ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNICATION, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN SUDAN

CDAC

NETWORK

communicating with disaster affected communities

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
C4D	Communication for Development
CBCFM	Community Based Complaints and Feedback Mechanism
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CCEA	Communication, Community Engagement and Accountability
CDAC Network	Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities Network
CEA	Community Engagement and Accountability
CFM	Complaints and Feedback Mechanism
COV	Community Outreach Volunteer
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CwC	Communicating with Communities
FCRM	Feedback, Complaints and Response Mechanism
HAC	Government of Sudan's Humanitarian Aid Commission
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
ISCG	Inter-Sectoral Coordination Group
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PSEA	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SHF	Sudan Humanitarian Fund
SUNA	Sudan News Agency
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
WG	Working Group

SUMMARY

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Introduction

Stemming from decades of political and economic instability, conflict and natural disasters, Sudan is currently experiencing a multi-faceted crisis. An estimated 14.3 million people – 30% of the total population – will need humanitarian assistance in 2022. The country is a major host country for refugees, and the 1.2 million refugees from neighbouring countries further challenge the humanitarian context. The Government of Sudan's Humanitarian Aid Commission has been leading the humanitarian response with support from various local NGOs, UN agencies and INGOs.

Against this complex humanitarian context, the CDAC Network (with funding support from UNICEF) conducted an assessment between April and July 2021 on the status of response-wide Communication, Community Engagement and Accountability (CCEA) work with affected populations in Sudan. This report is based on consultations with 29 humanitarian and non-humanitarian actors in-country within Sudan. It pays particular attention to the participation and involvement of local actors in CCEA activities, as well the availability of effective coordination to mainstream CCEA across all humanitarian activities, with many of the recommendations aimed at these areas. It sought to understand the current challenges and opportunities in these areas, and to outline key recommendations to facilitate, coordinate and help to provide meaningful and inclusive CCEA to affected people.

Key findings

The humanitarian CCEA coordination structures in Sudan are primarily led by UN agencies with governmental counterparts at the sector level in Khartoum and field sites. These coordination structures have a relatively low level of representation of local NGOs, CBOs and other community and local organisations considering the large number of local entities working at field level[1]. Local organisations are involved in the Sudan PSEA Network, led by with WFP as the Secretariat with support from the PSEA focal point and

the Humanitarian Country Team, the Network itself lacks strong linkages with the wider humanitarian coordination and protection forums.

The pre-conditions and interests of donors have restricted the capacity of local actors to facilitate and coordinate meaningful CCEA, such as not allocating specific funding for CCEA related activities, and the resulting lack of coordination and availability of information has restricted national NGOs and community-based organisations (CBOs) from accessing the humanitarian CEA system. During the review period up to July 2021 it was found that there could also be an improvement in increasing the level of engagement of media and the private sector for CCEA to share skills and deepen engagement. These media agencies, private sector communication and media companies and organisations outside of the traditional humanitarian space have a great deal of CCEA expertise and despite this, there remains a minimal level of collaboration and linkages between them and the humanitarian system.

Generally, the CBOs and NGOs with local teams have good community access, good relationships, and trust with the affected populations in very remote areas. As access to affected communities has been a key challenge for many humanitarian actors, leveraging and investing in maintaining, and where needed, creating, networks of local actors should be prioritised. Religious and community leaders, as well as government social workers, have substantial reach and influence at the community level, yet they are not integrated into wider response coordination systems.

Another critical gap in CCEA is the lack of a common approach for Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CFM) implemented by UN, INGOs, NGOs and government counterparts. Dedicated CFM focal points should be established by all partners to reduce confusion and ensure timely feedback to complainants. Face-to-face consultations and information sessions with communities should be prioritised to prevent a lack of understanding among potential CFM users.

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1. 2021 Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan Sudan_Humanitarian_Response_Plan_2021_EN (reliefweb.int)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

CDAC Network undertook this scoping assessment on the status of response-wide Communication, Community Engagement and Accountability (CCEA) towards affected populations in Sudan to provide recommendations for a strengthened and more inclusive platform. The assessment was conducted between April and July 2021. Overall, twenty-nine humanitarian and non-humanitarian actors active in the Sudan response were consulted in this process, including government partners, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), private sector, educational institutions, the media, UN agencies and International NGOs (see Annex).

It follows on the previous support provided by CDAC Network and OCHA to establish the Sudan Accountability towards Affected Populations (AAP) and a community engagement platform. The work has focused on the coordination of different operational agencies in Sudan to more effectively and efficiently deliver CCEA and enhance inter-agency coherence. This collaboration between CDAC and national experts with experience working alongside OCHA Sudan and field offices took place over nine months in 2020/21. OCHA provided administrative and guidance support, with funding provided by the H2H Network.[2]

BACKGROUND

Sudan has experienced decades of instability, stemming from significant political changes, conflict, sudden-onset disasters, and poor economic conditions. Like most countries, Sudan has been battling COVID-19 outbreaks, with 41,309 confirmed cases and 3,069 deaths recorded between March 2020 and November 2021.[3] The multi-faceted crisis will leave an estimated 14.3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2022.[4] Sudan is a host country for refugees fleeing conflict in neighbouring countries. As of July 2021, Sudan hosts over 1.2 million refugees from Eritrea, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, and South Sudan.[5] 50,159 refugees fleeing Ethiopia's Tigray region were reported in Sudan in November 2021[6], with growing hostilities in the region threatening to trigger more crossings into Sudan.[7]

Sudan is a country of high ethnic and linguistic diversity. The languages of Sudan include Fur, Masalit, Zaghawa, Beja, Nuba, Dinka, Nuer, Hausa, including others and dialectical variants. Language has been one of the significant challenges in accessing services and information. It has been observed that communities living in the mountains communicated in low voices, while those in the deserts communicated in loud voices to cover the space. Arabic is the common language for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the host communities, despite over 190 languages being spoken in Sudan. Refugees prefer to communicate in their languages, and older people prefer to communicate in their local language and dialects. English is used by the educated and intellectual Sudanese and refugees.

The many cultures and languages of Sudan, in large part due to the constant influx of refugees, complicate the humanitarian response. Many areas in need of aid are also hard to reach and have restricted access, particularly in Darfur, South Kurdufan, and the Blue Nile states. Competition over the limited resources and limited communication and engagement with communities has led to conflicts between the affected communities of refugees, IDPs and the host communities in many areas of Sudan. While communication and community engagement has been added or integrated into most aid providers' projects, not all are well-implemented on the ground, which can negatively impact relationships with communities and affected people.

Overview of the humanitarian landscape

The Government of Sudan's Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) is the national regulating body that oversees all humanitarian work carried out in Sudan, while the Federal Ministry of Health leads the COVID-19 response. The Sudanese Red Crescent has branches in all states while a growing number of Sudanese civil society organisations support national and regional emergency responses. The humanitarian coordination architecture in Sudan is comprised of the United Nations Country Team, with the United Nations Communication Group, implementing the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

The Humanitarian Coordinator leads and chairs the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), with the overall objective to provide strategic and policy direction for collective inter-agency humanitarian response. Members include UN agencies, OCHA, national and international NGOs. Complementing this, the Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) provides a platform for sectors to work together and deliver an effective and efficient humanitarian operational response. The ISCG comprises the following sub-sectors: Coordination and Common Services (CCS), Education (EDU), Emergency Shelter/Non-Food Items (ES/NFIs), Food, Security and Livelihoods (FSL), Health (HEA), Logistics and Emergency Telecommunications (LET), Nutrition (NUT), Protection (PRO), and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH). The Refugee Consultation Forum (RCF) is led by UNHCR and addresses refugee issues in Sudan.

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3. Sudan: WHO Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Dashboard With Vaccination Data | WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard With Vaccination Data
4. OCHA. Global Humanitarian Overview 2022. Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022 (December 2021) - Sudan | ReliefWeb
5. Ibid.
6. UNHCR Gedaref Operational Update #21 https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/89947
7. UNHCR Ethiopia (Tigray) Situation Regional Update #23 – 14 October 2021. Document - Ethiopia (Tigray) situation regional update #23 – 14 October 2021 (unhcr.org)

Map of people in need in Sudan

Source: OCHA Humanitarian Needs Overview, Sudan (2021)

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In 2021, the Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) was launched by OCHA and partners to scale up the response in Sudan and consolidate the evidence base to inform joint strategic response. The 2021 HRP prioritises efforts to strengthen inter-agency coordination on AAP/CEA approaches "through combining communication, community engagement, participation strategies and technology" and addressing accountability through an emphasis by all partners on anti-fraud; the provision of humanitarian services free of charge; and people's rights and entitlements; and code of conduct.[8]

AAP/CEA Working Group

The AAP/CEA Working Group was established in November 2020 and reports to the ISCG at the Khartoum level by OCHA and CDAC Network. The Working Group is co-chaired by UNHCR and Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), with OCHA and Almanar NGO serving as rotational secretariat in the first year. The AAP/CCEA Working Group functions as a coordination platform for humanitarian organisations and sector coordinators to plan and implement collective approaches to collect, analyse and respond to complaints and feedback raised by affected communities; harmonise approaches to participation, two-way communication, and information provision; and inform decision-makers and operational partners on humanitarian interventions based on evidence-based data.[9] It also serves as a forum to ensure linkages between AAP, Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) related activities.[10] The AAP/CEA Working Group plans to establish a Sudan CEA strategy with Sudanese humanitarian actors in line with HCT commitments.

Sudan PSEA Network

The Sudan PSEA Network is the primary body for coordination and oversight of PSEA in Sudan and is led by the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC). The PSEA Network is interagency and is supported by a WFP contracted PSEA focal point, the HCT, and representation from 56 partners from UN organisations, INGOs, and local NGOs. The Network functions to support the management and coordination of members; information sharing and adherence to monitoring and compliance mechanisms; establishment of community-based complaints mechanisms in cooperation with local communities; prevention-related activities; and harmonisation of response systems, among other responsibilities.[11] The Network has developed a Joint Framework for Action on PSEA outlining priority areas of action around policy operationalisation, coordination, advocacy, complaints and investigations, prevention and internal mainstreaming and survivor support.[12]

8. OCHA. Sudan_Humanitarian_Response_Plan_2021
9. Ibid.

10. OCHA. Sudan Accountability to Affected People and Community Engagement Working Group – Terms of Reference. 16 December 2020. ISCG_endorsed_AAP-CEA_WG-final (humanitarianresponse.info)
11. OCHA. Sudan Nework on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN/NGO Personnel – Terms of Reference. 21 January 2021. Sudan_PSEA network_TOR (humanitarianresponse.info)
12. Sudan PSEA Network - Joint Framework for Action

Local and community actors

There are several prominent local humanitarian and development NGOs that are active in the response, including Almanar NGO, Alsalam Organization for Rehabilitation and Development (AORD), Gayat for Peace and Development, Mutawnat, Nada Al Azhar, Nidaa and Zainab. Within communities, religious leaders are influential, and they have contributed to raising awareness in COVID-19 pandemic campaigns. Local government social workers working with communities at state, town, and village levels, also have good knowledge of their communities' languages and cultures, and therefore can be considered good assets for humanitarians and community engagement activities.

Overview of the media landscape

The government-owned Sudan News Agency (SUNA) is at the centre of the formal supply of news within Sudan's highly centralised information ecosystem. Though some media freedoms have improved, the country still ranks in the bottom ten countries of the Reporters Without Borders index. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the closure of about 21 newspapers which were considered credible and accessible sources of information to most people in Khartoum.

Local, relevant information is typically gathered through community correspondents who reported local news, from local outlets/sources to urban-based journalists, centralising the information. The newspaper with the highest circulation was the daily tabloid Al Dar, which mainly reports sensationalist stories of local crime that tend to attract readers.

Due to low literacy rates, broadcasting is highly popular. Sudan's traditionally oral culture has created a strong

preference for radio over print media. Sudan TV, Omdurman Radio, BBC, and Radio Monte Carlo were the preferred and most followed channels. Community radios and listening clubs, supported by UNICEF, were still operating in some rural areas of IDPs and returnees in the Blue Nile and South Kurdufan states. The UNICEF Communication for Development (C4D) Unit has utilised a mobile cinema during the pandemic to disseminate information on COVID-19 and preventative measures.

Access and use of the Internet is growing, with 13.4 million internet users in Sudan, making up 31% of the population. 32.8 million people have mobile phones, making up 72% of the population. Despite the relatively large numbers of internet users, there were only 1.3 million active social media groups. Social media platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp are popular as they are free, mobile-friendly, do not require a solid connection to function adequately, and offer both official and unofficial information. While people use their phones to access media online, many people in rural areas use their phones for calling and texting only, possibly due to poor internet connectivity.

Overall digital media is a burgeoning sector in Sudan. However, it has been hampered by the infrastructural constraints surrounding access to electricity and payments for content. Due to the US State Sponsors of Terrorism designation (nominally lifted in October 2020, but not yet finalised), media outlets are unable to obtain advertising revenue through digital platforms. This has severely hampered their ability to raise money and invest in training opportunities[13]. While online media and news websites, Google, YouTube, and Facebook are accessible to local media companies, they are not able to collect any advertising revenue.

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13. Internews. Misinformed: Sudan's centralization problem & the pandemic – An information ecosystem assessment by Interviews, Sudan, March 2021. Sudan_COVID-19_IEA.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Humanitarian coordination on CCEA

UN, INGO and government coordination

The humanitarian coordination structures are led by UN agencies and often co-chaired with an INGO, with UN sector focal points as the leading coordination entity at the field level. Coordination often relies on the UN and/or humanitarian aid organisations to lead the coordination groups due to the limited capacity or the ability to do so amongst government entities in humanitarian work. The government has not prioritised coordination, and instead has focused on the direct response and immediate support for both sudden-onset emergencies and aid. While investments have been made by humanitarian partners to support the capacities and skills of government staff for CCEA coordination, the high turnover of staff in relevant ministries has meant that the skills base has fluctuated. While the Sudan PSEA Network consists of UN, INGOs and local NGOs, the network itself does not participate in any humanitarian coordination or protection forums.

Although there is a AAP/CCEA Working Group at the Khartoum level, CCEA coordination still requires significant more effort to address CCEA issues and coordination and community participation, particularly at field levels. The establishment of state-level AAP/CCEA Working Groups (WG) may be a way to improve participation of communities in humanitarian decision-making, as the state level is where most national organisations operate, though currently, in practice, the weak level of field coordination may limit their effectiveness. There is also a challenge to connect national and state levels; with the national level acting as the policy and strategy maker and the state level as the decision-maker.

National and local NGO coordination

There is a lack of a coordination body or platform to gather local NGOs to advocate for strengthening the capacities and promoting NGO and local entities. While there is a lack of a coordinating body, individual CBOs and NGOs are relied upon by UN agencies and INGOs to convey access to hard-to-reach areas and groups. CBO's and local NGOs also often implement projects with minimal funding to achieve their goals and could represent good value for money on community engagement work compared to the higher cost allocated for the INGOs and UN agencies' projects. Local organisations want to reorientate their partnership so that they are involved in decision-making beyond being implementing partners, utilising their good community connections and relations with affected communities at field levels. Overall, CBOs felt their contributions were not fully recognised as they were not eligible for direct funding to work as equal partners with the UN, INGOs and other humanitarian actors on a decision-making basis. However, there is also recognition that greater support is needed to bridge local and national organisation capacities so local community organisations can integrate into the national humanitarian coordination framework. Some contributors have expressed concern that not all local organisations have developed a comprehensive rights-based approach to their work following humanitarian principles, especially on the use of a rights-based approach to humanitarian response work. Providing a stronger linkage or network between local organisations and bridging capacities, especially on a state-wide level, with the national level could be beneficial. National guidelines and best practices on CCEA are sometimes inconsistently applied across the country, and a stronger linkage between local organisations and the national working group may help to improve this.

Local organisations are also involved in the Sudan PSEA Network Joint Framework of Action, which is a mechanism used to implement PSEA activities and strengthen local actors' capacities. Capacity bridging programmes here were designed for individual organisations using a tool developed by UNFPA, UNICEF and UNHCR, with loose coordination to the AAP WG Technical Task teams following the capacity assessment. UNICEF, UNHCR and UNFPA had started this capacity assessment individually; with training and capacity building to take place before the beginning of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2022. Sudan PSEA Network is still planning for future engagement with relevant governmental actors.

Donors and CCEA coordination

Donors and humanitarian partners have not allocated specific funding for CCEA related activities and the lack of coordination and available information about humanitarian coordination has restricted national NGOs and CBOs from accessing the humanitarian CEA system. While the national NGOs, CBOs, and associations generally have excellent relations with affected populations at the grassroots level, international support and funding still tended to flow to national/local government staff in Sudan rather than to national/local NGOs or communities. A limited number of CBOs worked in partnership with NGOs to represent them as mediators for funding to implement community projects, this has proven to be especially useful in CCEA work as local organisations are able to access existing communication and accountability pathways. However, donor interests and pre-conditions have restricted the capacity of local actors to facilitate and coordinate meaningful CCEA on their own terms.

The lack of consistent, reliable, and adequate resources/funding for CCEA in humanitarian programmes within Sudan has limited the ability to mainstream the approach, especially by partner local actors, with the result that CCEA has not been prioritised, funded, or staffed consistently. This has led to knowledge gaps amongst staff, leading to inconsistent or repetitive implementation which can make activities such as feedback mechanisms confusing to users, limiting local participation. More generally the lack of consistent funding for a mainstreaming approach, humanitarian CCEA is often included as a standalone activity rather than a crosscutting integrated one, leading to projects including CCEA activities without proper coordination or service mapping across sectors, leading to duplicating efforts which may lead to confusion.

Recommendations for humanitarian coordination

- UN, INGO and government: leading coordination partners such as OCHA and INGO partners should harness existing operational platforms for AAP/CEA related issues at the state level. They can effectively provide technical support through the AAP/CCEA Technical Task team. The Sudan PSEA Network should strengthen its relationships with relevant actors to enhance protection mechanisms. In the longer term, when capacity increases, state-level AAP/CEA working groups (WGs) may be useful for allowing local organisations to participate in the decision-making process.

- National and local NGO: The representation of NGOs and CBOs in the coordination forum should also be enhanced, and funding should be allocated for the capacity building of their staff. Projects should identify coverage areas of the project and be implemented based on the actual needs and not pre-decided.

- Donors: support can be given for national NGOs, CBOs, and local actors with skills development in CCEA and a knowledge of a rights-based approach for localisation. Further support can be given to them to help develop partnership opportunities and understand funding allocation processes to ensure that CCEA has consistent resources for it. Having direct links between donors and CBOs and NGOs without mediators may be a way towards achieving this as well as giving greater localisation and local participation in decision-making.

Media engagement and language for CCEA

Media engagement for CCEA

Humanitarian actors do not typically utilise local media and telecommunication networks like Zain, Sudani and MTN, and instead rely on their own communication teams to share messages with affected communities. This was frequently due to concerns around the Sudanese media lacking awareness around humanitarian pinciples, as well as concerns around more fundamental ethical principles and standards of media. While local media has considerable expertise in CCE, the gaps in the understanding of the culture and operations across the media and humanitarian sectors challenge collaboration. Lack of training opportunities between humanitarians to media staff has widened the gap between the two entities.

Many media education and learning institutions' curriculums do not have the specialised technical training in humanitarian media. There were very few materials in

the media advocating and calling for respecting cultural, tribal, and ethnic differences, which made communities reluctant to collaborate with them. Communities generally were not involved in media activities, and there was a misperception there about the media and its mandate. They also did not have any specific programmes informing the host communities about IDPs and refugees in Sudan to raise knowledge and information about this topic and the importance of protecting these two groups. Most media agencies were aware of their lack of experts in humanitarian affairs and noted lack of funding as a key barrier to enhance their capacity.

Language and translation

Sudanese cultural customs and traditions play a significant role in the flow and exchange of information through verbal and oral practices, with a reliance on informal sharing of information. Humanitarian actors have worked through local volunteers to reach out to the affected people by interpreting the messages into the local dialects with consideration of informal slang language. However, misaddressed messages and mistranslation of information has created an insecure or untrusting environment between the communities and aid providers. Lack of knowledge and biases of some translators have led to tensions and the nonacceptance of humanitarian partners. Low literacy rates across affected communities have also meant that humanitarian actors focus primarily on disseminating messages via local radio. While digital media is growing in popularity, there has not been little effort to tap into this resource for CCEA.

Recommendations for media engagement and language

- Humanitarians should work with and use local media expertise to design and disseminate key messages about services and responses to local communities.
- Coordination between the media and humanitarian actors should be improved to facilitate engagement of the affected communities, and humanitarian principles should be considered by media staff.
- Training should be provided to integrate media and communication companies into the humanitarian response, so that localised expertise in language

ability can be utilised. This should include sessions on ethical behaviour and humanitarian principles.
- Local interpreters should be used to reach out to different groups of affected communities. Mass communication accessible for lower literacy levels and inclusive of different needs should be used to ensure communities understand the messages being disseminated.
- Ideally more participatory development of Communicating with Communities (CwC) products by utilising Sudanese organisation and companies who natively speak the languages of the people affected by crisis, with the AAP/CEA WG providing pathways to connect partners between national and international actors.
- Humanitarian actors should encourage the use of digital technology, whilst considering Sudanese traditions and customs of communication.

Private sector engagement

There is limited engagement and coordination with the private sector that has non-humanitarian CCEA experience in Sudan. Companies such as Haggar, Dal, Mamoun and Alberir have significant expertise in this area. Although some companies were interested in being part of the humanitarian coordination system for effective participation, humanitarian actors typically do not approach or integrate them into coordination activities. Private sector entities are often not aware of the operations and planning of UN agencies and international NGOs in the country, creating missed opportunities for an exchange of knowledge and resources. There are also no plans for active platforms to regularly bring UN bodies and the private sector together to discuss common interests and eventually collaborate.

Recommendation for private sector engagement

- Partnerships with the private sector, which often have their own social responsibility activities through different community engagement initiatives, should be enhanced.

Engagement with affected communities

There continues to be a significant gap in community participation across project design and implementation. While some humanitarian actors involve communities in projects through meetings, workshops and consultations, community representation is infrequent. When there are CCEA activities, they are often conducted through Shaikhs (community leaders) and influential individuals. However, aid workers often perceive the Shaikhs to restrict the flow of information to their connections and relatives, rather than broadly disseminating messages. Between humanitarian agencies, there lacks a standardised way of validating and sharing of pre-tested messages.

Participation in humanitarian activities was restricted for certain groups. Despite the significant increase in women's participation in community affairs after the revolution in 2018, representation is still weak due to local Sudanese customs and traditions. Community stigmatisation restricts people with disabilities from participating in community activities, making it challenging for humanitarian actors to reach them. Other barriers to accessing services include fear of persecution, discrimination, economic situation and social norms. In addition, transient populations like migrants, nomads, and returnees are often left out of community engagement initiatives.

Recommendations for engagement with affected communities

- More work must be done to build up trust with the affected communities, with greater community participation in building community engagement and accountability structures. Where possible, existing pathways for engagement should be utilised, whilst taking a pluralistic approach which uses different mechanisms and engagement tools (e.g.: hotlines, face-to-face engagement, broadcast media, social media) for engaging different groups. The "one size fits all" approach of having a single engaging mechanism to cover everyone very rarely covers all affected people satisfactorily, this is especially important when dealing with marginalised or minority groups. Protected pathways are especially important for anyone fearing discrimination or persecution.
- Engagement mechanism design also needs in to take into account geographic flexibility when it comes to partnering and working with nomadic groups, so that they can be involved in identifying pathways which work for them.
- Engagement systems should be designed with the participation of affected people, so that regular engagement, and trust building, can take place, and not just a one-off consultation at the beginning or end of the activity.
- The capacities of community leaders must be strengthened for more effective participation, without this there may not have the knowledge to provide effective response, trust and accountability following humanitarian principles. A more systematic way of integrating religious and community leaders into community engagement could be built into the coordination mechanism, involving them in participatory community engagement, development and sharing of common messages.
- To help ensure that trust can be built without accidental misinformation caused by overlapping communication, Humanitarian actors and clusters/sectors should seek the possibility of design, validation and sharing of common messages/engagement tools after testing of messages with the affected communities to ensure they reach and are trusted by everyone.
- Monitoring and reporting of CCEA should be required from all humanitarian actors, and AAP/CCEA members must be trained on regularly reporting in the AAP indicators of HRP so that all groups can be reached, and not just the ones favoured by a limited number of donors .

Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms

There is no common approach to Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CFM) for collecting or sharing information at inter-sectoral levels. The UN, INGOs, NGOs and their line ministries and counterparts implement different CFM modalities, including hotlines, complaints

desks, COVs, community committees, and mobile teams. The majority of Community Based Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CBCFM) included hotlines and suggestion boxes.

Due to a lack of sustainable technical capacity and funding, some of CBCFMs initiatives have been discontinued. While the UNOPS Call Centre (Salam Sudan) was proposed to become a nationwide call centre, it faced capacity and funding issues. A significant challenge for some service providers is sustaining the effort required to provide feedback to the community on issues raised within the 14-day limit. The links between feedback and corrective actions are also inadequate, where information is not provided promptly, resulting in the feedback loop not closing for most complaints.

General lack of awareness of the availability and uses of CBCFMs, as well as mistrust and misconduct of aid providers, has discouraged communities from using CBCFM. There is a need for greater transparency on what these mechanisms are as well as outreach for the involving the community in participatory design of any CBCFM at the outset. There is also need for work to explain to users how to use them. There is also be a need to help staff understand the need to differentiate between feedback and a complaint in the context of a humanitarian response when sharing information collected from CBCFMs across organisations, with some staff noting that some partners organisations do not differentiate leading to mishandling/ errors in processing the collected information.

The CBCFM mapping conducted by CDAC-OCHA in the East and Central Darfur states and one in the East of Sudan during the Tigray emergency revealed that, gender, age, disability, minorities, social norms and economic problems were identified as the main barriers to accessing CBCFMs in both refugee camps and urban settings. In particular, complaints on sensitive issues like sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) remain rare, largely due to fears and stigma. Some CBCFMs staff have not been trained on PSEA, with some staff passing on SEA issues to the Gender-Based Violence teams. It is important that key messages about the free charge of humanitarian assistance and zero-

tolerance and reporting of SEA continues to be messaged. Face-to-face interaction is the most effective way to restore trust between communities and humanitarians. Low literacy rates have made verbal/oral feedback more common than the feedback/suggestion box, and the most popular method for submitting claims and feedback is through information and feedback desks and mobile teams.[14] There is no linkage between the CBCFM and the referral system, though there was a need for an orientation on SGBV referral. Additionally, most humanitarian actors did not have an AAP/CCEA focal point, and responsibility for the role was covered by program teams instead of a dedicated person.

Recommendations for Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms

- A common CBCFM approach must be prioritised to classify and share information, maintain confidentiality and privacy, and find a way to collect, aggregate, and analyse data from different systems.
- The to provide greater clarity in coordinating CBCFMs, organisations should identify an identified focal point person with the required cultural and language skills for other organisations (both humanitarian and community-based) to liaise with, and with time allocated to do this.
- The capacity of aid workers must be strengthened to efficiently implement CFMs. Specialised individuals should be equipped with comprehensive training that is regularly refreshed and training on PSEA, AAP/ CCEA should be provided to all CBCFM staff by the Feedback, Complaints and Response Mechanism (FCRM) Technical Task team of AAP/CEA WG.
- Community consultations/information sessions should be organised for IDPs/refugees and community leaders on the meaning, objectives, and procedures of the FCRM to prevent a lack of understanding among potential users.
- There should be greater outreach and information sharing between AAP/CCEA WG and other coordinating forums and platforms to avoid a silo approach. Regular feedback between groups to share information should be established, with consultation provided by the working group on including CCEA.

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14. CDAC Tigray Community Consultation Report- February 2021

CONCLUSIONS

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The objective of this assessment was to provide an overview of the critical gaps, opportunities and recommendations for more meaningful and inclusive CCEA, and ultimately, contribute to more effective humanitarian response. The assessment has revealed that humanitarian actors in Sudan have a long way to go to ensure sound communication and effective engagement with the millions of people affected by crisis and to address accountability to these populations. This report has highlighted the gaps in humanitarian coordination at all levels including government, UN, INGO, local NGO and donor levels, in particular there should be a more urgent move towards utilising local and community-based organisations for greater resilience. Despite local NGO and CBOs' strong community networks, these actors are not fully included in coordination efforts and their capacities remain under-invested. Despite media and the private sector's wealth of non-humanitarian CCEA expertise, they are largely untapped resources. The lack of coherence across CFM approaches challenge collection, analysis and timely response to community complaints and feedback.
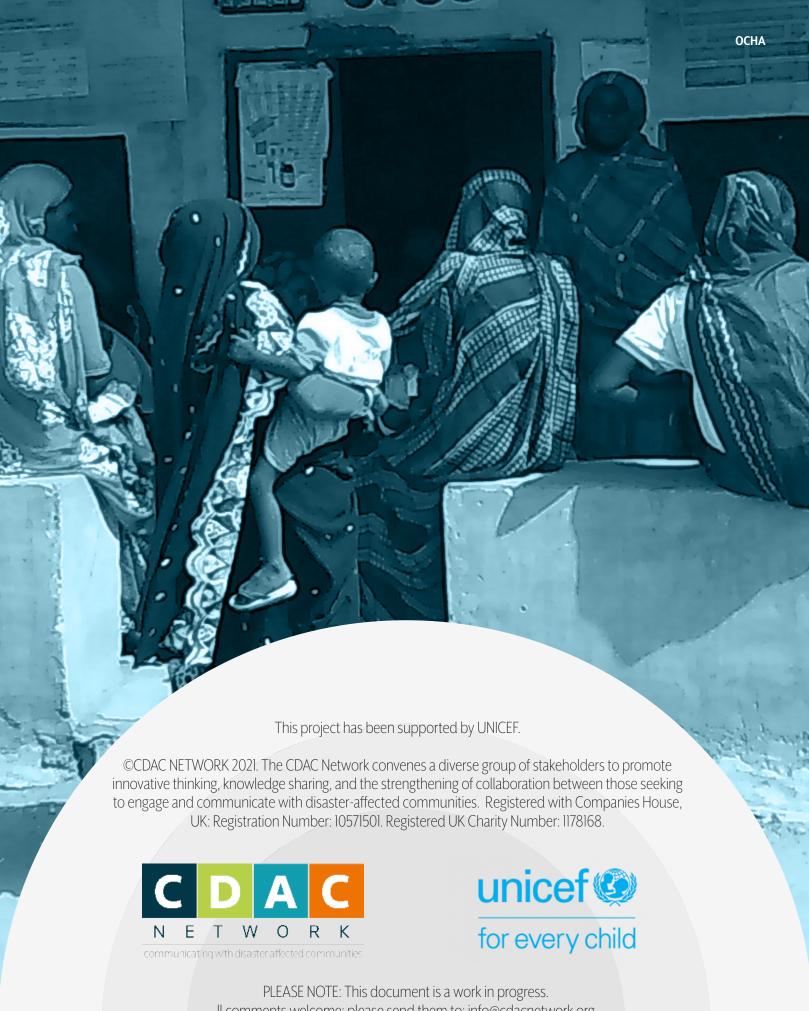
The current gaps in effective CCEA in Sudan reveal opportunities for ways forward. Several initiatives are already in motion—OCHA and CDAC Network in collaboration with local actors are working through the Sudan AAP/CEA Working Group to strengthen and improve CCEA, and the Working Group members will monitor and report on the AAP/HRP indicators. CDAC's joint effort with response partners to map and assess community-based CFM and improve CCEA coordination in the Tigray refugee response in Sudan can be used by humanitarian actors as a model for the wider Sudan context. CDAC's capacity bridging programmes that prioritise the capacity of local CCEA expertise have become fully accessible to practitioners responding on the ground, while the Expert Support Model enhances local capacity to access and navigate the humanitarian system.

The increasingly challenging humanitarian context of Sudan calls for collective action by all partners to put CCEA at the forefront of all humanitarian programmes. More needs to be done to reach the most vulnerable people across the country through a concerted effort led by the government and local actors, supported by international partners. This must bridge across the many responses underway in Sudan to give affected people a simpler and more cohesive way to interact with the response. Like a piece of rope, when all strands of the AAP effort are entwined to work as one, it is possible for everyone to pull together and achieve more.

ANNEX: LIST OF ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

Family and Child Protection Unit
Department of Combating Violence against Women
Almanar
Nidaa
Gayat for Peace and Development
Nada Al Azhar
Mutawnat
Alsalam Organization for Rehabilitation and Development (AORD)
Zainab
Rawafed
Al Tayser
Aseel
Ahfad University
Haggar Group
OCHA
UNHCR
UNICEF
IOM
UNFPA
UNDOC
PSEA Network
Internews
British Council
Plan International
NRC
Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
Sudan Red Crescent Society
Alight

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PLEASE NOTE: This document is a work in progress.
ll comments welcome: please send them to: info@cdacnetwork.org