

H2H Fund Activation:
Conflict in Tigray
2021

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About the author

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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. Sarah Simon and Hamzah Khamis from iMMAP. Helene Lafferty Smith from ACAPS. Jim Aborgast from Mercy Corp. Alyssa Boulares from Translators Without Borders. Helen Kearney and Alice Darcq from H2H Network.

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Introduction

This case study explores how the 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. This process aims to strengthen the H2H Network's activities and ensure their continued relevance and appropriateness. The study was conducted in November 2021 for the H2H Network by an independent consultant. A variety of sources including 10 key informant interviews, 8 project reports, a collaboration call¹ recording and 9 additional documents informed the study.

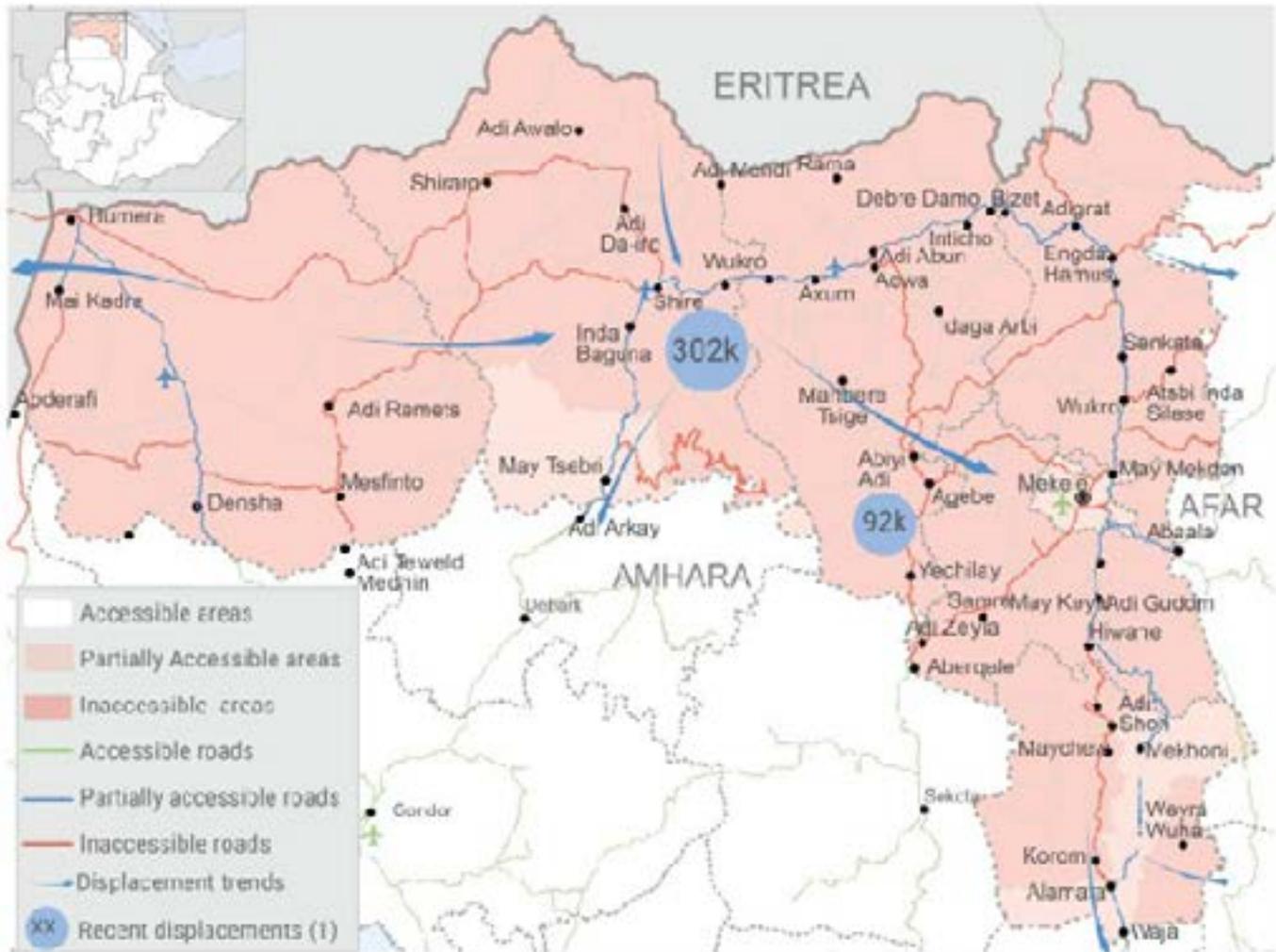
1 A "collaboration call" is a virtual or face-to-face workshop for grantees funded under a H2H Network Fund activation. It is an opportunity to share project updates, request support or advice from the core team or from fellow grantees, report on existing or identify new areas of collaboration between network members. Collaboration calls or workshops are typically scheduled at the mid-point of a grant period.

H2H Fund Activation

1. Crisis background

Months of rising tensions between the regional government in Tigray in the northern region of Ethiopia and the central government culminated in armed conflict in early November 2020. The fighting between Ethiopian Federal Forces (EDF) and security forces of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) aggravated an already difficult humanitarian situation, where 2 million people were dependent on aid ([OCHA Situation Report Nr.2](#)). By 19 January 2021, over 4 million people were in urgent need of food assistance in the region ([OCHA Access Snapshot](#)) and more than 56,000 people had fled across the border into Sudan ([UNHCR](#)). Humanitarian activities were severely hampered by the volatility of the conflict, the blockage of air and road access and an ongoing regional communication black-out ([OCHA Humanitarian Update](#)).

At the time of the H2H Network Fund activation the SARS-COV-2 pandemic impacted aid delivery around the world in multiple ways. Organizations operating in the Tigray response had to take additional planning and implementation measures while safeguarding staff and adhering to national and international rules and regulations. As a particularity to this specific fund activation, the UK Embassy in Ethiopia provided earmarked funding, enabling ACAPS specifically to remotely monitor the evolving food insecurity situation. The earmarked funding for ACAPS was complemented by the main H2H Network Fund.



4 million ⁽²⁾
 People in need of food aid

495,000 ⁽¹⁾
 People internally displaced

Number of people displaced in the region ⁽¹⁾

57,000
 New Ethiopian Refugees in Sudan since November 2020

6
 Number of humanitarian workers killed

Zone	IDPs
Central	110,056
Eastern	20,210
Mekelle	28,371
North Western	310,744
South Eastern	2,638
Southern	16,922
Western	6,853

(1): Numbers from IDM/DTM

(2): The 4 million PIN is an estimation that includes 2.5M relief beneficiaries from the food cluster, plus PSNP and Refugees beneficiaries. The IDP figures are used by the food cluster.

2. Fund activation details

The request for scoping for a potential H2H Fund activation was made by UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO, H2H Network's main donor at the time) two weeks into the conflict. Based on a secondary data needs assessment, and discussions with H2H Network members, operational agencies and key informants, a call for proposals was issued on 18 December 2020, aiming to fund a package of projects supporting multilateral processes including needs assessments and on-demand analytical products. Network members were encouraged to apply with projects that included products and tools to support the humanitarian system in Ethiopia and Sudan by contributing to processes led by OCHA and others. 5 network partners submitted projects by 6 January 2021, of which 4 were selected by the grant panel.

The H2H Network service package was fully operational by the end of January 2021.

The H2H Network Fund activation: How it works

The 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 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 I was composed of an independent consultant with regional knowledge, a donor representative and an H2H core team member. A service package is created to meet needs in a specific context and strengthen the humanitarian response.

The UK Embassy in Ethiopia contribution and the H2H Network Fund combined to make a total of £262,000 available to fund the four projects with a maximum duration of 3 months. The fixed end date and short implementation period were determined by the end of the fiscal year for the UK Embassy and stood in stark opposition to the needs assessed and the ability to deliver services in the highly volatile and uncertain context of the evolving conflict. The tight timeframe and end date (no cost extensions were not possible) and difficult implementation context explained why not all funding available was spent at the end of the implementation period.

The H2H Network Fund: Why it is needed

H2H (humanitarian-to-humanitarian) is an innovative network of specialist organizations, providing niche services, tools and products to the wider humanitarian system. Evidence and experience shows that they improve the quality and impact of humanitarian responses. Too often however, traditional humanitarian aid funding mechanisms are slow and reactive. Unnecessary delays impact responses and often shut out smaller organizations. The H2H Fund enables network members to quickly get to work when an emergency strikes. It functions as seed funding, allowing members to implement their services while applying for additional, longer-term funding.

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. All 4 project proposals included sections on potential risks and respective mitigation measures. Projects included strong remote support components due to access constraints including international travel during the pandemic and lengthy visa application processes in the case of Sudan.

The participation in a kick-off webinar and an additional collaboration call when required are key components of the service package concept. When reviewing proposals, grant panel members ensure compatibility of the projects, aiming for an effective overall outcome of the H2H Fund activation. Facilitated collaboration throughout the implementation period make the H2H Fund a unique approach to humanitarian service provision. The H2H Fund project application form is very clear regarding the demands for interoperability between projects, coordination and collaboration among funded partners. In this specific activation the form stated: “The network’s core team will have limited capacity to coordinate this activation; therefore, extra emphasis will be placed on members working together.” In January and February 2021, the core team was operating at reduced capacity, without a Director or a Head of Fund, meaning that previous levels of remote and on-site support to grant recipients could not be provided. Covid-related travel restrictions also meant that no team member could deploy.

Main findings

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.

1. Speed and timeliness

- The turnaround from initial assessment to fund activation was swift and allowed for timely and crucial service provision in the onset of the conflict escalation. However, administrative processes around the additional grant received from the UK Embassy delayed the project start. Grantees unilaterally confirm that the “onboarding process” including the fund application process are straightforward with strong technical guidance and support from the H2H Network core team.
- The 3-month project length proved challenging for all partners for multiple reasons. Partners with established presence in-country had an advantage as did those whose services were one-off, with no intended continuation beyond the project timeframe. Impact measurement beyond anecdotal evidence is near-impossible in such a short time frame.
 - The established presence of CDAC in Sudan was a key advantage to their swift uptake of activities at national level and enables them to build on existing relations with many key stakeholders in the humanitarian response.
 - The short implementation period and the delayed initiation of activities in-country prevented CDAC from guiding partners through the recommendations made around the mapping exercises and follow up on the training delivered.
 - The short implementation period and a rapidly growing workload limited iMMAPs capacity to seek additional funding for a seamless continuation of their activities. It also impacted their capacity to explore further collaboration with other H2H Network grantees. However, existing communication with ACAPS ensured that there was no overlap of their services. Initial discussions around developing a joint product were not realized due to time constraints.
 - The short implementation period forced iMMAP’s project activities to stop as the number of requests for support grew. This caused a certain level of frustration among partners and the iMMAP team, and ultimately kept the organization from applying to the second tranche of short term H2H funding for Tigray later in the year to avoid further reputational consequences.

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- There were several issues and misconceptions around the financial component of the H2H Fund activation:
 - Reduction of the implementation timeframe (originally 30 April 2021, reduced to 31 March 2021) to fit the requirements of the UK Embassy funding, impacting the effective implementation of set objectives within the shortened timeframe.
 - Uncertainty with regards to the general availability of H2H Network funding after 31 March 2021, which restricted the potential for cost and no cost extensions beyond March.
 - The earmarked funding for ACAPS and the perceived direct relations to the donor: Other grant recipients were unclear on the possibility to approach FCDO directly for additional funding and expressed their wish for a stronger role from the H2H Network core team in facilitating donor relations.
 - When the second call for proposals was issued in May only one of the four grant recipients applied. Others did not see the call as an invite to continue the activities or had sought other funding in the meantime.
 - *The gap between closing projects in March and reinitiating them in May/ June was raised in each interview as another reason for members' reticence to re-apply to the fund.*
 - *The second round of funding was again limited to 3 months and one member raised reputational concerns vis-à-vis operational partners when (again) having to wrap up activities amid a protracted crisis.*

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- Participation and reporting requirements are high for a 3-month funding period with limited amounts of funding issued per grant recipient, as feedback from key informants suggest. One grant recipient reported that this diverted time from using the short implementation period to seek additional funding.
 - The application and reporting formats, albeit short with an average of 10 pages each, are perceived to be repetitive in their questions. This issue had been raised before and been addressed since, however there is still opportunity for combining several sections into more effective or coherent blocks of information.
 - This H2H Fund activation was the first time that earmarked funding was channelled through the usual H2H Network funding mechanism. Facilitating this unusual configuration, in the onset of an emergency and further challenged by the Christmas holiday period made this a very challenging grant to manage.

2. Coordination and collaboration

- The facilitated collaboration has been praised extensively by key informants, however this form of bilateral and multilateral support to the fund grantees is labour intensive and demands a sustained effort from the H2H Network core team. At the time of the fund activation and throughout implementation, the team faced issues around staff turnover and workload which impacted on the ability to maximize support to the grantees as intended in the H2H Network Fund concept.
- While the swift access to funding and the simple onboarding processes were much praised by H2H fund grantees their strongest argument in support of the H2H fund was the networking opportunity arising from being a network member and the facilitated collaboration during project implementation. Some relationships were established during previous member meetings while others were formed during this service package implementation and have since continued, leading to new forms of collaboration.
- iMMAP reported that international NGOs were concerned about sharing their data, deterring them from requesting iMMAP's services. As a result, iMMAP developed a short memorandum of understanding covering data protection issues which allowed international NGOs to use their services, but delayed uptake among this user group. Clusters, that were used to be working with iMMAP, did not face this issue, so iMMAP was able to provide them with information services throughout project implementation. Regarding national NGOs, more time was needed to specifically liaise with them and present their services.
- Feedback required from partners to develop a context-specific glossary of humanitarian terms was difficult to acquire. TwB had to search for relevant terminology in documents and other sources rather than guide the expected collaboration with operational agencies.
- Collaboration with TwB and CDAC in Sudan helped strengthen some of the products and supported wider relationship building, including across the border. This was crucial in a context where there was very limited exchange between the two humanitarian communities.

3. Adaptation and Innovation

- Several grant recipients had to amend their projects throughout the implementation period (see details below). The responsiveness, flexibility, and openness of the H2H Network core team to accommodate for those amendments was praised in key informant interviews.
- TwB had to change its planned operating model due to travel restrictions affecting the arrival of the project manager in Sudan. Remote support had to take a stronger role than intended which delayed partnership building in-country.
- As the humanitarian response to the needs of refugees in Sudan evolved slower than anticipated, TwB's support to implementing partners was kept rather generic than contextualized. However, TwB was able to adapt their project swiftly to support the establishment of services where they were absent and translation services focussed on the translation of tools and guidance.
- TwB struggled to raise awareness, especially among national, smaller organisations, on what services could be provided beyond translation, and why language is key to accountability and quality of the response.
- Working in parallel with a grant from the H2H Get Ready Fund, TwB have identified ways in which they can be more prepared for this in future and prepared some documents and processes.

4. Relevance and appropriateness²

- Operational key informants commented positively on the relevance of the services provided through H2H funded projects and that critical gaps in the overall humanitarian response were addressed, including the exchange of information across border and between the two responses which was largely absent at the time. This was facilitated through the collaborative working relationship between H2H Fund grantees and highlights the added value of this key component of the H2H Network Fund mechanism.
- The project proposals were all technically strong. However, not all risk assessments and mitigation measures proposed were inclusive of some risks that could have been anticipated, especially for partners who were already familiar with the national context:
 - Logistics to and from the field proved more challenging than anticipated and slowed down project implementation.
 - The tight project timeframe coincided with a high staff turnover among humanitarian partners in the early stages of the response which affected both capacity building and coordination efforts in the field.
 - Establishing services and building network and trust among implementing partners took longer than anticipated. Navigating the sensitive information landscape required time and sensitivity: building trust among partners was a key element to success. The continued presence of ACAPS staff in-country, though limited to Addis Ababa, was of importance in building these relationships.

² 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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- At the onset of the crisis many humanitarian partners in-country recruited information management specialists, including tapping into iMMAP’s national roster of experts through multiple Standby Partnership agreements. iMMAP also faced considerable difficulties recruiting national staff for the short duration of the H2H Network funded project. In consultation with the H2H Network core team, the human resources structure of the project was modified to work with international information management specialists instead.
 - Sustaining coordination efforts, network building and training outcomes are typically challenging in an evolving emergency response environment – Tigray was no exception. CDAC conducted a Training of Trainers intended to support implementing partners to pass on their knowledge to newly arriving staff. However, whether this opportunity was fully utilized depended on the willingness and capacity of the respective implementing partner.
 - Feedback from several national staff and operational partners suggests that grant recipients and their staff often miss opportunities to actively disseminate information on the H2H Network. If the network is mentioned at all, it is solely as a donor. This is a missed opportunity to promote the network, build awareness and uptake of H2H services at response level.

5. Additional outcomes and what happened next

The H2H Network Fund aims to enable network members to get to work quickly when an emergency strikes, delivering needs-based technical services, tools and products to support the wider humanitarian response. Members typically seek additional funding from elsewhere to continue activities if the need is identified. An important characteristic of the H2H Network Fund is its ability to function as catalyst for medium and longer-term engagement of members in the context in question.

- ACAPS and iMMAP secured additional funding during and after the H2H Fund project implementation and continue to operate in the Tigray conflict response to date. Their H2H Fund stimulated collaboration continues, though at a different scale through regular exchanges on project activities funded by the same donor.
- CDAC did not seek additional funding to continue the activities funded by both H2H Fund activations in Tigray. However, key informants confirmed that their activities, in particular the (re-) activation of accountability to affected populations coordination and the linkages between actors in the field and Khartoum are still ongoing, with strong focus on enhancing the work of local partners.
- TwB and CDAC carried their collaboration onward to the H2H Fund activation for the earthquake in Haiti and have developed their joint project based on their long-term collaboration as H2H Network members.

Conclusion

The H2H Network Fund activation for the conflict in Tigray allowed the four H2H Fund recipients to provide timely and relevant services at a point in time when the predominantly development-oriented aid community in Ethiopia and Sudan needed urgent support to scale up or transition their operations to life saving services. It was impossible to predict the intensity and length of the evolving conflict during the assessment phase of the fund activation. The 3-month timeframe with focus on assessments and on-demand analytical products were in theory appropriate for seed funding. In practice, however, the complex Ethiopian and Sudanese contexts, exacerbated by the SARS-COV-2 pandemic, proved challenging for all H2H Network Fund grantees. Some of the factors impacting on the swift roll-out of activities were anticipated in the scoping and assessment phase of the fund activation and highlighted by the grant panel process, as reflected in the respective matrices developed. However, assumptions made and concerns raised were not adequately taken into account when the initial implementation timeframe was shortened by another month due to the conditions put forward by the earmarked funds from the UK Embassy in Ethiopia. With uncertainty around the overall continuation of the H2H Fund, there was no room for any negotiation around potential needs-based project extensions as the conflict continued to escalate. It was not until the final collaboration call, after all 4 projects had closed in March 2021 that a discussion took place among grant recipients, the donor and core team members which eventually led to a second H2H fund activation two months later.

The impact of the relatively small budgets of each H2H Fund recipient was maximized by the strong level of collaboration between the four fund recipients, operational agencies and the coordination and collaboration with the wider humanitarian community. Striking in all key stakeholder interviews was the emphasis placed on the multiple benefits – outside the opportunity to receive funding -- of being a member of the H2H Network. The culture of the network, through which partners are often already familiar with each other, is of great value specifically for smaller organizations who provide niche services that are most useful when combined with others, as can be seen in the case of the collaboration between TwB and CDAC in this H2H Fund activation. The forming of service packages and the facilitated collaboration during emergencies is seen as unique and highly effective, especially through expanded networking opportunities with either key informants or service users but also through combining distinct services (CDAC and TWB in this case) for the benefit of a more comprehensive service provision to the same group of service recipients. The purpose of the H2H Fund as seed funding in sudden onset emergencies is of crucial relevance for H2H Network members who would otherwise be unable to respond, as access to traditional funding sources remains difficult and slow for small niche service providers.

Reporting requirements, including the writing of a blog, were perceived high for the relatively small grants issued. However they do serve crucial purposes for the benefit strengthening the H2H Fund mechanism internally and the promotion of the H2H network externally. The purpose of the blog, which aims to promote the H2H network, the H2H Fund and the respective partners' work supports the growth of the network and the demonstration of the added value of H2H "way of working". The particularly sensitive context in this H2H Fund activation limited partners' opportunities to publicly promote the H2H fund as source of their work and this has been clearly communicated and agreed upon with the network. However, more could have been done to promote the network vis-à-vis operating partners in the response as this is important both for uptake of services from operational agencies, as well as for network development purposes.

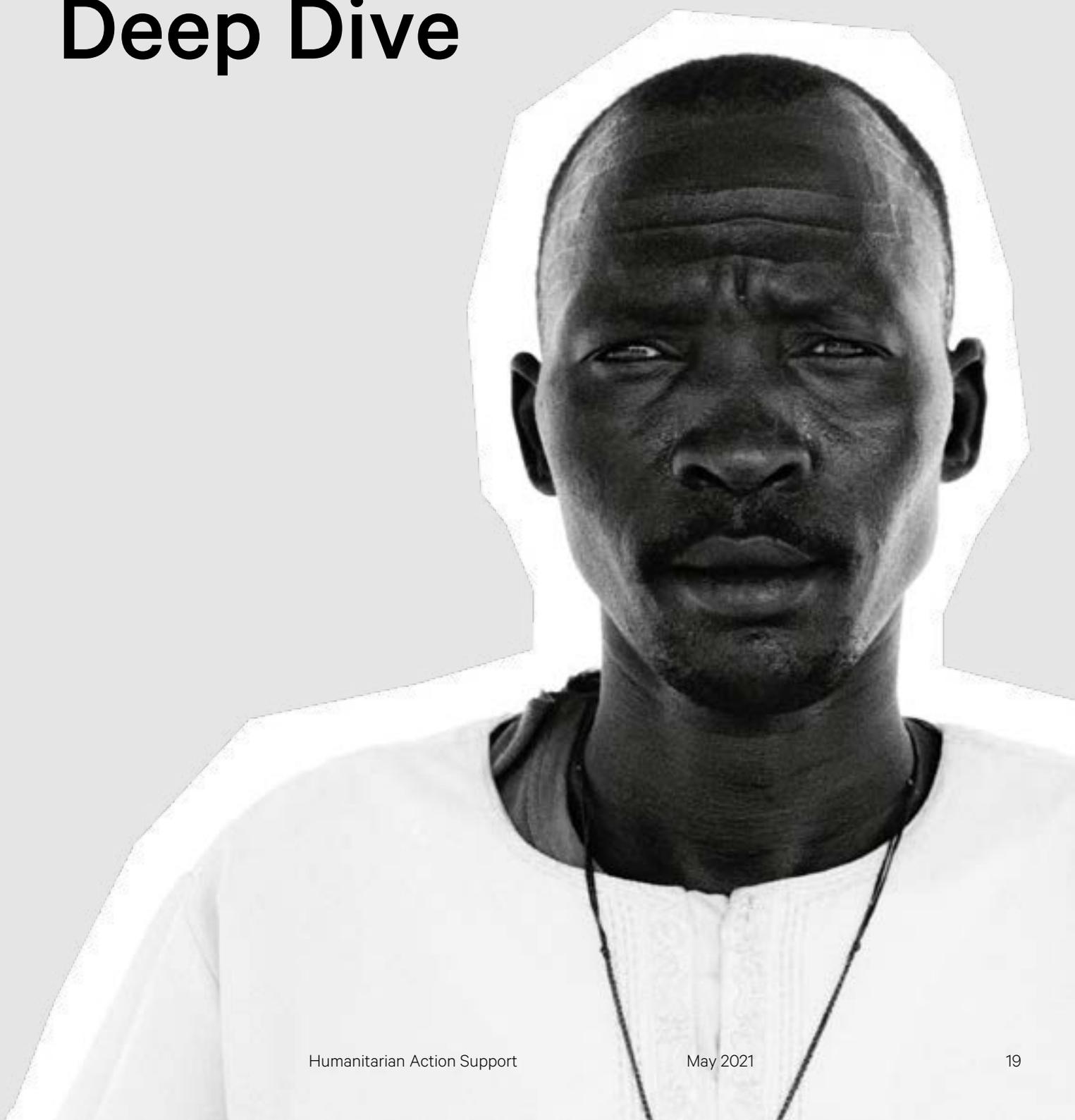
“ In the sensitive context (of Ethiopia) the usual approach of ACAPS to be publicly sharing their reports was not taking place. But this “word of mouth” and distribution list distribution worked well. Now everyone is on the distribution list.

Jim Aborgast, Senior Director of Crisis Analytics at Mercy Corp ”

Annexe 1

Projects

Deep Dive



1.

CDAC – Enhancing collective community engagement and accountability through surge capacity to Sudan’s Tigray response and the AAP/CCEA Working Group

Project design

CDAC proposed to ensure that the communication, community engagement and accountability needs (CCEA) of the affected people in the border area of Sudan and Ethiopia be effectively included in humanitarian aid programming through enhanced coordination at national and subnational level. Key objectives of the project were the provision of technical support to the newly established working group on AAP (accountability to affected populations) and CCEA and to assist implementing partners with improving their communication, reducing confusion, and providing shared feedback pathways with the affected population. The services provided by CDAC intended to strengthen humanitarian responders capacity to implement coherent CCEA and AAP services to affected populations.

Services delivered

At the time of the Tigray Fund Activation, CDAC already had an established presence in Sudan through their H2H-funded COVID-19 response project in the country. This allowed for the swift recruitment of a Senior National Community Engagement and Accountability Coordinator as surge support to the growing number of humanitarian partners in the capital and the border area with Ethiopia. The senior coordinator led joint efforts to rapidly map existing CCEA capacities among implementing partners and a mapping exercise of the presence of community-based communication and feedback mechanisms (CBCFM) relating to refugees from Tigray. The latter included the involvement of host and refugee community representatives ensuring the building of trust and promote social cohesion and peaceful co-existence between the refugees and the host communities. A training of trainers (ToT) on CCEA was conducted with 25 staff from multiple implementing partners operating in the border area. Through CDAC's presence in the border area coordination between implementing partners shifted from siloed activities to a collective approach to AAP and Community based complaint and feedback mechanism (CBCFM) systems. Chat groups and regular CwC/ CCE community of practice meetings were established and guidelines on AAP and CBCFM systems developed by CDAC and UNHCR were widely disseminated.

CDAC did not seek any additional funding throughout the implementation period, however they submitted a similar project for the second H2H Network Fund activation to continue their project in Sudan.

“ The AAP working group established by OCHA and CDAC is still functioning to date (November 2021) and still strives to enhance the work of local partners. The seed for this was planted by CDAC and the H2H funding.

Khadiba Agab, Senior National Community Engagement & Accountability Coordinator, CDAC Sudan ”

1. CDAC – Enhancing collective community engagement and accountability through surge capacity to Sudan’s Tigray response and the AAP/CCEA Working Group

Services used

The training of trainers (ToT) and provision of technical guidance enabled implementing partners to enhance their services using a common set of CEA and AAP tools and to disseminate their knowledge to colleagues and newly incoming staffs. The forging of collaboration and joined learning among ToT participants and working group members contributed to shifting the local response environment from a fragmented, uncoordinated response to a collaborative approach on CCEA and AAP and thus reducing the potential for confusion among affected population and humanitarian partners. The deployment of a Senior Coordinator helped to strengthen the coordination between the UNHCR led subnational CwC working group, the OCHA led CEA/AAP working group, and the nationally led Refugee Consultation Forum in Khartoum. All forums have committed to follow up on the implementation of context specific recommendations for CEA and AAP developed by CDAC.

Response contribution

The efforts of the technical expert as co-facilitator in the working groups at national and subnational level and as intermediary between various technical working groups ensured a common understanding of ways of working among humanitarian partners. Collaborating with H2H Network members and the wider humanitarian community maximized the impact of their project. Collaboration between the H2H Network grantees included direct project implementation through the joint training with TwB, frequent information exchange and introductions to the humanitarian network in Sudan with ACAPS and joint discussions during the collaboration calls.

2.

IMMAP – Information Management services and Needs Assessments support to the humanitarian community responding to the North Ethiopia crisis

Project design

iMMAP proposed to provide on-demand analytical products and technical support to needs assessments of organizations that are operating in the Tigray region of Ethiopia. Methodologically secondary and remote primary data were to be analyzed where information gaps were identified among partners. Alongside the support for data collection iMMAP would provide information management services including data management and visualization.

The long-standing presence of iMMAP in the country and established relationships with various clusters and individual key stakeholders in the response to the crisis in Tigray provided a strong foundation for the project. Implementation modalities included a mix of remote support from international iMMAP experts and locally recruited staff working with existing secondary data and facilitating the analysis of primary data of implementing partners.

“ We were observing the beginning of the crisis and already developed a concept to support the humanitarian response but didn't see any funding opportunity. When we learned about the H2H fund activation we realized that it was possible to do something rapidly.

**Sarah Simon, iMMAP Africa
Desk Coordinator**

”

2.

IMMAP – Information Management services and Needs Assessments support to the humanitarian community responding to the North Ethiopia crisis

Services delivered

Recruitment of staff took longer than anticipated and therefore shortened the project phase considerably. However, throughout the implementation period iMMAP successfully supported humanitarian actors with needs assessments, information analysis and the provision of information management products. Activities focused on providing support to OCHA’s Multi-Agency Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) in Northwest Tigray, covering the development of remote data collection forms, user manuals, training materials, quantitative and qualitative data analysis of the outcomes of the assessment, and participating in the production of the final assessment report. The education cluster was supported in their Joint Education Needs Assessment (JENA). The iMMAP information management team supported the Global Protection Cluster in overlaying humanitarian access maps regarding the location and demographic breakdown of Internally Displaced People (IDPs). 4Ws (who, what where, when) analyses were provided for the Food Security Cluster and Nutrition Cluster and a dashboard was developed for the Shelter/NFI Cluster to clearly visualize their activities across the region.

Services used

The iMMAP service availability was communicated to cluster leads and to cluster participants, leading to a growing number of requests for a variety of different IM products for collectives (OCHA, the Protection Sub-cluster, the Health Cluster, the Nutrition Working Group, the Food Security Cluster, The Nutrition Cluster, the Agriculture Cluster (FAO), the Education Cluster) and individual organisations (UNWomen/UNFPA, WFP, the Access WG, DRC, and Care). Despite a delayed start and shorter implementation period the number of IM products developed by iMMAP vastly exceeded the objectives in the project proposal. iMMAP had to finalize its project activities just as understanding and interest in their services grew and with many pending requests for IM support by a growing variety of humanitarian partners.

At the end of the project - and with clear indication for continued needs of information management products - iMMAP responded to an OCHA request to share their context-specific methodologies and templates used during the collaboration.

Response contribution

The products developed for various clusters were widely disseminated among cluster partners and publicly accessible in most cases. The IM products provided input to flash appeals and annual humanitarian response planning and thus contributed to the wider humanitarian response and beyond the H2H Network funded project implementation period. This includes the creation of an Event Tracking Tool dashboard to update and map IDPs' locations which continues to date. The support provided to coordinated needs assessments contributed to a better understanding of the situation among humanitarian partners. Sharing tools and methodologies with OCHA provided the opportunity to sustain some of iMMAP's impact through their continued use.

3. Translators Without Borders – Language and communication expertise provision to humanitarian responders to the Tigray crisis

Project design

Translators without Borders (TwB) proposed to support humanitarian partners in Ethiopia and in Sudan with language and communication services that aim to provide all people affected with access to vital knowledge in their own language. In Sudan, TwB intended to conduct a rapid assessment to identify language barriers and needs to inform the refugee response. Technical support was to be provided to humanitarian partners to ensure their activities consider language and communication preferences of the affected populations. To strengthen multilateral processes across the response in both countries, TwB contributed to the establishment of Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms and provided language training and guidance on data collection and accountability for staff. The project was implemented with physical presence of TwB staff in Sudan and extensive remote support from the global TwB team. Technical support to projects of H2H grantees and network partners in Ethiopia was to be provided remotely.

Services delivered

TwB was able to deliver against all objectives set out in the project proposal. A language assessment was conducted in the border region of Sudan and its findings contributed to all further activities of TwB and the wider humanitarian response. Trainings were conducted on language aware assessment methodologies and on multilingual accountability mechanisms. From these training experiences a context-specific training methodology, briefing papers and guidance notes in Amharic, Tigrinya and Arabic were developed and shared with implementing partners through AAP and CWC working groups in Sudan. The language-aware assessment methodology was turned into an Arabic language online training module and available as freeware from May 2021 onward. A glossary of key terms in relevant languages to support communication with affected people on both sides of the border was developed and made available online. Through active participation in respective working groups, TwB promoted best practices on language aware communication and supported the setup of language-aware accountability and feedback mechanism in the refugee camps in Sudan.

In Ethiopia, TwB collaborated closely with ACAPS on the production of a language map for the affected region and provided translation of accountability related material to the International Organisation of Migration. Support to Internews and REACH/ Impact Initiatives' assessment plans was provided and the work of the RSHub was supported with translation capacity to ensure access to safeguarding resources and information materials in Tigrinya and Amharic for humanitarian partners. These prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) safeguarding resources and information materials in Tigrinya and Amharic were widely distributed through relevant networks in Ethiopia and Sudan.

3. Translators Without Borders – Language and communication expertise provision to humanitarian responders to the Tigray crisis

Services delivered

While several implementing partners entered into language service partnerships with TwB, the uptake of (translation) services available to all implementers in both countries were picked up to a lesser degree than anticipated. A DRC/UNICEF/NCA project plans to implement feedback mechanisms in multiple formats (e.g. using audio, pictorial options), based on TwB's insight that initial face-to-face information desks are not enough. Internews considered their involvement in the refugee response, built on the joint messaging from TwB and CDAC that there was an information and accountability gap in the response. Feedback from training participants include a shift in understanding and addressing power dynamics based on language, an indication that services to beneficiaries are likely refined and become more inclusive of particularly vulnerable members of the refugee community. To ensure future action on the recommendations developed by TwB, the tools and guidance were developed with scope for impact post-implementation.

“ I and others find it easier to talk to people in Arabic, and we know some refugees we work with who do speak good Arabic. But now we are more aware of making sure we listen to people who speak only Tigrinya

Quote from a TwB training participant in Sudan ”

Response contribution

The project raised awareness of the language and communication challenges in the response and gave responders an idea of how to mitigate them. TwB effectively positioned themselves as an expert H2H organization to contact for guidance or collaboration. Assessment processes and project implementation now ensure language awareness and community feedback mechanisms are in place and their purpose is explained to the refugee community in the right language.

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During the joint community consultation process with CDAC and TwB language barriers were identified which eventually became a focus area of CDAC's work. We experience many emergencies and crises in Sudan, but this was the first time that language was raised as an issue!

Khadiga Agab, CDAC, Sudan

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4. ACAPS – Support analysis of humanitarian needs resulting from the conflict in Northern Ethiopia.

Project design

ACAPS proposed to support in-country decision makers, operational NGOs, international NGOs, the UN system, donors, and other actors with evidence-based analysis of primary and secondary data for humanitarian decision-making. This was to be delivered in form of regular independent contextual and humanitarian analysis products and thematic analyses with focus on salient issues that were not well understood as and when they arose in the rapidly evolving context. Predicting access issues ACAPS designed its project to be conducted remotely with some in country support through an existing network of operational actors in Ethiopia and the region. An in-country consultant was to be recruited to support ACAPS on networking and fact-checking. ACAPS received additional earmarked funding alongside the H2H Fund from the British Embassy in Ethiopia to produce a thematic report on the food security situation in Tigray depicting the deteriorating food security situation within the region resulting from the conflict and pre-crisis context.

Services delivered

During the three-month project ACAPS produced two humanitarian needs updates covering the immediate needs in Tigray, as well as a secondary data review specifically for the region, covering the pre-crisis situation and the impacts of the crisis. Additionally, an in-depth food security briefing report, a note on displacement in the region, and one zone profile on Tigray central zone, providing a zone-specific overview of pre-crisis characteristics, displacement, humanitarian access and in-crisis needs. All products were the result of extensive secondary data analysis of publicly available information, assessment data from implementing partners and from key informant interviews. The products reflect the information needed by implementing partners as they were produced during and after extensive consultations, either through cluster participation or in bilateral communication. Duplication of services was avoided through participation in the Assessment and Access working groups and through working in collaboration with iMMAP. ACAPS' strong relationship building through collaboration with OCHA and frequent attendance in multiple coordination forums proved invaluable to access the various data that informed their products.

ACAPS was able to use the implementation period to secure funding to continue its services to humanitarian partners in Ethiopia at a reduced output level than the original H2H grant provided. As an in-house capacity building activity, ACAPS utilized the support of some of its trainees to assist in the project – both the analytical piece and participation in key informant interviews. This provided training and learning opportunities for them.

“ I think that the partners really trust us as we have built these relationships and continued to build them. A lesson for me was the importance of making sure that the team stayed the same and that we continue these relationships is really critical. Using a mailing list rather than openly publishing sensitive information helped build that trust.

**Helene Lafferty-Smith ACAPS Project
coordinator** ”

4.

ACAPS – Support analysis of humanitarian needs resulting from the conflict in Northern Ethiopia.

Services used

ACAPS reports were used by UN partners, FCDO and other donors, and NGOs for response planning purposes. Several products were not publicly shared but distributed to a mailing list in recognition of the highly politicized information landscape in Tigray which poses considerable risks for operational partners when sharing information. According to ACAPS' project manager Helene Lafferty Smith the mailing list grew significantly from 15 to now (November 2021) over 230 recipients, indicating the widespread uptake of information provided.

“ When the conflict kicked off ACAPS was pretty swift and their inception period was surprisingly short. They were producing reports when everyone was still blind and it was extremely difficult to know what was happening or what the humanitarian impact was - even outside of Tigray.

Jim Aborgast, Senior Director Crisis Analytics at Mercy Corps

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Response contribution

ACAPS products provided background information in support of multiple planning processes in response to the conflict in Ethiopia. The production of humanitarian needs updates and thematic reports was critical to informing the response in Tigray and useful for local actors beyond the immediate project implementation period to provide input in the pre-crisis and post crisis contexts. The Secondary Data Review (SDR) on the pre-crisis context in Tigray was used as a source to support other stakeholders' analysis including the report *Starving Tigray* (World Peace Foundation). The project also directly resulted in relationship building and collaboration with H2H Network members and other humanitarian partners, opening opportunities for collaboration and further networking.

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 or email info@h2hnetwork.org.