

WORKSHOP REPORT

AHEAD LEARNING SERIES FOR DIASPORA & LOCAL PARTNERS

From Response to Preparedness - Strengthening Capacities in AA

BACKGROUND

AHEAD – Anticipatory Humanitarian Action for Displacement is a global initiative led by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) that aims to strengthen humanitarian responses by enabling action before displacement occurs. By leveraging Early Warning Systems (EWS) and Anticipatory Action (AA) mechanisms, the project seeks to reduce the negative impacts of conflict-induced displacement and improve operational preparedness.

Enhancing the role and inclusion of diaspora organizations and local communities in AA is a key objective of AHEAD. In emergencies, diaspora play a crucial role; they act as first responders, mobilizing resources quickly, flexibly, and at scale. They engage across different sectors - from health and education to protection, livelihoods, and peacebuilding - as well as across response stages. Yet, diaspora organizations face structural barriers to AA frameworks, leaving diaspora humanitarianism overly reactive rather than proactive.

The AHEAD Learning Series was designed to address this gap. The first two-and-a-half-day workshop, held on 27–29 November 2025 in Nairobi, Kenya, brought together 27 diaspora organizations and their local partners across the East Africa and Great Lakes (EAGL) region. Through expert presentations, targeted training, practical exercises, and group discussions, participants explored key concepts of AA, diaspora–local partnerships in AA, and resource mobilization for AA. The objective was to build a shared understanding of anticipatory action, enhance participants' access to AHEAD forecasting models and tools, and strengthen their capacity to apply these within AA frameworks.

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Day 1 focused on building a shared understanding of how forecasting tools can support preparedness efforts. DRC introduced the *AHEAD Model* and key concepts such as triggers, lead times, and the “no regrets” principle. Participants applied a *Context Monitoring Tool* to identify early indicators, assess impacts, and define potential actions. In a *Displacement Scenario Building* exercise, they explored key components of an AA Protocol and how to build a scenario as part of developing an AA Plan.

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Day 2 focused on strengthening *diaspora-local partnerships* and exploring how joint resource mobilization for AA could provide organizations with flexible funding. The following training on *Crowdfunding for AA*, delivered by Dr. Ikhtlaq Hussain, London School of Philanthropy, introduced crowdfunding as a practical financing tool, with participants drafting campaign concepts aligned with EW indicators, triggers, and lead times.

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Day 3 focused on *translating learning into action*. Exercises reflected on the role diaspora and their partners can play along the displacement route drawing on existing strengths and addressing potential capacity gaps. Action areas included EW communication, dissemination of protection information, conflict sensitive community mobilization, and resource mobilization, while also identifying key barriers related to coordination and implementation.



KEY LEARNINGS



Diaspora organizations are critical EW actors, receiving real-time information through close community ties and partner networks.



Mapping and leveraging diaspora communication channels can strengthen the link between informal EWS and formal forecasting.



Crowdfunding and diaspora resource mobilization can provide flexible funding when aligned with triggers and lead times.



AA trainings and tools must be adapted to be truly inclusive of non-traditional AA actors and enable meaningful engagement of diaspora.



Clear coordination, well defined operational roles and pre-agreed actions are essential to integrate diaspora contributions into AAPs.



Strong diaspora-local-INGO partnerships rely on transparency and shared decision-making, including recognizing and valuing distinct roles and mandates.

NEXT STEPS

- **Crowdfunding Coaching:** Participants are offered follow-up coaching and support by Dr. Ikhtlaq Hussain, (London School of Philanthropy), enabling them to translate the concepts introduced during the training into practical fundraising initiatives for AA.
- **Future Capacity Building:** Whereas this workshop aimed to build a strong conceptual foundation by strengthening participants' AA knowledge and capacities, future sessions will focus on operationalizing diaspora inclusion in AHEAD.
- **Diaspora Engagement Modalities:** Initial concept notes will outline key modalities for diaspora engagement in AA within specific areas, e.g. economic engagement, EWS, protection etc. These will be guided by the principle of “no regrets” to maximize the impact of diaspora programming.
- **Diaspora Pilot Context:** Based on factors like conflict sensitivity, diaspora activities in AHEAD target locations, and identified capacity gaps and opportunities, one country will be selected to pilot diaspora inclusion in the design of an AAP and the broader implementation of AHEAD.

AHEAD – DIASPORA COMPONENT

Drawing on DRC's 15+ years of engagement with humanitarian diaspora organizations, AHEAD is exploring the role diaspora can play in AA for conflict-induced displacement. This includes research on how diaspora can contribute to forecasting, engage in AA design and delivery, mobilise resources ahead of shocks, provide systematic early warning information to affected populations, and support AA advocacy.



About AHEAD



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