Loss and Damage assessments should capture both incurred losses and unmet recovery needs.

The food expenditure gap identified in this pilot illustrates how households may remain below minimum levels required to meet basic needs and maintain resilience, even after the immediate shock has passed.

5. Household-level evidence can help bridge the gap between reported impacts and Loss and Damage financing needs.

The pilot shows that household experiences of drought can be translated into measurable loss categories and indicative costs, providing a foundation for financing requirements.

ABOUT REACH

REACH facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, Acted and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).

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