

Incorporating social impacts analysis into the post-disaster response¹

Why analyze the social impacts of a disaster?

The strength of post-disaster recovery and reconstruction efforts lies with how well they respond to the needs of affected people. Well-designed programs start with an understanding of local realities and channel appropriate resources to help support the priorities and needs of affected communities. This promotes accountability and community ownership, enables government and other aid providers to target resources effectively and, through avoiding waste and poor targeting, leads to better results on the ground.

The Post-Disaster Needs Assessment and Recovery Framework (PDNA/RF) has become the primary tool through which national governments assess the physical, economic and human impact of natural disaster, and identify recovery needs and priorities. In recent years, Government counterparts in countries affected by disasters have frequently chosen not to implement full-blow PDNAs and have increasingly opted for shorter or sector-specific post-disaster assessments. These assessments continue to draw on the PDNA methodology, which is then adapted to suit the specific needs and requirements of implementing Governments.

The PDNA methodology draws on the Damage and Loss Assessment (DaLA) methodology developed by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). The methodology identifies and quantifies the extent of damage and loss caused by both natural and human-made disasters, and is particularly well suited to capturing the ‘what’ and ‘where’ of a disaster response. In addition, the PDNA methodology updated in 2014 highlights the importance of collecting qualitative information across the 18 thematic areas of the PDNA (sectoral and cross-sectoral) to more fully assess the human impact of disasters from the perspective of affected populations and inform the Recovery Framework.

Post-Disaster Social Impact Analysis (SIA) builds and complements the updated PDNA methodology. It offers a rigorous and systematic approach to conducting qualitative analysis in a post-disaster setting. It picks up where PDNA guidance leaves off by providing Government counterparts and PDNA implementation teams with very practical tools and guidance on *how to* capture post-disaster social impacts in an often very compressed time-frame.

The use of social impacts analysis enables issues that would otherwise remain hidden to be identified. In-depth interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation², because they are open-ended and in-depth, enable researchers to understand the perspectives of affected community members and allow new, emerging issues to be identified and explored. These can include insights on local perceptions of need, exclusion, feedback on design and performance of recovery programs, more tailored priority-setting, and information on early warning, especially for sensitive issues such as emerging conflict and corruption. The mix of quantitative and qualitative methods strengthens and expands the type and range of information that is available to key government and other stakeholders in the aftermath of disaster.

¹ This briefing note introduces post-disaster social impacts analysis to PDNA leaders and coordinators. More detailed information can be found in the accompanying summary note and guidance note.

² Further details of these research domains and instruments can be found in the accompanying guidance note.

The social impacts methodology is particularly helpful in identifying whether particular social groups or areas are (at risk of being) excluded from rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. Incorporating such analysis into the PDNA and its recovery framework as well as into post-disaster programs enables the needs captured by the analysis to be used as the basis for resource mobilization and allocation and establishes a baseline for subsequent monitoring. Conducting such analysis as part of a PDNA can help identify such issues early, expanding the range of information available to government and other aid providers and enabling the reconstruction framework to be tailored better to community-level social realities and broader social risk management needs.

After Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, for example, the social impacts analysis revealed that affected households faced a spiralling problem of debt and high interest rates, and that, although casual labourers had been severely affected by the cyclone, they were hurt more structurally by the lack of recovery assistance being given to landowning farmers, who had been overlooked in aid programs and so were unable to recapitalize their farms and rehire casual labourers. Gathering such information enabled the recovery effort to be more responsive to local realities and accountable to affected communities.

In the Philippines, the social impacts analysis highlighted issues of governance, social accountability, negative coping strategies and impacts on vulnerable groups. For example, it found evidence of lack of information about potential sources of assistance leading to a high degree of uncertainty among the affected population, and of significantly different roles played by municipalities and *barangays*³. As a result, several interventions were incorporated into the PDNA framework, including community block grants, systematic consultation for the relocation of affected communities, and cash transfers for vulnerable groups.

What is post-disaster social impacts analysis?

Post-disaster social impacts analysis is the process of assessing, monitoring, analyzing and managing the social consequences of disasters and post-disaster aid efforts.⁴ It can be undertaken in the wake of a disaster (social impacts assessment) and periodically during the post-disaster period (social impacts monitoring). In both cases, the main research instruments are in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, informal interviews, short surveys and participant observation.

³ Villages

⁴ Non disaster-specific social impacts assessment aims at assessing, monitoring and managing the likely social consequences of policy and development interventions in order to minimize their negative impacts and maximize their positive benefits.

The research domains generally include the following:

Research Domains	
<p>Relief and recovery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government capacity to respond • Patterns of support • Targeting, equity, vulnerability • Process of delivery • Decision-making and accountability • Communications • Perceptions of the aid effort • Resolution of aid-related problems 	<p>Social relations and cohesion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social composition • Relations among social groups (gender, age, ethnicity, religion), including migrants • Relations between villages/neighborhoods • Collective action • Access to social justice/social protection • Crime and violence
<p>Socioeconomic impacts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livelihoods • Access to capital and indebtedness • Impact on land and other resources • Migration • Displacement (temporary or permanent) • Coping strategies • Longer-term vulnerability 	<p>Local institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village/community administration • Capacity • Relations between leaders • Relations between leaders and community members • Role of community organizations • Role of private sector

Carrying out social impacts analysis as part of a PDNA – critical steps

Social Impacts Analysis (SIA) can be carried out at the same time as PDNA teams carry out their sector assessments. The SIA will be led by Government as part of the PDNA process. Government may request national or international actors to manage the SIA on their behalf. Doing so involves a series of simple steps on the part of the ‘social impacts task team’. The timeline depends on the PDNA timeline, budget, the scale of the disaster and the sample size of communities. A sample timeline might look as follows:

Day/Week	Task
Week 1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult the PDNA team and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) clusters for humanitarian assistance on the scope and focus of the analysis • Consult other relevant partners, including international and local NGOs, donors, the private sector, community-based organizations and others active in the recovery effort • Arrange funding and implementation: write terms of reference, set a budget, secure resources, arrange contracting • Hire local research partner if possible: this can be a research institution or NGO. If not possible, the social impacts task team carries out the assessment itself • Design the research: decide on scope, sampling methods, research domains and instruments • Support research partner to write a field guide and train researchers • Pre-test field guide • Revise field guide based on pre-test • Fieldwork starts
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fieldwork ends

Week 3/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary site reports to help with PDNA inputs, and additional field work if needed
Weeks 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of PDNA social impacts assessment inputs (c. 10 page analysis for the annex and c. 1 page summary for the main text)
After PDNA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalization of full research report by social impacts task team or local partner/researchers

PDNA coordinators can help support the process by:

- Ensuring that a social impacts assessment is included in the PDNA terms of reference and budget. Costs vary for contracting a local research partner, but may range from US\$30-50,000;
- Ensuring that a 'social impacts task team' exists as part of the PDNA team, usually two or three members with social analysis, qualitative research and disaster recovery skills;
- Ensuring that the social impacts task team consults and works in partnership with: the United Nations system and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee clusters for humanitarian assistance; and other partners, including local and international NGOs;
- Ensuring that the social impacts task team coordinates with the PDNA sector teams;
- Ensuring that initial findings from the social impacts assessment are incorporated into the PDNA report;
- Coordinating with government to ensure that the social impacts analysis is integrated into the overall results and monitoring framework.

A full guide for social impacts analysis for task teams along with detailed guidance on research methodology for research partners is available for consultation on the GFDRR website.