

Title: Too small to count? The impacts and policy implications of small disasters in the Sahel
Speaker: Dr. Mark Brennan
Date: 8 December 2021
Time: 1200-1315
Where: Quinn Lecture Hall, P-251
POC: Dr. Christopher Jasparro

SYNOPSIS:

Despite extensive research on disasters induced by natural hazards and climate change, the impact of those of smaller scale remains relatively understudied. This is especially the case in the Sahel, an increasingly important zone in terms of disaster risk reduction. To what extent do ‘small disasters’ cumulatively lead to substantial losses in the Sahel and how do public and nonprofit decisionmakers manage small disasters? To answer these questions, we adopt a mixed methods approach. Analyzing state-level panel data on disasters losses in Senegal and Mali for the decade between 2005 and 2014, we find that small disasters are as impactful if not more than big disasters in driving total losses, and especially for housing and agricultural losses. We report that large disasters are concentrated in Southern Mali, indicating other areas experiencing many small disasters may be overlooked by assistance classically triggered by many deaths from a big event. We distill policy insights from these quantitative findings with ten qualitative interviews and three focus groups and document analysis from Senegal and Mali. The qualitative findings highlight the challenges of small disasters and the consequences of conflict and small disasters. Together, the findings indicate that small disasters lead to significant disruption for vulnerable communities already shouldering burdens of conflict, food insecurity, and environmental degradation.

BIO:

Mark Brennan is a visiting scholar at NWC and postdoc associate at MIT who analyzes humanitarian operations to improve vulnerable groups' access to essential goods and services and

to improve partnerships with public agencies and nonprofits with the goal of implementing innovative solutions to operational challenges. At NWC, he works with DOD and U.N. agencies to document, analyze and improve how humanitarian assistance reaches those in need. In his research at MIT, he focuses primarily on housing assistance and emergency medical services. He received his Ph.D. from MIT.