

WORKSHOP REPORT

AHEAD LEARNING SERIES FOR SOMALI DIASPORA & LOCAL PARTNERS

Operationalizing Diaspora Engagement in Anticipatory Action

INTRODUCTION

AHEAD – Anticipatory Humanitarian Action for Displacement, led by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), aims to strengthen humanitarian response by enabling action before displacement occurs. By advancing anticipatory action (AA) mechanisms, the project seeks to reduce the impacts of conflict-driven displacement, improve preparedness, and support more timely, effective interventions. A core focus is the meaningful inclusion of diaspora actors in AA frameworks, particularly in preparedness, early warning, and response. Diaspora actors play a critical yet often under-recognized role in humanitarian contexts

The AHEAD Learning Series was designed to address this gap **by building diaspora capacity, improving access to forecasting tools, and generating practical insights on their role in AA**. Following an initial workshop in November 2025, a second workshop was held in Nairobi in May 2026, focusing on Somalia as a pilot context. Bringing together diaspora organizations and local partners operating in hard-to-reach areas, the workshop translated AA concepts into practical applications and generated concrete outputs, including operational mappings and initial AA response options.

60% of participants reported applying AA approaches in their work, and 50% have taken steps toward crowdfunding readiness. These early behavioural shifts signal that the Learning Series is achieving its intended purpose, not just building knowledge, but gradually moving towards catalysing action.

“ANTICIPATORY ACTION IS TO EMPOWER PEOPLE TO ACT
BEFORE SOMETHING ARRIVES”

(Diaspora Organization – Executive Director, Action For Relief & Development (ARD))

1 Day 1 opened by grounding participants in the AHEAD framework, linking anticipatory action to the crisis timeline and exploring shifting from a reactive to a proactive mindset. The Somalia context was introduced, highlighting key conflict drivers and displacement trends, alongside AHEAD’s strategy to act before and along displacement pathways. Discussions emphasized that early, trust-based engagement is central to effective anticipatory action, reducing both human and financial costs. Interactive mapping exercises of diaspora and local partner capacities, communication channels, and community-level dynamics in Somalia generated key insights on early warning systems, highlighting their critical role but also opportunities for shaping the implementation of AA.

2 Day 2 positioned diaspora actors within Somalia’s broader anticipatory action ecosystem, engaging directly with UN agencies, government, and humanitarian partners. Discussions reinforced that effective anticipatory action requires collective effort, grounded in field knowledge and community insight. The AHEAD forecasting model was introduced as a key tool for predicting displacement three to four months in advance, combining data on conflict, climate, and population movements. While already demonstrating strong accuracy, participants highlighted the need to strengthen community-level data to further improve early, actionable insights.

3 Day 3 focused on translating learning into action, linking early warning systems to anticipatory response. Participants reaffirmed that trusted, informal networks, including clan elders and community structures, are the primary sources of early signals, while formal systems play a secondary, verification role. Discussions highlighted a critical gap: community-level intelligence is not systematically connected to formal anticipatory action mechanisms. Strengthening this link, through clearer protocols, better integration of local knowledge, and structured engagement with existing systems, emerged as a key priority. The day ended with identifying key strengths, opportunities and enabling factors for Diaspora Organizations to shift their activities towards AA.

KEY LEARNINGS

TRUST-BASED COMMUNITY NETWORKS ARE CENTRAL TO EFFECTIVE AA



Diaspora organisations operate through trusted relationships with clan elders, women's groups, mosques, family networks, and local partners. These informal systems often detect crisis signals earlier than formal mechanisms

AA REQUIRES ADDRESSING BOTH VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE RISKS



Measurable indicators such as livestock deaths, market disruption, and flood warnings matter, but so do less tangible dynamics such as social tensions, and evolving clan relations.

COMBINING FORMAL FORECASTING WITH LOCAL KNOWLEDGE STRENGTHENS DECISION-MAKING



Predictive models and technical analysis become significantly more useful when combined with community-level monitoring, indigenous knowledge, and protection data.

DIASPORA ACTORS ARE UNIQUELY POSITIONED AS BOTH TRUST RECEIVERS & RAPID RESPONDERS



Diaspora networks serve a dual role: they can rapidly monitor and disseminate community intelligence while simultaneously mobilising resources through trusted transnational networks.

FUNDING AND CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS REMAIN THE MAIN BARRIERS TO EARLY ACTION



Lack of rapid, flexible financing and varying levels of organizational readiness limit their capacity to translate early warning into timely anticipatory action.

OPERATIONALISING DIASPORA ENGAGEMENT REQUIRES STRUCTURED SYSTEMS AND SUSTAINED SUPPORT



Diaspora actors can contribute across the full anticipatory action cycle, but sustained progress will require enhancing linkages to formal AA responses, clear coordination protocols, capacity-building, and long-term partnership and flexible funding.

NEXT STEPS

- **Validate and support community-based early warning systems:** Convene online workshop to identify early warning indicators and explore opportunities for co-designing and putting in place early warning structures linking diaspora and local actors to the AHEAD response mechanism.
- **Co-design the Somalia Anticipatory Action Plan (AAP):** Convene a co-design workshop with diaspora actors, local partners, and DRC Somalia to develop, validate, and agree on diaspora participation modalities within the AHEAD Somalia AAP.
- **Strengthen evidence on remittances and early action:** Initiate research on remittance flows as a potential anticipatory action early warning indicator.
- **Sustain capacity building through a Diaspora Community of Practice:** Continue engagement through webinars and targeted learning sessions on priority areas such as early warning systems, SOPs, safe information management, fundraising, procurement, and operational delivery of AA programming.
- **Partnerships:** Explore partnership opportunities to pilot anticipatory action programming in target locations contingent upon available funding, strategic and geographic alignment.

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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