DRC Research Consultancy

The missing link: Diaspora as Anticipatory Actors in Conflict-Induced Displacement

1. Who is the Danish Refugee Council?

Founded in 1956, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) is a leading international NGO and one of the few with a specific expertise in forced displacement. Active in 40 countries with 9,000 employees and supported by 7,500 volunteers, DRC protects, advocates, and builds sustainable futures for refugees and other displacement affected people and communities. DRC works during displacement at all stages: In the acute crisis, in displacement, when settling and integrating in a new place, or upon return. DRC provides protection and life-saving humanitarian assistance; supports displaced persons in becoming self-reliant and included into hosting societies; and works with civil society and responsible authorities to promote protection of rights and peaceful coexistence.

2. Purpose of the consultancy

Under the project Anticipatory Humanitarian Action for Displacement (AHEAD), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and DEMAC are commissioning a consultancy to consolidate lessons and findings on the role of diaspora in anticipatory action under the project. The consultancy focuses on two levels:

(1) Context monitoring, community sensing and early warning: examining whether diaspora and local partner specific signals, including remittance patterns and community sensing indicators, can serve as reliable early warning indicators for conflict-induced displacement; and,

(2) Response and activation: the distinctive contribution diaspora organisations and their local partners make in the partial and full activation phases, including how they mobilise resources quickly and exploring other innovative modalities for channelling support.

3. Background

AHEAD — Anticipatory Humanitarian Action for Displacement — is a global project led by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) that aims to strengthen humanitarian responses by improving the ability to act before displacement occurs. Implemented in eight countries (Yemen, Myanmar, Somalia, Niger, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Uganda, South Sudan), it combines in-country implementation with cross-context learning to build an evidence base for anticipatory action (AA) in conflict settings — an area far less developed than AA for climatic shocks. A key component of the project is to strengthen the inclusion of diaspora and local actors in designing AA frameworks and supporting their engagement in preparedness, early warning dissemination, and rolling out AA responses.

Diaspora, often outside formal humanitarian structures, play an essential role in conflict-prone contexts. Sitting at the intersection of a layered, real-time information ecosystem, they occupy a unique position of trust and access that formal systems cannot replicate, receiving real-time community intelligence — often within hours — and disseminating warnings through channels, communities actually listen to in areas hard to reach. The same trusted channels that receive community intelligence also serve as the fastest available mechanism for mobilising and transferring resources. Across crises, they share unique capacities to mobilise and transfer

resources swiftly, rapidly and innovatively, serving as often overlooked yet critical lifelines that are sustained beyond the lifespan of a crisis. This dual function of sensing and acting is what makes diaspora actors uniquely positioned in the AA ecosystem, and what distinguishes them from other formal early warning actors.

Yet while diaspora actors are increasingly recognised as informal humanitarian actors and vital responders in the aftermath of crisis, their capacity to mobilise existing knowledge, networks and resources in the critical window *before* displacement peaks remains largely under-conceptualised and under-examined. This gap extends across both dimensions of diaspora engagement: the signals they detect and the modalities through which they mobilise support. Remittances are illustrative. As a signal, shifts in remittance behaviour may point to deteriorating conditions in real time — when communities begin planning their displacement journey — yet their reliability and specificity as an early warning indicator remain untested. And while Somali remittances exceed USD 2 billion annually, outpacing official development assistance and humanitarian aid combined, these flows are inherently kinship-based and solidarity-driven, mediated by relations of trust and reciprocity, and mobilised almost exclusively in reaction to crises that have already hit. Accordingly, this raises broader questions about whether their support can be relied upon proactively, and/or sustained across recurrent shocks without exhausting the networks they depend on. Across both the predictive and the financing dimensions, it remains unexamined whether diaspora signals and resources — remittances among them — can be oriented towards anticipatory ends. This is the conceptual and empirical gap the consultancy sets out to explore and address.

This consultancy is anchored in the AHEAD Somalia context - a context that combines recurrent, overlapping conflict- and climate-driven displacement with an exceptionally strong, densely connected diaspora. As AHEAD is implemented in Somalia, DRC and its partners generate evidence on two questions: whether the signals diaspora detect are reliable enough to act on, and how their engagement affects outcomes once a response is triggered. The consultancy's role is to consolidate this evidence and package it into a structured account of diaspora as anticipatory actors. In doing so, the consultancy seeks to position diaspora as a missing piece in AA systems, with the Somalia experience presenting an emerging, largely unexplored frontier whose lessons could strengthen how anticipatory action is designed, funded and activated across other contexts.

Because this work concerns anticipation, its object is inherently uncertain — whether a predicted crisis will take place, and when or how often partners activate, cannot be known in advance; the consultancy is therefore designed to follow the implementation as it unfolds and adapt to what it surfaces, rather than evaluate predetermined events.

4. Objective of the consultancy

The consultant will consolidate and package the evidence generated under the project by DRC across four learning areas. The guiding questions under each set out what the consolidated learning should answer.

Across these areas, the consultant will be required to:

1. **Context monitoring, community sensing and early warning:** Examine and consolidate findings on whether signals reported by diaspora and local partners, namely shifts in remittance patterns and community sensing data gathered under the AHEAD project, can serve as reliable early warning indicators for conflict-induced displacement.

Sub-questions:

   a. *Can changes in remittance patterns — spikes or drops in transfer volumes, frequency, and requests — serve as a reliable early warning indicator for conflict-induced displacement, and/or as an earlier precursor of crisis?*

b. *Can social signals related to community sensing, including social media monitoring and social pattern detection serve as reliable early warning indicators for conflict-induced displacement, and/or as earlier precursors of crisis?*

2. **Activation – Response:** Examine and consolidate lessons on the distinctive contribution diaspora organisations and their local partners make in the partial and full activation phases, and how their engagement affects outcomes (assessed against indicators such as access, speed and trust). This includes capturing lessons from innovative modalities for support emerging from AHEAD's implementation in Somalia. Among these, DRC is currently exploring trigger-based payments that connect early warning triggers to diaspora transfers ahead of a predicted crisis; should this be taken forward, it would form part of this learning.

   Sub-questions:

   a. *How does diaspora engagement in AA implementation affect outcomes for affected communities — e.g. reach to hard-to-reach groups, trust, acceptance, complementarity with the formal response, and associated risks?*
   b. *How do the speed and modality of diaspora financial support affect AA outcomes?*
   c. *What innovative modalities for channelling diaspora support emerge through AHEAD's implementation in Somalia, such as trigger-based payments, and what conditions, infrastructure and partnerships are needed for them to work as anticipatory funding ahead of a predicted crisis?*

3. **Linking Informal to Formal EW/AA Structures:** Examine and consolidate lessons on the conditions, benefits and risks of connecting diaspora and community-based early warning (EW) structures to the AHEAD AA response mechanism across both the monitoring, reporting, escalation and activation cycle.

   Sub-questions:

   a. *What conditions proved necessary for diaspora and community-based EW structures to connect effectively to the AHEAD AA response mechanism across the monitoring, reporting, escalation and activation cycle?*
   b. *What benefits and risks did this surface for the actors involved — including effects on community ownership, diaspora–local partner trust, and responsiveness to warnings?*

4. **Cross-Cutting - Learning & Advocacy**: Package the consolidated learning into case studies for external publication and a synthesis report to inform AHEAD and broader diaspora programming, drawing out implications for scaling to other contexts.

5. Scope of work and Methodology

The consultant will prepare a **methodology and work plan** setting out how the evidence generated in-house will be consolidated and packaged against the objectives above, and the support required from DRC and DEMAC.

Division of roles: All primary data collection, triangulation and assessment is carried out in-house. DRC's AHEAD team and partners collect early warning and monitoring data, including bi-weekly reporting from diaspora–local partner pairs; DRC's MEAL and data teams triangulate and assess this data, together with activation and outcome data. The consultant complements this with targeted qualitative fieldwork on

remittance flows and community sensing (objective 1) and on the diaspora contribution in activation (objective 2), and consolidates the evidence and findings generated in-house and package them into the outputs set out below. Accordingly, the consultancy will work in a very coordinated manner with the data and MEAL team to avoid potential duplications.

Indicative scope: the evidence covers diaspora–local partner pairs across four or five locations in Gedo (Luuq and Beled Xawo) and Hiraan (BeledWeyne, Jalalaqsi, and Buulo Burte (TBC)), including bi-weekly monitoring data from all (up to five) and activation in up to three locations (AHEAD target locations; eg. Beled Xawo, BeledWeyne and Jalalaqsi). The number and timing of activations cannot be known in advance.

The learning notes produced under **areas 1–3 serve as interim outputs**, feeding into the final synthesis report and policy brief.

All deliverables are to be submitted in English. Fieldwork will be conducted in Somali

The main tasks related to achieving the above-mentioned objectives are described in detail below:

Scope	Deliverables	Suggested Activities
Community context monitoring (objective 1) Examine and consolidate findings on whether signals reported by diaspora and local partners, namely shifts in remittance patterns and community sensing data gathered under the AHEAD project, can serve as reliable early warning indicators for conflict-induced displacement.	1 learning note on whether diaspora and community sensing signals are reliable early warning indicators for conflict-induced displacement.	Consolidate DRC in-house context monitoring data (which will cross-compare and triangulate indicators received from diaspora and local partners with DRC community context monitoring) an carry out complementary qualitative fieldwork examining how remittance flows (including mobile money transfers) and community sensing signals shift ahead of displacement. n each of the four to five target locations, this includes around 5 (five) key informant interviews (with mobile money agents or remittance providers, local partners, community leaders and local authorities) and 1 (one) focus group discussion with recipient households. In addition, around 8 (eight) remote interviews with diaspora senders. Findings feed into the assessment of reliability, timeliness, accuracy, bias and conflict sensitivity.
Activation – Response (objective 2) Examine and consolidate lessons on the distinctive contribution diaspora organisations and their local partners make in the partial and full activation phases, and how their engagement affects outcomes (assessed against indicators such as access, speed and trust). This includes capturing lessons from innovative modalities for support emerging	1 learning report on the diaspora contribution in activation, including resource mobilisation and innovative modalities (which could include trigger-based payments)	Complement in-house activation and outcome data with qualitative fieldwork to assess the quality, relevance and acceptance of diaspora and local partner assistance across partial and full activation, including the speed and modalities of resource mobilisation. In each location where activation takes place (up to three), this includes around five key informant interviews (with local partners, community leaders, local authorities and other responders) and two to three focus group discussions with affected communities. Capture lessons from innovative modalities for support, including trigger-based payments if taken forward.

from AHEAD's implementation in Somalia.		Quantitative impact data on needs mitigation following AA assistance will be provided by in-house MEAL Specialist. Measurable outcome analysis is provided in-house by MEAL Specialist.
Linking Informal to Formal EW/AA Structures (objective 3): Through after-action review, assess the conditions, benefits and risks of connecting diaspora and community-based early warning (EW) structures to the AHEAD AA response mechanism, across the monitoring, reporting, escalation and activation cycle.	1 assessment of connecting informal diaspora and community EW structures to the AHEAD AA response mechanism.	Consolidate lessons and support AHEAD team in conducting after-action review, examining the connection at each stage of the cycle — monitoring, reporting, escalation and activation — drawing on the evidence from areas 1 and 2.
Cross-Cutting – Learning & Advocacy (objective 4): Generate case studies for external publication and a synthesis report to inform AHEAD and broader diaspora programming, and assess implications for scaling to other contexts.	3 Case studies for external publication; a final synthesis report and policy brief.	Document case studies from AHEAD's implementation in Somalia; produce interim learning notes; present findings at AHEAD convenings; deliver the final synthesis report and policy brief with recommendations on diaspora inclusion in AA and implications for scaling.

6. Deliverables

The Consultant will submit the following deliverables as mentioned below:

Phase	Expected deliverables	Indicative description of tasks	Maximum expected timeframe
Phase 1 — Inception & baseline	1 Inception report with approved methodology and work plan	Kick-off meeting; agree methodology and work plan with DRC	5 working days (4 lead / 1 field team) over period Q4 2026
Phase 2 — Context monitoring	1 Learning note on the reliability of diaspora and community-sensing signals as early warning	Consolidate in-house monitoring data and analysis; carry out fieldwork across the four to five target locations (ie. Luuq and Beled Xawo (Gedo), and BeledWeyne, Jalalaqsi and Buulo Burte TBC) (Hiraan) (key informant interviews and focus group discussions) and remote interviews with diaspora senders.	35 working days (15 lead / 20 field team). over period Q1-Q2 2027
Phase 3 — Activation & response	1 Learning report on the diaspora contribution in activation, including	Consolidate in-house activation and outcome data; Qualitatively examine diaspora engagement across partial	40 working days (18 lead / 22 field team) over period Q1–Q3 2027,

Phase	Expected deliverables	Indicative description of tasks	Maximum expected timeframe
	resource mobilisation and the feasibility of trigger-based payments	and full activation (up to three locations); capture lessons from innovative modalities for support, including trigger-based payments if taken forward.	following activation as it occurs
Phase 4 — Linking informal to formal	1 After-action review assessment of connecting diaspora and community EW structures to the AHEAD AA response mechanism	After-action review across the monitoring, reporting, escalation and activation cycle, drawing on the evidence from Phases 2 and 3	10 working days (8 lead / 2 field team) over period of Q2–Q3 2027
Phase 5 — Cross-cutting & synthesis	3 case studies for external publication; 1 final synthesis report and 1 policy brief	Produce case studies to present findings at AHEAD convenings; deliver the final synthesis report and 1 policy brief with recommendations and implications for scaling across contexts.	20 total working days (18 field team / 2 local).(Case studies run alongside Phases 2–4 (Q1–Q3 2027); final report and policy brief by 1st September 2027.

7. Duration, timeline, and payment

The assignment involves up **to 110 working days** spread over a contract period of up to 10 months, from December 2026 to 30 September 2027. **Payment is linked to approved deliverables, not to days worked.**

- **Instalment 1:** Inception report, data collection tools and fieldwork plan (Phase 1) – 30%
- **Instalment 2:** Learning note on context monitoring and early warning & Activations (Phase 2 & 3) – 20%
- **Instalment 3:** Learning note on linking informal to formal structures & Case studies, final synthesis report and policy brief (Phase 4 & 5) – 50%

The consultant shall be prepared to complete the assignment no later than **30 September 2027.**

The level of effort is **expected to vary throughout the assignment**. Periods of higher intensity are anticipated during the inception phase, including the development of the methodology and workplan, and during the final synthesis and evaluation phase, including analysis, reporting, and dissemination of findings. Additional periods of increased effort may arise in connection with activation events and response monitoring; however, the timing and frequency of such activations cannot be determined in advance and will depend on contextual developments.

Should fewer activations occur than anticipated, days allocated to Phase 3 may be reallocated to other deliverables, as agreed with DRC.

8. Eligibility, qualification, and experience required

Eligibility

- The bidder is a research or consultancy firm registered as a legal entity in its country of incorporation; individual consultants are not eligible.
- The firm proposes a named team leader and a field research team meeting the profiles below.

Experience

Firm:

- At least 2 years since registration
- Proven track record delivering qualitative research or evaluations, ideally in humanitarian or conflict settings
- At least three research, evaluation or review assignments for international organisations, research institutes or development agencies, preferably in the Horn of Africa
- Record of producing publishable outputs (reports, policy briefs, case studies)
- Ability to access and work safely in the target locations in Gedo and Hiraan
  Desirable: established presence or research network in Somalia; familiarity with anticipatory action and community-based early warning

Proposed Composition of Team

Team leader

- Master's degree or PhD in social sciences, development studies, peace and conflict studies or a related field; a PhD is an asset
- At least 5 years' post-graduate research experience in humanitarian, displacement or conflict settings in the Horn of Africa
- Demonstrated research on the Somali diaspora, diaspora humanitarianism or remittances, evidenced by at least two publications or research projects
- Strong research design, qualitative analysis and after-action review skills
- Demonstrated ability to synthesise and package findings into high-quality, publishable outputs (reports, briefs, case studies)
- Experience overseeing qualitative fieldwork (FGDs, KIIs) in Somalia, including in hard-to-reach areas, and coordinating in-country researchers
- Established access to, and trust with, relevant diaspora and local actors (desirable)
- Excellent written and spoken English required, fluency in Somali is an asset.

Field research team:

- At least 3 years of field-research experience in Somalia; research experience in Gedo or Hiraan is an asset
- Somali-speaking field researchers able to conduct key informant interviews and focus group discussions in target locations
- Deep knowledge of Somalia and its context — clan and community structures, conflict and displacement dynamics
- Established access to, and trust with relevant local actors and communities in the target areas

9. Technical supervision

The selected consultant will work under the supervision of:

- ***DRC Diaspora AA lead***

In close coordination with the DRC AHEAD team, including DRC AA Lead/PM at country office and regional level (EAGL) and DRC data team.

10. Location and support

Remote or based in East Africa.
The Firm will provide her/his own computer and mobile telephone.

11. Travel

The assignment is expected to be mainly remote for the team leader. The financial bid should include all travel and fieldwork costs(travel, accommodation, meals etc), based on a minimum of:

- One field round in each of the four confirmed target locations during Phase 2 (Luuq, Beled Xawo, BeledWeyne and Jalalaqsi), plus Buulo Burte if confirmed
- One field round in each location where activation takes place during Phase 3 (up to three, expected to be Beled Xawo, BeledWeyne and Jalalaqsi)

Bidders should show travel and fieldwork costs per location, so that locations can be added or removed. Unused Phase 3 travel will not be charged if fewer activations occur.

12. Submission process

*Proposals must be submitted to the following email address: tender.ken@drc.ngo with '**Diaspora as Anticipatory Actors in Conflict-Induced Displacement**' in the subject line* by **20th November 2026 at 1700hrs EAT**.

Bidding documents should be requested from procurement.ken3@drc.ngo email**.**