

**H2H Fund Activation:**  
Tigray Support Package II,  
June - August 2021

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## **About the author**

**Ina Bluemel is a humanitarian aid worker with 18 years of experience in a broad spectrum of emergency preparedness, response and recovery subjects. Having spent most of her career in humanitarian deployments Ina has also contributed to and led a number of evaluations and reviews, ranging from subnational humanitarian responses to disease outbreaks, multi-year national projects and global strategies and programmes. Her educational path includes a master's degree in international health, a bachelor degree in nursing and studies of international politics and social science.**

## **Thanks to all members who participated in the study**

**The H2H team thanks all the contributors: FanMan Tsang, Khadiga Agab, and Rasha Ahmed from the CDAC Network. Mozamil Mallasi Ohaj Mallasi from Danish Refugee Council. Christina Wille and Peter Ott from Insecurity Insight. Helen Kearney and Alice Darcq from H2H Network.**

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# Introduction

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This case study explores how a second H2H Fund activation for the conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia contributed to an improved humanitarian response in Ethiopia and in Sudan. As part of a series of case studies, the study also contributes to a lessons learned process, aiming to strengthen the work of the H2H Network and ensure its continued relevance. The study was conducted in December 2021 by an independent consultant. A variety of sources including 8 key informant interviews, 4 project reports and 9 additional documents informed this case study.

# H2H Fund Activation

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## 1. Crisis background

Months of rising tension between the regional government in Tigray and the central Ethiopian government culminated in armed conflict in early November 2020. The conflict continues to date (December 2021), mostly unabated. It has further expanded to the South, affecting Afar and Amhara regions and causing widespread harm. The continuation of hostilities has exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities in a region that was already hosting over 100,000 IDPs, primarily from Amhara and Oromia regions, and over 5,500 returnee IDPs, as well as more than 95,000 refugees, predominantly from Eritrea in October 2020 ([The Pre-crisis situation in Tigray ACAPS](#)). The Northern regions of Ethiopia have long struggled with climate-related droughts, food insecurity and most recently a large-scale locust infestation. Basic services, especially in rural areas, were difficult to access even before the conflict and have since been severely impeded by active fighting, access constraints and supply shortages ([Access snapshot OCHA, April 2021](#)). Aid workers – particularly national Ethiopians – operate in a high-risk environment. In April 2021, OCHA documented that 30 partners reported an increase of incidents with threats and intimidation at check points by armed actors. In addition, parties to the conflict regularly refuse humanitarian access and movements to large rural areas, preventing assistance to the people in need ([ibid](#)). Assessing numbers of people in need or IDPs remained extremely challenging due to access constraints, multiple displacements, and limited government capacity to conduct registrations. As of 27 April 2021, over 63,000 refugees from Tigray had fled to Sudan. ([Crisis in Tigray I ACAPS](#)).

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## 2. Fund activation details

A first H2H Fund activation in January 2021, engaging four H2H Network partners, ensured the delivery of a service package that aimed at supporting multilateral processes including needs assessments, communications, community engagement and accountability (CCEA) surge support and on-demand analytical products to humanitarian organizations in Ethiopia and Sudan (H2H | Tigray service package).

### **How H2H Network Fund activations work:**

The H2H Fund is activated following a request by a donor, a network member, or a responder within the context of a specific emergency. A monthly network forum gives members the opportunity to flag crises and request needs assessments. The core team conducts a scoping and needs assessment and decides on whether to activate the fund or not. If the decision is positive, a call for proposals is issued. Proposals are then reviewed and scored by the grant panel, which at the time of Tigray II was composed of one or several independent consultant(s) with regional knowledge and a donor representative. A service package is created to meet needs in a specific context and strengthen the humanitarian response.

The initiation for the scoping for a potential H2H Fund activation stemmed from the wrap-up call with H2H Fund grantees of the initial Tigray Fund activation on 28 April 2021. Feedback from the four H2H-funded partners in Sudan and Ethiopia was further validated by assessments and evaluations from operational network partners International Medical Corps, Insecurity Insight and Atlas Logistique in Ethiopia and Sudan. Consultations with the wider H2H Network led to the decision to release a second tranche of H2H funding in support of the humanitarian response to the conflict in Tigray. The objective of this second fund activation was to increase the visibility and understanding of the evolution of humanitarian needs in the crisis, to improve accountability systems and keep strengthening the response as a whole. The fund activation intended to provide short-term support from 1 June 2021 to 31 August 2021. The short time frame was set by the imminent end of the funding agreement between the H2H network and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO,

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H2H Network's main donor at the time) at the end of October 2021. The call for proposals, with an envelope of 200,000 GBP, was issued on 18 May 2021, giving H2H Network partners a week to submit project proposals that would fit the activation's objective. Four network partners proposed technical services, products and tools to support the humanitarian community in their response to the conflict on both sides of the Ethiopian-Sudanese border and in the wider Tigray region in Ethiopia. Only one of the four applicants had utilized the first tranche of H2H Fund to implement activities in Sudan from January to March 2021. Three project proposals for a total of only 44,000 GBP passed the grant application process; however, one partner was eventually unable to operationalize its plan for internal reasons. CDAC, specializing in community engagement and accountability (CEA) and Insecurity Insight, specializing in surge support and security incident data analysis, utilized the second H2H Fund activation for the conflict in Tigray to implement projects in Sudan and Ethiopia.

“ In the training I have learned to involve the community in every step of the humanitarian cycle. With that new knowledge I believe that the main beneficiaries from CDAC training are the refugees themselves - through the trainers that can spread the information and apply what they have learned.”

**Mozamil Mallasi Ohaj Mallasi, DRC  
SudanCDAC Sudan**

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Network members applying for the H2H Fund must meet specific eligibility requirements. This includes having passed a due diligence assessment and ensuring security, safety, and in-field hosting - which are ultimately the member's responsibility. Participation in a kick-off webinar and further collaboration calls when required are central to the service package concept. When reaching decisions, the grant panel team intend to ensure compatibility of the projects, aiming for an effective overall outcome of the H2H Fund activation. The degree to which complementarity and collaboration are considered in the grant panel decision process depends on the attention given to this crucial aspect in formulating a service package and on the compatibility of the project proposals received.

“ We have been there for a while. Even though we knew the context, information was impossible to come by. We wanted Insecurity Insight to fill the gaps – networking decision-making processes, who's who, get on top of new red tape, sharing intelligence.... That's what they did. In general: Insecurity Insight's products were fantastic and exactly what we needed

**Peter Ott, Global Security Advisor,  
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“ Insecurity Insight 's format was spot on in the Ethiopian case, and so was the content. This is taken for granted but the quality was really good and there was also an openness to when something was unclear - flagging possible speculation etc. which is very good!

**Anonymous Key Informant**

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# Main findings

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The lessons identified below are derived from a comprehensive document and collaboration call review, key informant interviews with grant recipients, their operational partners, and from discussions with members of the H2H Network core team. Learning points are summarized and systematically grouped by core themes. They include the administration of the fund, how the projects were implemented in practice and what effect they had on the humanitarian response.

The design, delivery, usage, and contribution to the overall humanitarian response of all three projects are described at the end of this report.

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# 1. Speed and timeliness

- The fund activation was swift and fund recipients report that many previous administrative hurdles during H2H Fund activations had been addressed. This is reflective of the learning culture within the H2H core team.
- Both funded network members had an established presence in country. The H2H Network Fund allowed them to scale up activities and to focus on specific issues for three months.
- The gap between the two activations and the short implementation period deterred three of the four initial grant recipients from applying to the second tranche of H2H Network Funding. Partners either did not perceive the second call as an invite to continue the activities or had sought alternative funding in the meantime. Clearer communication during the assessment phase of the second activation, specifically with these three network partners, may have influenced their decision to apply and resulted in a more comprehensive service package.
- The gap between the first and second fund activation for the conflict in Tigray was predictable. It could have been communicated more transparently and addressed proactively with the membership. These include uncertainty around continuation of the fund itself, with a second no cost extension pending at the time, and the staffing situation in the H2H core team which fluctuated and eventually reduced to a skeleton team in which multiple key functions were spread between remaining team members.

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## 2. Coordination and collaboration

- Tigray II included two distinct project proposals that both fitted the objective of the fund activation. However, there was limited opportunity for effective collaboration between the projects, and the H2H Network service package concept was of limited use on this occasion.
- The relatively small number of project proposals received highlights the fact that the service package concept rests on the complementarity and diversity of services brought forward from network members.
- A better understanding of why few proposals were received, despite the presence of several members operating in the Tigray response, including those of the initial fund activation and above-named contributors to the needs assessment, would help inform future H2H Network Fund activations. What are the barriers to access the H2H Fund especially for newer or less established H2H members? How significant is the short implementation period, especially for members with no established presence on the ground?
- Key stakeholders interviewed for this case study highly value the culture of the H2H Network. This includes the willingness of the core team to find constructive solutions to challenges during the process of implementing H2H Network-funded projects, as well as the benefits of being part of a group of likeminded people with a genuine interest in collaboration (above and beyond facilitated collaboration during H2H Fund activations).  
Maintaining such a culture while growing as a network is crucial to continue offering a unique platform that brings together established agencies, smaller niche service providers and innovative start up organizations aiming to influence how the humanitarian sector evolves vis-à-vis the changing scale and nature of humanitarian crises.

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- Collaborating with others humanitarian organizations - as in the case of Insecurity Insight and the Global Interagency Security Forum (GISF) - expanded the reach of work for both organizations and resulted in increased uptake of their services as the MEAL process conducted by Insecurity Insight highlights (the GISF roundtables doubled in number during the implementation period with the number of participants reaching over 100 in total). This is an excellent example of how H2H Network funding can effectively strengthen the overall humanitarian response in a protracted emergency.
  - Feedback from operational partners and staff reveal that the promotion of the network – beyond its function as a donor – is often not well communicated to humanitarian organizations during project implementation. While this may not be an immediate priority in the onset of a humanitarian response or at the height of a protracted crisis, and the obligatory blog writing is taking place and consuming valuable project time, this is nevertheless an opportunity lost to create interest in the network and its benefits at operational level, and to build the market for H2H services.

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## 3. Adaptation and Innovation

- Insecurity Insight's strong system for gathering feedback from participants at the roundtables allowed for rapid adaptation to needs communicated by the end users of the information provided.
- CDAC had to adapt its project to the reality at the border region between Sudan and Ethiopia where high staff turnover and an influx of numerous new partners required a stronger emphasis on supporting the set-up of AAP/CCEA services and building capacity than anticipated.

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## 4. Relevance and appropriateness<sup>1</sup>

The funding received allowed to intensify activities – with a project-specific focus – in a context where Insecurity Insight was already present. Without an existing presence in-country the funding made available would not have been sufficient to operationalize this project.

Collaborating with GISF enabled Insecurity Insight to benefit from an existing level of trust as well as to use their efficient discussion platform to explore how to operationalize situation analysis. The linkages between the lead coordination agency in Sudan (OCHA) and the lead agency in the Tigray response (UNHCR) changed over time due to staff turnover and changing priorities. The value of CDAC acting as an independent coordinator able to re-establish these linkages proved valuable in this second project.

- High staff turnover in sudden onset emergencies challenge the sustainability of CCEA capacity building initiatives and concept development. This includes capacity loss when staff leave and priorities shift between different staffing rotations. The continued presence of a CCEA coordinator would have been beneficial to the sustainability of services provided in the initial H2H Network-funded Tigray response.

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<sup>1</sup> Each of the project descriptions below provides a short insight to the overall humanitarian response contribution, including additional information on relevance and appropriateness which is not repeated here.

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## 5. Additional outcomes and what happened next

The H2H Fund aims to enable network members to rapidly initiate activities when an emergency strikes. Typically, H2H Network members then seek additional funding for the continuation of their activities. An important aspect of the H2H Network fund is therefore its ability to function as catalyst for the medium and longer-term engagement of H2H Network members in the given context.

- Insecurity Insight continues to provide security analyses in the context of the conflict in Tigray. While it was not an objective of the H2H funded project, the open source event monitoring capacity that was developed during the H2H fund activation now provides key data, including the monitoring of sexual violence in conflict, enabling humanitarian actors to take evidence-based action.
- CDAC did not seek additional resources to continue the activities funded by both H2H Network fund activations in Tigray. However, key informants confirmed that the action taken, in particular the (re-) activation of AAP coordination and the linkages between actors in the field and the Khartoum are still ongoing with strong focus on enhancing the work of local partners. “The seed for this was planted by the H2H Fund project of CDAC” (Khadiga Agab, Senior National Community Engagement & Accountability Coordinator, CDAC Sudan)

# Conclusion

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All operational key informants interviewed for this case study confirmed that the second H2H Network fund activation for the conflict in Tigray provided services that filled enduring gaps in the humanitarian response. As noted across previous case studies, the opportunities for collaboration and coordination stood out as the major added value of being a members of the H2H Network and implementing a project funded by the H2H Fund. On this occasion, the service package concept which, alongside the facilitated collaboration between grantees, sets the H2H Fund mechanism aside from other pooled funds, did not deliver a distinct added value. The low number of proposals received can be attributed to the tight 3-month timeframe, the due diligence processes required to even be eligible to apply for funding and the lack of communication around the gap between the two fund activations. Exploring and addressing these issues will be key to strengthen future H2H Network Fund activations.

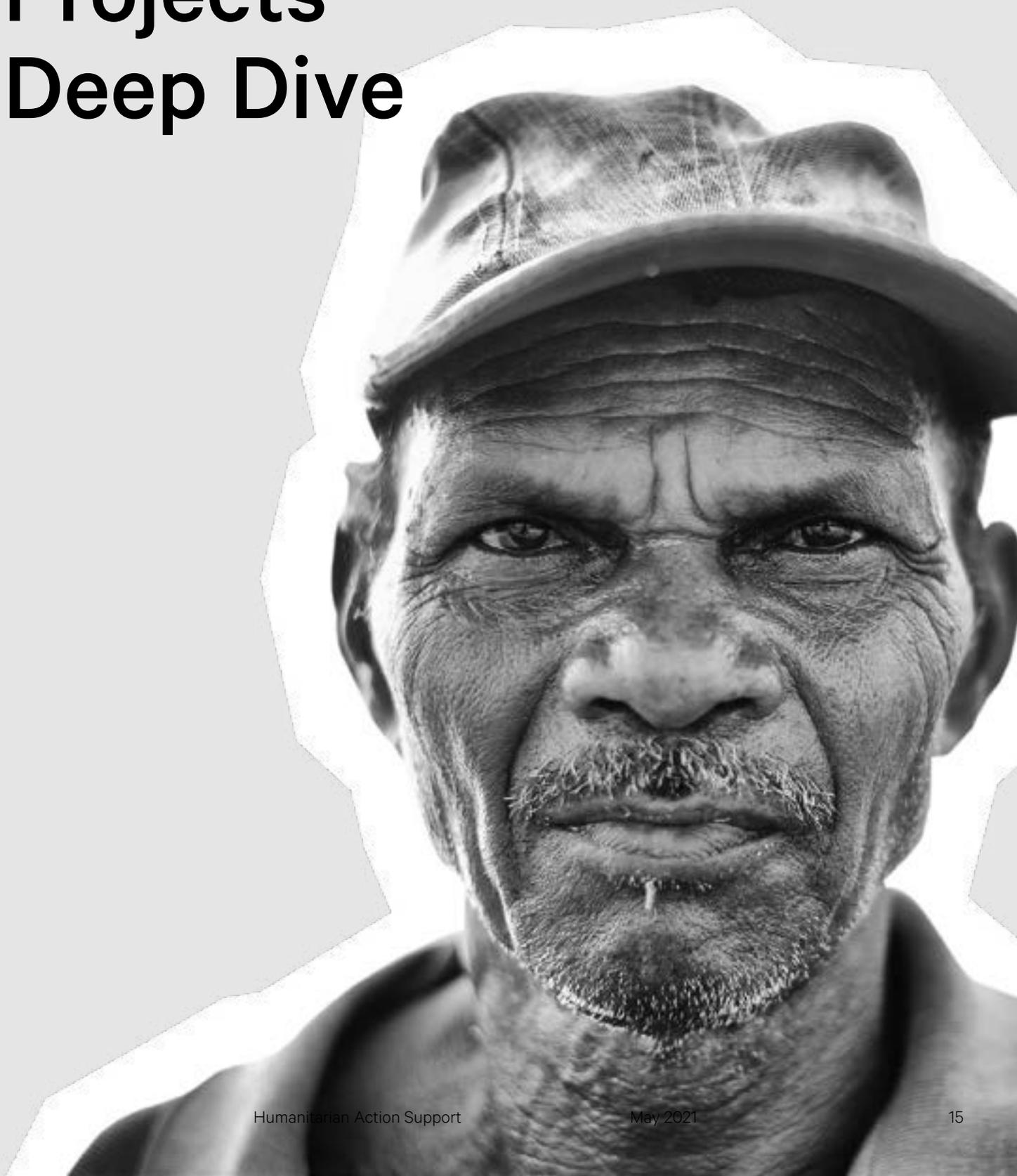
Clearly an earlier activation – or an extension of the initial Tigray I H2H Network Fund activation -- would have been a more effective way to strengthen and sustain the services that had been provided in early 2021. The development of a mechanism that secures H2H Fund availability for time frames that match the identified needs of the context at hand is crucial for the funding mechanism to remain relevant and true to its ostensible purpose of rapidly funding existing gaps in sudden onset and protracted crisis.

The development of the H2H Fund mechanism grew somewhat organically; staff turnover and shifting perceptions of priorities among multiple interim leaders over time influenced the current approach to H2H Fund activations. Strengthening the H2H Network core team with a clear distribution of roles and responsibilities is an additional key element in strengthening and stabilizing the H2H Fund activation process.

# Annexe 1

## Projects

### Deep Dive



1.

## **CDAC: Entrenching urgently needed collective community engagement and accountability through surge capacity to Sudan's Tigray response and the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)/ Communications, Community Engagement and Accountability (CCEA) Working Groups**

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### **Project design**

CDAC proposed to ensure that communication, engagement and accountability needs of affected people in Sudan be effectively included for all parties through enhanced coordination of AAP/CCEA. Building the initial H2H Network-funded project (January to March 2021) in the same context, CDAC planned to build its response around the establishment of and advocacy for common collaborative working practices in CCEA activities and coordination. To achieve this, CDAC would build bridges between existing actors and facilitate workshops and trainings. CDAC bridged skills gaps not only through training but also by creating cooperative working structures between organizations through better coordination. A CDAC National Coordinator would engage directly with operational partners and take an active role in working groups at both national and regional levels.

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## Services delivered

The CDAC National Coordinator rekindled previous activities to link humanitarian agencies working in the Tigray response on the border with Ethiopia to the AAP WG at national level. With a growing number of operational partners in the response advocacy for participation in respective working groups was part of the role to enhance coordination around CCEA activities.

Through CDAC's guidance a common approach to classifying and collectively sharing consultation information has been drafted, enabling partners to share comparable data and plan a coherent response to commonly identified needs respectively.

In total 3 training of trainers workshops (ToT) were conducted for focal points on feedback and complaint mechanism and accountability, community engagement and coordination. The ToT trainings were undertaken with 36 focal points from different organizations operating at the Gadarif refugee camp. A basic referral system was put in place for the management of a feedback and complaint, managed by ALIGHT and DRC.

The CDAC CCEA toolkit has been translated into Arabic and was distributed to all focal points and working groups. The CDAC National Coordinator supported focal points to create a WhatsApp group so they could continue to discuss and share learnings from each other and from the CDAC CCEA coordinator, which they as trainers themselves can disseminate among their own organizations.

1.

## CDAC: Entrenching urgently needed collective community engagement and accountability through surge capacity to Sudan's Tigray response and the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)/ Communications, Community Engagement and Accountability (CCEA) Working Groups

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### Services used

CDAC bolstered coordination structures between UN agencies, NGOs and government actors, both at the levels of the camps and national coordination. They established working relationships, offered technical expertise, and established shared feedback pathways. This included providing CCEA toolkits and supporting humanitarian actors in the field with AAP/CEA training.

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### Response contribution

CDAC's work was focused towards strengthening a more systematic and common approach to CCEA in the humanitarian response to the conflict in Tigray in Sudan. According to CDAC's final narrative report there has been an improvement in the capacity level and coordination effort between relief organizations and agencies. The provision of an understandable toolkit available in languages used by the majority of aid responders will allow a common approach to CCEA activities.

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In the training I have learned to involve the community in every step of the humanitarian cycle. With that new knowledge I believe that the main beneficiaries from CDAC training are the refugees themselves - through the trainers that can spread the information and apply what they have learned

**Mozamil Mallasi Ohaj Mallasi, DRC Sudan**

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## 2.

# Insecurity Insight - Aid Agency Information (ASI) Incident Data Sharing and Analysis - Ethiopia

## Project design

[Insecurity Insight](#) had been working in Ethiopia since 2020 through the [Aid in Danger Project](#). The project collects data on any event that interferes with the delivery of aid and makes information and analysis available to aid security professionals and policy makers. H2H Network funding intended to build on the existing structure in place and allow Insecurity Insight to instantly scale up direct support to implementing humanitarian partners to deepen situational awareness among aid agency staff. With the additional resources, Insecurity Insight was able to produce information updates every two weeks and regularly share key data from a core group of contributors with the wider humanitarian community via [the humanitarian data exchange](#). Key project were the data sharing and analysis of security incidents from partner agencies active in Ethiopia and making insights available for the whole aid sector in the form of situation analysis and direct access to data.

“ We have been there for a while. Even though we knew the context, information was impossible to come by. We wanted Insecurity Insight to fill the gaps – networking decision-making processes, who’s who, get on top of new red tape, sharing intelligence.... That’s what they did. In general: Insecurity Insight’s products were fantastic and exactly what we needed

**Peter Ott, Global Security Advisor,  
Trocaire**

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## 2.

# Insecurity Insight - Aid Agency Information (ASI) Incident Data Sharing and Analysis - Ethiopia

### Services delivered

The project provided security situation information for aid agency decision makers with the aim to support security risk management in order to improve aid access. The project focused on independent, aid centred and predictive security analysis to address the lack of context information for preparedness planning. Operating remotely and through robust, collaborative arrangements with implementing humanitarian partners Insecurity Insight was able to deliver against all set objectives. In fact the team was able to double the number of round tables planned for and exceeded the expected number of participants in each. The number of downloads of their reports surpassed initial expectations by far.

### Services used

A total of 108 individuals participated in 4 virtual round table discussions. The 6 Vigil Insight branded information products were downloaded on average 1,034 times. The dataset of anatomized aid agency incident data was updated 10 times on the publicly available site, indicating continued engagement in data sharing among partners. The datasets were downloaded over 300 times during the course of the project. Which specific target group accessed the data and how it was used was impossible to monitor due to data protection requirements. However, Insecurity Insight had established a robust MEAL process, including using the roundtables for to gather direct feedback, conducting follow-up conversation with individual stakeholders and implementing an after action review. The roundtable discussions allowed the Insight Insecurity team to amend their information products to the specific needs identified by participants during the project implementation. When probed during the key informant interview Nico Palet from iMMAP confirmed that participants in the round table discussions were to some degree “the usual international organizations”.

“ Insecurity Insight ´s format was spot on in the Ethiopian case, and so was the content. This is taken for granted but the quality was really good and there was also an openness to when something was unclear - flagging possible speculation etc. which is very good!

**Anonymous Key Informant** ”

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## Response contribution

Insight Insecurity services filled a critical gap in the response to the conflict in Tigray. The project made a particular contribution to organizational effectiveness by providing open access to information that had been collectively assembled and which would have absorbed considerable resources if each aid agency would have carried this work out internally and on their own. Smaller humanitarian organizations, typically lacking the capacity for in-depth security analysis, especially benefitted from the products which were made available as public goods.

## H2H Network

Getting more to people in need

**At H2H Network, we work to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action.**

We assess humanitarian crises to define the type of response needed. We then coordinate specific network members to quickly provide relevant services. The network's services are easily accessible to all responders.

We have responded to crises including the humanitarian emergencies in Occupied Palestinian Territories, Tigray and Nagorno-Karabakh, Covid-19, Cyclone Idai, Ebola in DRC and internal displacement in Burkina Faso

**H2H Network members are expert and independent.**

Together we help the humanitarian sector evolve and cope with the changing scale and nature of humanitarian crises. We address sector-wide issues including the collection, management and analysis of data, community engagement, security management, logistics, accountability, standards and localization.

Reach out to H2H Network for direct contacts and to request other services from network members at [h2hnetwork.org](https://h2hnetwork.org) or email [info@h2hnetwork.org](mailto:info@h2hnetwork.org).