



N E T W O R K

communicating with disaster-affected communities

# The state of communication, community engagement and accountability in the Horn of Africa drought response

## **A snapshot report for Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia**

May 2023



# Acknowledgements

This report was written by Andrew Nzimbi, independent consultant and CDAC Expert Pool member, and Alyssa Thurston, Policy and Advocacy Manager at CDAC Network. The authors would like to thank Angela Wambui, Farah Mohamed, Louise Tunbridge, Laura Wagenknecht, Tinebeb Gebremeskel, Lisa Robinson and Maxine Clayton for their contributions.

This was funded by the H2H Network, as a component of the CDAC Network project 'Accelerating a collective and inclusive approach to communication, engagement and accountability in the Horn of Africa drought response' with focus on Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

**h——h**  
**H2H Network**  
Humanitarian  
Action Support

Cover photo: Women and children walking through strong wind in Sagalo village in the Somali region of Ethiopia, January 2022. Credit: UNICEF Ethiopia/Mulugeta Ayene.

# Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>2</b>
<hr/>	
<b>List of acronyms</b>	<b>4</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>5</b>
Summary of key findings	5
<hr/>	
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>6</b>
Analysis methodology	6
<hr/>	
<b>Background</b>	<b>7</b>
Humanitarian situation	7
CCEA commitments and coordination structures	7
Overview of communication and media landscape	8
<hr/>	
<b>Key findings on CCEA barriers and gaps</b>	<b>11</b>
Collective CCEA and coordination	11
Information management and data sharing	12
Information provision and two-way communication	13
Complaints and feedback mechanisms	14
Language and translation	15
Inclusion of marginalised groups	15
Engagement of diverse CCEA actors	16
Engagement of communities	17
CCEA capacity	18
<hr/>	
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>19</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Appendix: Organisations consulted</b>	<b>20</b>
Organisations consulted via key informant interviews	20

# List of acronyms

<b>AAP</b>	accountability to affected people
<b>CCEA</b>	communication, community engagement and accountability
<b>CEA</b>	community engagement and accountability
<b>CFM</b>	complaints and feedback mechanism
<b>CVA</b>	cash and voucher assistance
<b>CWC</b>	communicating with communities
<b>GBV</b>	gender-based violence
<b>HCT</b>	Humanitarian Country Team
<b>HoA</b>	Horn of Africa
<b>IASC</b>	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
<b>ICCG</b>	Inter-Cluster Coordination Group
<b>IDP</b>	internally displaced person
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>PSEA</b>	prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse
<b>NGO</b>	non-governmental organisation
<b>OCHA</b>	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>SMS</b>	Short Message Service
<b>WG</b>	Working Group

# Executive summary

The Horn of Africa (HoA) region is experiencing one of the worst droughts in recent decades, triggered by consecutive failed rainy seasons. An estimated 36.4 million people are affected across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, and in need of life-saving humanitarian assistance.<sup>1</sup> In a crisis of this magnitude, all affected people require information to make important decisions on issues that impact their lives and livelihoods. Yet information provision and continuous dialogue with communities can be the weakest link in complex humanitarian responses.

CDAC Network conducted a regional analysis in December 2022–May 2023 on the state of communication, community engagement and accountability (CCEA) in the HoA drought response. The report is based on key informant interviews with humanitarian actors and spotlights the key challenges and opportunities for collective approaches to accelerate CCEA. Initial conclusions were validated and further contextualised through a series of multi-stakeholder workshops held in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, and endorsed by regional and country coordination structures.

## Summary of key findings

- Collective approaches do exist, but they are fragmented, not widely known and selectively utilised by implementing organisations. There is still a high preference for individualised, organisation-specific approaches to CCEA.
- There are critical gaps around data collection, analysis, sharing and access within and between agencies. There is plenty of feedback and information, but data is not adequately used to inform decision-making.
- Information provision is inadequate and largely one-way. There is an emphasis on collecting information from communities and not necessarily sharing information or analysis with them.
- Referral pathways for complaints and feedback mechanisms (CFMs) are not systematically rolled out and CFMs do not speak to each other, creating confusion among people in need.
- Language and translation must be prioritised as entry points to include all affected people.
- Marginalised groups, including the many affected communities in hard-to-reach areas, need specific, tailored CCEA initiatives.
- The lack of systematic engagement with diverse CCEA actors and stakeholders hinders speed, coverage and support for effective CCEA.
- Community engagement is often overlooked in programme design, leading to ad hoc CCEA uptake during implementation.
- Coordination and delivery of CCEA initiatives are fragmented by gaps in technical capacities among organisations and partners.

---

<sup>1</sup> OCHA (n.d.) [Horn of Africa drought data explorer](#).

# Introduction

The Horn of Africa (HoA) is experiencing consecutive failed rains and the worst drought and food insecurity in the region in more than a decade. The situation continues to deteriorate – millions of affected people and communities in the region are experiencing severe food and water insecurity, crop failures, high food prices and death of livestock – with no end in sight.

In a crisis of this magnitude, information provision and continuous dialogue to support affected people make life-saving decisions is essential – yet it is often the weakest link in complex humanitarian responses. Information on where and how to access assistance, mitigate losses, reduce health risks and stay safe while on the move are in high demand<sup>2</sup> – and this information must be accessible in people’s preferred language and format, delivered through the channels that people trust and use. Ensuring safe and accessible channels for people to communicate with responders and express their needs and concerns is just as important.

To support systems, networks and collective approaches to strengthen communication, community engagement and accountability (CCEA) in this regional response, CDAC Network conducted a regional analysis on the current state of CCEA across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.<sup>3</sup> The report spotlights the primary blockages and opportunities to accelerate CCEA in the regional drought response.

## Analysis methodology

This report is informed by 24 key informant interviews conducted in December 2022–March 2023. Key informants included subject matter experts with international, regional and country focus from United Nations (UN) agencies, Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies, international non-governmental organisation (NGOs) and media development agencies; representatives of UN-led coordination structures, and a donor agency (see Appendix). The report is also informed by CDAC’s member engagement in the Community of Practice on In-Country Coordination and Collaboration on the HoA – an interagency forum active since April 2022 – as well as desk research of publicly available literature.

The findings were reviewed by members of the Regional Accountability to Affected People (AAP) Working Group, Somalia Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) Taskforce, staff from organisations implementing AAP in Kenya, and CDAC members. The report went through further multi-stakeholder consultations at the CDAC Learning Events on Strengthening Collective CCEA in the HoA in April and May 2023, co-organised with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Regional Office for Southern and Eastern Africa in Kenya, the AAP Working Group in Ethiopia and the Somalia CEA Taskforce in Somalia (see Appendix for list of representative organisations).

---

2 DW Akademie (2021) [Information needs assessments among refugees and host communities in Kenya](#); Ground Truth Solutions (2022) [Rights, information, and predictability: keys to navigate a complex crisis – Somalia Cash Barometer](#); REACH (2021) [Information needs assessment: Dadaab refugee complex, Garissa County, Kenya](#); REACH (2022) [Drought in Jamaame District, Somalia](#); [Hard-to-reach assessment – South and Central districts: Somalia](#). See also: IFRC (2021) [Drought: key messages](#).

3 This project and report focus on CCEA in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, with some learnings applicable to the wider region.

# Background

## Humanitarian situation

The relentless drought in the HoA, triggered by consecutive failed rainy seasons, has affected 36.4 million people across Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.<sup>4</sup> With no end to the crisis in sight, humanitarians warn the region is faced with catastrophic humanitarian impacts.<sup>5</sup> Affected households continue to experience severe food and water insecurity, crop failures, high food prices and death of livestock. For Somalia, the most drought-affected country, an estimated 8.3 million people are expected to face the crisis level of acute food insecurity (Integrated Food Security Classification Phase 3) by June 2023.<sup>6</sup>

The drought situation, compounded by persistent conflict and insecurity, has also driven displacement of people seeking assistance in the region. As of January 2023, 1.75 million people had been internally displaced in Ethiopia and Somalia, and another 180,000 refugees were recorded from Somalia and South Sudan into Kenya and Ethiopia.<sup>7</sup> According to an analysis by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the majority of affected people noted loss of crops and livestock and an increase in food prices as the main triggers for migration.<sup>8</sup> Affected people crossing borders often join refugee camps that are already overstretched with limited resources.<sup>9</sup> Past droughts in the region have shown increased rates of gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual violence and child marriage, making protection and safeguarding of critical concern.<sup>10</sup>

## CCEA commitments and coordination structures

The 2023 Humanitarian Response Plans for Ethiopia and Somalia endorsed by the Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) prioritise AAP, with specific mention of collective approaches to two-way communication and community feedback mechanisms.<sup>11</sup> Agency-specific regional appeals also echo AAP commitments across health, protection, telecommunication, multipurpose cash assistance, displacement tracking and other areas of response.<sup>12</sup>

---

4 OCHA (n.d.) [Horn of Africa drought data explorer](#).

5 FAO et al. (2023) [Sustained “no regrets” humanitarian efforts urgently needed in response to drought in the Horn of Africa](#), joint statement, 16 February.

6 UNHCR (2023) [The Horn of Africa drought situation appeal](#).

7 Ibid.

8 IOM and Mixed Migration Centre (2023) [East and Southern Africa snapshot. The impact of the drought on migration from Ethiopia to Somalia: migration triggers & household decision-making](#).

9 UNHCR (2023) [Kenya’s Dadaab camp swells with Somalis fleeing drought, conflict](#), 28 February.

10 UNICEF (2022) [Regional call to action. Horn of Africa drought crisis: climate change is here now](#).

11 OCHA (2023) Somalia Humanitarian Response Plan; Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Plan.

12 OCHA (2022) Horn of Africa drought: regional humanitarian overview & call to action.

Table 1 **Overview of CCEA coordination structures in the region and by country**

Country	Coordination structures
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Regional AAP Working Group:</b> Led by OCHA Regional Office for Southern and Eastern Africa, covering Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. Key contact: Angela Wambui (<a href="mailto:angela.gathimbu@un.org">angela.gathimbu@un.org</a>)</li> <li>• <b>RCCE Working Group/Collective Service:</b> <a href="#">See their drought resources</a></li> </ul>
Ethiopia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>AAP Working Group:</b> Operational since 2009; contributed to the AAP Action Plan endorsed by the HCT. Chaired by IOM and Plan International. Key contact: Catherine Alcaraz (<a href="mailto:caalcaraz@iom.int">caalcaraz@iom.int</a>)</li> <li>• <b>Ethiopia Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Network:</b> National and sub-national networks across Ethiopia, co-chaired by UN Women and UN Population Fund (UNFPA) with support from an inter-agency PSEA coordinator</li> <li>• <b>Community Voices Dashboard:</b> A collective feedback platform that provides trends analysis of concerns, consolidated by the AAP Working Group</li> </ul>
Kenya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Communicating with Communities (CwC) Working Group (Kakuma and Dadaab Refugee Camps):</b> Co-chaired by UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and FilmAid Kenya</li> </ul>
Somalia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CEA Task Force:</b> Created under the Integrated Office of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG/RC/HC) with a community engagement and accountability strategy developed and endorsed by the HCT. Co-chaired by IOM and Nexus Somalia. Key contacts: Mohamed Farah (<a href="mailto:fhmohamed@iom.int">fhmohamed@iom.int</a>) and Ali Ibrahim (<a href="mailto:ali.ibrahim@nexusom.org">ali.ibrahim@nexusom.org</a>)</li> <li>• <b>Monitoring &amp; Evaluation and AAP workstream:</b> Under the Somali Cash Working Group to mainstream AAP in cash and voucher assistance. Key contacts: Liston Mwabi (<a href="mailto:liston.mwabi@reach-initiative.org">liston.mwabi@reach-initiative.org</a>)</li> </ul>

Note: the information contained in this table is accurate as of 10 May 2023. Please contact the authors for any corrections.

UN-led coordination mechanisms are operational in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia, with CCEA coordinated through dedicated task forces, working groups and sub workstreams. Coordination of CCEA for refugees follows the Refugee Coordination Model for the response, with UNHCR leading on coordination of relief efforts including AAP. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Scale-Up for Ethiopia and Somalia also had an emphasis on AAP/CCEA.<sup>13</sup> Table 1 provides an overview of the CCEA coordination structures in each country.

## Overview of communication and media landscape

The communication and media landscape in the HoA has undergone significant changes in the last few decades, impacted by – and often fuelling – political reform. Media actors in the region have critical roles in providing information to a broad audience, establishing dialogue and forums for debate, and strengthening accountability and transparency. This section gives an overview of key media players and access in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia.

<sup>13</sup> 'A set of internal measures designed to critically enhance the humanitarian response in view of drastically increasing humanitarian needs and to ensure that IASC member organizations and partners can rapidly mobilize the necessary operational capacities and resources to respond to critical humanitarian needs on the ground'. See: IASC (2023) [IASC Humanitarian System-Wide Scale-Up Activations and Deactivations](#), 19 April.

## Ethiopia<sup>14</sup>

The media landscape in Ethiopia has changed considerably over the years, characterised by the unblocking of previously banned media outlets, the release of detained journalists and legal reforms to the media sector. Radio remains the most popular medium, with Fana FM, Sheger FM and regional radio stations having the largest audiences. Television is a close second, with most television viewers watching private television stations, like Kana, EBS and Fana BC, rather than national public television or satellite television.

With more than 80 ethnic population groups living in Ethiopia, language diversity is an important aspect of media coverage. Most stations air content in Amharic, but radio and television stations collectively use 67 local languages and four foreign languages. Community media outlets are growing, with 33 community radio stations and two television stations currently operational.

Digital access is growing in Ethiopia but remains relatively low: internet penetration is about 20% of the population, with access periodically restricted during periods of unrest.<sup>15</sup> Social media access is unpredictable, with irregular access to platforms like Facebook, Telegram, TikTok and YouTube. Approximately 6% of the total population are social media users.

## Kenya<sup>16</sup>

Kenya is a regional hub for international media outlets and has a diverse media landscape, with a thriving radio sector of more than 100 radio stations broadcasting in many local languages. Leading national stations include Radio Citizen, Radio Maisha and Jambo. Television is increasing in popularity, with major broadcasters including Citizen TV, Kenya Television Network (KTN) and NTV. Kenya also has a high rate of internet penetration and rapid growth in mobile phone use. The two main languages used in the media are Kiswahili and English.

According to BBC Media Action, nearly all Kenyan adult population have access to some form of media: 98% of the population have access to radio, 97% mobile phones, 81% television and 51% access to the internet.<sup>17</sup> However, access to media and penetration of phone, internet and radio varies significantly between rural and urban areas, and between refugee and non-refugee settlements. Remote, drought-stricken counties in the north, like Turkana County, and refugee communities living in Kakuma Refugee Camp and Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement have particularly low access to information.

---

14 For more detail, see: Fojo Media Institute (2017) [Strengthening free, independent and professional journalism in Ethiopia](#); Media Progress (2018) [Overview of the Ethiopian media landscape](#); IMS (2021) [Gender in Ethiopian media landscape](#); Center for Advancement of Rights and Democracy (2022) [Post-2018 media landscape in Ethiopia: a review](#); Reporters Without Borders (n.d.) [Ethiopia](#).

15 DataReportal (2021) [Digital in Ethiopia](#); BBC News (2023) [Ethiopia Orthodox Church split: social media restricted](#), 10 February.

16 For more detail, see: BBC Media Action (2018) [Kenya media landscape report](#); DW Akademie (2021) [Information needs assessments among refugees and host communities in Kenya](#); Media Innovation Centre (2021) [Media viability in Kenya](#); Reporters Without Borders (n.d.) [Kenya](#).

17 BBC Media Action (2018) [Kenya media landscape report](#).

## Somalia<sup>18</sup>

The Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism in Somalia is granted broad powers to regulate the media. Television and print media sectors are relatively weak but there has been a recent emergence of professionally run media outlets. The country's oral culture coupled with low literacy rates and low costs means that radio is the most popular information source. There are 56 radio stations spread across the country, with many more people accessing radio broadcasts on their mobile phones. There is no national coverage on FM and only on shortwave.

About 12% of the population are internet users, with access limited due to poor infrastructure. Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are increasing in popularity, with most users accessing these platforms through their mobile phones.

---

18 For more detail, see: European Journalism Centre (2018) [Somalia: media landscape](#); BBC Monitoring (2023) [Somalia media guide](#), 25 April; Reporters Without Borders (n.d.) [Somalia](#).

# Key findings on CCEA barriers and gaps

## Collective CCEA and coordination

**Collective approaches do exist, but they are fragmented, not widely known and selectively utilised by implementing organisations. There is still a high preference for individualised, organisation-specific approaches to CCEA.**

Collective approaches to CCEA<sup>19</sup> are existent in the HoA but are often fragmented in their member composition and scale of operation in-country. Informants noted that collective approaches are challenged by the following factors.

**Duplication of in-country collective efforts and coordination is creating confusion:** Where there are collective approaches, there is often duplication between the different CCEA systems, relationships and networks within the HoA, challenging a coherent approach. Some of the existent systems include: the Somalia CEA Task Force, Regional AAP Working Group (WG), Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) WG, country-specific AAP WGs, Prospects Partnerships, Communicating with Communities (CwC) WG, Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) WGs, cluster-specific call centres or coordination hubs, and Community Voices Platform in Ethiopia. Informants noted the need to streamline duplicate systems and better understand coordination to improve the effectiveness and uptake of collective efforts. Several informants suggested establishing issue-, sectoral- or preference-based coordination, for organisations to align with as appropriate, instead of pushing for 'blanket' in-country CCEA coordination that is perceived to potentially hinder progress, especially in the light of other existing sectoral CCEA mechanisms.

**Capacity issues:** Lack of dedicated CCEA focal points coupled with high staff turnover of those leading CCEA strategies and efforts restricts capacity for continuous engagement and coherence in collective approaches. There is also inadequate clarity and continuity on roles and responsibilities for both collective and organisation-specific CCEA. Further, there are gaps in knowledge and adoption of technology and innovation to support collective CCEA. It was also noted that capacities (including coordinated forums) are often at the national levels and not fully decentralised to the regional and sub-regional levels (in Ethiopia) and counties (in Kenya).

**High preference for organisation-specific approaches:** Organisation-level approaches to CCEA take centre stage rather than a collective approach. There is much focus on agencies demonstrating what they

---

19 Collective approaches should not be seen as only establishing a single number for a hotline, or a single call centre/hotline/IDP centre. The focus should instead be on systemic issues, such as enabling seamless and effective two-way communication and systematically giving feedback to communities on complaints or concerns raised. It is important to ensure that, whichever collective approach an organisation chooses to be part of, there are adequate data collection, sharing and analysis processes, clear referral pathways to the highest decision-making level (HCT/ICCG), visibility of feedback received and clear procedures for follow-up, and feedback loop completion.

are doing individually but not on what could be done collectively to achieve greater impact. Too many organisation- or system-specific CCEA initiatives being rolled out means collective approaches achieve diminished visibility and impact.

## Recommendations

- Revive the national CCEA coordination forum in Kenya to jointly develop a CCEA Action Plan. Widely disseminate the CEA strategy for Somalia and AAP Work Plan for Ethiopia among stakeholders.
- Strengthen links between all CCEA collective approaches in-country, for coherence and to ensure that data can be jointly used to inform and influence decision-making. All CCEA approaches should be mapped and publicised, and organisations enabled to plug into existing approaches.
- Document and advocate for the benefits of coordination, including preventing duplication, avoiding parallel CFMs and improving data-sharing on community perspectives for informed decision-making.
- Invest in local partnership programmes for CCEA and include diverse actors in leadership of existing CCEA coordination structures and collective approaches.
- Develop a collective CCEA advocacy strategy and key messaging that targets HCT and donors.
- Agree on a defined approach to the design and delivery of CCEA (e.g., a checklist for CCEA roll-out, AAP indicators in-country, etc.) that could be adopted by organisations.
- Consider a cross-border CCEA approach to inform decision-making at a regional level.

## Information management and data sharing

**There are critical gaps around data collection, analysis, sharing and access within and between agencies. There is plenty of feedback and information, but data is not adequately used to inform decision-making.**

Information management and data sharing were identified as key barriers to effective CCEA by most informants across response countries. Despite the routine collection of data across numerous CFMs, analysis of information received and closing the feedback loop with communities remains a key challenge. Inadequacy in closing the feedback loop is perceived as being related to data/survey fatigue from programme participants – where this fatigue could be eased through effective data-sharing between agencies.

Data access and sharing between agencies was also reportedly inadequate. Many organisations tend to guard information and prefer to utilise data internally as opposed to sharing for collective use. Where there is desire to share information, partners often do not know where to send their data. These inadequacies hinder decision-making and the ability to develop collective learning and joint solutions.

Such challenges with information management are compounded by the location of implementation. For example, in Somalia, the lowest administration level for 5Ws (who's doing what, where, when and for whom) is the district level, which encompasses a vast area of smaller administrative units. This means that information on operations from smaller administrative units are often not captured adequately by agencies, and information and feedback collected from communities at the smaller administrative units are prone to be lost, as it is collated and fed up to the district level. This is also reflected in the Ethiopia context, where practical engagement with the lower administrative units (kebeles) is minimal.

## Recommendations

- Design protocols around: data access/sharing, joint data analysis and utilisation (e.g. presentation to Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG)/HCT) and collective dissemination to communities. Roll out simplified data-sharing protocols preferably from the regional administrative units up to the country level.
- Prioritise the sharing, analysis and use of existing CCEA feedback and data from communities, rather than collecting new data.
- Conduct a mapping of existing CCEA initiatives at the lowest administrative units.
- Consider the development of a feedback dashboard that can track rumours, concerns and comments.

## Information provision and two-way communication

**Information provision is inadequate and largely one-way. There is an emphasis on collecting information from communities and not necessarily sharing information or analysis with them.**

In a context where assistance and services may not be readily available to all, affected people need actionable information to help them make crucial decisions and cope with challenging realities. Informants noted a gap in accessible information on critical topics to support people in their daily lives, such as advice on nutrition, conserving water, preventing the spread of communicable diseases and treating diarrhoea at home. Other topics that are particularly important among refugee communities include employment opportunities, security and education.<sup>20</sup>

Information on the aid and services available to affected people is also in demand. In Somalia, 63% of people receiving aid (cash and voucher assistance) generally feel informed about the aid available to them – an increase from 45% in 2021. However, there are critical gaps around people's understanding of the duration of assistance, access to different services, and who is providing assistance in their location.<sup>21</sup> The information gap is particularly stark for hard-to-reach and isolated settlements, with communities in the worst-affected southern and central regions of Somalia reportedly receiving no information on assistance available to them.<sup>22</sup> Accessible data on information needs in Kenya and Ethiopia are limited, but assessments conducted in Turkana and Garissa County with Kakuma Refugee camp, Kalobeyi settlement and Dadaab refugee complex indicated similar gaps around services available, as well as information related to repatriation, integration and settlement.<sup>23</sup>

According to key informants, organisations have the information that communities need on their entitlements and available services, but is not made fully available or accessible. Informants also noted that communication is still largely one-way, with the emphasis on collecting information from communities and not necessarily sharing analysis of the information in return. A key challenge is reportedly around

- 
- 20 DW Akademie (2021) [Information needs assessments among refugees and host communities in Kenya](#); Reporters Without Borders (n.d.) [Kenya](#).
- 21 Ground Truth Solutions (2022) [Rights, information, and predictability: keys to navigate a complex crisis – Somalia Cash Barometer](#).
- 22 REACH (2022) [Drought in Jamaame District, Somalia; Hard-to-reach assessment – South and Central districts: Somalia](#).
- 23 DW Akademie (2021) [Information needs assessments among refugees and host communities in Kenya](#); REACH (2021) [Information needs assessment: Dadaab refugee complex, Garissa County, Kenya](#).

the scattered locations of affected communities and their diverse communication needs. Clusters and agencies depend on partners, national and local organisations and community committees to access and deliver information to communities, yet there are limitations to monitoring the adequacy of resulting communication activities. The lack of cohesive approaches between organisations to share data on information needs is also a major barrier.

## Recommendations

- Invest in regular communication on available services and people's rights and entitlements, using people's preferred languages and formats via channels they use and trust.
- Communicate information on critical topics that support people in their daily lives. This information should be accessible and shared using people's preferred formats, channels and languages. Work with other sectors to get the messaging right.
- Identify and integrate diverse ways of communicating with communities into the design of CCEA strategies.
- Collaborate with local media actors to disseminate information through trusted channels (especially radio) on a routine basis.
- Identify key stakeholders (community organisations, local committees) that can support CCEA at the smallest administration units. Bolster them with capacity strengthening and training.
- Develop key CCEA messaging that targets the smallest administrative units and deliver it with organisations or community focal points/leaders best placed to reach maximum coverage.
- Conduct focused, regular information needs assessments to capture people's priorities and preferences, and actively share this data between organisations and coordination mechanisms.

## Complaints and feedback mechanisms

**Referral pathways for CFMs are not systematically rolled out and CFMs do not speak to each other, creating confusion among people in need.**

There are many entry points for receiving community feedback in all three countries, yet there are significant gaps in unified analysis, interpretation, agreed next steps, messaging and follow-up action to close the feedback loop. Different CFMs exist at organisational level, cluster mechanism level and other coordination fora but, due to inadequate service mapping and referral pathways, these mechanisms do not speak to each other. This prevents effective utilisation of available data, joint learning among organisations and subsequent accountability to communities through closing the feedback loop.

Another gap is around monitoring the functionality of CFMs over time to assess whether communities still perceive the established mechanisms as trustworthy and fit for use. Trust issues around referral pathways were noted, with a preference for a neutral actor (not a direct implementer) to coordinate the collation and dissemination of information raised via referral pathways or common feedback mechanisms.

Critically, key informants noted that affected people are often unclear on their rights and entitlements regarding CFMs. Communities reportedly fear reprisal, organisations pulling out and withdrawal of benefits should they report any concerns; hence the broader goal of AAP and CCEA is misunderstood. There is also

inadequate understanding among agencies and sensitisation among affected people about raising sensitive issues: complaints related to PSEA and GBV are often not reported through CFMs set up by agencies, with most affected people preferring to raise concerns through small community meetings instead.

## Recommendations

- Conduct a mapping exercise of functional CFMs in-country (organisation-specific and collective). Align approaches (and strengthen where required) between existing CFMs as opposed to establishing new mechanisms for every project being rolled out. Focus on streamlining processes to share and cross-check information between agency-specific mechanisms. Share minimum principles across agencies on establishment of functional CFMs.
- Ensure all responders have clear, verified information to help rapidly address specific complaints and feedback, e.g. those related to availability of services. This could take the form of a 'frequently asked questions' document with responses collated from relevant higher-level structures such as the ICCG and HCT.
- Prioritise the development and dissemination of information on people's rights related to giving complaints and feedback and the various methods to do so. Provide clear, safe and accessible channels that consider diverse needs and target groups.
- Understand how affected people prefer to raise sensitive topics around PSEA and GBV, and work through trusted local groups and community-based organisations to prioritise face-to-face interactions and safe and accessible community meetings.

## Language and translation

**Language and translation must be prioritised to include all affected people.**

Language-related challenges are critical barriers to the effective roll-out of CCEA initiatives in the HoA. Most information for communities, particularly written materials, is provided only in English and the majority language. This is partly due to inadequate operational data on people's preferred and spoken languages, resulting from needs assessments and analysis processes not systematically including questions on language. The majority of CCEA coordination fora are also conducted in English, which potentially excludes staff from national organisations and local authorities that may have the most access to affected communities.

## Recommendations

- Advocate for language data to be systematically collected through existing needs assessments and analysis.
- Conduct training on language data needs and their role in effective programming.

## Inclusion of marginalised groups

**Marginalised groups, including the many affected communities in hard-to-reach areas, need specific, tailored CCEA initiatives.**

Language barriers are reportedly closely linked to the exclusion of marginalised groups. Data is particularly scarce around marginalised languages, and CCEA approaches tend to exclude illiterate people, older people, children and people in remote and rural areas. People with disabilities – especially those with hearing and vision impairments – are also often left out from communication because few organisations consider their participation and translation needs in CCEA. In Kenya, a recent information needs assessment conducted by the Norwegian Refugee Council and REACH found that less than half of humanitarian actors reported targeting minority groups, people with disabilities and older people when disseminating information.<sup>24</sup>

Many affected communities, including refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), live in remote and rural areas. These groups may have different communication needs and experience challenges accessing information due to cultural barriers, language and illiteracy, as well as limited access to and use of channels. For example, 77% of IDP settlements in hard-to-reach areas of Somalia reported no electricity as a critical barrier to accessing information and 38% cited lack of radio signal.

Although host communities may not be marginalised groups, it was noted that they are often left out of interventions, with emphasis being given to IDPs and refugees hosted in the same locations, despite both experiencing similar problems that require humanitarian interventions.

## Recommendations

- Develop CCEA strategies to provide two-way communication in a variety of offline formats and languages to better include marginalised groups. Communication materials should also be intentionally inclusive of people with disabilities.
- Consult people in marginalised communities and rural areas on their preferred channels and means for two-way communication and engagement, and circulate the findings among organisations. Regularly monitor the use and effectiveness of the identified channels and adapt the approach as necessary.
- Include marginalised and vulnerable groups in information and communication needs assessments and conduct analysis on media and network penetration to support CCEA interventions.

## Engagement of diverse CCEA actors

**The lack of systematic engagement with local organisations, government entities, media actors and other stakeholders hinders the speed, coverage and support necessary to implement effective CCEA.**

Engagement of local organisations, government authorities and media actors across response countries is ad hoc, and largely dependent on the interests and capacities of specific organisations, clusters/sectors and working groups/task forces. Informants noted that engagement of diverse actors is closely linked to organisations' level of funding – with the end of funding ceasing engagement especially with local actors, and often negatively impacting the continuity of CCEA activities. The limited engagement of key CCEA players was perceived to have implications for the speed, coverage and support provided to cohesively implement effective CCEA.

---

24 REACH (2021) [Information needs assessment: Dadaab refugee complex, Garissa County, Kenya.](#)

A key challenge cited was the lack of systematic processes to adequately engage diverse actors in coordination mechanisms. This is particularly the case regarding engagement of media actors, where coordination mechanisms are often failing to adequately integrate information that media receives from communities, or to provide media actors with information collated from organisations participating in these fora. Informants noted that organisations often strongly prefer to work only with specific media actors, despite other actors having wider capacity, reach and coverage of targeted communities.

On engagement with government, organisations noted that perceived bureaucracy and uncertainty about governments' shifting priorities around CCEA sometimes slowed effective implementation. Further, engagement is often personality- and not necessarily institution-based.

Engagement of local organisations in CCEA-related mechanisms is similarly inadequate, especially in the design of interventions. Local organisations are primarily engaged as entry points to communities and to conduct risk assessments where implementing organisations lack access, but are not actively engaged in CCEA activities and closing the feedback loop.

## Recommendations

- Conduct a mapping of all actors implementing CCEA at the lowest administrative units and their capacities. Ensure a diversity of actors are provided with information to disseminate to communities, especially about the actions being taken in the response.
- National organisations are a strategic ally that should be at the decision-making table: they are the first responders to crises and their staff can reach communities quickly.
- Respect different actors' niches and their contribution to CCEA and build on these strengths, including local authorities, media actors, clusters, community-based organisations and local NGOs.
- Recognise and leverage the expertise of local media on how to talk to and engage with their audiences.
- Consider providing translation in meetings to encourage participation of local and national actors that may otherwise not participate due to language barriers.
- Consider having a permanent desk in OCHA in-country to respond to media questions around CCEA. There should be some form of accountability for providing information for dissemination to communities.

## Engagement of communities

**Community engagement is often overlooked in programme design, leading to ad hoc CCEA uptake during implementation.**

Community involvement in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects and responses is reportedly not systematic. Informants noted that communities are involved in needs assessment but the information they provide is not systematically factored in for all stages of the project cycle. CCEA-related indicators are not actively considered in project design and so it is often an add-on to project implementation as opposed to an integral issue throughout the project cycle. Community meetings are organised primarily to disseminate information, rather than to meaningfully engage with communities

on decision-making in all stages of the project cycle. According to a Ground Truth Solutions survey in Somalia (2022), only 40% of respondents felt they could influence how aid is provided and 39% that they were consulted on their needs.<sup>25</sup>

Challenges with community engagement in CCEA that were cited as limitations included most activities happening during normal working hours (8 am–5 pm), which some community members perceive as exclusionary. Limited consideration of cultural approaches, such as budgeting for escorts for women (*Mahram*) required in some Muslim cultures, can also have a direct impact on engagement.

## Recommendations

- Engage women, youth and children in CCEA planning and decision-making and train staff on gender mainstreaming.
- Work with community networks and support their capacity to actively participate.

## CCEA capacity

### Coordination and delivery of CCEA initiatives are fragmented by gaps in technical capacities among organisations and partners.

Implementing organisations and staff lack capacity around CCEA in project design and implementation. Informants reported inadequate clarity on CCEA theories of change and how CCEA can be utilised to inform relevant, timely and targeted responses. The objective and role of CCEA is sometimes misunderstood by implementing staff, with informants noting that some staff perceive CCEA as a form of policing.

The inclusion of CCEA in programme design is especially poor among the local organisations that are closest to communities and that are most often required to conduct CCEA activities with affected people. Awareness-raising and capacity-bridging varies between organisations, with individual agencies determining the scope of CCEA training conducted with their partner organisations. Inconsistent CCEA capacity-strengthening of local organisations, government authorities and media actors (especially local media) challenges their meaningful participation in coordination and operations. Yet these actors are also key players that receive complaints and feedback from communities, posing ongoing challenges to CCEA capacity, effectiveness and continuity.

## Recommendations

- Establish functional interagency CCEA fora in-country and use these to develop clear capacity-strengthening/training activities for effective and collective CCEA under a monitored action plan.
- Package information on the core CCEA principles and skills to share with actors (potentially a CCEA theory of change), including how to incorporate CCEA in all stages of the project/programme cycle.
- Pilot the identification and training of accountability champions and promote cross-sectoral/mandate learning (peer-to-peer feedback gathering) on key CCEA gaps identified.

25 Ground Truth Solutions (2022) [Rights, information, and predictability: keys to navigate a complex crisis – Somalia Cash Barometer](#).

## Conclusion

The current drought crisis in the HoA is unprecedented in scale but not in its occurrence, with the region experiencing three major droughts just in the past decade. This means that each country has existing systems, networks and learning from past responses, all essential to driving a coherent and effective CCEA response. The current drought responses in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia have demonstrated a significant early commitment to CCEA, with HCT-endorsed CCEA strategies being rolled out by the different coordination mechanisms and a strong rhetoric around collective approaches by implementing partners.

However, despite recognition of the importance of CCEA and efforts to implement strategies, critical gaps continue to block demonstrable progress. CCEA coordination is strained by the disparate activities and approaches of organisations, with collective efforts impeded by issues around data sharing and access between agencies and the limited use of data to inform CCEA decision-making and planning. Gaps in technical capacities and inadequate engagement of critical actors, such as media and government, hamper the speed, coverage and impact of CCEA efforts.

The increasingly complex humanitarian context and magnitude of the crisis call for an urgent acceleration of CCEA across the region.<sup>26</sup> Prioritising necessary join-up of CCEA activities, continuous engagement of key CCEA actors and the design of interagency protocols for information-sharing and data usage can help to reduce duplication and promote efficiency. A refocus on meeting immediate information needs of affected people with critical considerations around inclusion is important, including key messaging on people's right to information.

---

26 See: CDAC Network (2023) [‘Working with what we have’: key advocacy messages for inclusive communication and engagement in the Horn of Africa](#).

# Appendix: Organisations consulted

## Organisations consulted via key informant interviews

### CDAC members

- ActionAid
- Anthrologica
- BBC Media Action
- CLEAR Global
- DW Akademie
- FilmAid Kenya
- Ground Truth Solutions
- International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- International Media Support – Radio Ergo
- International Organization for Migration
- Save the Children
- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)
- United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

### International, local and national actors

- Kenya Red Cross Society
- Somalia Nexus
- Somalia Red Crescent Society
- Talk To Loop

### Coordination structures

- AAP Working Group – Ethiopia
- Camp Coordination and Camp Management Cluster – Somalia
- CEA Task Force – Somalia
- Protection Cluster Working Group

### Donor agency

- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

Table 2 Organisations consulted via CDAC Learning Events

Kenya – 19 April 2023	Ethiopia – 26 April 2023	Somalia – 4 May 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACT Alliance</li> <li>• ACTED</li> <li>• ASAL Humanitarian Network</li> <li>• Action for Sustainable Change (AFOSC) Kenya</li> <li>• British Red Cross</li> <li>• Catholic Relief Services</li> <li>• Christian Aid</li> <li>• Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD)</li> <li>• DanChurch Aid</li> <li>• FilmAid Kenya</li> <li>• Grassroots Women Development Agenda</li> <li>• ICRC</li> <li>• Kenya Red Cross</li> <li>• Miss Koch Kenya</li> <li>• Nawiri Child Development Programme</li> <li>• Norwegian Refugee Council</li> <li>• OCHA</li> <li>• Save the Children</li> <li>• Somali Lifeline Organization (SOLO)</li> <li>• Transparency International Kenya</li> <li>• UNHCR</li> <li>• UNICEF Kenya</li> <li>• USAID Nawiri</li> <li>• WomanKind Kenya</li> <li>• World Vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action Against Hunger</li> <li>• ActionAid</li> <li>• ANE Ethiopia</li> <li>• BBC Media Action</li> <li>• CCCM Cluster Regional</li> <li>• Concern Worldwide</li> <li>• Development for Peace Organization</li> <li>• Dutch Relief Alliance</li> <li>• Emergency Shelter/Non-Food Items Cluster</li> <li>• Food for the Hungry (FH) Ethiopia</li> <li>• IOM</li> <li>• IFRC</li> <li>• International Medical Corps Ethiopia</li> <li>• Imagine1Day</li> <li>• International NGO Humanitarian Community (HINGO)</li> <li>• International Rescue Committee (IRC)</li> <li>• LM International</li> <li>• Mothers and Children Multisectoral Development Organization</li> <li>• Norwegian Church Aid</li> <li>• OCHA</li> <li>• Partnership for Pastoralists Development Association (PAPDA)</li> <li>• Terres Des Homme</li> <li>• UNHCR</li> <li>• UNHCR/Amhara AAP Working Group</li> <li>• UNICEF</li> <li>• World Food Programme</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ADRA Somalia</li> <li>• Agricultural Development Organization (ADO) – Hargeisa</li> <li>• BBC Media Action</li> <li>• Cordaid</li> <li>• FAO Somalia</li> <li>• Gargaar Relief Development Organization (GREDO)</li> <li>• Ground Truth Solutions</li> <li>• Impact Initiatives</li> <li>• IMS (Radio Ergo)</li> <li>• IOM</li> <li>• Nomadic Assistance for Peace and Development (NAPAD)</li> <li>• OCHA Somalia</li> <li>• REACH Initiative</li> <li>• Somali NGO Consortium</li> <li>• Talk To Loop</li> <li>• Trocaire</li> <li>• World Vision International</li> </ul>



CDAC is a network of more than 35 of the largest humanitarian, media development and social innovation actors – including UN agencies, RCRC, NGOs, media and communications actors – working together to shift the dial on humanitarian and development decision-making – moving from global to local.

© CDAC Network 2023

### **CDAC Network**

Sayer Vincent–Invicta House  
108–114 Golden Lane  
London EC1V 8BR  
United Kingdom

-  [cdacnetwork.org](https://cdacnetwork.org)
-  [@CDACN](https://twitter.com/CDACN)
-  [@CDACN](https://facebook.com/CDACN)
-  [CDAC Network](https://linkedin.com/company/CDAC-Network)
-  [CDAC Network](https://youtube.com/CDAC-Network)

Companies House Registration No: 10571501  
Registered Charity Number: 1178168