H2H Fund Activation:
Horn of Africa 2022
Case Study

Humanitarian
Action Support

Contents

1. Introduction

1.1. Context

Between 2020 – 2022, the Horn of Africa experienced five consecutive failed rainy seasons. Large areas of Somalia, South and South-Eastern Ethiopia, and North and Eastern Kenya faced the most prolonged drought in recent history, surpassing both the 2016-2017 and 2010-2011 droughts in both duration and severity. The international humanitarian community responded in 2020 across Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya with flash appeals, CERF activations and donor-led roundtables in 2021 and early 2022. As the drought continued into 2022, the response significantly increased in scale, reaching more than 17.1 million drought-affected people with at least one form of humanitarian assistance.

By the end of November 2022, almost 500 humanitarian organizations were engaged in drought response across the three countries, the majority of which were locally-led and community-based – including 248 national NGOs in Somalia and 36 in Kenya[1]. While the response itself was broad and based on both context and needs analyses conducted by the UN agencies and others, H2H Members identified some gaps through their respective stakeholder engagement activities. Gaps identified included:

- In-depth community-based food insecurity assessments across Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia, balancing both regional and national priorities, and going beyond the work conducted by National Disaster Management Agencies (NDMAs) to identify priority areas and communities in most need

- Technical assistance in establishing and maintaining groundwater monitoring systems to improve drought early warning

- Recent analysis of the impact of violence in the region on hunger, both directly and via the effects violent incidents have on delivery of food aid by humanitarian actors

- Mapping and analysis of language barriers faced by internally displaced persons (IDPs) in and across Somalia, including the exclusionary factors faced by minority linguistic groups

- Drought-specific training for humanitarian responders on topics including needs assessment, project planning and management, accountability to affected populations and stress management

These gaps were identified and developed through H2H Members' own stakeholder engagement and analysis activities, independently of the H2H Fund itself. Members conducted a range of consultation activities, including a joint analysis meeting with 22 different humanitarian response agencies, meetings with NDMAs, cross-cluster coordination and inclusion working groups, rapid language needs assessments and other desk-based research and gap analyses.

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1   OCHA (2022) 'Horn of Africa Drought Regional Humanitarian Overview and Call to Action, Revised 28 November 2022', p.9.

1.2. Fund activation

In this context, the H2H Fund launched its Horn of Africa activation in August 2022, immediately prior to the October – December rainy season. Geographic coverage included drought-affected areas of Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya, with projects ultimately running from September 2022 until April 2023. In total £263,188 was awarded, across seven H2H Member organizations, with services covering all four core H2H service areas:

1. data, information management and analysis;

2. community engagement and accountability;

3. logistics, security or program support;

4. quality & professionalization.

The majority of the funds (60%) were awarded to organizations providing data, information management and analysis. Approximately one quarter (27%) were allocated to community engagement and accountability, with a further 6% being spent on quality and professionalization; and 6% again on logistics, security or program support.

**Figure 1:** Fund allocation by service area
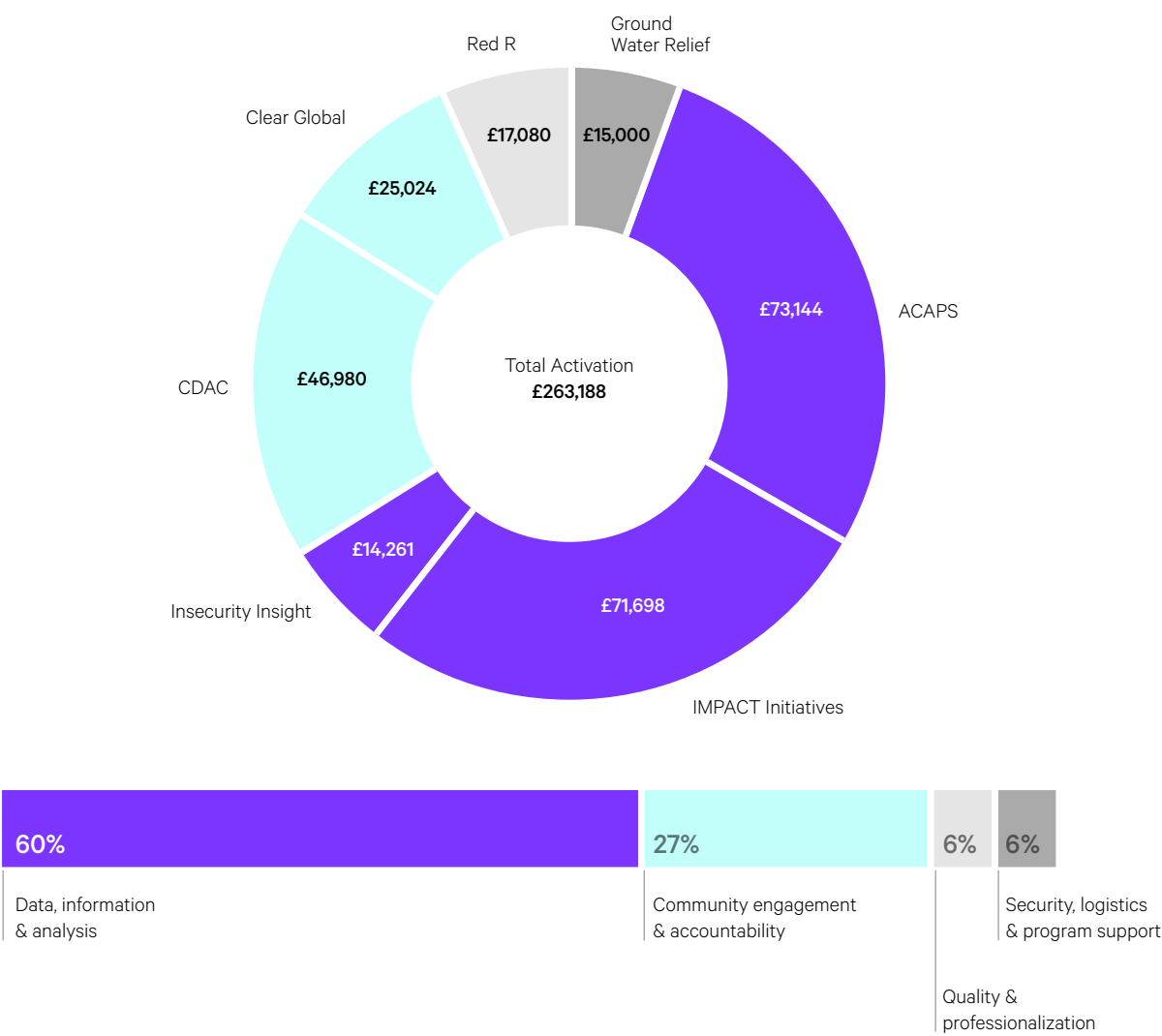
The breadth of this service package therefore included a mix of products and services for humanitarian responders including:

– In-depth reports at both regional and country level, providing analysis of food insecurity and potential impacts across communities and vulnerable demographics in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia

– Multi-sectoral assessments at county-level in northern Kenya and regional drought analysis across the Horn of Africa

– Specific partnerships with national NGOs to support groundwater monitoring in Kenya and Ethiopia to improve drought alert systems

– Publicly available mapping of linguistic exclusion in Somalia, and support for the integration of linguistic diversity in needs analysis activities by other actors

– A food security and conflict research framework with associated dataset made publicly available, as well as social media monitoring of disinformation related to food aid programs in Ethiopia.

– Staff training for national and international NGO staff members on needs assessment, project planning and management

– Support for humanitarian organizations to integrate community communication, engagement and inclusion across their response activities.

All projects were implemented between 2nd September 2022 and 5th May 2023, with all but one of the seven projects having been completed by 15 April. The staggered starts were primarily due to funding being received from H2H donors (the UK FCDO and USA BHA) separately. The first four projects were launched prior to receipt of funds from BHA, while the final three were launched after.

Figure 2: Project timelines
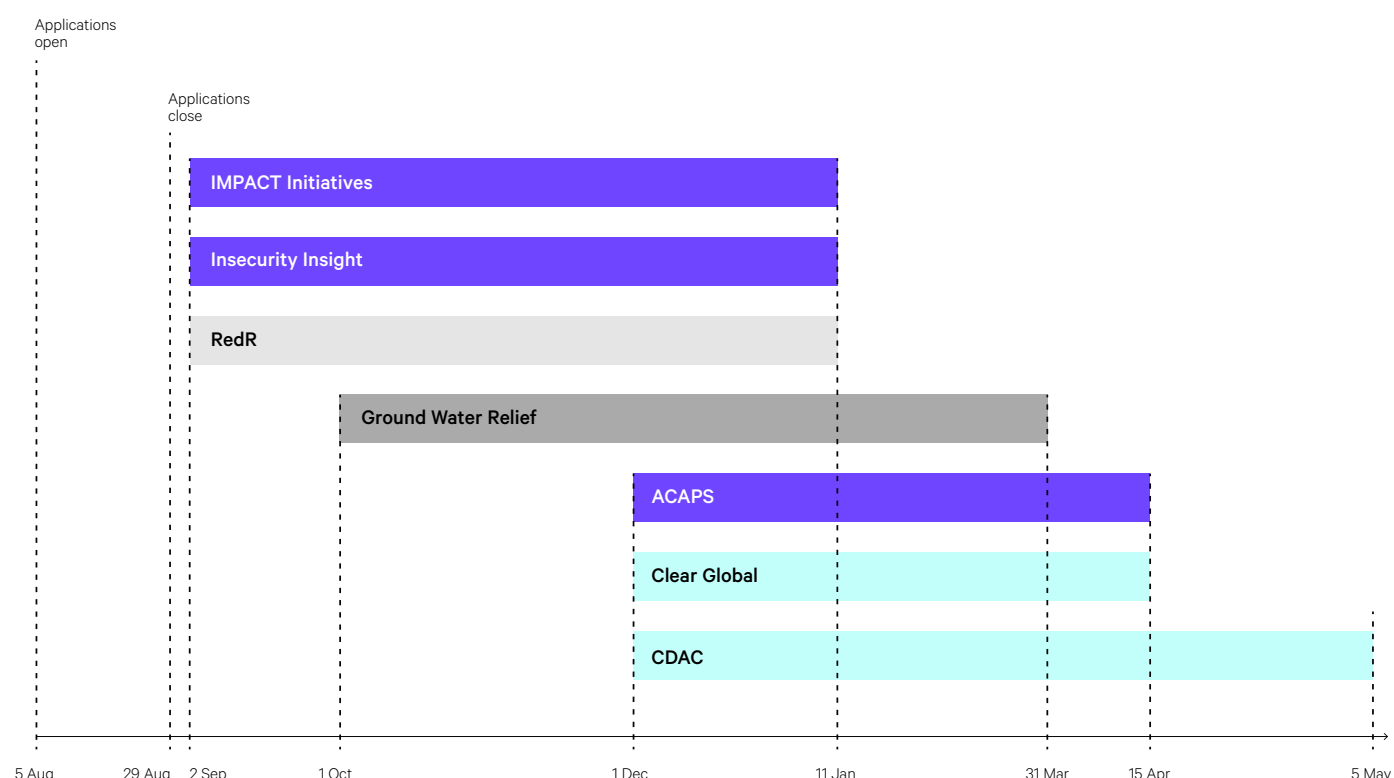
2. Case study purpose and method

2.1.   Objectives

As part of its monitoring, evaluation and learning activities, the H2H Network aims to measure and document how the services and resources produced by its member organizations contributed to improving the quality, effectiveness and accountability of the humanitarian response in the contexts where it activates its Fund.

To this end, this Case Study aims to provide evidence on the results, effects and achievements the H2H Fund activation during the Horn of Africa drought crisis in the period 2022-2023. It features examples of changes to the humanitarian response which can be reasonably said to have been influenced by both the individual projects themselves and the wider fund activation as a whole. In particular, evidence of improvements to the quality, effectiveness and accountability of the humanitarian response has been identified, in line with the strategic objectives of the H2H Fund.

2.2.   Methodology

The case study was constructed on the basis of the pre-existing MEAL (Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning) resources developed by the H2H Fund. These include a MEAL framework outlining the key elements of the Case Study data collection with associated information sources, a key informant interview guide, a coding table and a Case Study template.

The following information sources were used for this Case Study:

Project documents		47
Funding documents (8):	Call for proposals	1
	Project proposals	7
Project deliverables (16):	Thematic reports, briefing notes and datasets	21
Fund management documents (16):	Kick-off meeting minutes	2
	Project workplans	7
	Project narrative reports	7
MEAL documents (2):	Learning workshop meeting minutes	1
	Project activities summary	1

Key informant interviews		22
	Staff from H2H Member organizations	11
	End-users and coordination actors	11

All key informants were identified by the consultant in consultation with the H2H Network and its members. H2H Member organization staff were selected on the basis of their involvement in the design and implementation of the H2H funded activities. End-users were selected on the basis of their use of the products and services developed with the support of the H2H Fund. Coordination actors were selected on the basis of their engagement with H2H Members regarding the gap analyses and dissemination activities associated with the products and services in question.

All information gathered from the above information sources was compiled using a coding table structured against the H2H MEAL framework and Case Study reporting structure. The resulting information is presented in the following section, indexed against the H2H service areas deployed in this activation.

2.3. Limitations

The major limitation of the study is the low number of end-users consulted during the key informant interview stage. The consultant aimed to interview 4-6 end users for each funded project. Ultimately, H2H Members were able to identify between 2 and 5 end users each, with the final number interviewed being just 11 across the 7 funded projects. It is assumed that the major reason for the low response rate to interview requests is the timeframe of the case study data collection, which came 3-4 months after project closure.

The result of the low interview number is a reduced the opportunity for feedback from end-users and coordination actors regarding the products and services provided by H2H Members during this activation. To mitigate this, the consultant sought to draw out secondary information and feedback gathered by the member organizations, themselves, in the period since project closure. This approach did add some nuance and information beyond that already collected in the member reports. But ultimately, the limited number of end-users reduces the comprehensiveness of the findings, particularly regarding uptake and use of H2H Member products and services. For this reason, readers should not assume that the case study findings represent the entirety of the changes made by the H2H Fund during the Horn of Africa drought crisis.

3. H2H Services

3.1. Information management, data & analysis

3.1.1. Services and resources produced

H2H Members together developed and published 11 separate reports, briefs and datasets providing information management, data and analysis to humanitarian organizations responding to the drought in the Horn of Africa. These reports covered a range of issues, including:

– Climatic patterns and drought severity at the local level

– Humanitarian needs resulting from the drought, key population groups affected, the impact on children, existing coping mechanisms, compounding factors, access constraints and local response capacities

– The interaction between conflict, hunger and aid security

– Patterns of social media misinformation regarding food aid programs

– Anticipatory analysis of key crises likely to have significant humanitarian impact in 2023

Resource	Type	H2H member	Humanitarian needs	Anticipatory analysis	Climatic patterns	Conflict & hunger	Social media
Horn of Africa, Impact of drought on children	Thematic report	ACAPS	✔				
Somalia, Key crises to watch in 2023	Thematic report	ACAPS		✔			
Djibouti, Drought	Thematic report	ACAPS	✔				
Ethiopia, Impact of drought in Oromia & Somali regions	Thematic report	ACAPS	✔				
Somalia, Impact of drought in Banadir and Bay regions	Thematic report	ACAPS	✔				
Kenya Drought, Marsabit & Turkana Alert	Advocacy report	IMPACT Initiatives	✔				
Drought in the Horn of Africa	Thematic report	IMPACT Initiatives			✔		
Conflict, Hunger and Aid Security	Thematic report	Insecurity Insight				✔	
Disinformation Campaign Targeting Aid Agencies	Thematic report	Insecurity Insight					✔
The Links between Conflict and Hunger in Somalia	Thematic report	Insecurity Insight				✔	
Conflict, Hunger and Aid Security	Dataset	Insecurity Insight				✔	

The design of each resource was instigated following consultation with end-users and in each case the reports respond to gaps identified by humanitarian actors in the drought response. ACAPS organized a Joint Analysis Meeting with 22 organizations including the major UN agencies, NGOs and working groups involved in the international response. The joint analysis identified a need for intersectoral analysis of the humanitarian needs arising from the drought in specific regions of Ethiopia and Somalia, a lack of information on the impact of the drought on children across the Horn of Africa, anticipatory analysis for future crises in Somalia, and humanitarian impact data for Djibouti. This helped ACAPS to define the scope of the resources they produced, each of which aligned well with the needs identified through the joint analysis.[1] Likewise, IMPACT Initiatives consulted National Disaster Management Agencies (NDMAs) to identify priority geographical areas for the analysis of climatic patterns in drought-impacted areas, producing both regional analysis across the Horn of Africa and specific analysis in Turkana and Marsabit. Insecurity Insight developed the scope and design of their products through conversation with a forum of 9 NGOs working on hunger and conflict, led by ACF London, as well as an InterAction working group on hunger and conflict. The NGOs identified the need for a non-operational agency to publish information about deliberate attacks on food security actors and the wider interaction between conflict, hunger and food insecurity in the region. Insecurity Insight responded to this by producing four briefing papers highlighting both the specific security risks faced by drought response teams and the complexity of the interaction between conflict and hunger in the region.

Each of the information products have been made publicly available and disseminated via a mix of digital and non-digital channels. Insecurity Insight published each of their reports online, as well as uploading their datasets on the Humanitarian Data Exchange.[2] They also conducted four events (two online and two in-person) during the activation period. Two online events were based around the Somalia briefing paper and conducted with an emerging NGO coalition, with 17 and 19 participants attending, respectively. The third and fourth events were both in-person, focused on security risk reports, and held in Madrid in October 2022 and CAFOD offices in London in December 2022. Their reports were aimed at a mixture of aid agency negotiators/advocates who have a role in addressing access constraints faced by aid agencies delivering food aid in the region, as well as security risk managers who plan and oversee the delivery operations. At the time of project closure in January 2023, the reports had been viewed or downloaded nearly 5,000 times. In the period from January through November 2023, this had increased to almost 10,000. ACAPS also published their papers online, on both their own website and ReliefWeb, with over 1,500 downloads by project-close in April 2023. In addition, they disseminated their reports through both their Global Distribution List and regional mailing groups including the Food Security and Nutrition Working Group (FSNWG) and the Information and Assessment Working Group (IAWG). Lastly, ACAPS presented their key findings through regional inter-agency meetings with FSNWG and IAWG. ACAPS end-users included humanitarian donors, UN agencies and NGOs, with readership reported by IAWG, FAO, WFP, OCHA, NRC, Mercy Corps, IRC, REACH, Oxfam, Save the Children, Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCiS), ECHO and FCDO, among others. IMPACT Initiatives published their products online and disseminated through their own tailored dissemination channels, prioritizing email dissemination to over 70 operational partners in Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia. IMPACT Initiatives Kenya reports were used directly as evidence by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) to classify counties on food insecurity scales (see next section for further details).

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1   ACAPS produced five analytical reports with H2H funding. This included multisectoral analyses of the drought impacts in Somalia (Banadir and Bay regions) and Ethiopia (Oromia and Somali regions), a regional analysis on the needs arising for children living in drought-affected areas, anticipatory analysis of the key crises to watch in Somalia in 2023 and a briefing note on the impacts of the drought in Djibouti.

2   www.humdata.org

3.1.2.   Effect on the response

The information management, data and analytical resources produced by H2H Members during the Horn of Africa Fund Activation made observable contributions to:

- **the depth and granularity of the needs analyses used by operational agencies,**

- **the availability of multi-sectoral crisis analyses across the region, and**

- **the understanding of key operational agencies on the interaction between conflict, hunger and aid security.**

These contributions were evidenced by direct feedback from users in the humanitarian community, including both direct end-users and wider stakeholder groups involved in coordinating the humanitarian response, who cited indirect use of the products.

The IMPACT Initiatives analyses were used by humanitarian organizations central to the food security response in the Horn of Africa. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a multi-partner initiative that provides a five-point severity scale for food insecurity. It is widely accepted by the international community and used by governments and other humanitarian actors to quickly understand a situation of acute food insecurity (or anticipated acute food insecurity) and take action. In the Horn of Africa drought crisis, the IPC used primary data collection work conducted by IMPACT Initiatives, with H2H funding, in the Turkana and Marsabit regions of Kenya. This data was credited with adding granularity to pre-existing data collected by the NDMA in Kenya. IMPACT Initiatives has since continued working with the NDMA on assessments in other areas since publishing the report funded by H2H. In addition, the data helped raise the attention of the Famine Review Committee toward the severity of the food insecurity situation in certain regions of Kenya. More broadly, the work was cited as having an influence in helping to raise awareness of the potential for more severe food insecurity within Kenya than previously understood.

The ACAPS analyses were used by program and planning teams across a wide range of humanitarian response agencies. The reports were produced at the end of 2022 and start of 2023, at a time when the number of engaged response agencies – both international and national – had risen substantially compared to the previous year. There were significant amounts of pre-existing data on the crisis and impact on humanitarian need at that time, but the majority was sector-specific. ACAPS resources were therefore unique in that they provided multi-sectoral crisis context analysis, lessons from previous crises, and future risks analysis. User feedback from international actors (UN agencies, INGOs and donors) and the Information and Assessment Working Group indicates broad appreciation of the multi-sectoral approach deployed by ACAPS, as well as particular appreciation for the products that filled specific information gaps for the international community, namely the Djibouti briefing note, the analysis on impacts on children and the forward-looking crisis risk assessment for Somalia.

The Insecurity Insight resources were used by two broad categories of users:

1. policy and program teams working on the interaction between conflict, hunger and aid security in the Horn of Africa; and

2. security risk managers seeking mitigate security risks for food aid delivery in the region, and thereby ensure continued access to vulnerable populations living in conflict-affected communities.

Policy and program teams used the research to inform their understanding of how food insecurity, conflict, protection and safety of humanitarian teams are interrelated. FAO's anticipatory action team used the Insecurity Insight datasets to improve their predictions of how conflict will affect food insecurity, specifically helping them to understand specific triggers and thresholds which translate a conflict dynamic into a food security risk. NGO users working on the protection of civilians in Ethiopia and Somalia cited the usefulness of the reports for understanding how the actions of conflict parties can mitigate conflict-induced hunger, and therefore how to approach advocacy towards conflict actors in the region. The reports and associated datasets were also used by UN actors in preparation of the 2023 Somalia Protection of Civilians Report.

No specific instances of use and impact were identified with the security risk managers, however. Broad appreciation of the product was observed within this stakeholder group, particularly regarding the quality and granularity of the insights on social media misinformation about food aid delivery in Ethiopia. But no specific follow-up or actions were observed. The most plausible explanation for this is the novelty of the product, developed by Insecurity Insight for the first time in the context of the Horn of Africa. Notably, Insecurity Insight have continued this service in more recent H2H Fund activations, including the Türkiye/Syria earthquake response. It is hoped that follow-up actions will become more clear as organizations become more familiar with the data-type and how to act upon it.

3.2. Community engagement & accountability

3.2.1. Services and resources produced

H2H Members produced three reports and one advocacy brief on communication, community engagement and accountability in the Horn of Africa drought response. These reports covered two central topics:

– **Language use**: the use of local dialects and languages in the drought response in Somalia

– **CCEA**: the extent to which humanitarian organizations responding to the drought implemented sound communication, community engagement and accountability (CCEA) mechanisms

Resource	Type	H2H member	Language	CCEA
Language use in Somalia: Quantitative research findings	Thematic report	CLEAR Global	✓	
How can we speak the truth if they can't understand us?	Thematic report	CLEAR Global	✓	
The state of CCEA in the Horn of Africa drought response	Thematic report	CDAC		✓
Key advocacy messages for inclusive communication & engagement	Advocacy brief	CDAC		✓

The resources on language use in Somalia were designed through conversations with international stakeholders on cross-cluster coordination and inclusion working groups, while the CCEA products were designed following consultation with key coordination bodies and the regional Accountability to Affected Person (AA) Working Group. The CCEA activities were designed to accelerate a collective approach to CCEA and support response actors to find effective ways to increase the quality of the CCEA response through analysis and advocacy support. The ultimate aim of which is to encourage an early focus on communication and community engagement during the early phases of a crisis, when communities most need information and communication. CDAC was embedded in the UN humanitarian coordination structure and collaborated with OCHA Regional Office for Southern and Eastern Africa, UNHCR, the Regional AAP Working Group and other CDAC members to determine the specific technical capacity gaps required to strengthen collective CCEA. In addition, CDAC established a Community of Practice at the onset of the drought response, which helped to coordinate its approach with other partners and minimize the risk of overlap.

Dissemination and uptake of the CCEA resources, themselves, has been less notable than with the information management resources. Instead, it has been the wider stakeholder engagement efforts that have seen clearer success in supporting collective unity on CCEA related issues. For both CCEA and language-use, H2H Members argued that the advocacy effect lay as much with the networking and relationship-building that took part in the process of the project implementation, as opposed to the direct consumption of the research products at the project-end. In this regard, CDAC successfully mobilized a large number of actors through learning workshops in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. The roundtables brought together a diverse range of CCEA actors for an open discussion on context-specific challenges to driving CCEA and co-designed recommendations for ways forward. In this sense, CDAC's wider stakeholder engagement contributed to the identification of collective priorities and messages for CCEA in the region. Regarding dissemination of specific resources, however, both the CCEA and language-use products have been published and disseminated through H2H Member channels, primarily organization websites and sector-wide platforms such as the REACH Resource Centre and ReliefWeb website. The Language-use products had obtained 140 views between publication and project closure in April 2023, while the CCEA advocacy tools received 158.

3.2.2. Effect on the response

International organizations used CLEAR Global's resources on language-based inclusion outputs to better understand communication needs in a multi-lingual country, while national NGOs benefitted both from granular information to help prioritize translations for marginalized groups, as well as from having an additional advocacy tool in their efforts to raise awareness of linguistic diversity in Somalia. While there are indications that CLEAR Global's work has contributed to a wider awareness of linguistic diversity in Somalia, there is no evidence yet of a wider system-level shift towards integrating multilingualism as a central part of response planning and implementation.

International organizations have integrated learning from CLEAR Global's resources in their needs assessment approaches. Most notably, REACH has incorporated language questions into both their assessments of hard-to-reach (H2R) areas and their detailed site assessments (DSAs). REACH's global MSNA team has indicated that, in response to this collaboration, they have raised the priority level of language-related questions in the core indicator set that they share with country teams. This increases the likelihood of more comparable and reliable language data being made available for a wider range of humanitarian emergencies to inform more inclusive communication and community engagement.

Somali NGOs used CLEAR Global's resources to help understand how best to think about translation of English-language products into local languages. In particular, the quantitative language data analysis provided a range of nuanced analysis that helped national NGOs think about the appropriate means of communication channel for each linguistic community. One actor cited the usefulness of the work highlighting preferences for different communication channels across each of the major linguistic communities. This was identified as being useful when considering where to focus written translation efforts and where to focus on other messaging approaches, such as visual posters or face-to-face conversations.

In addition, national and local NGOs credited CLEAR Global's resources with a role in helping raise awareness of linguistic diversity among their international partners. Notably, when asked to compare the period 6 months prior to and 6 months following CLEAR's publications, one local NGO actor recorded a noticeable positive shift in appreciation and understanding of Somali linguistic diversity among his international partner organizations. The perception of this actor was that CLEAR Global's work, and their engagement of other international actors in its production and dissemination, played a contributory role in driving this change. While anecdotal, and limited to the specific international partners with whom this actor worked, this does suggest that CLEAR Global's work contributed to change at the system-level in this response.

Nevertheless, the wider humanitarian community in Somalia has not yet fully integrated multilingualism as a central plank of its planning, design and coordination activities. The quantitative and qualitative work produced by CLEAR Global with H2H support illustrates the central place of language in the analysis of vulnerability, need and means of communication in Somalia. The qualitative data assessment demonstrates, for example, patterns of marginalization and discrimination affecting Maay Somali speakers' experience

of assistance, which point towards potentially replicable analysis with predictive value for risk assessment in future crises. Nevertheless, at the time of writing, the international humanitarian community continues to approach linguistic diversity as primarily a challenge of translation, i.e. of turning English-language communications content into local dialect content, rather than integrating language data into planning and design practices. As one actor put it: "I want people to realize that you can't hear who you can't hear, and I think that shift hasn't happened yet, and it's absolutely critical". A mindset shift, such as this, is, of course, unlikely within a six month project timeframe. But it is notable that the improvements observed in this case study are, while concrete, only first steps on the path to broader change.

The CCEA activities undertaken by CDAC, with H2H support, contributed to the identification and elevation of critical CCEA needs and priorities in each country and was credited with influencing the direction and uptake of the AAP action plans in Ethiopia and Somalia, as well as initiating discussions among key actors to revive the CCEA WG and Action plan for Kenya. CDAC's advocacy messages were also taken up by coordination and country-level stakeholders, with the potential to feed these messages up to HCT or ICCG level. In addition, the Learning Events were credited with encouraging relationship building between a diverse range of CCEA actors, including "unusual suspects" such as local media organizations and local community and civil society organizations.

3.3. Quality & professionalization

3.3.1. Services and resources produced

H2H Member RedR UK produced six free online courses for local responders across the Horn of Africa. The courses were designed to support responders to act in an effective, safe, sustainable and equitable manner, while ensuring the most vulnerable communities received timely and relevant assistance. RedR worked in collaboration with the Somali Lifeline Organisation (SOLO), a local response organization operating in Somalia and Kenya. They developed the course offering by adapting pre-existing RedR modules to the drought response, selecting focal areas on the basis of a rapid desk study and learning needs assessment. The final suite of learning materials covered six distinct aspects of response, namely:

- Needs assessment

- Project planning and implementation

- Accountability for field-based staff and back office/HQ staff

- Staying effective (safety, security and wellbeing)

- Resource mobilization (human and financial resourcing)

In addition, RedR offered a series of bite-sized, self-paced courses, to introduce local responders to key concepts in humanitarian action, including diversity, vulnerability and capacity, protection, humanitarian standards and coordination structures. A train-the-trainers session was held with 21 participants across the Horn of Africa, with 6 then selected to support a second round of online modules for more participants.

All participants were in the East Africa region, with 94.3% working in their home country. Half of the participants were from local NGOs, and 40% from national branches of international NGOs. Only 24% of participants were female, with RedR and SOLO noting the importance of increasing female participation in future modules.

3.3.2. Effect on the response

The courses were advertised on the RedR website and marketed through RedR and SOLO networks in East Africa. Participants reported that the training sessions were free to attend, easy to access, and very user-friendly. Participant satisfaction scores were high, with 95% or more of participants training the training overall, the facilitation, and the improvement of their knowledge as 'excellent' or 'good'.

Course participants recorded a number of changes in their own behavior, knowledge and capacities following course completion. One participant described how it changed their approach to needs assessment, enabling them to conduct more rigorous assessment. This was notably useful in a context where the drought was creating high numbers of newly arrived internally displaced persons, making it harder to keep track of evolving needs. The participant reported that "the skills I gain from that needs assessment course has really helped me to conduct a needs assessment with those IDPs who have recently arrived." Another cited the increased awareness of accountability for field-based staff had changed the way they interact with community members during community engagements.

In addition, some local responders noted that the training had an indirect impact on their ability to advocate effectively for vulnerable persons living in their communities. The training had, in their view, increased the quality of their assessments and reporting. This had a knock-on effect of increasing the credibility of their organization with international actors, which in turn improved their advocacy capacity among the international organizations operating in their region.

3.4. Logistics, security & program support

3.4.1. Services and resources produced

H2H, through its member organization Groundwater Relief (GWR), piloted a drought warning groundwater monitoring system in Kenya (Kakamega District) and Ethiopia (Addis Ababa). GWR worked with local partners in both locations. In Kenya they partnered with The Water Project, while in Ethiopia they partnered with the Ethiopian Environmental Health Professionals Association (EEHPA). The project trained data enumerators, modified groundwater access points, took measurements of groundwater levels, tested and upgraded a mobile application for data capture and provided remote data management services during the pilots.

The majority of the system was designed by GWR in previous projects, although some modifications were undertaken during the pilot to improve usability and ownership by their local partners. The training took place using a standard operating procedure developed by GWR in previous crises. It involved the use of a bespoke mobile phone app called "Water Data Rocks," developed by GWR. The Water Data Rocks app was used to record groundwater level measurements and capture information about the water point in both locations. The usability of the app was iteratively improved throughout the course of the pilot. The water point modifications involved constructing access ports to enable safe measurement of groundwater levels.

Some efforts were undertaken to ensure the sustainability of the project after the H2H Fund activation closed. GWR also signed MoU with the Water Project and the EEHPA to continue conducting data collection rounds during 2023, with water level readings anticipated to take place on a monthly basis for the entirety of 2023 in Kenya, and for the first half of 2023 in Ethiopia. But the results of these MoU were not verified at this stage.

3.4.2. Effect on the response

The Groundwater Relief project was designed to improve management of key water points and provide advanced warning of potential system failures. This is especially important in periods of drought, where groundwater resources become critical for water supply and food production. In such circumstances, good monitoring of groundwater levels can help local and international stakeholders better understand availability in the context of increased abstraction.

The activities completed by Groundwater Relief during this activation will likely not be sufficient to achieve this goal, but they do provide a starting point for future improvements if local actors continue the monitoring process. GWR's training, app development, water point modifications and data management are all relevant activities towards the end goal of building an improved groundwater management and early warning system. The MoU signed with local partners are also critical to the sustainability of the activities beyond the lifecycle of the H2H Fund activation. But without defining thresholds and triggers for early warning, or mobilizing and preparing local communities, organizations and authorities, it is not clear that the full potential of the project can be realized. Nevertheless, the dissemination of groundwater management data via GWR's online platform, could provide other actors with a clear starting point for wider engagement and the establishment of a more comprehensive early warning system.

4. H2H Fund overall performance

The scope of services offer by the H2H Fund activation in the Horn of Africa drought response was broad, albeit with a comparatively small number of engagements on professionalization, technical assistance and implementation noted in section 1 above. This allowed for a significant focus on services that improved the availability of data, information and analysis for responding agencies, as well as community engagement and accountability.

The relevance of the services offered to humanitarian organizations involved in the drought response was high, with good levels of engagement with other actors during the design process. Funded projects were mostly based on context-specific analysis of the needs and operational gaps emerging in the drought response, although some projects did replicate services offered elsewhere by the same members in other crises.

The speed of H2H Fund activations helps its members to provide critical early-response stage services and to pilot new approaches, despite the delays observed in this case. All members observed that, in general, the speed and early-phase engagement provided by H2H is one of its biggest added values for humanitarian actors. In the case of the Horn of Africa activation, delays were observed between the initial call and the full fund availability, as a result of the staggered fund availability coming from FCDO and BHA donors. Nevertheless, for the four projects funded in the first stage, H2H was able to support critical early-phase services such as needs analysis and tailored, linguistically appropriate, communication, community engagement and accountability approaches. It also allowed H2H to provide bridging funds for members who were on the early stages of the innovation cycles, such as Insecurity Insight and Groundwater Relief. For example, Insecurity Insight was able to build on the work in the Horn of Africa activation, and they are now better positioned to secure funding from other actors working in this space in other crises.

The small size of the H2H Fund activation, in both financial and temporal terms, does mean that results are limited to early stage indicators of wider change. The work of CLEAR Global, for instance, had an impact on increasing the focus on linguistic diversity of international actors working in Somalia. But in order to achieve the organization's wider goal of shifting mindsets towards integrating linguistic diversity in humanitarian response design and planning, it is clear that a longer timeframe would be needed. Likewise, the work of Groundwater Relief demonstrated successes in building the capacity for improved groundwater management, but it is unlikely to bring about a fully operational early warning system in the timeframe provided.

Coordination of H2H Member activities was complicated by the staggered funding cycles in this response. The staggered funding cycles provided by the UK FCDO and then the USA's BHA, outlined in section 1 above, did introduce some complications for H2H Members seeking to improve their understanding of other members' activities in the drought response. Some members noted that, since they only accessed fund resources in the second funding phase, they were comparatively late to the coordination activities, and were thus unable to benefit from early-phase coordination with other H2H Members.

Nevertheless, it remains unclear exactly where and how coordination and learning could be best leveraged to improve H2H Member services without overburdening project teams. Some members appreciate the light touch of the H2H Fund, with relatively small amounts of money available, but considerable freedom granted in the management of fund allocations and a low burden in terms of coordination activities. Other members cited the potential for more coordination activities to encourage synergies between members. To a degree, this may reflect the divergent needs between large, established members, who are providing similar services to previous crises; and smaller more innovation-focused members, who would arguably benefit more from coordination and network-focused activities.

5. Conclusion

The H2H Fund activation in the Horn of Africa drought response provided a wide-scope service package to humanitarian responders, which was taken up and used by a combination of local and international actors. These services had demonstrable effects on the availability of information and analysis of the nature of humanitarian need, the relationship between hunger and conflict, the linguistic diversity of Somali communities, and a number of other critical areas.

Local actors, in particular, benefitted from the training and professionalization services offered by H2H, despite the relatively small amount of funds dedicated to this area. But they also cited the usefulness of H2H work in terms of helping them advocate for more community-specific responses when speaking with international humanitarian agencies. Other service areas had less obvious and direct uptake by local users, although there were some exceptions, such as the communication, community engagement and accountability work which, while primarily used by international actors to improve their engagement with local actors, did have value for local actors, as a result of the changed mindsets and awareness levels recorded in international actors responding to the drought.

The speed and light administrative load of the H2H Fund were appreciated by member agencies, many of whom were seeking to implement short studies and pilot initiatives that required a degree of scope flexibility and left limited space for coordination and reporting work.

Future H2H Fund activations could benefit from reflection on the most appropriate levels of coordination work for member agencies, and on the balance between data, information and analysis activities on the one hand, and other activities with a clearer added value for local response agencies.

Acknowledgement

To learn more about the H2H Network and its fund, please visit our website:

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