

Information Ecosystem Assessment

# INVOLVE US:

information & participation dynamics,  
desires and challenges in Sudan's  
Tigray refugee response





# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Since the start of hostilities in the Tigray region in north Ethiopia in November 2020, more than 68,000 Ethiopian refugees have fled to Sudan.<sup>1,2</sup> Prior to the withdrawal of Ethiopian government troops from Tigray in early July this year<sup>3</sup>, newspapers and humanitarians reported severe atrocities against civilians including massacres, sexual violence, destruction of civilian infrastructure and mass looting<sup>4</sup>.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported indiscriminate shelling of towns, widespread pillaging, destruction of crops and extrajudicial executions<sup>5</sup>. Journalists in Tigray also reported the illicit use of chemical weapons<sup>6</sup>. Others report the involvement of soldiers from neighboring Eritrea, who have been accused of mass looting and sending artillery shells on Tigray. Confirmation of these accusations – which all have consistently been denied by the Ethiopian government – has been complicated due to communication with the region being cut and access curtailed.<sup>7</sup>

Most Tigrayans fled for safety to Kassala and Gedaref, two bordering states in eastern Sudan, where they now stay in refugee camps, reception areas or with host-communities.





# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

>> This Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA), which was delivered by Internews in partnership with Insight Strategy Partners (ISP) in Sudan, studies the information environment of Ethiopian refugees and host communities in Gedaref and Kassala State in eastern Sudan.

An Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) is an analytical framework that can capture all dimensions of the relationship between information consumers and information supply. The Internews Information Ecosystem approach seeks a human centered understanding of how people and communities find, share, value, trust and share information in their own local contexts, whether it comes from the media or not.

The objective of the report is to establish a deep understanding of information dynamics of refugees from Tigray and Sudanese host populations living in eastern Sudan. Through this exercise, Internews and ISP will identify entry points for the design and enhancement of humanitarian information and communication and community engagement (CCE) services for Ethiopian refugees and host communities in eastern

Sudan. The research was funded and supported by CISCO.

Through a combination of key informant interviews, surveys, desk research, and COVID-19-safe focus group discussions, carried out by Insight Strategy Partners (ISP), this IEA explores trends of information demand and supply within refugee and host communities. This report analyzes their information access, needs, use, flows, and identifies means of trust and influence within host and refugee communities in Sudan. It is intended that the findings will be used by humanitarian partners to inform the design of future activities, adapt existing strategies and to inform the modification of activities and communication.

The report is structured into five sections. In section one, we explore the research scope and methodology. In section two, we provide an overview of the contextual realities in the refugee camps, transit sites and host communities in Sudan. In section three, we explore the supply side of information: which media providers and other humanitarian information providers are already available to refugees and host communities and of what quality is

information provided. In section four, we explore the information needs, gaps, access and barriers of refugees and host communities, including particularly vulnerable groups. In section five, we explore information dynamics including trust, transmission, influence and ultimately, the impact of information provision on specific knowledge, attitudes, and practices. We will conclude with user-centered recommendations and conclusions. •



# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**21%**  
of host  
community  
access the  
internet on  
a daily basis



**63%**  
of host  
community  
have never read  
a newspaper



**30%**  
of host  
community  
use a phone  
without internet  
on a daily basis



**28%**  
of host  
community  
watch television  
on a daily basis



**17%**  
of refugees  
watch television  
on a daily basis



**34%**  
of refugees  
use a phone  
without internet  
on a daily basis



**75%**  
of refugees  
never read  
a newspaper



**28%**  
of refugees  
access the  
internet on  
a daily basis



**38%**  
of host  
community  
use social media  
to talk with  
friends & family



only **7%**  
of host  
community  
reads a newspaper  
on a daily basis



**29%**  
of host  
community  
use a smartphone  
on a daily basis



**13%**  
of host  
community  
listens to the radio  
on a daily basis



**11%**  
of refugees  
listens to the radio  
on a daily basis



**55%**  
of refugees  
use a smartphone  
on a daily basis



only **4%**  
of refugees  
read a newspaper  
on a daily basis



**44%**  
of refugees  
use social media  
to talk with  
friends & family

**94%**  
of host  
community  
own a mobile phone

**77%**  
of refugees  
own a mobile phone



Host community

Refugees



# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Key findings

This section sets out the key findings and recommendations of the IEA:

### Information supply

Media outlets provide information to refugees and host communities living in Gedaref and Kassala State in eastern Sudan. Some people living in refugee camps and host communities do access television and radio programs, newspapers from Ethiopia (also, from Tigray) and Sudan (both from Khartoum and regionally) and are, at times, able to access the internet and social media platforms. Journalists, however, are not always free to write what they want, as they face different types of restrictions in Sudan (for, example, threats and attacks) and Ethiopia (including, restrictions and suspension).

Given the region has electricity and network limitations, many people rely on interpersonal communication with friends, family, and community leaders. In the refugee communities, humanitarians also play an important role in information provision, particularly about humanitarian services. Information is frequently provided via formal leaders, but refugees and host communities alike report to have only partial trust in these messengers. As such,

respondents advocate for the inclusion of informal leaders, such as women, religious, and youth leaders in response processes.

### Information needs and gaps

Various groups in refugee and host communities have different information needs and demands. Refugees, for example, report to desperately wanting to get news about their family in Tigray and in other camps, the security situation at home, food distribution and resettlement schemes. Host community members want to know why they are not included in the humanitarian response and what services are available to them.

Young people want more information about work and educational opportunities, whilst elderly people want to know about shelter and medical services. Refugee women – particularly survivors of sexual violence – have an urgent need to know more about sexual and reproductive health services and mental health and psychosocial support services.

People with disabilities, both refugees and host community members, say they are

often totally excluded from information and service provision, as information is not available in braille nor in sign language.

### Humanitarian response

Humanitarian agencies working in eastern Sudan recognize that refugees and host communities need more information about humanitarian services; that they need to be more informed and involved in decision-making processes about the response and that they need more opportunities for disclosing concerns and getting answers to their questions and complaints. Some agencies have set up complaint mechanisms, but these are often limited to responding to feedback about their own operations and don't address issues in a holistic manner.

More and better coordination is needed. This is particularly and urgently needed when it comes to information about food distribution, cash, and shelter distribution. The lack of timely information on food delivery time slots and inclusion and exclusion criteria of such services is causing some people to lose access to these lifesaving services. •

# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Recommendations

Based on the above information, this IEA makes the following recommendations:

### Community participation and engagement

Refugees and host communities in eastern Sudan should be included in decision-making processes of humanitarian and government agencies and actively contribute to the design and implementation of humanitarian activities. Whilst presently most engagement is done through formal and elected community leaders/officials, refugees, and host communities report that these leaders don't always represent their interests well.

As such, refugees and host community members request for informal and trusted leaders like women, religious, and youth leaders, to be included in such processes. Additionally, they would like mechanisms so they can issue complaints and report concerns to camp leadership, humanitarian agencies and the government. Respondents want to be better informed in general about humanitarian services, including when they are being delivered to whom and how.



### Access to information, communication platforms and media

Refugees and host communities report that they have access to various communication platforms and media. A large proportion of the population - and in particular, young people - own or have

access to smart phones (29% of refugees; 55% of host community members) and simple mobile phones (30% of refugees; 34% of host community members) which they use to chat with friends, family and when possible, to access the internet. Even if the network is poor and electricity provision irregular, this >>



# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



>> provides an attractive opportunity for mass engagement.

Refugees and host communities alike access news and information – although not regularly - through television, radio and interpersonal communication at places they frequent, including the market, school, and restaurants. To reach the largest population most effectively, humanitarians should use multiple delivery modalities when disseminating information.

When aiming to reach specific audiences, humanitarians should use existing, popular and preferred areas/channels/platforms (e.g., humanitarians can reach women in markets, at the waterpoint, or through women representatives/groups; young people via their phones or at entertainment venues in the community; children at schools, etc.).

Additionally, humanitarians, government and private sector actors could collaborate to increase access to the electricity and the internet and by doing so increase the coverage for refugees and host community members simultaneously.

## **Humanitarian service provision**

Humanitarians working in Gedaref should increase effective and reliable information provision to all members of refugee – and host – communities on diverse and context-appropriate channels. This should include giving people the opportunity to express concerns and complaints about individual services of humanitarian agencies as well as the overall refugee response. This feedback should be not only be listened to but also acted on.

Then, clear responses should be provided, even in cases where the requested change/recommendation cannot be made. Refugees and host communities requested to be included in decision-making processes of humanitarian agencies and the government about the refugee response. They also advocated for informal leaders and the general public to be given space to participate, and not only formal and official community leaders (who currently frequently are asked to represent the community in humanitarian and government fora). •

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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

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<b>AAP</b> Accountability to Affected Populations	<b>EDHS</b> Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey	<b>ISP</b> Insight Strategy Partners	<b>SUNA</b> Sudan News Agency
<b>ACAPS</b> The Assessment Capacities Project	<b>EEPA</b> European External Programme for Africa	<b>JAHR</b> Sudanese Journalists Association for Human Rights	<b>TDF</b> Tigray Defense Force
<b>BBC</b> British Broadcasting Corporation	<b>ENDF</b> Ethiopian National Defense Force (the Ethiopian national army)	<b>JPA</b> Juba Peace Agreement	<b>TMC</b> Transitional Military Council
<b>BOLSA</b> Tigray Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs	<b>EPRDF</b> Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front	<b>KIIs</b> Key Informant Interviews	<b>TPLF</b> Tigray People's Liberation Front
<b>CBCFM</b> Community Based Complaints and Feedback Mechanism	<b>FDGs</b> Focus Group Discussions	<b>MSF</b> Médecins Sans Frontières	<b>TV</b> Television
<b>CCE</b> Communication and Community Engagement	<b>FFC</b> Forces of Freedom and Change Alliance	<b>NGO</b> Non-governmental Organization	<b>TWB</b> Translators without Borders
<b>CDAC</b> Communication with Disaster Affected Communities	<b>GCRT</b> Sudanese General Authority for Radio and TV Broadcasting	<b>NPC</b> National Press Council and Publication Committee	<b>UN</b> United Nations
<b>CDC</b> Centre for Disease Control	<b>HAC</b> Humanitarian Aid Commission (part of the Sudanese Ministry of Social Development)	<b>NRC</b> Norwegian Refugee Council	<b>UNICEF</b> United Nations Children's Fund
<b>CJP</b> Committee to Protect Journalists	<b>HNO</b> Humanitarian Needs Overview	<b>SARS-CoV-2</b> Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2	<b>UNDP</b> United Nations Development Programme
<b>COR</b> Commissioner for Refugees (part of the Sudanese Ministry of the Interior)	<b>HRW</b> Human Rights Watch	<b>SCI</b> Save the Children International	<b>UNHCR</b> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>CSAE</b> Central Statistical Agency Ethiopia	<b>ICF</b> Inner City Fund	<b>SJU</b> Sudanese Journalists Union	<b>UN OCHA</b> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>CwC</b> Communication with Communities	<b>ICG</b> International Crisis Group	<b>SNBC</b> Sudan National Broadcasting Corporation	<b>WFP</b> World Food Programme
<b>DHS</b> Demographic and Health Survey	<b>IEA</b> Information Ecosystem Assessment	<b>SRHR</b> Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights	<b>WHO</b> World Health Organization
<b>DRC</b> Danish Refugee Council		<b>SST</b> United States State Sponsor of Terrorism	

## 2. RESEARCH SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

### Research scope and main building blocks of the IEA

This Information Ecosystem Assessment documents how information was produced, consumed, and shared by Tigrinyan refugees and host communities in Sudan in 2021 amidst a global pandemic and other compounding economic and political crises. It identifies how Tigrinyan refugees and host communities in eastern Sudan relate to their information environment and builds primarily upon surveys, interviews and focus group discussions with Tigrinyan and Sudanese community members, information practitioners, Sudanese media, and local and international organizations working closely with Tigrinyan and host-communities communities. •

#### Legend



### RESEARCH METHODS

- Interviews with key informants and community members
- Listening groups / focus group discussions in the community
- Quantitative survey (sample >100)
- Research led by the community (research assistants and enumerators from the community)
- Desk research on information supply and existing research
- Continuous feedback by panels of experts and community throughout the research
- Results dissemination and feedback from communities

### RESEARCH THEMATIC SCOPE

#### Information Providers

- Environment
- Non media information providers
- Digital media and platforms
- Media capacity
- National media
- Community media

#### Dynamics and Interactions

- Trust (trusted channels...)
- Sharing and gatekeeping
- Influence and impact of information
- Linkages between different actors of the information ecosystem

#### Information Demand

- Information needs and gaps
- Preferred channels and sources
- Barriers to information access
- Info needs by humanitarian organizations and other stakeholders

### GEO AND DEMOGRAPHIC SCOPE

- Targeted geographic area: Gedaref state, Eastern Sudan.
- Focus on specific population groups (Tigrinyan refugees and Sudanese hosts)
- Full country
- Entire population



## 2. RESEARCH SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY



### Methodology

Putting people and crisis-affected communities at the center of our humanitarian interventions is critical. Internews and ISP recognize that, in line with the Sphere Core Humanitarian Standard, to ensure that humanitarian response is effective, relevant and timely, the feedback and participation of affected communities and people should underpin the design of every humanitarian intervention.<sup>8</sup>

Concerns and complaints about aid should be welcomed and addressed to ensure that a humanitarian response is complementary and of high quality. Similarly, any intervention or response must be adequately contextualized considering the affected communities' socio-cultural frameworks.<sup>9</sup>

The overarching goals of Internews' Information Ecosystem Assessment (IEA) methodology is to gain a deeper human-centered understanding of how people and communities find, share, value, and trust information in their own local contexts whether it comes from media agencies and stakeholders or not. The information Internews and partners gather through the multiple phases of the IEA informs possible solutions to address information gaps and overlooked audiences. The



## 2. RESEARCH SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

>> IEA methodology is based on four key principles:

### 1. Putting the community at the core of the research

Internews and partners seek to be at the core of the communities they serve. With the IEAs, Internews therefore endeavors to involve the community in the research. This can take different ways and ascertain different levels of participation. Internews strives to design multiple ways and methods to gather feedback from community members and representatives. They may hire researchers and data collectors from the community and partner with community members to disseminate results and gather feedback.

In this research community members were involved in data collection activities in all research sites and a participatory approach was taken across all Focus Group Discussions (FDGs).

### 2. Following a human-centered research design

Internews and partners seek to develop a

holistic understanding of people's information practices. In the IEA we, therefore, focused on understanding demand and supply in a broad sense and are not narrowly focused on media outlets or media actors. The scope of analysis is also defined by how people access and consume information and not by pre-defined categories. We strive to understand both which practices are broadly shared and what are the specific needs and behaviors of groups, especially the most vulnerable ones.

### 3. Marrying qualitative and quantitative data

Internews and partners seek to elicit and combine mixed method data to understand both the supply and demand of information and how the two interact to produce a dynamic ecosystem. Using qualitative data to explore behavior, knowledge and practices, combined with broad trends brought by quantitative data help set up a detailed and reliable analysis.

### 4. Integrating research and action

Internews and partners do not see IEAs as an “end product”. IEAs are often used as

the first stage of project design, providing insights into contextual realities, preferences and requirements. They are always connected to recommended actions, whether our own, those undertaken by communities or by partners and other key stakeholders in the ecosystem.

Based on these four principles, Internews maps information ecosystems by establishing first an overview of the quantity and quality of media available to the populations we are interested in. This is the “supply side” of the ecosystem. The “supply side” provides an overview of the physical and institutional infrastructure that supports information flow. This includes the geography and reach of traditional media and digital media, the legal and regulatory environment and the political, economic, legal and technological factors affecting information flow.

Internews analyses the different ways that people behave around this information including that which comes from informal and nonmedia sources. To understand this behavior, we work with people to find out about the “demand side” elements of the information ecosystem. The “demand side” >>



## 2. RESEARCH SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

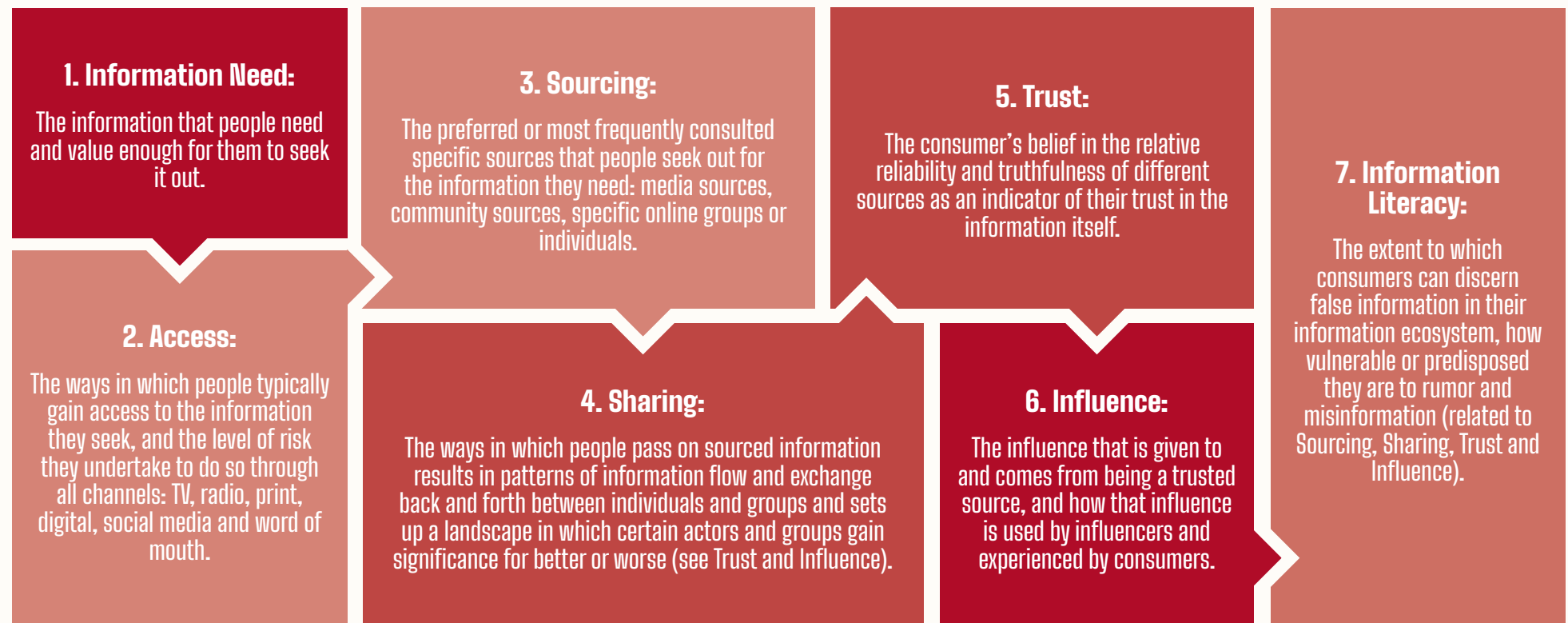
>> perspective is critical to a full understanding of any information ecosystem as they are more than a network of news, media and information channels; they include informal, personal, civic, community and trust-based information flows that may or may not be influenced by news or media.

Most importantly, information ecosystems are uniquely defined by the “information behavior” of the people who live in them. In the constant quest of humans to connect with information, the ways in which they consume, produce, contribute to, interact with, and behave around their information

supply are what makes information ecosystems dynamic and diverse.

Gaining qualitative insights will allow us to explore which channels, platforms, formats or people that they the audiences we work with prefer and trust. •

*The key components of the demand side of an information ecosystem that are of interest to Internews:*



## 2. RESEARCH SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

### Research questions

This IEA explores the information ecosystem, desires and demands of refugees fleeing conflict in the Tigray region in northern Ethiopia, and Sudanese communities who have hosted and provided lifesaving support to Tigrayan refugees in Gedaref and Kassala states in eastern Sudan. This research aims to gain an understanding of the information needs, communication behavior and preferences of these communities, both affected by the conflict in Tigray. The research explores the following questions<sup>10</sup>:

- What are the most effective formats and channels to use when designing two-way communication strategies and feedback loops to meet these information needs?
- What information needs exist within both refugee and host communities?
- How are refugees from Tigray and host communities in eastern Sudan accessing information that is important to themselves, their families and their communities?
- How common, reliable, trusted, and effective are these available channels?
- Who are the formal and informal 'information brokers' that drive them?



## 2. RESEARCH SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

### Research activities

This IEA was carried out in eastern Sudan between February - July 2021 in three phases. First, a rapid review of grey and academic literature determined the research design and methodology of the study. An inception report from ISP established the sampling strategy and approach. In the second phase, a mixed method research approach was implemented in four research locations in Sudan, making use of a quantitative survey (in which data was captured through Kobo-Box, a mobile-phone application), key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FDGs). In the third phase, analysis was done of all qualitative and quantitative data collected. The emerging findings were presented and discussed with the research team on the group during validation workshops with data collectors (see Annex 1 for more information).

Across all four locations, 947 participants were included in research activities (54% male, 46% female; see Annex 1 and Table 1 for more information). To ensure that participants reflected the variety of the diverse communities, efforts were made to select an equal number of male and female

Table 1 - List of Key Informants

Informants	Tool	Sample	Specifics
Individuals and communities	Surveys	804	Tigray refugees and host communities in Eastern Sudan. Random sampling in the city of Gedaref, Hamdayet, Um Rakuba camp and Um Rakuba village
	FDGs	120 people 12 sessions in Um Rakuba, Um Rakuba village and Hamdayet.	Tigray refugees and host communities in Eastern Sudan. Divided in four groups: Female (18-35 years old) Female (35 to 55 years old) Male (18-35 years old) Male (35 to 55 years old)
Community leaders	KII	3	Community leaders (both traditional, and government)
Informal leaders	KII	9	Respected service providers at the local level – teachers, health workers, youth workers, resistance committee members
Media	KII	5	In Gedaref city, only from host community not from refugee population
International Agencies and Humanitarian actors	KII	6	International organizations and local organizations; from different hierarchies
<b>Total</b>		<b>947</b>	

respondents; to include participants of different age groups; to include participants with different physical abilities; and of various socio-economic and educational backgrounds; and nationalities (both

Sudanese and Ethiopian). For details on the sampling strategy for the qualitative and the quantitative work; the recruitment criteria for participants; and task division amongst the research team, see Annex 1. •



## 2. RESEARCH SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

### Methodological limitations

The ISP team reported various challenges related to data collection. This included:

- **Field work limitations:** the sampling approach for the qualitative data collection was purposive, which means that the findings for this part can only be considered indicative. Additionally, the quantitative sample was selected using a household sampling strategy (see Annex 1), there was no household registration list available for the research team for all residents in the area.

- **Contextual limitations:** a level of survey fatigue within the refugee camps and host communities in eastern Sudan has

impacted the quality of data collection. Participants made their unwillingness to be surveyed without being paid clear to the data collection team. These statements are indicative of wider frustration with humanitarian agencies' research and assessments and lack of consequent action.

- **Research design related limitations:** the data collection team was recruited from the communities that they were researching – and hence were not independent observers but had a stake in the research.

While none was witnessed, this has the potential to impact on the impartiality of the research findings. However, being able to conduct the research in the preferred languages of the participants, in a culturally and contextually appropriate way, by data collectors trusted by the refugees and host communities may have also strengthened the richness of the findings, and the understanding of contextual specificities. Due to the broad scope that needed to be covered in the research, the survey was lengthy and took much time from participants. •



### 3. CONTEXTUAL PROFILE



The conflict in Tigray started in November 2020. On 4 November 2020, Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ordered military action against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), a political party representing the interest of the minority Tigray ethnic group, citing provocation. The Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) moved into the area, according to government sources, to respond to an attack by TPLF on ENDF's military bases.<sup>11</sup> The TPLF, on their end – already embroiled in a tense political war with the central government – says that Ahmed's cabinet used the COVID-19 pandemic as an illegitimate mean to postpone the national elections to hold on to power.<sup>12</sup> Ignoring the decision, the Tigray government continued with regional elections causing the central government to withhold aid and federal financing and ultimately declaring the regional government as illegitimate.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, heavy fighting broke out in the region between the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) and its allies – formal and informal military factions of the Amhara region, and troops from neighboring Eritrea – and the troops of the ousted Tigray Regional Government, led by





### 3. CONTEXTUAL PROFILE

>> TPLF.<sup>14,15</sup> Humanitarian agencies, NGOs, international organizations, media and foreign government agents report mass casualties because of armed violence, air strikes, and human right violations, including targeted rape of women.<sup>16</sup>

The conflict in Tigray should be viewed with an understanding of the diverse contexts in Ethiopia, it's historical and political struggle, and internal disagreement on governance of a country as ethnically diverse as Ethiopia. Home to more than 80 ethnic groups, Ethiopia has to balance normative diversity with efforts to implement state law across its territory.<sup>17</sup> Disagreement over how the country should be governed – by a governance model focused on ethnic federalism, or differently – has historically and is currently creating tension between various political and ethnic groups (with some fearing that their culture and identity are under threat<sup>11</sup>).

Prior to the conflict in Tigray, the country was governed by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), the then ruling coalition of which both PM Abiy Ahmed and current Tigray political leaders were a member<sup>18</sup>. Whilst the

Tigrayan minority represents only around 6% of the population, but for years they dominated the political realm in Addis Ababa – which has created tension with other ethnic groups over unfair distribution of resources, privileges and budget for development.<sup>19</sup>

When Ahmed was elected in 2018, the EPRDF coalition was merged into a single party (the so-called Prosperity Party).<sup>20</sup> Many saw the decline of Tigrayan political influence tentatively as a positive outcome for the country, although many have changed their mind since. The political situation is in flux and ever changing in the different areas of the country.

At the time of writing in early July 2021, the Tigray Defense Force (TDF), a new iteration of the TPLF, has retaken the Tigray capital Mekelle, after waging a guerilla campaign against the ENDF. This has the likely impact of prolonging the conflict but perhaps also the opening of humanitarian corridors through Sudan. Hostilities and destroyed infrastructure continue to constrain humanitarian actors' access, with The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

(UN OCHA) stating that: *"the humanitarian situation on the ground is extremely dire and far from improving."*<sup>21</sup>

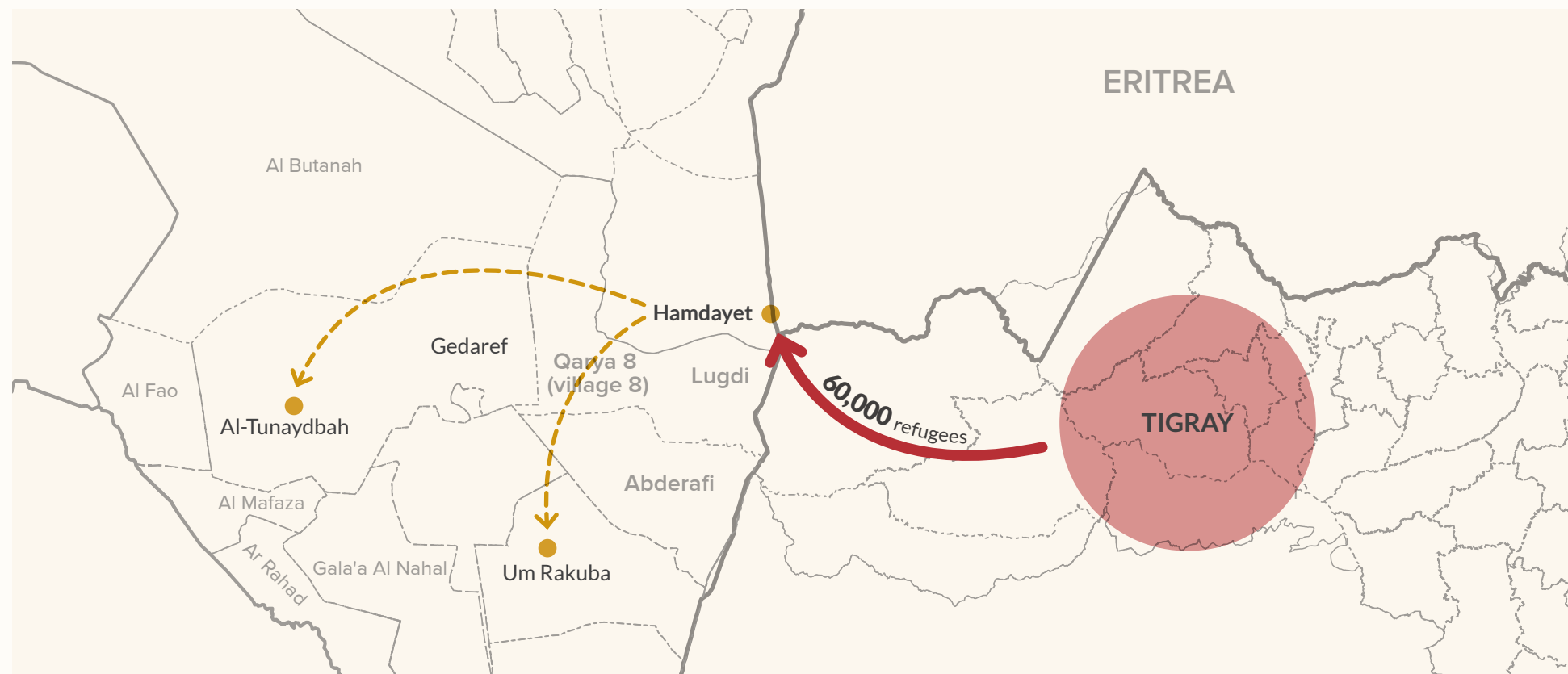
The TDFs recapture of Tigray towns and cities - and the group's encroachment of the neighboring state of Amhara has recently caused thousands Amhara refugees to flee to Sudan. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) - a large dam in the Nile which is also likely to continue to raise tensions between Sudan and Ethiopia. Conflicts over land ownership in Gedaref are additionally impacting diplomatic relations. •





### 3. CONTEXTUAL PROFILE

#### Humanitarian situation overview in East Sudan



The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (UN OCHA) Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) for Sudan estimates that over 12.7 million people in the country are in dire need of humanitarian services.<sup>22</sup> More than 60,000 refugees from the

Tigray region entered Sudan mainly at the transit point of Hamdayet (between Gedaref and Kassala states), from where they are being slowly relocated to Um Rakuba and Al-Tunaydbah, the two permanent refugee camps in Gedaref state.<sup>23</sup> More than 20,000 refugees

have been moved from the border and temporary transit points to Um Rakuba and more than 17,000 refugees were relocated to Al-Tunaydbah.<sup>24</sup> Others remain in the vicinity of the border or wait for family members in a transit point at the border.<sup>25</sup>



### 3. CONTEXTUAL PROFILE

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>> Generally, refugees arrive in Sudan in poor health and with few belongings, having walked long distances without water and food, navigating Fano militia and bandits, the dangerous Tekeze river crossing and patrolled checkpoints.<sup>26</sup> Young boys are also at risk of being recruited for war by the TDF, say humanitarian workers part of the research and government spokespersons in Addis Ababa.<sup>27</sup> Others have had to leave loved ones behind who are less mobile (often elderly and those with disabilities) causing great psychosocial suffering.<sup>28</sup>

Humanitarian partners are supporting UNHCR and the Sudanese government's Commissioner for Refugees (COR) with services for these new arrivals. Ethiopian refugees are supported with food, shelter, health, and nutrition services including, for example, food distributions (WFP); ready meals (Muslim Aid); improved cooking stoves (COR, UNHCR and Forest National Cooperation); water supplies (The Red Cross, UNHCR); and lanterns with mobile charging facilities.<sup>29</sup> Additionally, specific services are set up for girls, women and children including

safe spaces, child friendly spaces and temporary school facilities.<sup>30</sup>

However, humanitarian partners report significant funding gaps.<sup>31</sup> MSF has reported insufficient access to water, food, health care, education, social services, and proper shelter in refugee-hosting locations.<sup>32</sup> The same dire situation was painted by other humanitarian agencies in The Lancet, speaking of the urgent need for basic services in eastern Sudan's Tigray response.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, overcrowded conditions in the refugee camps and transit sites can lead to the spread of communicable diseases.<sup>34</sup> UNHCR notes that there are water shortages, sanitation and shelter gaps, limited protection services, and that there is a stark need for mental health and psychosocial support.<sup>35</sup>

Host communities in the vicinity of the refugee camps and other entry points report that whilst they host many refugees, they have not been included in the response.<sup>36</sup> The influx of refugees is placing significant pressure on local resources, including on livelihoods, food

availability and economic opportunities. Many people live off traditional subsistence agriculture or sell their labor for meagre daily wages.<sup>37</sup> Recent research in the host communities show that many feel neglected by the government and humanitarian agencies as they do not receive support whilst they face the same challenges as the refugee population. Some host community members state that refugees now have better life conditions than them, causing feelings of resentment.<sup>38</sup>

However, there have been long standing trade relationships between eastern Sudan and Tigray, which saw Ethiopian laborers regularly crossing the border to work on Sudanese farms, and where tradespeople sold goods on the borders on both sides of the border.<sup>39</sup> There are also significant social ties between the communities, including through kinship and intermarriage. There are many Ethiopians already living in this part of Sudan. They were part of an earlier wave of refugees fleeing to eastern Sudan in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after prior of episodes of violence and famine. •

# 3. CONTEXTUAL PROFILE

## Sudan's national context

Sudan has undergone major political changes since the revolution that ousted former president Omar al-Bashir. Following Bashir's fall, a Transitional Military Council (TMC) was set up along with civilian forces, led by the Sudan Professionals Association (a broad umbrella of unions and professional associations) and the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) Alliance negotiated a new political, transitional, government.

In August 2019, a bifurcated governance system was created with a Sovereignty Council of 11 members (five from the TMC, five from the FFC, and one chosen through consensus of the two) as the collective head of state, and a civilian executive government under Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok. After the signing of the Juba Peace Agreement (JPA) in October 2020, political negotiations followed which resulted in a cabinet reshuffle in February 2021, that incorporated the erstwhile rebels. The Sovereignty Council adopted the terms of the JPA and has included three members from the former rebel groups, signatory to the agreement.<sup>40</sup>

Conflict, political instability, sudden-onset disasters, and poor economic conditions

contribute to Sudan's multifaceted crisis, which has left 9.3 million Sudanese in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>41</sup> Food insecurity, malnutrition, and a lack of access to basic services, health and medicine services are the drivers of most humanitarian needs.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, more than 2 million Sudanese have been internally displaced since 2010.

Environmentally, Sudan is prone to flooding and the 2020 rainy season (June-

October) led to widespread flooding that destroyed homes and farmland, damaged infrastructure, triggered risk of water-related diseases, and obstructed humanitarian access, all during the COVID-19 pandemic. Drought, linked to desertification, depreciates agricultural conditions, and increases food insecurity and conflict across the country, also in Gedaref. Recently, inflation has increased the prices of consumer goods with rural inflation averaging at 451%.<sup>43</sup> ●





### 3. CONTEXTUAL PROFILE

#### Key contextual indicators<sup>44</sup>

##### Press related index

Sudan*	
Civil liberties (including freedom of expression)	10/60 Not free
Press freedom index 2019 (out of 180 countries)	7/100
Press freedom index 2020 (out of 100 countries)	12/100 ↑
Kassala/Gedaref specific data	N/A

##### Ethiopia\*

Civil liberties (including freedom of expression)	13/60 Not free
Press freedom index 2019 (out of 180 countries)	22/100
Press freedom index 2020 (out of 100 countries)	24/100 ↑
Tigray specific data	N/A

\* Source civil rights: Freedom House global freedom status - <https://freedomhouse.org/country/sudan>; <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ethiopia>

##### Civil rights

Sudan*	
Obstacles to access (0=worst, 25=Best)	5
Limits on content (0=worst, 35=Best)	15
Violation of user rights (0=worst, 40=Best)	10
Freedom on the net score 2019	25/100
Freedom on the net score 2020	30/100 ↑
Kassala/Gedaref specific data	N/A

##### Ethiopia\*

Obstacles to access (0=worst, 25=Best)	5
Limits on content (0=worst, 35=Best)	12
Violation of user rights (0=worst, 40=Best)	12
Freedom on the net score 2019	28/100
Freedom on the net score 2020	29/100 ↑
Tigray specific data	N/A

\* Source civil rights: Freedom House <https://freedomhouse.org/country/sudan>; <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ethiopia> >>

### 3. CONTEXTUAL PROFILE

>>

#### Digital media



Sudan*	
Kassala/Gedaref State level data	N/A
Internet penetration rate (nationally)	30.9% (2021)
Mobile phone penetration (nationally)	76% (2021)

#### Ethiopia\*\*

Internet use in the past 12 months (male; in Tigray)	5% (2016)
Internet use in the past 12 months (female; in Tigray)	13% (2016)
Internet penetration rate (nationally)	20% (2021)
Mobile phone penetration (nationally)	39% (2021)

\* Source: Datareportal - <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-sudan>

\*\* Ethiopia DHS - <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR328/FR328.pdf>; Datareportal - <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2021-ethiopia>

#### Key demographic, social and political factors



Sudan*		
Human development index (rank)		170/198
Population in multidimensional poverty, headcount		52% (2021)
Rural population (%)		65 (2021)
Illiteracy rate (%)		61 (2021)
Gedaref	Total population (millions)	2 (2021)
	Illiteracy rate (%)	57,2 (N/A)
Kassala	Total population	68.621 (2021)
	Illiteracy rate (%)	43,8 (N/A)

#### Ethiopia\*\*

Human development index (rank)		173/198
Population in multidimensional poverty, headcount		84% (2021)
Rural population (%)		79 (2021)
Illiteracy rate (%)		52(2021)
Tigray	Total population (millions)	5 (2011)
	Illiteracy rate (%)	male – 72 / female – 45 (2011)

\* SCBS - <https://knoema.com/atlas/Sudan/Gedaref>;

UNDP: [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/SDN.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/SDN.pdf)

\*\* SCBS - <https://knoema.com/atlas/Ethiopia/Tigray>;

UNDP: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/ETH>

### 3. CONTEXTUAL PROFILE

#### Research sites specificities

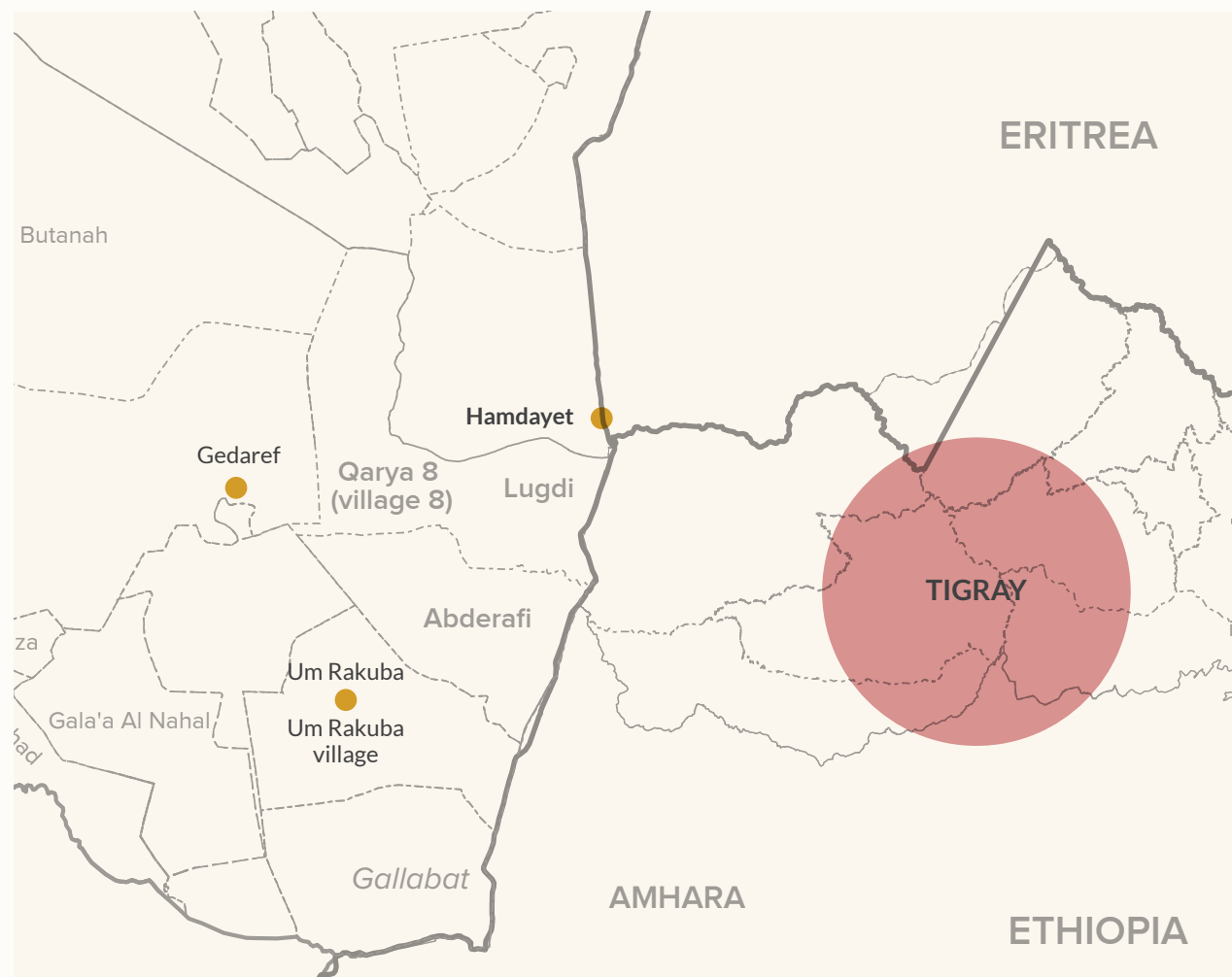
The research was conducted in four research sites and included both Sudanese host communities and Ethiopian refugee camps and transit sites.

In this report, the term ‘refugee population’ refers to Ethiopian refugees from Tigray who have recently fled the hostilities in Tigray starting in November 2020. ‘Host community members’ are those people who were already living in Sudan prior to the recent conflict in Tigray. They may be from Sudanese, Ethiopian or Eritrean communities originally but have been living in Sudan prior to the conflict in Tigray. Many of these ‘host community members’ have provided critical humanitarian services to the recent refugees coming from Tigray (see more information below).

The research sites were selected because of the number of refugees living in the area or in its proximity to the research team due to access restrictions faced by the researchers. The research team selected a refugee camp, a host community village, a neighboring city, and a transit site where refugees first enter the country. The decision to include these sites was made to ensure that different experiences

and perspectives were included into the analysis. The selection was approved by the

Commissioner for Refugees (COR) office in Gedaref.





### 3. CONTEXTUAL PROFILE

>> This section details an overview of contextual specificities of the research sites:

#### Um Rakuba (refugee camp)

Um Rakuba is a refugee camp in Sudan in Gedaref state, which as of 30 June 2021, houses 18,522 refugees. Humanitarian partners report that there are various services and facilities available to camp residents, including safe spaces for girls and women, child friendly spaces, semi-permanent school structures. Additionally, a recent mapping of the camp shows that there are 20 water points, 182 showers, 10 health facilities, 346 latrines, 1 COVID-19 isolation center and 3,884 shelters. That means that 59 people share 1 latrine, and 113 use 1 shower, and that refugees live with 5 people per shelter, a situation that does not meet the minimum Sphere standards. In April 2021, Um Rakuba camp reached full capacity. The only available electricity is in the office of a few humanitarian agencies, who use generators during the daytime. Many refugees are Tigray or Amharic-speaking farmers who mostly practice Christianity.

#### Hamdayet (transit)

Hamdayet is a transit site where recent refugees from Tigray enter Sudan and stay until they are reallocated by the UNHCR to Um Rakuba Camp or Tunaydbah camp. In total, UNHCR, as of 30 June 2021 notes that there are 5443 refugees in the settlement. Hamdayet only provides the first and basic lifesaving services. Many of the first arrivals arrive in Hamdayet and, according to UNHCR, are exhausted, hungry, express strong fears and report serious threats to their safety. Although service provision is better in refugee camps, many refugees want to stay near the border. According to UNHCR, some refugees are waiting for loved ones that they have been separated from, or have brought their agriculture equipment, animals which needs to be cleared by customs; or hope to return home for harvesting. The village has no electricity or water supplies, with only one medical clinic, and telephone, television and internet connectivity are extremely weak. In Hamdayet, most Sudanese are Muslim, Arabic-speaking traders and livestock herders.

#### Um Rakuba village (host)

Um Rakuba village is a Sudanese settlement next to Um Rakuba refugee camp. The ethnic diversity of eastern Sudan is a result of historical waves of migration by ethnic groups from both Sudan and neighboring states. Therefore, various ethnicities are present in host communities, including of the Nilotic Ja'alin group, Hausa, and Beni Amer ethnic groups. Additionally, previous refugee flows from Eritrea in the 20th century have increased the number of Beni Amer and Tigrayans already living within the Gedaref and Kassala states. There is no electricity network in Um Rakuba and the telephone network is extremely unreliable. Some teahouses and restaurants use private generators for electricity. People in the village report that the coming of refugees has had a negative impact on their availability of water, and that many trees have been cut down for firewood.

#### Gedaref (host)

Gedaref is the capital of the state Al Qadarif, also spelled Al-Qadarif or El-Gedaref, in Sudan and is located on the border with Ethiopia. According to Britannica, the city is a "commercial center for the cotton, cereals, sesame seeds, and fodder produced in the surrounding area". Refugees from different countries and Sudanese nationals live here together and have done for decades. Gedaref state used to be key to the patronage network of the ancien regime of the Islamist National Congress Party and remnants of that regime still linger in governance structures and within in the community. Once a rich, agricultural breadbasket, Gedaref today suffers from water shortages (due to mismanagement, not because of supply problems) and according to SUNA has the highest inflation in the country, standing at 1,141% in mid-2021. These issues have exacerbated existing tensions between pastoralists and farmers (as was also seen in Darfur in the run-up to the conflict there) and growing tensions between newly arrived refugees and host communities who want to see their access to services increase after the 2018 revolution, and related promises of the opposition to provide better support.

## 4. SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS' LANDSCAPE

### Media providers

This section details the supply side of information provision in eastern Sudan. It gives a detailed overview of available media; their capacity to broadcast trustworthy and relevant news for refugees and host communities in eastern Sudan.<sup>45</sup>



Sudan has a broad formalized media scene at the national level.<sup>46</sup> News agencies, radio stations, newspapers and other outlets across Sudan provide information to its citizens. Often journalists and news providers get information through the Sudan News Agency (SUNA), a state-owned news agency that disseminates government-approved material to media across the country.<sup>47</sup> However, Sudan's media space has been under "intense government oversight" following the 2018-2019 revolution, and the SUNA plays a significant and restrictive role within narrative control.<sup>48</sup>

Although nationally the media scene is well established, in eastern Sudan there are fewer media actors and there is more room for state sources to have a significant influence on information provision and broadcasting. A Sudanese journalist in Gedaref told researchers that: "most people access information via the media from government official sources"; "they have a monopoly for information".





## 4. SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE

>> While print media is steadily losing popularity and rising prices are leading to a drop-in distribution, several privately-owned newspapers are still produced in the country.<sup>49</sup> In 2017, 45 newspapers focused almost exclusively on entertainment and sports were produced. In 2016, the Press Council stated that newspaper distribution had declined by 21% that year.<sup>50</sup> Newspaper businesses, except for those benefiting from financial aid through international development funding, survive on a meagre budget.<sup>51</sup> The newspaper with the highest circulation in 2021 is the daily tabloid Al Dar, which is also sporadically available in Gedaref State.

International established news companies such as Aljazeera.net (in Arabic), BBC Arabic and Sky News Arabia, as well as news channels from the MENA region, are available and frequented via the internet and social media networks.

Radio is widely listened to throughout Sudan.<sup>52</sup> Sudanese radio stations are popular across different population groups, but stations from neighboring countries are also available.<sup>53</sup> Before the advent of television, the Sudan National Radio Corporation,

*“Sometimes government officials don’t like information to be supplied when there are some problems occurring in specific areas like conflict and other humanitarian crisis”, says a broadcast journalist from Gedaref-city*

founded in 1940, was the country’s first radio service and continues to broadcast on a range of topics from cultural programs, music and news. Specific radio stations, for example, Radio Dabanga and Afia Darfur were founded with foreign aid to support the political process in the country.<sup>54</sup> In such conflict areas, radio is an important social cohesion tool, marrying various languages and cultures in programming. As such, in Darfur for example, radio has been useful for various populations, informing people of the location and intensity of fighting in nearby areas. Radio Dabanga, is an independent radio station, which provides news from Sudan, through community

correspondents and staff based in Sudan and the Netherlands.

In the state capital Gedaref radio may be popular, but listenership data in the research sites shows that rural populations less often listen to the radio. Trust in radio programs and news may also fluctuate, reports a broadcast journalist in Gedaref: “Radio is a media channel that is generally trusted to provide good information. But sometimes they cannot be trusted, especially when they choose not to publish information after pressure from government officials. Sometimes the government doesn’t like information to be shared freely when there are problems like conflict or humanitarian crisis in an area”.

There are presently 19 television stations operating in Sudan, at the national and regional level.<sup>55</sup> The Sudan National Broadcasting Corporation (SNBC), also known as Sudan TV, is a government-owned and operated Arabic language TV station. Launched in 1962, it was the first of Sudan’s now six TV networks. Most states also have local channels: in total there are 18 regional channels, sometimes available in multiple regions.

>>



## 4. SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE

>> Only one of these, Blue Nile TV, is not entirely state-owned. Gedaref and Kassala states also have their own state-level TV channels that are available terrestrially and via satellite. A journalist in a TV station in Gedaref reported that in eastern Sudan the influence of the former regime is *“still very much there in decisions about what to broadcast”*. Another journalist commented that when reporting on security or conflict dynamics information can be hard to access, *“it is often only known by the authorities”*.

Refugees and host community members can access Sudanese, Tigrayan and Ethiopian media sources in Gedaref and Kassala, albeit infrequently (see Chapter 3, and Table 2). Media providers seem to still be broadcasting from Tigray, although some journalists may have fled the region.<sup>57</sup> According to sources that were written prior to the conflict, there are numerous media outlets, including private print media outlets and community radio stations in Tigray.<sup>58</sup> The state-owned Tigray Mass Media Agency facilitates the spread of news to media agencies in the region.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, there are – again, according to pre-conflict sources – various radio stations including Fana FM, Dimtsi Weyana – Voice of

Tigray, Humera Community Radio, Mekelle University Community radio.<sup>60</sup> There are also various (new) digital media reporting on the Tigray conflict including Tghat.com and Tigray Media House. These media have a good digital presence, use livestreams and other multimedia material and may be broadcasting from abroad due to safety concerns.

More primary research should be done with media providers in Tigray to assess if they are still operational and what impact the conflict has had on their ability to broadcast. Since the conflict in Tigray broke out in early November, The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has documented the detention of at least six journalists, with some being held in connection to their reporting on Tigray.<sup>61</sup> ●



## 4. SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE

Table 2 - Radio stations and other media that can be accessed by the research population

>>

	Radio		Newspaper		Television	
	Stations	From were	Newspaper titles	From were	Stations	From were
Um Rakuba camp	Voice Of America FM	USA (digital)	Weyn Addis Zemen Addis Standard Admas	Ethiopia	TMH Assena DW Bentsiweyne	Ethiopia
			Meqalih Tigray Echo Tigray	Tigray		
Um Rakuba village	Beladi Radio 96,6 FM	Sudan	Al-Dar Al-Akhbar Akhir Lahza Alyom Altali Alayam Alsada Al-Intibaha Al-Ahdath	Sudan	Sudan TV	Sudan
					Al Jazeera TV	Qatar (satellite)
Hamdayet	Omdrman FM Kassala FM	Sudan	Weyn Addis Zemen Addis Standard Admas	Ethiopia	Sudan TV	Sudan
					Al Jazeera TV	Qatar (satellite)
	Dulsi & Yanni FM	Tigray	Meqalih Tigray Echo Tigray	Tigray	Media House Athna TV	Tigray
Gedaref city	Beladi Radio 96,6 FM	Sudan	Al-Dar Al-Akhbar Akhir Lahza Alyom Altali Al-Ayam Al-Sada Al-Intibaha Al-Ahdath	Sudan	Sudan TV	Sudan
					Al Jazeera TV	Qatar (satellite)
					BBC News	UK (satellite)
					CNN	USA (satellite)

## 4. SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE

### Media and journalist associations and regulators

Government bodies have been established to regulate information laws and public information. The Ministry of Information and Communications coordinates public information, mainly from its headquarters in Khartoum. The Ministry has posted civil servants across the country and has representation in Kassala and Gedaref State. The Ministry works closely with the Sudanese News Agency (SUNA), which promotes government interests on television and radio.<sup>62</sup> Both SUNA and the Ministry are based in Khartoum, but their influence can be felt by journalists at the state level in Gedaref and Kassala. Distribution networks and links between government stakeholders are straight forward: either the stakeholder calls for a press conference to share their news or they send it directly to SUNA for release. SUNA, in turn, shares it in news bulletins that are shared with all newspapers and TV.<sup>63</sup>

The Sudanese General Authority for Radio and TV Broadcasting (also called the General Corporation for Radio and Television – GCRT - and in Arabic: Al-Hay'a Al-Aama lil-Iza'a wa Al-Television), oversees legislative reforms in TV and radio and is ministry-regulated in terms of content.<sup>64</sup>

The Corporation regulates all radio and TV content within its networks who all draw news from official sources. The Ministry of Information and Culture is the official government oversight of TV and radio and the liaising body with international actors.

Sudan TV and Omdurman Radio are the main state broadcasters. Journalists from these stations report severe government influence on their choice of stories, angles and sources. In reaction to the censorship, in late 2019, several hundred journalists demonstrated outside the Information Ministry against the state sponsored intelligence agents who have long infiltrated the state radio and TV broadcaster, GCRT.<sup>65</sup>

Journalists interviewed for this research reported self-censorship, particularly when it comes to the national security situation and the interests of senior officials.

Press is regulated through the National Press Council and Publication Committee (NPC), a regulatory body established in 1993. The Council is based in Khartoum but has nationwide influence and is heavily influenced by government or pro-government bodies such as the Sudanese Journalists Union (SJU).<sup>66</sup> It has the authority to

stop print and publications and revoke the licenses of media bodies. Recent examples of the seizure of newspapers were in 2016, during a period of public dissatisfaction with the NCP regime, in 2017 when three newspapers were seized by National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), and in 2018 when the print of six newspapers were halted and consequently confiscated.<sup>67</sup>

Amendments to the Press and Publication Act (2009) in 2018 expanded the powers of the NCP to include in their remit the monitoring of online platforms and additional penalties for journalists and editors making the latter criminally accountable for published content.<sup>68</sup>

The Sudanese Journalist Union (SJU, Arabic: Itihad al Sahafiyeen al Sudanyeen) was formed to represent journalist' interests during the previous administration, but many journalists report that the union was under strict government influence and not at all independent.<sup>69,70</sup> The Union is currently inactive due to disagreements with the transitional government.

In counter to the SJU, professional journalists have started to form other groups to represent their interests across





## 4. SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE

>> the country. Most organizations are based in Khartoum. An alternative body, for example, is the Sudanese Journalists Network, which represents and campaigns for journalist rights; and the Sudanese Journalists Association for Human Rights (JAHR).<sup>71</sup> There is also a Sudanese Women Journalists Association, which advocates for the interests of female journalists, who are often the targets of harassment.<sup>72,73</sup>

Research by Internews in early 2021 showed that Sudanese journalists across these institutions have well-defined yet unwritten regulations.<sup>74</sup> These govern issues that are considered in bad faith or unethical such as attacking family members of politicians and showing pictures of the children of politicians.<sup>75</sup> Self-censorship is also practiced when it comes to scandals involving politicians. This notion follows the Hadith, a record of the traditions or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad used as discourse and tradition followed by many Muslims: *“He who protects his Muslim brothers’ honor, God will forgive his trespasses in this world and the next”*. For this reason, even the daily tabloid, Al-Dar, anonymizes names in exposés of the private scandals of politicians.<sup>76</sup> ●



## 4. SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE

### Local relevance of information

In Sudan, local, relevant information is usually gathered by community correspondents or stringers, who share local information with urban-based journalists centralizing the information.<sup>77</sup> As most state-owned news agencies are based in the capital, the official news flow is often very capital-oriented meaning most of what is reported is reflective of events in Khartoum or seen from the perspective of someone in Khartoum.<sup>78</sup>

Community media for local consumption is generally hyper-local and disseminated through social media rather than official media channels. However, the information provided via these local community media is not always reliable. Many community-based media actors don't have sufficient financial resources to be able to report independently as they are often dependent on private funding from people with resources in the area (often the local "power-holders").

Refugees and host communities report that not all communication devices and channels in Sudan and from Ethiopia are safe to use, and that not all disseminate trustworthy information. This, they reflect, was particularly the case for information

disseminated via WhatsApp groups and Facebook, which contained information which was seen to have significant local relevance but was 'sometimes inaccurate'. Both refugees and host community participants noted that not all information that was spread via digital media was to be trusted as the information was often not fact-checked nor perceived to be shared by trustworthy sources.

Media actors who contributed to this research report that there are important information needs in this part of Sudan. As one journalist from Gedaref describes the situation: *"People immediately need real information from correct official sources on the current situation, health, security issues"*; and: *"they don't know where humanitarian services are being provided"*. Journalists also notice that refugees require information about the dangers and social and psychological effects of migration and asylum. Information should ideally be provided on a "daily basis", and by already trusted and professional information providers, they stress.

Journalists from Gedaref report that refugee community leaders, humanitarian actors and government agencies often

**Journalists from Gedaref report that refugee community leaders, humanitarian actors and government agencies often provide “deliberately opaque information”, which means that people frequently only have access to “half-truths”**

provide “deliberately opaque information”, which means that people frequently only have access to “half-truths”. As one female broadcaster explained: *"To some extent community leaders and politicians don't like people to get specific information and this affects the community as they don't get the real information"*. Humanitarians, they note, could use media outlets and social media to communicate with refugees (*"As a journalist it is my role to identify and provide information for the problems they face"*).

Journalists themselves, they report, are also sources of information for people, as they often travel between the camps and cities and as such can relay information





## 4. SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE

>> about their work, the people they meet and general news.

Journalists say that they currently don't supply specific information for refugees in the area. However, local news providers and journalists in Gedaref-city say that they would be suitable actors to supply information to both refugees and host communities in eastern Sudan (*"we are already trusted as information providers in the area"*). They view themselves as more suitable actors to supply information to the community than humanitarian agencies due to their experience and local knowledge.

As a broadcast journalist from Gedaref put it: *"of the most prominent problems or barriers that face humanitarian workers is that in addition to their lacking knowledge of the language, they also lack knowledge about the traditions and customs of the communities"*.

Refugees and host community members did not report to have higher trust in local media providers than other local and humanitarian actors but recognize that these media actors can play a role in information provision.

Media professionals also see a role for themselves in supplying opportunities for



dialogue between refugees and host communities, which, according to them, would lead to: "good relations" and "an opportunity to solve problems". As one journalist puts it: *"it is necessary to build a bridge of communication between humanitarian service providers, host communities and the refugee community"*. Others state that when reliable information is available on a daily basis, it will *"lead to the security and stability of the community"*. Journalists who participated

in this research suggested that humanitarians could use existing media platforms to broadcast and could capitalize on social media tools and already frequented platforms. Partnering with trusted local journalists would be a clever idea, reported one female journalist: *"People ask information from media workers because they are the most credible. Society resorts to them during political and societal crises, in addition to speaking to community leaders on a daily basis"*. •



## 4. SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE

### Digital media landscape

Digital media is a rapidly expanding sector in many parts of Sudan.<sup>79</sup> Social media is growing in popularity as a platform and attracts large audiences in Sudan, in particular amongst young people in Khartoum. Access to social media has increased in recent years as internet has become more freely available. As of January 2021, there are 13.70 million internet users in Sudan, which is 2% more than the year before, increasing internet penetration to 31%.

Most people access the internet via their mobile phone (85%), with only 14% accessing the internet via a computer or a laptop.<sup>80</sup> The most frequently used websites include Google; YouTube; Sudannews365; Facebook; Yahoo.<sup>85</sup> In 2014, 93% of the mobile users in Sudan used WhatsApp to communicate and share content.<sup>81</sup> For Sudanese audiences most common internet searches are done in Arabic.<sup>82</sup> However, in many parts of the country - and in particular in rural areas in eastern Sudan, access is significantly lower.

There were 33.74 million mobile connections in Sudan in January 2021, which is 1.4% more than the year before and an equivalent to 76% of the total population.<sup>83</sup>

However only 32% of the population has access to mobile infrastructure and internet access remain reserved for those who can afford it. Most mobile phone users connect via prepaid credit scratch cards rather than ongoing plans.

The main telecommunications operators are MTN, Sudani, and Zain, all regulated by the National Telecommunications Corporation (NTC).<sup>84</sup> The country has a national fiber optical backbone, wireless fixed-line networks, but very limited fiber-to-home connections.<sup>85</sup> In 2016 with the introduction of 4G service, Zain increased its total number of customers to 12.5 million - the largest share of users in the country.<sup>86</sup> With recent inflation, mobile services have become more out-of-reach for many users, and which has the potential to alter digital media behaviors. All of 92% of all devices in Sudan are Androids.<sup>87</sup>

In Sudan, social media is used by journalists and activists alike, particularly given the restrictions of free traditional media channels by the state.<sup>88</sup> For example, some news outlets are distributing their news via WhatsApp in addition to traditional platforms, now that print media is less

*“The safest channels to access information are from the media because the workers in these channels are specialists in the field of collecting, supplying, and disseminating information. The information provided on some internet and social media channels are not safe”, reports a journalist from Gedaref*

popular. Technological changes have enabled young and tech-savvy Sudanese activists to set up active parallel media and information outlets.<sup>89</sup> Throughout the revolution, social media played a critical role in organizing the activism of Sudanese youth who took center stage at demonstrations calling for regime change, and ultimately overthrowing the president and his military regime.<sup>90</sup> Digital media, in this way, facilitated individualized, localized, and community-specific dissent to turn into structured movements.<sup>91</sup>



## 4. SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE

>> Disclaimer: this data is for the national level, not specifically for our target audiences in eastern Sudan.



**85%** of users  
access the internet  
via mobile phone

**92%**  
of all devices  
are Androids

only **32%**  
has access to mobile  
infrastructure



**13.70** million  
internet users

**+323k**  
internet users  
between 2020 & 2021

**33.74** million  
mobile connections

**+456k**  
mobile connections  
between 2020 & 2021



**93%** of mobile users  
in Sudan use WhatsApp to  
communicate & share content

**TOP5**

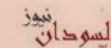
frequently used  
websites:



Google



YouTube



Sudannews365



Facebook



Yahoo

Host community

Source: <https://datareportal.com/digital-in-sudan>

>>



## 4. SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE

>> Additionally, financial pressures and a drop in advertising pushed many newspapers to publish via online platforms during the COVID-19 lockdown, because it was cheaper to distribute than print media.<sup>92</sup> Many media outlets now use social media in Sudan to broadcast. However, internet shutdowns are common: they regularly took place during the revolution, but also more recently, for example during secondary school exams.<sup>93</sup>

Social media use is popular in urban areas in Sudan. In our research, the city of Gedaref reportedly had good digital access whilst respondents in the other sites struggled with poor network or the cost of buying data for their phones. As a female broadcaster put it: *“having internet access is not commensurate with the financial capacities of the refugees they can’t afford it”*. In Gedaref, however, a journalist reported: *“The most important communication channels that people use to receive information and communicate with are WhatsApp and Facebook and they are used daily”*.

Another broadcaster in Gedaref added that refugees in the area also use the internet to get informed, also in Um Rakuba camp and

surroundings: *“People use it in the afternoon and evening to communicate with each other and get information about refugee issues”*.

Journalists in Gedaref report that whilst digital media access is improved, it is increasing the spread of misinformation and disinformation. They report: *“official media institutions are safer than social networking sites. Although they are the most developed, most of their information is unreliable because they are not subject to professional standards”*; and: *“The safest channels to access information are the media because the workers in these channels are specialists in the field of collecting, supplying, and disseminating information. The information provided on some internet and social media channels are not safe”*.

However, there are various barriers and challenges for effective digital media use in Sudan. The United States’ (US) State Sponsor of Terrorism (SST) designation of Sudan, which nominally lifted in December 2020, is still causing barriers to online payments. This means that Google, YouTube and Facebook advertisements and online media and news websites do not always show in Sudan, making it impossible for websites to make a profit from digital advertising in

**Social media use in Sudan and Ethiopia is ever more popular, and in particular, amongst young audiences in urban settings. However, internet usage prior to the conflict was less frequent in Tigray, and in particular amongst women and girls, rural residents and elderly populations**

Sudan. Further, it meant that informative adverts or service announcements related to COVID-19 from the WHO and UNICEF were not accessible in Sudan.<sup>94</sup>

Access to power is another major barrier. While mobile phone ownership and access may be increasing, the electrification rate in Sudan is only 32.6% and in rural areas only 17.6%, presenting a major challenge for people to have uninterrupted digital access.<sup>95,91</sup>

In Ethiopia, digital media is increasingly popular. Although with 20.6% internet >>



## 4. SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE

>> penetration, the internet is less accessible than in Sudan.<sup>96</sup> In Tigray, before the conflict, Demographic and Health Survey (DHS, in 2016) data shows that internet usage in the region was marginally higher – standing at 5% of women having used the internet in the past 12 months versus 13% of men - than the national average (at 4% of women having used the internet in the past 12 months ; and 11% of men), but youth use the internet more frequently.<sup>97</sup>

The internet is also used for protests, and to incite violence along ethnic lines.<sup>98</sup> In Ethiopia, the government has frequently restricted internet use, particularly when there are protests, civil unrest, elections or conflict.<sup>99</sup> This was no different in Tigray, and months of communication blackout left refugees without reliable updates from home.<sup>100</sup> The internet is also used as a political bargaining tool. In May 2021, Ethiopia was the site of a heated corporate and political battle between Chinese and Western technology companies, vying to build Ethiopia's new 5G network.<sup>101</sup> The negotiations took place at a period of intense international pressure on the central government due to the Tigray crisis and its humanitarian impact on the civilian population. •

**Adverts or service announcements on COVID-19 from the WHO and UNICEF were not accessible in Sudan because US's restrictions on the internet**



## 4. SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE

### Media capacity, freedom of press and information quality

Sudan ranks among the lowest 15 countries in the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) 2020 press freedom index.<sup>102</sup> RSF states that the legacy of al-Bashir's dictatorship runs deep into freedom of press: *"Omar al-Bashir's ousting in a popular uprising in 2019 ended three decades of dictatorship during which Sudan was one of the world's most hostile terrains for journalists. The National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) spearheaded the regime's censorship, arresting journalists, shutting down newspapers, confiscating entire issues as they came off the press, and imposing red lines that could not be crossed with impunity. RSF registered more than 100 arrests of journalists at the height of the witch-hunt against the media in the regime's final days"*. Whilst this situation is changing for the better, and control of news is less visible, predatory policies have not completely disappeared and the media and regulatory system now needs to be *"rebuilt over the ruins"*.<sup>103</sup>

Whilst the transitional government has made important steps, freedom of the press in Sudan continues to be restricted.<sup>104</sup> This was confirmed by journalists who took part in the research. In Gedaref city, a journalist part of the research simply said:

*"in some cases, the government doesn't like people to get specific information"*. The flow of information is top-down and hierarchical with the government systematically aiming to control the flow of information from official sources, and through official channels.<sup>105</sup>

For the transitional government, which retains many staff and behaviors of the Bashir regime, old habits die hard. In June 2020, the transitional government cracked down on 21 newspapers considered to be loyal to the former regime.<sup>106</sup> Many journalists fear being taken in for questioning, asked to reveal their sources, and being detained by security forces.<sup>107</sup> For example, in October 2020, Saad Eddin Hassan, a correspondent for Al-Arabiya, was arrested by security forces who wanted to prevent him from reporting on a demonstration in Khartoum.<sup>108</sup>

Available media are also not always neutral, impartial and trustworthy due to a lack of institutional support.<sup>109,110</sup> Given there is a lack of funding for independent media, advertising remains the main source of revenue with many media accepting financing from political parties directly, or

by supporters of them or other wealthy individuals.<sup>111</sup> Many wealthy individuals behind media organizations have histories with the al-Bashir regime or benefited from its patronage networks.<sup>112</sup> Previously, an Internews and ISP report (2021) stated, *"revenues from advertising were given to regime loyalists, as incentives. Owning media outlets or printing presses was expensive and required a special permit from the government. This made media easy to control since the lion's share of capital was in the hands of party members"*.<sup>113</sup>

The transitional government is now in the process of reforming the laws that restrict media production and distribution.

Underinvestment has also negatively impacted the standard of journalists over time.<sup>114</sup> Journalism studies are underfunded, often of low quality and to access training on technical or broadcast equipment journalists often need to travel abroad. Since the revolution, journalists have more capacity to verify and disseminate information. However, they tend to focus on editorials and opinion pieces rather than time-consuming and complex investigative journalism for which





## 4. SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE



>> they rarely have the required resources. Government pressure and restrictive actions against the press also prevents journalists from undertaking investigative work focused on local powerholder and/or holding the state to account.

The US State Sponsors of Terror designation also previously made it difficult for media outlets to make money through digital platforms. In addition, it often caused Sudanese journalists to be excluded from international and online

training opportunities.<sup>115</sup>

In Ethiopia, researchers studying the ethnicization of the Ethiopian media state that the media society is fueled by ethno-nationalistic motives. As Oluka (2021) notes, since the federal state has stopped financing dedicated federal state media (public broadcasters like the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation, the Ethiopian News Agency and the Ethiopian Press Agency) regional mass media agencies which are often funded by private stakeholders are winning terrain.<sup>116</sup>

In practice, researchers state, means that journalist members part of agencies like the Tigray Journalists Association and the Amhara Journalists Association are mainly supporting their ideological interests and are not reporting in an unbiased and neutral manner.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, most media companies and associations are affiliated to ethnic groups, and often operate in their own 'ethnic echo chambers', contributing towards further polarization and tension between Ethiopia's diverse ethnic groups.<sup>118</sup> ●



## 4. SUPPLY: INFORMATION PROVIDERS LANDSCAPE

### Humanitarian agencies

Humanitarian agencies, national and international non-governmental agencies and UN agencies across Gedaref provide a range of services including education, food security and livelihoods, health, nutrition and protection and WASH related services.<sup>119</sup> Many of these organizations provide information about their services to their target audiences, through a range of methods, including community meetings and outreach activities.

Health partners report conducting information sessions on SARS-CoV-2, prevention methods and treatment. UNHCR reports that communication with communities on COVID-19 and relevant prevention measures, however, need more support.<sup>120</sup> Internews' Rooted in Trust (RiT) program in Sudan also notes that the predominance of Arabic as the main language of communication and information sharing, means that COVID-19 information is not localized to minority languages, which prevents communities from accessing the needed information.<sup>121</sup> In the Tigray response most information on COVID-19 was shared in Arabic and English. Some humanitarians were observed to use translators to relay relevant information

in Tigrinya (see findings in the Information Demand Chapter on page 40).

Humanitarian agencies currently provide information and news to host communities and refugees living in eastern Sudan. Various agencies aim to support information services to refugees and host communities in eastern Sudan. At Khartoum level, there exists an Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)/Community Engagement and Advocacy (CEA) working group, coordinated by UN OCHA, with a range of members including Translators without Borders (TWBs), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Communication for Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Save the Children (SCI) and UNHCR. These agencies provide various forms of community engagement activities, including community meetings, house-to-house visits and media engagement services.

The Communication for Disaster Affected Communities (CDAC) Network in collaboration with the Communication with Communities (CwC) Technical Task Force - led by UNHCR with participation of the

Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) – conducted a “Community Based Complaint and Feedback Mechanism (CBCFM) Mapping” in March 2021 in Gedaref state.<sup>122</sup> The mapping showed that four humanitarian agencies have established complaints and feedback mechanisms for their own programming, but there is no integrated, collective approach. This means that refugees may know which channel to use to complain about an individual service but that general complaints, concerns or questions may not be captured by the response.

Furthermore, CDAC notes that many refugees are not aware of the services available to them because information is not provided promptly. Additionally, the network notes that if feedback is collected from refugees, humanitarian agencies often fail to implement the ideas or suggestions of refugees, and don't inform the refugees what happens with their concerns, complaints or suggestions.<sup>123</sup> •

## 5. INFORMATION DEMAND

### Information needs and gaps

This section details the demand side of information in eastern Sudan. It explains how, when, where and why refugees and host community members in Sudan (want to) access, create or share information that is important to them. It also shows how the available information shapes behavior. It gives an overview of communication preferences of refugees and host communities, identifies opportunities and entry points for service delivery and improvement.

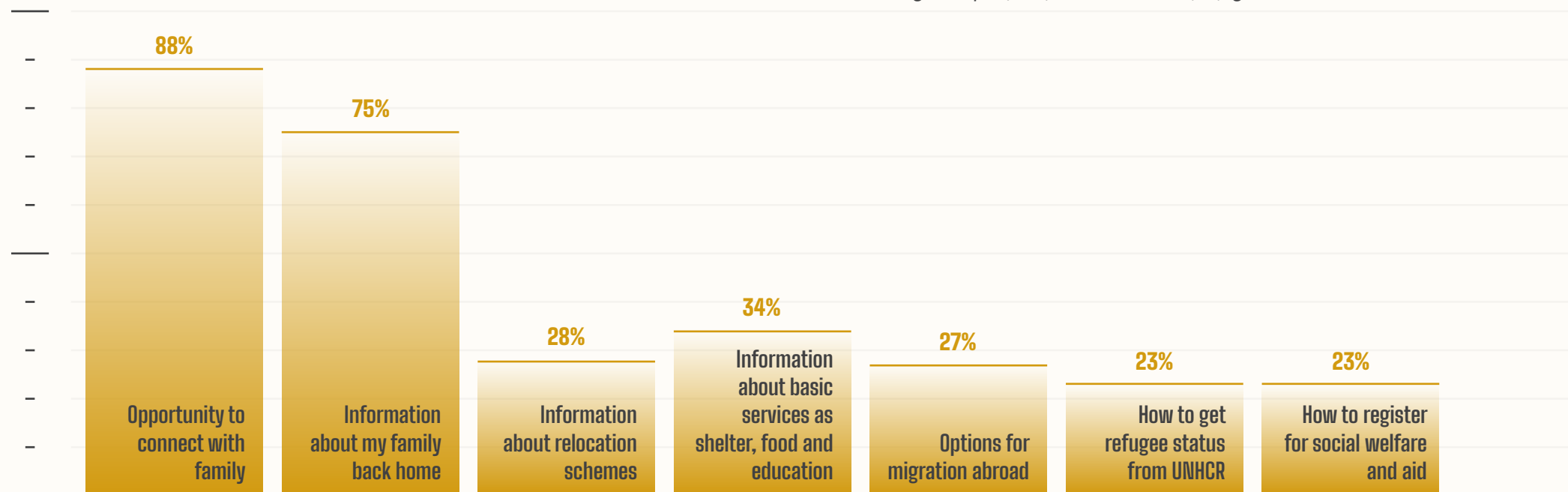
Refugees and host community members look for information about a wide range of topics, depending on their unique situation. Whilst all refugee and host communities requested information about the humanitarian and public services available to them and livelihood opportunities, they also have specific information needs and demands. Refugees, for example, requested information about the situation in Tigray, about food distribution planning, resettlements and asylum procedures. Host communities report wanting to know more about the availability of public services. As a religious leader in Um Rakuba camp reported: *“The type of information needed is not similar for all groups because some groups have specific needs”*.

Age and gender dynamics also play a role in the type of information required. People with disabilities also have distinct information demands. Information demands are not static and can change rapidly for the different audiences.



## 5. INFORMATION DEMAND

Image 4 – specific information needs of refugees involved in the research



>> The central request of refugees was the opportunity to connect with family back in Ethiopia and to know more about the situation at home. As one refugee, a female teacher in Um Rakuba camp reported: “*The most important information I need is news from home*” and “*I am worried about my family there*”. Months of communication blackout has left refugees without reliable updates from home.<sup>124</sup> Many rely on getting information from family and country members who have recently arrived in Hamdayet,

but there is often limited communication between the different camps in Gedaref because of poor phone signal/network. Additionally, refugees want to know more information about how to improve their lives in Sudan (see Image 4). As a youth activist in Um Rakuba camp said: “*The most important need that people in this community have, is how to get information about accessing refugee IDs and how to get this permit because it is important for travelling to seek services that are not available in the camp*”. Refugees

***“Even for the most basic information, refugees have to fight their way to get access to it”, says a humanitarian worker in Hamdayet***

also wanted to have more information to help them: “*figure out how to go abroad*”. In Hamdayet, a transit site, this included in-

>>



# 5. INFORMATION DEMAND

>> formation on: “how to relocate because we are too close to the fighting and too far from the camps”. A humanitarian worker working in Hamdayet added that there is also an urgent need for basic information provision at the nearby border crossings: “Nobody is telling them at the border crossing where they will go, where they will register and yet within 72 hours they will be on a bus to a refugee camp – that basic information is not there”.

Women in host communities and refugee populations report having distinct information needs. Ethiopian women between 18-35 years old in Hamdayet, who sell tea in the market, state that: “women and girls need different information than men, for example, they need information about their reproductive health and protection”. This, according to the women, included information about maternal health care, childcare, and contraception.

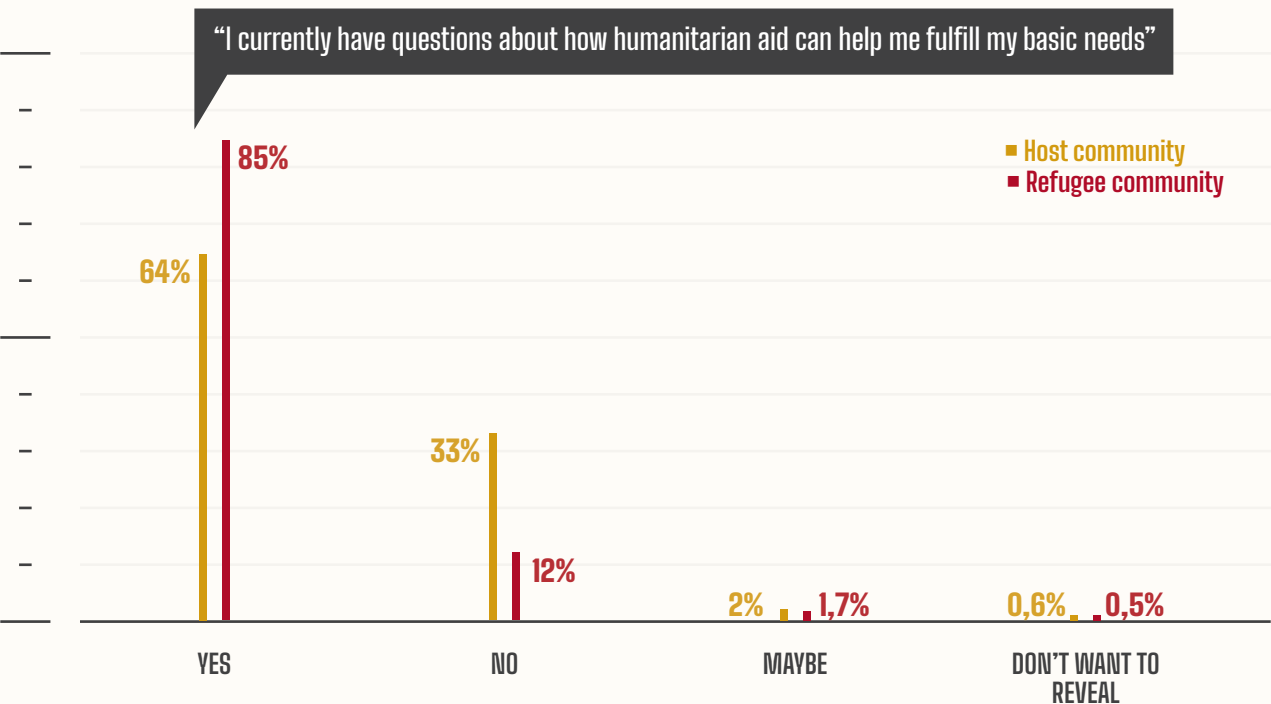
Men agree that women have specific needs but rather stressed their need for information about the education for their children, childcare, and livelihoods rather than sexual and reproductive health services. Young women also stressed the need for job opportunities and participation

in decision-making fora, something which men did not classify as a particular need for young women in their community.

Young people report having distinct information needs as compared to elderly people. In focus group discussions, youth in Um Rakuba camp wanted information about: “youth services such as watching clubs<sup>125</sup>, entertainment venues, rights, work opportuni-

ties, whilst the older people need information about public services like shelter services and provision of water”. Humanitarian workers confirm this need: “the children in the refugee camp they have nothing to do in the weekend”. Elderly people involved in the research agree that they have different and distinct information demands, including on how to access pensions, social support schemes

Image 5 – Level of information needs around humanitarian services and basic needs



## 5. INFORMATION DEMAND

>> and public services, and how to mitigate floods and heavy rainfall as they are less mobile. As one community leader says: *“To improve this situation, the issues and problems of these groups must be integrated into all refugee programs too”*.

### Information demands about humanitarian services

Refugees and host community members request more information about available (and unavailable) humanitarian services in their area (see Image 6). More than two thirds of survey participants in host communities (64%), and the majority of refugees (85%) have questions about humanitarian services. A refugee religious leader in Um Rakuba camp reported: *“Most people do not know where and if humanitarian services are provided”*.

This was also the case in host communities, says a community leader from Um Rakuba village: *“We need information about these organizations and the services they provide, because we don’t know where they are and what they are doing”*. In Um Rakuba village, community leaders stressed that people in the community want to know why refugees

benefit and they don’t. When this information is not available, says a male respondent in Hamdayet: *“the community feels marginalized. It has a negative impact on our economic situation and family”*. Another adds: *“we have no information about our fate as host communities... their extended presence [refugees] has an influence over us, and we want to know what precautions humanitarian agencies put to prevent that”*.

Refugees in Hamdayet and Um Rakuba reported wanting more practical information about the available humanitarian services including: criteria for access, type and quantity of aid, location and timing of distributions and how long they will be able to access humanitarian assistance. A teacher in Um Rakuba camp, a refugee herself, described the situation as follows: *“Most people don’t know where and when services are provided”*. A religious leader from Um Rakuba camp, added: *“Most people here don’t know why some people are included and some excluded. Is it the result of shortage or because of some other reason?”*.

Host community members did not request this specific information as humanitarian services are less available where they are.

### Health information demands

When it comes to health, the majority of respondents requested information on how to access general and specialized medical services for themselves and their families. This includes information about SRHR services; mental health and psychosocial support services (because: *“I am losing hope”, “please take me back to Tigray”*) and - for people living with disabilities or those who care for people with disabilities - specialist disability services.

Refugees also request information about COVID-19 and prevention methods, which was less of a need reported in host communities (see Image 6). Refugees also requested information on how to get medical help to their families in Ethiopia (44%).

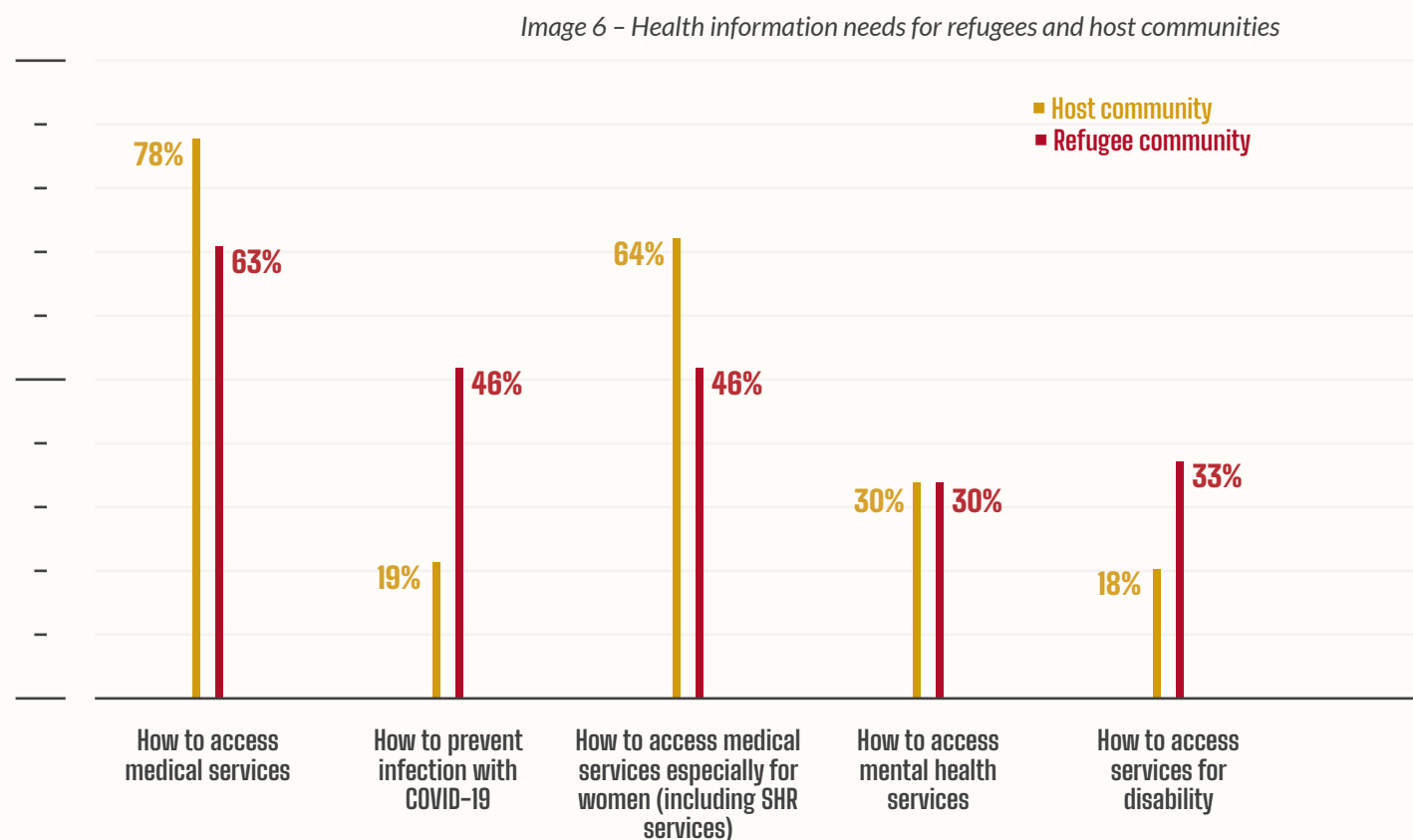
Humanitarians report that refugees also need to know where they can find specific medication for long-term health conditions. More than half of the surveyed refugee population wanted to know where to access clean water.

Refugee women requested information about sexual and reproductive health and tailored psychosocial support services. >>

## 5. INFORMATION DEMAND

>> Many women and human rights organizations are survivors of war violence: reports about sexual violence used by militant elements in Tigray are frequent amongst Tigrayan households in eastern Sudan.<sup>126</sup> Researchers conservatively estimate tens of thousands of women may have experienced sexual assault by militant elements.<sup>127</sup> This kind of abuse has long term negative impacts on the survivor individually, her family and the wider society.<sup>128</sup> Survivors often report feeling abandoned and isolated in the aftermath of war-related violence.<sup>129</sup>

Witnessing war-related violence may also have long term effects as it may alter a survivor's relationships with others.<sup>130</sup> Beyond the immediate physical damage, trauma experienced by victims of violence can lead to long-term suffering, guilt and fear.<sup>131</sup> The detrimental and intergenerational effects of war-time violence can coexist with and amplify structural, communal and domestic forms of violence that pre-existed the conflict. Furthermore, about one in three women in Ethiopia, for example, have experienced some form of spousal abuse in their lifetimes; and sexual violence in Sudan is rife.<sup>132</sup>



### Livelihoods, education, employment and food security

Both refugees and host communities request more information about opportunities that can increase their livelihoods, income and food security. This includes information about jobs and livelihood op-

portunities and agricultural techniques (for host community members) and food distribution opportunities (for refugees living in Um Rakuba and Hamdayet).

Information about educational opportunities is also a priority, especially for those >>

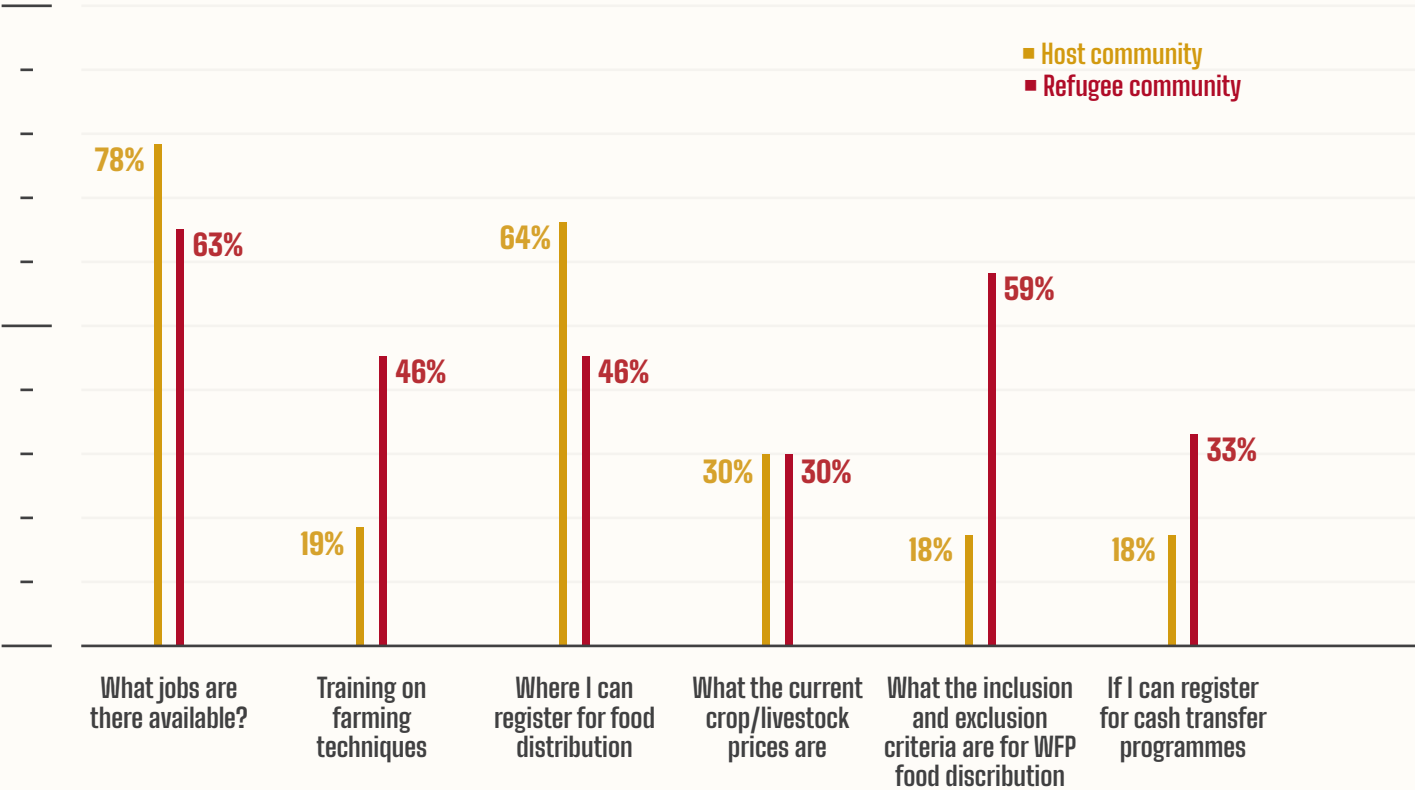


# 5. INFORMATION DEMAND

>> who were studying at university level before fleeing to Sudan (particularly for young men of more economically well-off families). As a refugee respondent reported: “The young ones need it for the future”. Whilst host communities (see Image 7) request information about jobs, refugees request more information about food distribution and cash transfer programs.

In refugee communities, both women and men report wanting more information about food distribution processes and criteria. More than half of all refugees reported needing more information about how and when food is distributed (56%), what the inclusion and exclusion criteria are for WFP food distribution (59%), and where they can register for food distribution (46%). At present, young refugee men report that there is not enough information about the time and location of the food distribution. They report that humanitarian partners inform community leaders that food is ready when the distribution already started: “most of the community has not heard about it and then they may have lost their right to food services”. A refugee leader in Um Rakuba camp agreed and reported that: “people

Image 7 - Information interests when it comes to livelihoods, education and employment



need full information about the provision of public services concerning the distribution time, quality and quantity”.

In host communities there is high interest in finding out what job opportunities are available (78%). The arrival of refugees has had an overall negative impact on the

economic situation of host communities.<sup>133</sup>

The price of food and other goods has increased and negatively affected the already impoverished families.<sup>140</sup> There have been fewer job opportunities and a drop in the rates for manual labor has been observed. Furthermore, many families have taken in refugees into their homes, >>

## 5. INFORMATION DEMAND

### Humanitarian actors



Information about HIV/AIDs and why discrimination is harmful

Information about the rights of refugees and host communities

Information on what to do when there is flooding

Information about COVID-19 and prevention methods

### Refugee community

Information about the availability of humanitarian services (including food aid, shelter, education and medical services), who is eligible, where aid is provided and when, etc.

Information about family members back home in Tigray and the security situation

Education and information about job opportunities for young people

### Host community

Medical services and protection services for elderly people in the community

Information about how to protect yourself and your family from getting ill with COVID-19

Information on what to do when there is flooding

Entertainment and music

***“There is a need for real community engagement – we should say this is the service we’d like to provide and then ask them what the best way is to provide it to you?” says a humanitarian in Hamdayet***

rights” of refugee populations. Refugees and host-communities did not raise these thematic areas. At the same time, refugees and host community members requested more music and entertainment programs, including spiritual programs – a form of information that was not named as an urgent need by humanitarian workers.

When it came to disaster preparedness, however, humanitarians, refugees and host community members agreed that “there is a severe need for communication about temporary reallocation and other related flooding prevention measures”. One refugee in Um Rakuba camp said simply: “we need information about the disaster that comes in the rainy season”. •

often depleting their resources to provide food for the newcomers.<sup>134</sup>

Host community members are also concerned about land arrangements and report that the prices for daily labor on agricultural fields during the harvest season have decreased due to the refugees’ willingness to work for lower wages.<sup>135</sup>

### Information priorities

Refugees, host communities, and humanitarians did not always have the same information priorities in mind. A humanitarian worker, for example, reported that refugees need: “more information to counter stigmatization and discrimination of people living with albinism”. Additionally, he notes that there is need for education about “the

## 5. INFORMATION DEMAND

### Access – channels and sources

Refugees and host communities already access information via various channels and platforms. Some refugees use technological tools to access information including smartphones, mobile phones, radios and television sets. However, across both communities, even if technology is available and frequently used, it does not always work. Respondents in both refugee camps, transit sites and host community sites state that the lack of electricity, a stable phone network and financial resources prevent many from accessing these technologies, particularly when it comes to vulnerable groups like people with disabilities, the elderly and those who are economically marginalized within the community.

Many people therefore use multiple channels to get information and compare across sources and channels. This includes gaining face-to-face information from others in the community.

#### Interpersonal communication

Refugees and host community members receive information from people in their community on a daily basis. From which stakeholder they receive the information

depends on the type of information that they request (e.g., issues that concern the whole community are often discussed in public fora; women are more likely to express sexual and reproductive health related issues with other women).

The availability of the relevant stakeholders (*“community leaders are busy”; “humanitarians are never here at night or in the evening”*) also plays a role.

Additionally, many refugees reported wanting to be reached in places they already frequent (for example, men like to be reached in tea houses and restaurants, young men at coffee-ceremonies and women ideally at home or through women groups and at water points).

Community leaders most regularly relay information about available public and humanitarian services as they are in direct contact with aid workers. Indeed, refugees in Um Rakuba camp, mainly access information about public services through community and zone/block elected leaders who are in direct contact with humanitarian agencies and COR-camp management. A woman teacher in Um Rakuba village reported that community leaders are a

frequent source of information: *“They are available and participate in all village related issues on a daily basis”*. A 28-year-old refugee man from Um Rakuba camp reported that these channels are preferred as they are: *“the official channels that emerged from the community itself”*.

A humanitarian worker in Hamdayet reported another problem: aid agencies don't frequently send staff with decision-making abilities to the refugee camps. As a result, lower level staff are sent to communicate with refugees and those representatives often don't have the required information needed to answer the (complex) questions of refugees. But as community leaders are not always available, and don't always have the right answers, refugees also get information from family, friends, neighbors and other people in communal spaces. In Um Rakuba camp, for example, people play cards, meet at the market, and get news in front of the stalls of food vendors making traditional Ethiopian food.<sup>136</sup> Other areas frequented included waterpoints, latrines and showers; food distribution areas; clinics and schools.<sup>137</sup>

The market and the water collection points >>



## 5. INFORMATION DEMAND

>> are spaces that are also used by host community members, and an information exchange happens between the two communities there. However, as one female participant reported: *“The safest channels to access information are the humanitarian organizations delegates, but the information that individuals exchange between them in cafes or tea house is less credible”*.

Host community members also get information through service providers like teachers and the police, from religious leaders in mosques, shops, and from members of the resistance committees and service committees.<sup>138</sup>

People try to validate evidence and information through comparing and contrasting it with other available sources they have access to. Depending on which topic of the information they are trying to validate, participants will search out the closest-by ‘authority’ they have access to. For example, whilst women often don’t have direct access to humanitarian workers as they are not part of decision-making forums like community or humanitarian meetings, they often rely on a friend, family-member or someone they know (e.g., through the church, their work in the market or via

women groups) who then knows a humanitarian. The proximity to a trusted source is thus important for effective transmission.

Social and gender norms are such that women have access to different information than men. Men visit tea houses, get news during coffee-ceremonies, in entertainment venues whilst women mainly get information at the market, when selling tea, and when collecting water, and more frequently from other women. As a 28-year-old man, a youth leader reported: *“women and men have unequal access. Women have their own information. Men have the opportunity for asking questions and are involved in agenda setting more than women”*. Women in host communities are also more often at home, taking care of the family and children, and meet frequently with other women in female-only spaces. Women in Hamdayet mentioned that information disseminated in male-dominated spaces often only reaches them in a fragmented and filtered manner.

### Technologies

Refugees and host community members use technological tools to access information (see Image 8). Many own or have access to mobile phones, including smart phones,

television sets and radios, but their ability to use them is low due to a combination of limited electricity (particularly in Um Rakuba village where electricity is only available through generators at public cafés and entertainment centers, at unregular times), a poor network and limited financial resources. As a 46-year-old religious leader in Um Rakuba camp described: *“sometimes people use television and telephones for communication, but they face challenges such as weakness of the network. Others don’t have access to information as a result of not having smart phones, especially those who do not have the recourses”*. Often, people use such tools at in the evening or at night, when the connection is better.

Mobile phone use is high and could provide a useful entry point to reach people at scale. In host communities 94% of all people surveyed owned a mobile phone. Over half of the host population reported having frequent access to a smartphone (52%) or a mobile phone without an internet connection (30%). In host communities, 75% surveyed has access to Bluetooth. In refugee populations, 59% had access to a phone in their household and 45% reported to use a phone every day.

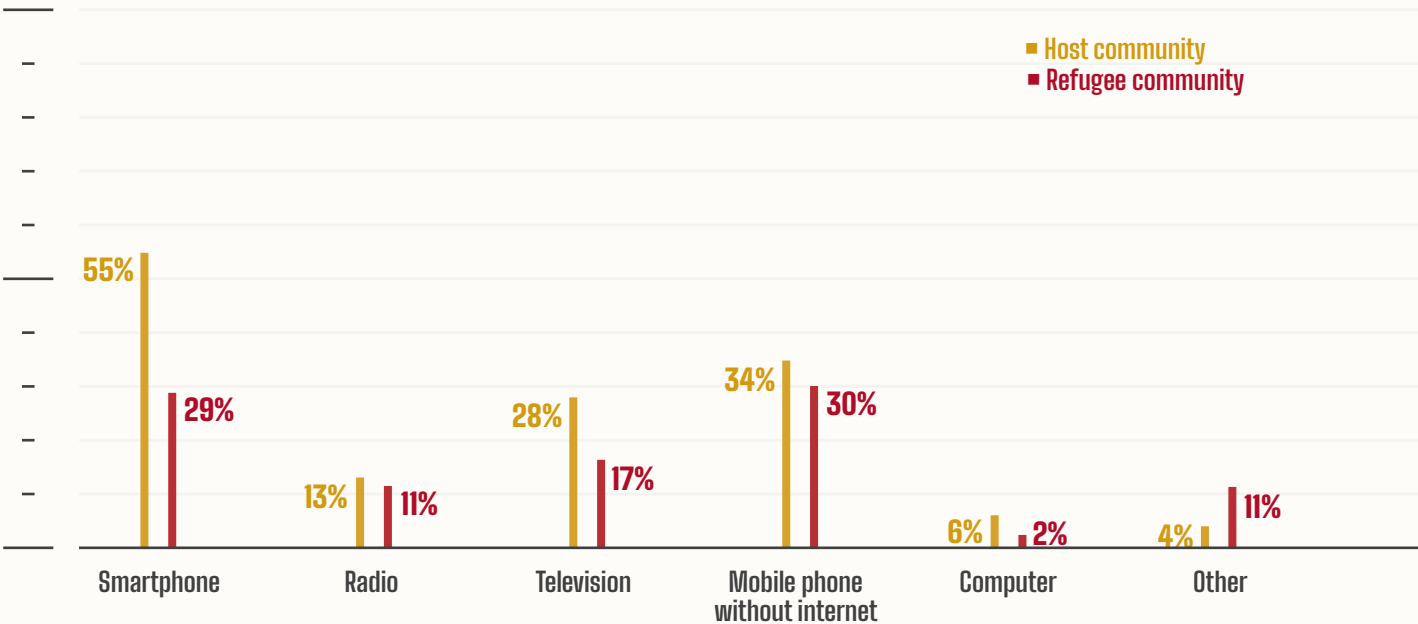
# 5. INFORMATION DEMAND

>> However, when specifically probed on phone ownership in qualitative research activities, 77% of surveyed refugees reported owning a mobile phone.

These conflicting trends can only be explained by refugees’ carefulness when disclosing the technology that they have access to, perhaps as they fear that their answers could impact the humanitarian aid they receive now or in the future.<sup>139</sup>

Those with mobile phones reported having access to Bluetooth. Phones are most often used to communicate with friends and family; to access the internet and social media; to read news and to take photos or videos. However, some population groups do not have access to mobile phones: the elderly, children and young people and those with disability: “don’t have the resources”.

In both host communities and refugee populations, some people report listening to the radio, even if they do not have a personal radio. However, this number is lower than the percentage of people that never listen to the radio. In host communities, 44% report never listening to the radio, and 13% say they listen every day. In refugee populations, 75% never



listen to the radio and only 11% listen every day. A small number of respondents in host communities (8%) use their phone to listen to the radio; compared to 2% of refugees.

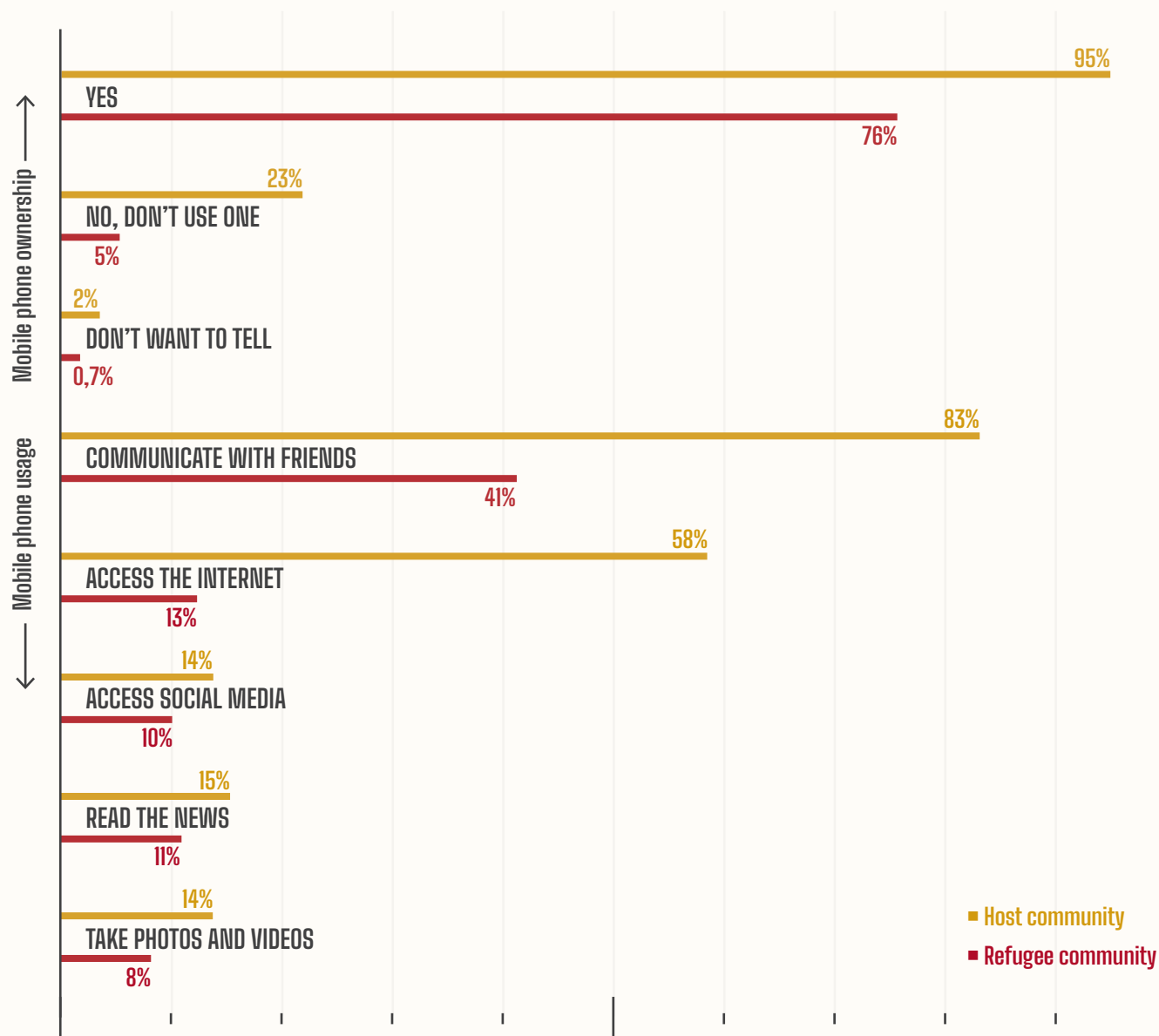
Most people in host communities listen to the radio at home or in public spaces (teashops). Refugees would most frequently listen to the radio in public spaces, including teashops. Many were unable to take their radios when fleeing from Ethiopia. When they listen to the radio, refugees tune into Tigrinya speaking media (for example, Duls

& Yanni FM) whilst host community members report listening to Arabic speaking radio (including Beladi Radio 96.6FM and Omdurman & Kassala FM). In the refugee camps people more frequently access the internet and therefore also report listening to Voice of America (VOA) FM, which is only available online. Those who listen to the radio prefer to listen in the evening hours (5pm – 12 pm) or early morning (5 – 8AM). During the day people are often at their farms or at work.

>>

## 5. INFORMATION DEMAND

Image 9 - mobile phone ownership and usage in host and refugee communities



**In refugee communities, three quarters of the surveyed population said they never listened to the radio. In host communities this number was lower – a little more than 4 out of 10 people never listen to the radio**

Printed newspapers were not frequently read. In host communities, 7% of the surveyed population read a newspaper on a daily basis and 63% reported to have never read a newspaper. In refugee populations, 4% of respondents read a print newspaper on a daily basis, whilst 75% reports to never read a newspaper.

Where newspapers are accessible, refugees read Weyn, Melalih Tigray (Tigray Echo), Addis Zemen (Addis Times), Addis Standard and Admas, illustrating that media from Tigray and Ethiopia occasionally make it to the camps in Sudan. Sudanese host community members, logically, prefer to read local and national newspapers in Arabic.

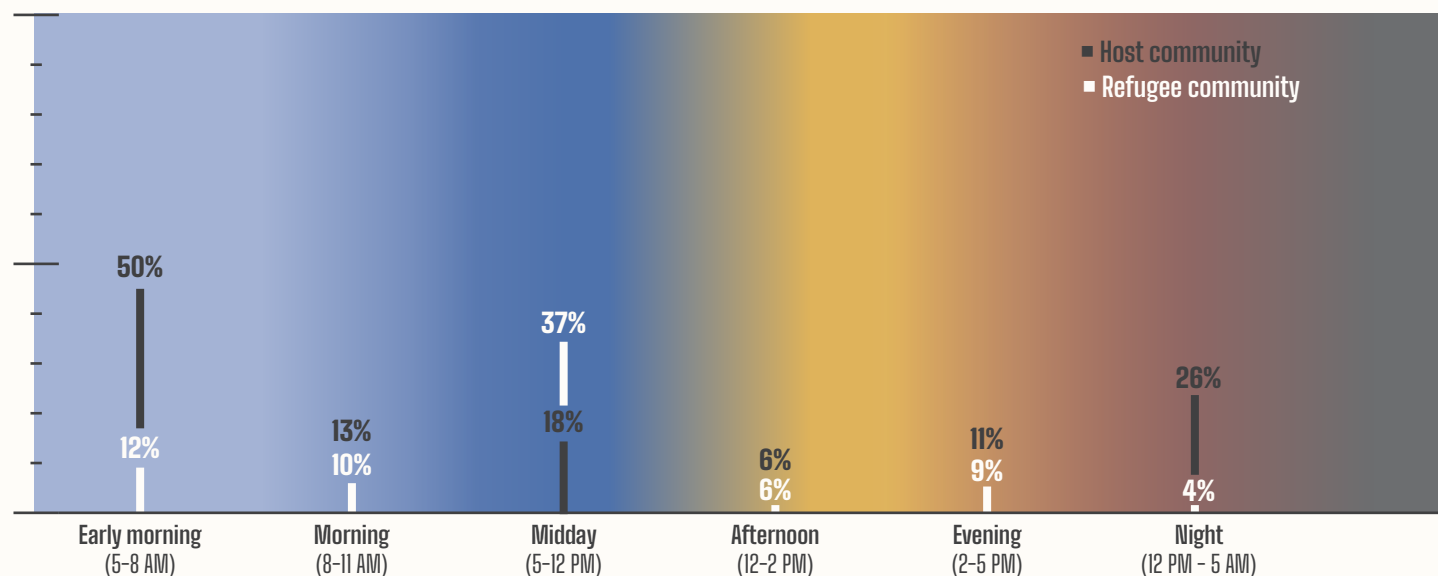


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>> Where they are available newspapers are often shared and redistributed, which makes it hard to assess real readership.<sup>140</sup> During research activities in Um Rakuba village, participants told the research team that they sometimes visit neighboring cities like Doka to acquire newspapers.

Television access is not very common although some refugees and host community members have access in public spaces as “watching clubs”, or watch television in restaurants and coffee and tea houses. Around a third of all respondents in host communities reported to own, or have access to, a television in their household, compared to around a fifth of all respondents in the refugee population. In Um Rakuba camp and Hamdayet, televisions are regularly present in restaurants and shops, whereas in Um Rakuba village, television use is low due to limited electricity. As a woman teacher from Um Rakuba camp confirmed: “people access information at restaurants and shops”.

When people – and in particular young people – watch television, they frequently watch movies produced and filmed in Ethiopia and from abroad: (India, Mexico and the United States). Additionally, those



who are able to watch television also watch foreign news programs from Al Jazeera English, BBC News and CNN through satellite-television. Additionally, amongst Sudanese audiences – or other audiences able to understand Arabic – local satellite stations like Blue Nile TV, Omdurman TV, El Hilal TV are popular. For those audiences, series and TV-shows from Egypt are also popular.

### Digital media

Computer and tablet ownership is negligible in both populations, and most people ac-

cessed the internet via their smart phones. Those who had access to a smart phone reported to access the internet sometimes on a daily basis. In host communities, almost a quarter (21%) of all participants reported to access the internet every day, although a larger proportion (40%) surveyed participants reported to access the internet less than that. In refugee populations, this number is slightly higher with around a third of all refugees (28%) accessing the internet every day (Image 11). However, although refugees and host communities try to access the internet, this may not always be

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>> successful due to poor network, electricity issues, lack of resources and the fact that humanitarian agencies reset the passwords to their private internet connections (which are often hacked by refugees in the camps).

When it comes to social media, around half of surveyed refugees and host community members never access social media channels (47% for refugees, 53% in host communities). However, around a third of refugee respondents (28%) reported accessing the internet on a daily basis, compared to around a fifth of host community members (21%).

The most popular platforms are Facebook and WhatsApp (See Image 12). Social media was most frequently used for talking with friends and family in private groups; to search for information; for education; to stay updated about events; to talk to other members of the community in larger groups; to talk to people that the respondent did not know personally; to look for a job or to promote business; and to post information in public forums (see Image 12).

Participants part of the study set up specific social media groups on WhatsApp, Facebook and Telegram with their friends,

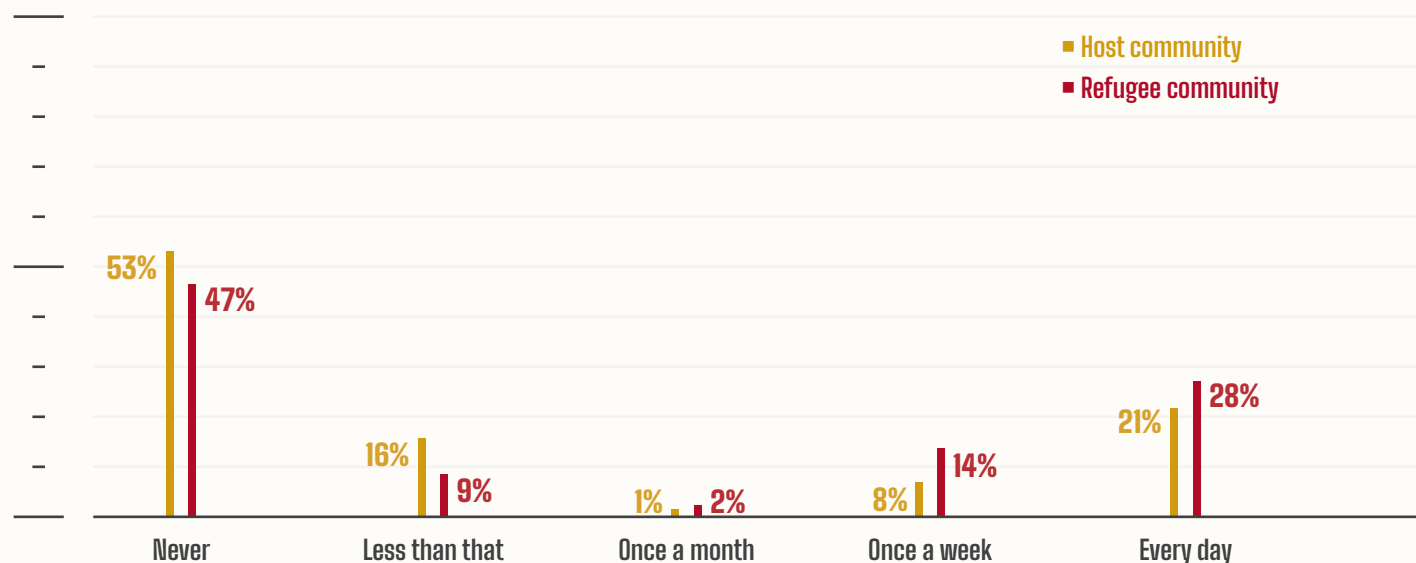
families and other social contacts; name these groups; set up community rules; and appoint people to administer the groups.<sup>141</sup>

Refugees and host community members use these platforms to communicate in groups on specific themes as well: for example, to coordinate and discuss football matches and teams, to discuss hobby's, work and education opportunities and – for refugees – to discuss politics at home. Telegram and Signal were also popular with refugee users as they are perceived to be more secure. The Internews Rooted in Trust (RiT) study

showed that those young people who have access to WhatsApp often disseminate information to others.

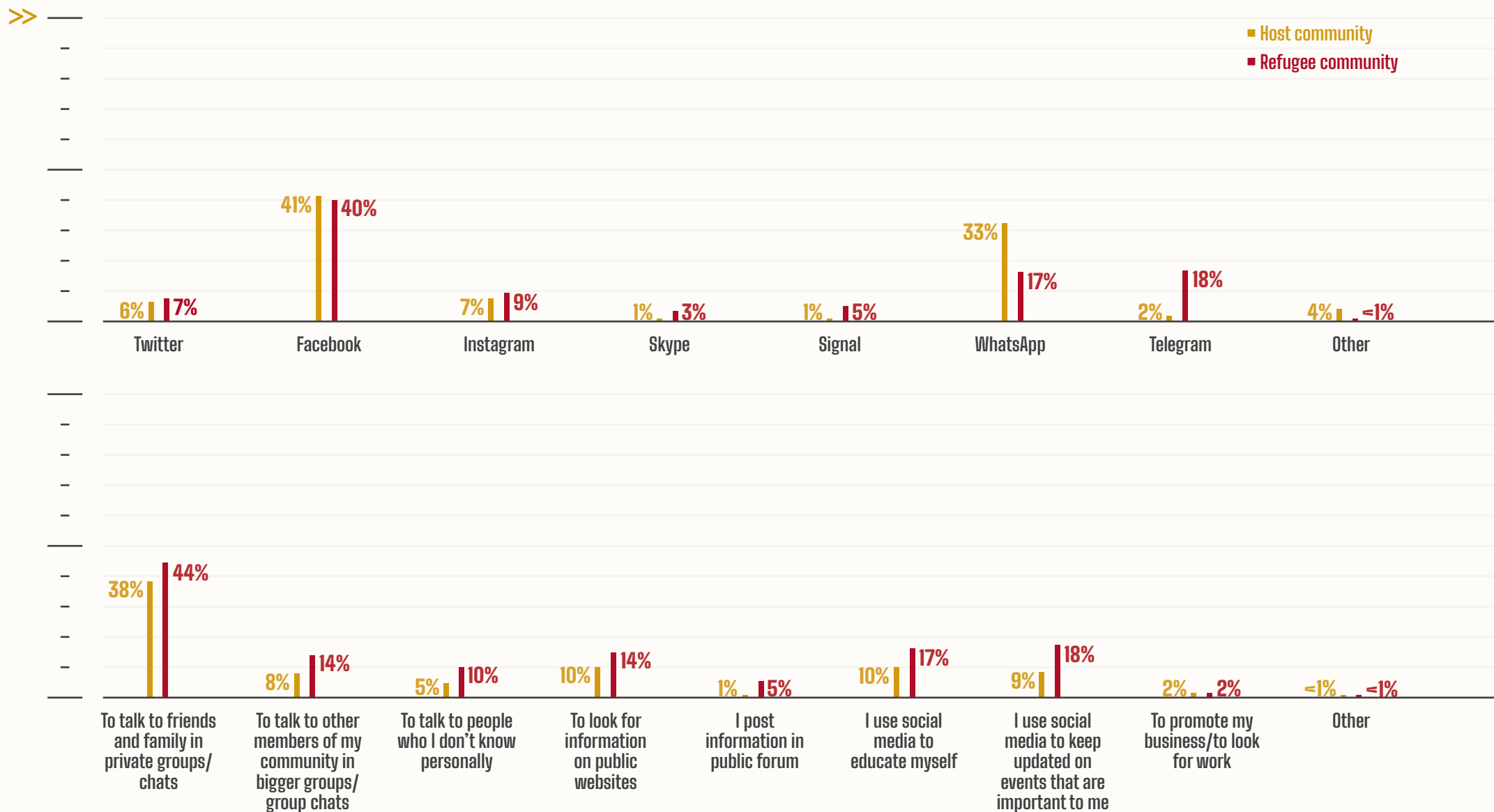
However, when designing programming using social media it must be taken into account that even if internet access is preferred by some audiences, it is infrequent and unreliable. Trust in information provided over social media may not always be high: “social media is not the safest because it does not provide professional information”, reported one respondent. •

Image 11 – frequency of accessing the internet across host community and refugee populations



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Image 12 – social media usage – frequency, used platforms and purpose





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### Main determinants and barriers to accessing information

There are various determinants and barriers that restrict access to information for various groups in refugee and host communities in eastern Sudan. Gender, age, language, health, economic dynamics, refugee status and other contextual realities mean that not everyone can access the information that is important to them. These dynamics should be considered when designing humanitarian information services.

#### Challenges related to information and communication about humanitarian aid

Most refugees and host communities express that humanitarian agencies don't provide enough information about the services available to them and are not satisfied in general with the information that is provided to them (see Image 13). As a group of male refugees (aged 35-55 years) in Um Rakuba camp reported: *"there is a complete absence of most organizations working in the humanitarian field in the process of providing information to refugees about public services... we believe that humanitarian organizations must provide this*

*information because it represents one of the types of response to our need as refugees".* Another refugee agreed: *"most people do not know when humanitarian services are being provided".* This was also the case in host communities, reports a 37-year-old religious leader: *"nobody knows where services are provided and why we don't benefit in the village".*

Humanitarians also report that they have *"neglected the Communication with Communities aspect".* Humanitarians report that communication mechanisms have not been set up with the target population which causes challenges when the community *"needs to be mobilized"* for action; or when news or information needs to reach the target population.

Refugees say that the lack of communication has a severe and negative impact. As refugee men in Um Rakuba camp reported, *"when humanitarian organizations want to distribute food, they do that through community leaders, or refugee representatives or even going to the community with megaphones and speakers... [but they are often too late] they do this when the distribution has nearly ended so that most of the community has never heard*

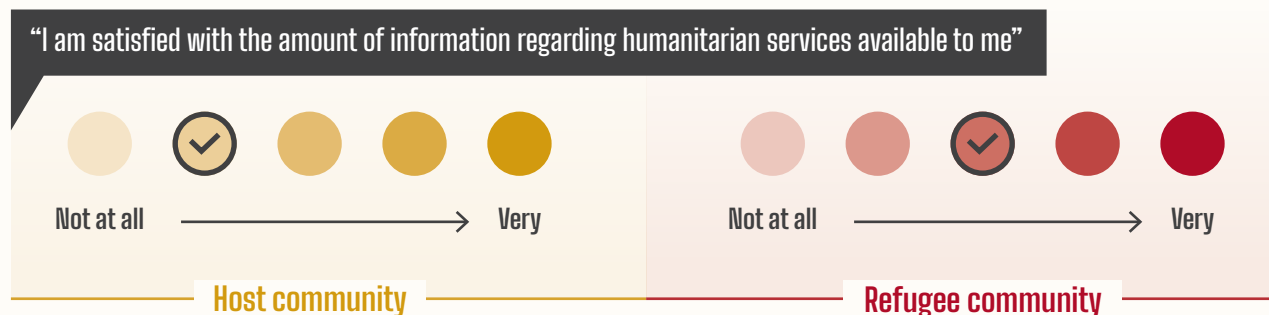
***"We believe that humanitarian organizations must provide information about the availability of humanitarian services because it represents one of the types of response to our need as refugees", reports a group of men in Um Rakuba refugee camp***

*it and so they may have lost their right to food services".* A group of women in Hamdayet reported: *"those people who don't have good information, it may be bad for them. They may lose services like food and their houses are in bad condition because they can't get help. Also, women miss out accessing maternal health care and child services".*

Refugees recognize there are sometimes practical reasons they cannot access information when they need it: *"it is difficult to get access to information because most humanitarian agencies or COR staff are not available all the time".* Others report: *"people receive information only at the time when* >>

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Image 13: Levels of satisfaction with information about humanitarian services



>> humanitarian agencies decide they want to disseminate information". Most offices close their doors in the evening and aid workers don't live in the camps, because of safety or other practical reasons. As such, aid workers are only in the camps during daytime and organize activities on their own schedule. This means refugees may miss out on services, says a humanitarian worker: "people missed the discussion because they were collecting firewood [and did not hear the announcement]". Refugees request that humanitarians: "provide real information at any time refugees need it".

### Infrastructure and resources

The infrastructure needed to access information or support technologies may not be available or functional. Internet access, for example, is very restricted

because of the lack of infrastructure and results in a patchy network. As a middle-aged refugee in Hamdayet reported: "WhatsApp can't be accessed on a daily basis as people face challenges because of the weakness of the network". There is a particularly weak network in Um Rakuba village. Almost half of the surveyed population (46%) reported that there is no signal or weak network where they live. Additionally, public electricity is not always available for household use in host communities, transit centers or in refugee camps, and people at times are able to use shared generators.<sup>142</sup>

As a result, around 24% of the surveyed refugee population reported not always being able to charge their phones. Host communities in Um Rakuba village also noted that government agencies don't have

***"Communication mechanisms have not been set up with the target population which causes challenges when the community needs to be mobilized for action or when we want to share information with refugees", reports a humanitarian worker in Um Rakuba camp***

any physical presence in their village and that they must travel to Doka, a nearby city, to obtain information. As a taxi or motorbike fare is expensive, these visits are sporadic and combined with other essential tasks.

Host communities and refugees reported that they may not have sufficient financial resources to access some forms of communication. As a 46-year-old religious leader in Um Rakuba camp reported: "not all channels can be accessed by all people in the community... as a result of not having smart >>

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>> phones, especially those who do not have resources". Many surveyed respondents explained that they could not always afford to buy phone credit ("the internet is too expensive"). In the refugee populations, for example, 47% of the respondents don't always have money for phone credit and internet access. Those who do have access to the internet often enjoy higher socio-economic standing or work/volunteer for humanitarian agencies and access internet at work.

### Language dynamics

All respondents from the refugee population report that humanitarian agencies (nor the government, or camp management, for that matter) don't provide information about available and non-available services in the communities' preferred languages and state this is creating significant challenges.

A female primary school teacher in Um Rakuba shared, for example, that: "people need humanitarian workers and other aid providers to speak Tigrinya as they can understand that, but currently most humanitarian workers speak Arabic, which most people in the camp can't understand".

***"We need humanitarian workers to speak Tigrinya. Now aid providers speak in Arabic or in English and most of our people don't understand humanitarian workers", says a teacher in Um Rakuba refugee camp***

A religious leader in Um Rakuba camp reports: "most of our people don't understand humanitarian workers".

Refugees from Tigray speak predominantly Tigrinya (97%; and sometimes Amharic, 9%, and English, 6%) whilst host communities speak Arabic, with a minority speaking English, Hausa, Darija, Beni-Amer (a language spoken by the pastoral Beni-Amer people from eastern Sudan and Eritrea). In particular, Hamdayet is a multi-language community with many tribes, including from Amer, Bagara, Barno, Baza, Beni, Bergo, Bilala, Birgid, Dago, Fallata, Fur, Galieen, Hadanwa, Hausa, Kawahla, Kebeada, Kinan, Mariya, Masalit, Moni, Nuba, Shao, Skokriah and

Tama communities. Humanitarian workers often only speak Arabic or English.

Humanitarian workers know that the response has failed to provide information in the community's preferred languages and cite operational challenges: "we really failed and struggled to cross-over from Arabic to Tigrinya and the other way around until we had volunteers from the community who could help with Tigrinya translation. That is not right, and it should be part of what we can do".<sup>143</sup> These findings are also reflected in the CDAC mapping.<sup>144</sup> Indeed, refugees report that they prefer to receive spoken information in Tigrinya (99%) and those who speak Amharic would ideally like to receive information in that language (8%).

As a result of these language challenges, some refugees were unable to access services. This is leading to frustration amongst refugees, says a young man in Um Rakuba camp: "the problem of language barriers makes us lose the access to reliable information... The misunderstanding of information impacts our lives, those of our family and our community... It makes us lose our rights to all kinds of services and lets us suffer from food shortages, hunger, while >>



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>> *our lives become worse and worse. At the community level, we are losing the right to food and public services... It will leave us feeling excluded and marginalized*". Increasing and prioritizing communication in the community's preferred languages would be impactful: *"If the information is clear and understandable this has positive effect on our lives and families"*, the young man adds.

### Discrimination and inclusive service provision

There are specific, and particularly vulnerable, groups amongst both the refugee population and host communities who would benefit from tailored and bespoke information services as they have unique information demands and preferences.

As was discussed in the previous sections, gender plays a critical role in women's ability to access technologies and information disseminated in public spaces. This is, in particular, the case for women who live in conservative families, and younger women. They may not have access to the same type of information as men due to their marginalized position within the household and

wider society. This is the case in both host communities and refugee populations.

Women in Um Rakuba village, for example, are often not included in public fora where information about humanitarian services is discussed. They explain the situation as follows: *"sometimes we receive information by contacting people who are close to humanitarian agencies, but we also receive information from ordinary people in the market or in the place of residence where women normally conduct their meetings. So, this information on humanitarian services is not always available to us our families"*.

Women in female headed households – including widowed and divorced women – are more vulnerable to information and communication exclusion.

Qualitative research also shows that elderly people have *"unequal access to information"*. As a 35-year-old refugee from Um Rakuba camp reported: *"young people have better access as they can participate properly in many activities regarding services in the camp, whilst older people have unequal access as they face some type of marginalization in the community"*. An older female teacher in Um Rakuba camp agreed and added: *"we have*

*language and technology barriers"*. A religious leader reports: *"we prefer face-to-face communication, then we can really understand"*. However, whilst most age groups have not mastered Arabic or English – the languages humanitarians speak – this is more pronounced in the older population who often do not know how to operate technologies like mobile phones and social media.

Young people, on the other hand are more often excluded based on their age when it comes to participation. But humanitarians working with children note that when young people are engaged in a way that fits their communication abilities: *"they are able to speak to us [about their concerns]"*.

Illiteracy is also a reason for unequal access to information, particularly when it comes to written information. As a 37-year-old religious leader in Um Rakuba village explained: *"women have unequal access to information because in our village they are more illiterate than men, so they are not able to get all information"*. In Sudan, in 2021, the national illiteracy rate stands at 61% and more women than men are illiterate, and rural communities are more likely to be illiterate than communities in urban

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>> centers.<sup>145</sup> Older people also are more frequently illiterate than younger ones.

These trends are reflected in this research. In Um Rakuba village, for example, only 60% of the surveyed population report being able to read and write Arabic; and women more frequently (50%) than men (32%) self-reported to be illiterate. In refugee camps, 17% reported that they do not read nor write Tigrinya.

Disability also prevents people from accessing information as reported by refugees, Sudanese host communities and humanitarian agencies alike. People living with a disability are “often hidden in society”, and therefore they are extremely vulnerable, an international NGO worker mentioned.<sup>146</sup>

People living with a hearing or sight impairment are vulnerable as they face significant language-related barriers: “Because they don’t hear it when you are making an announcement, they may become excluded from food distribution”. Information is not frequently offered in sign language or braille. Only one humanitarian organization reported to use sign language, braille and provided people with disabilities with pre-



recorded material. These findings are also reflected in the CDAC mapping conducted in refugee camps.<sup>147</sup>

Additionally, people with physical disabilities are often unable to frequent places in the communities where information is shared – for example, communal places like teashops, markets or food distribution areas, humanitarians report that.

There are also additional groups that have specific information needs and communication preferences. Across all locations, for example, a large number of unaccompanied or separated children from Tigray were reported. UNCHR says many were separated from family members

during their flight.<sup>148</sup> Many of these children now live with foster families. Humanitarian workers report that adolescent girls and those who fled alone or with a friend are at risk of sexual abuse and have unique needs.<sup>149</sup>

Additionally, prior to the crisis, the population in Tigray also included 96,000 Eritrean refugees, and the east of Sudan already hosted over 133,000 refugees from Eritrea.<sup>150</sup> Many Eritrean refugees have fled to Gedaref, and although they often speak Tigrinya, similar to the Ethiopian refugees, they may have unique information needs and preferences. •





## 6. INFORMATION DYNAMICS

### Trust

This section sets out how individual and communities interact with the information ecosystem and what they do with the information they access. It explores trust dynamics, transmission, influence and power structures and, where possible, the impact of the information provision on the lives of refugees and host communities in eastern Sudan.



Refugees and host community respondents say that some information providers are more trusted than others, and that trust often depends on historic relationships, previous experiences and the level of knowledge and authority a source has on a certain topic.<sup>151</sup>

Although most respondents in our survey report to trust community leaders (who are often in direct contact with humanitarian workers) to provide reliable and trustworthy information about humanitarian services, participants in qualitative activities expressed a severe level of distrust in information provided through formal leaders and humanitarian workers. In effect, leaders (often older men) are seen as the right representatives by some, whilst some state that they don't represent and provide information to vulnerable groups in the community.

In quantitative survey activities, humanitarian workers were generally perceived as reliable sources. 67% of host communi-





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>> ty members, and 70% of surveyed refugees report that when humanitarians provide information it is useful, particularly when it comes to information about protection, work and education (51%), food and livelihoods (62%). They also report that aid workers as non-state actors can be trusted to tell the truth about what is happening around them.

However, there is sometimes a perception that aid workers have an agenda, as they often have to work with the government to, for example, access affected areas.<sup>152</sup> This data demonstrates that refugees have at times conflicting opinions on the trustworthiness of aid workers - not necessarily seeing them as good or bad, but more often something in between, even when they receive aid.

Trust is also contingent on the circumstances of the refugees and the performance of the aid actors. As refugee men in Um Rakuba camp report: *“most of the people in this community don’t trust information being provided by humanitarian agencies”*. Female respondents in Hamdayet reported that trust was broken: *“Most information we get is not real so we don’t trust it because we have ex-*

*perience in that when we ask for information about specific services [they say] we can get it, but...we find nothing”*.

The lack of trust in humanitarian agencies was recognized by aid workers working in the area. International aid workers reported that *“building trust should be one of the key areas of improvements for the humanitarian response”* and that at the moment there is limited trust of refugees and host communities in the response.

For host communities trust eroded when humanitarians only provided services to refugee populations while leaving the vulnerable host communities outside of response plans.<sup>153</sup> In refugee camps the lack of trust was often attributed to the failures of coordination bodies to provide tailored and transparent messages about aid delivery, targeting and inclusion and exclusion criteria; and was quoted to lead to *“chronic misinformation and rumors”*. As one refugee respondent reported: *“Our people here are able to complain about the refugee response by conducting several meetings with the humanitarian organization actors, but it results in nothing”*.

Mistrust towards humanitarian agencies

was also raised as a key issue by the CDAC service mapping and the Community Consultation.<sup>154</sup> The mapping also showed that refugees in the research did not want to share information or feedback with some humanitarians because of a lack of trust.<sup>155</sup> This in turn can have a significant impact on effective and reliable humanitarian delivery in the area, report refugees part of the research.

Community leaders are seen by some (mainly men), in principle, as trusted sources: *“people usually trust in the community leaders and religious leaders as information providers because they already provide them information on a daily basis”*; *“the information we obtain about humanitarian services is clear and understandable because it comes to us through our religious leaders and community leaders. We always trust the information they bring to us as we delegated to them”*. Some requested that community leaders should be a part of all negotiations and aid delivery processes (*“because it leads to honest information”*), whilst others said that community leaders can’t always tell the truth as they get *“false information from humanitarians”*. Refugee men in Um Rakuba reported: *“even our community leaders bring*

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>> us untruthful information, people don't trust this information". A CDAC mapping conducted in March 2021 reported that information from "apela" (community leaders) is not always trusted, due to bias as *"they may favor their connections and relatives by restricting the flow of information, rather than broadly communicating with all relevant communities"*.<sup>156</sup>

Humanitarians report that the levels of trust may differ between host communities and refugee populations, as many formal leaders in refugee settlements have only recently been elected. As a humanitarian described the situation to Internews: *"the leaders and elders did not flee – so the natural leaders are not here in Sudan"*. Most refugees in eastern Sudan are young men at risk of being recruited by the Tigrayan militia and many formal and informal leaders (often, elders) stayed in Tigray. As such, Tigrayan community representatives in eastern Sudan are elected but don't necessarily have historic trust, experience or the ability to represent their newly formed communities.

Others state that leaders don't represent all, particularly not women and people living with disabilities. Humanitarian workers



say that leaders are not selected *"on their inclusivity"*.

In host communities, formal leadership is more established but old functionaries from al-Bashir's regime are not always trusted (*"politicians are hypocritical, don't listen to them"*; *"they always provide information that serves their political agenda"*). Only 35% of the Sudanese respondents reported to trust government officials.

Refugees and host community members prefer informal leaders and representatives to be included in information provision and to supplement the information received from formal leadership. As women in Hamdayet report: *"To some extent people do not trust the information being provided by humanitarian organizations... and sometimes*

*even the information that is provided to them by the community leaders is not real, so they started searching for other sources"*.

When it comes to already trusted sources, most refugees report family (83%), religious leaders (80%)<sup>157</sup>, friends (77%), and local media (67%). Survey participants in host communities state that their most trusted sources of information are friends and family (*"because they care for you"*; 65%); national and local civil society actors (57%) and religious leaders (46%).

Host community members in qualitative activities reported trusting women representatives, religious leaders, schoolteachers and youth activists and members of the Resistance Committees. In host communities, local civil society organizations – fo

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>> cused, for example, on farmers issues and rights - are more trusted than international agencies as they often have long-lasting relations with the community and whose work often speaks more to locally relevant concerns. Teachers were also trusted sources of information about aid in host communities.

As men in Um Rakubah reported: *“humanitarians can help to ensure trusted information through good communication and coordination with all community representatives including informal community leaders, religious leaders and youth leaders and groups from both sexes.”* Sudanese women from Um Rakuba village reported: *“these types of people represent the mediator between us and the humanitarian organizations that provide services”,* and: *“They already mediate between us and the Commission for Refugees and the government institutions in Doka city”.*

Journalists part of this research also confirmed the trust in religious leaders over formal leaders: *“Although the community leaders and the humanitarian organization are the favorable channels for information, people don’t trust them because in many cases, they didn’t provide truthful information, so now*

*they mostly trust in religious leader because of their orientations and beliefs - the religious leaders do not win”.*

Face-to-face interaction is perhaps the most effective way to restore trust between communities and humanitarians, reports CDAC, also given that literacy in some communities is low.<sup>158</sup> Participants in this research reported that face-to-face communication is preferred, as it *“leads to the most credible information”*. This was also linked to the fact that trust recently there is a recent erosion of trust and that many people are illiterate and prefer face-to-face communication. As one respondent reported that firsthand information is always better than secondhand information, because it is more trustworthy: *“people prefer to get information from aid providers face-to-face because they feel they can send their message safely, and they trust it [this channel] more because it ensures that they will get real information”*. A journalist involved in the research offered an explanation: *“they may not trust the mediator”*.

In terms of digital media - although smart phones and social media were generally perceived as safe communication channels,

***“Sometimes people don’t have confidence in the information that is provided to them by community leaders or humanitarian organizations as they provide them with incorrect information. When they come to the place where a service is delivered, there is nothing left”, says a Sudanese woman from Um Rakuba village***

people do report that there is a lot of fake news on the internet which should not be trusted. Rumors were frequently present on social media platforms, say both Sudanese and host community members part of this research. Additionally, some respondents were concerned about their privacy and safety online: *“They could share my information without my knowledge”,* report refugees’ part of the research, and others reported fearing government infiltration and surveillance on online platforms. •



## 6. INFORMATION DYNAMICS

### Transmission

Most information about available humanitarian services in refugee populations is transmitted through formal community leaders (when it comes to issues that concern the wider population) or through home visits (when it concerns individuals or families and their personal matters). Others report that humanitarian agencies “use microphones roaming all zones and blocks in the camps”.

Host community members’ main contact with relief workers is through time-consuming interpersonal interactions during home visits. These – often lengthy visits usually happen at a time that is convenient for humanitarians (e.g., during their working hours) and not when host communities prefer (e.g., early in the morning or when they come back from their work; or in the weekend).

Besides home visits and information through humanitarian agencies, refugees report that they get most information about humanitarian services through protection desks of UNCHR (44%) and via the news (27%).

Humanitarian workers say that most information for refugees is transmitted through

mass gatherings; through community leaders and small-scale initiatives organized by humanitarian agencies, often focused on their own activities.

Aid workers working with refugees have reported several challenges. For example, they report that mass awareness sessions are not ideal: “we gather all of them under a tree”; “it is very crowded”. This has a negative impact on understanding and messaging effectiveness.

Alternatively, information is transmitted through weekly community leader meetings organized by the Commission for Refugees (COR). Other organizations write down targeting criteria on a whiteboard outside their office; print leaflets with messages and disseminate them in public places (often in Arabic or English); conduct mega-phone campaigns; and organize group discussions with community members. Humanitarians say there is a stronger focus on information transmission during crisis situations. During the rainy season, for example, humanitarian workers hold mass gathering to warn communities about flooding risks; and currently they are providing information about COVID-19, its transmission routes, and prevention pathways.

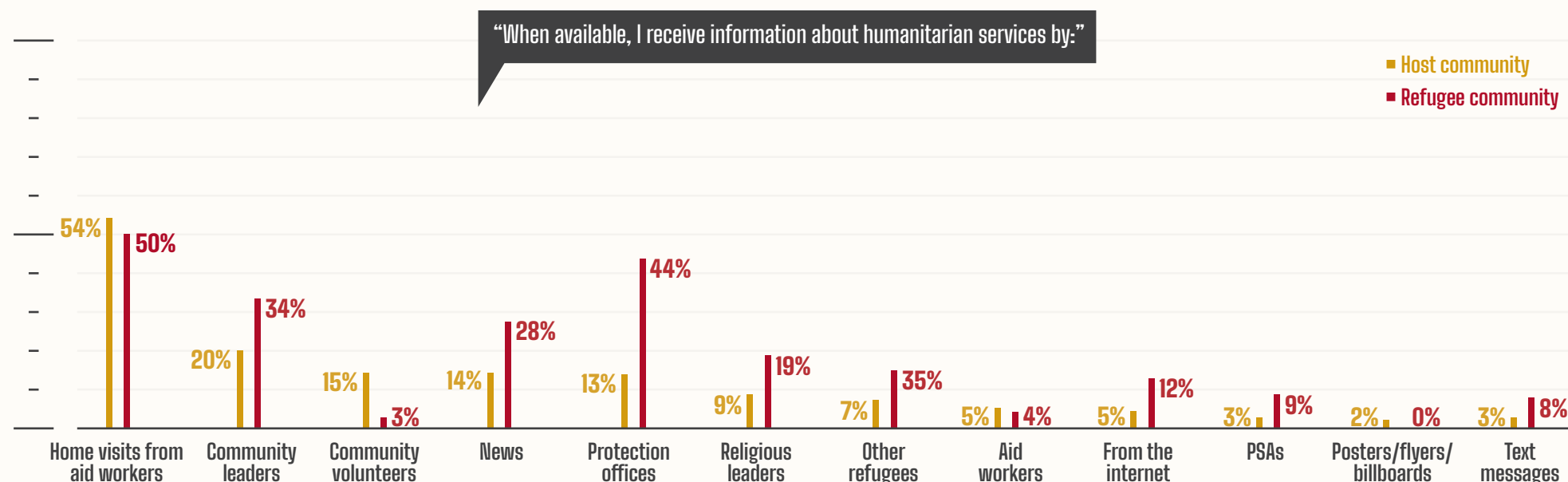
Refugees report that they appreciate face-to-face meetings with humanitarian as “some groups do not know how to read and write and therefore it is preferable to communicate face-to-face”. However, they also report that it is “good to meet with everyone when the objectives and issues to be discussed are related to the whole community”; “when it is about public services that are available to all of the community”. One-on-one communication is best: “when the person is selected for specific services”; “to ensure the confidentiality of these matters”.

Refugees and host communities report that they would ideally also like more public meetings, including with informal community leaders and the general public. Gatherings, however, are discouraged by the Ministry of Health because of the COVID-19 pandemic in order to protect refugees and Sudanese host communities from contracting SARS-CoV-2.

New technologies could be used by humanitarians to communicate about humanitarian services, particularly when it comes to public and humanitarian service delivery (Image 15). Whilst host community members and refugees are happy with >>

## 6. INFORMATION DYNAMICS

Image 14: Methods of transmission of humanitarian information



>> interpersonal meetings (see Image 15), they report that humanitarian workers should also explore other channels too in particular to reach those who have access to the internet and social media. In host communities, for example, one third of all participants asked for humanitarian information to be dispersed through social media (27%); through SMS (25%). Additionally, a small percent asked for information to be transmitted via radio (13%) and through portable loudspeakers (7%).

Whilst refugees also prefer to get

information about services through face-to-face meetings (62%), via community representatives (38%), others report that SMS (27%) and social media (26%) and mobile speakers (19%) could be used as channels, concurrently. A hotline was not a popular solution, reported host communities (3%) and refugees (2%).

When two-way communication was prioritized humanitarian workers reported that trust was built: “We build a relationship by listening to them and keeping promises”.<sup>159</sup> One humanitarian simply said: “there is a lot of wis-

dom within affected people”. However, when there is no clear information, this can create conflict and confusion. Humanitarian workers, for example, report that lack of information about payment and remuneration schemes can have a negative impact on relationships between humanitarian workers and refugees. As a humanitarian worker reported: “There is no published salary rates for volunteers in the camp. Different organizations [are] paying different amounts, and that is causing conflict”. Aid providers report that there is also confusion as refugees: “think that every organization has something to offer”.

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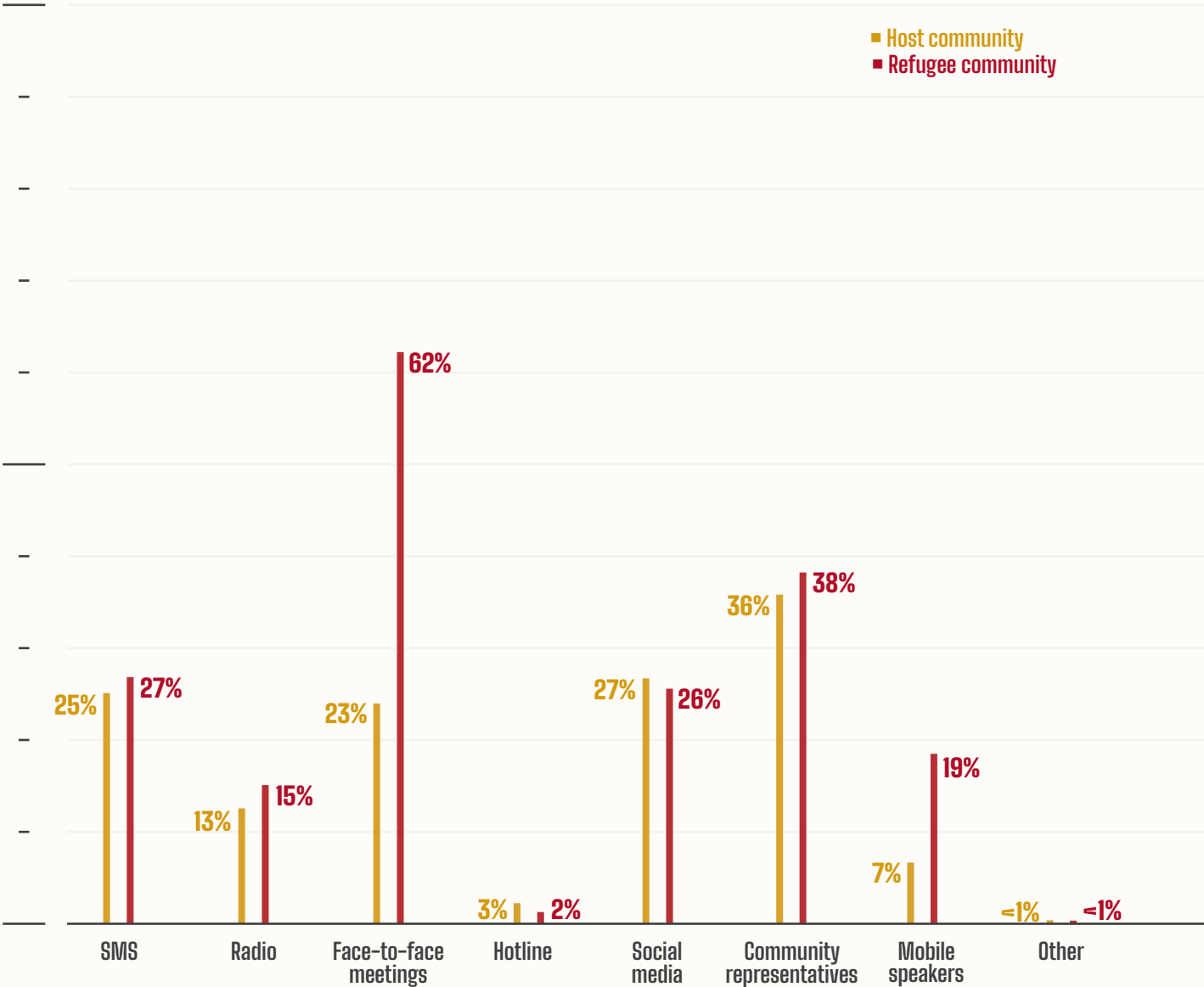
# 6. INFORMATION DYNAMICS



## Alternative communication channels

Humanitarian organizations working with children in Um Rakuba camp reported using alternative channels to communicate with families and children. They have set up two-way communication systems making use of WhatsApp for one-to-one feedback. When there are certain issues that the organization cannot respond to, they: “reach out to the right service provider that is able to respond to it”. They pair such channels with low-tech and off line approaches so that those without mobiles phones can also feed back their concerns through face-to-face communication through animators or by writing in “feedback books”. •

Image 15: Preferred methods of transmission of humanitarian information





## 6. INFORMATION DYNAMICS

### Influence, participation and decision-making abilities

The majority of host community and refugee participants report that although some have options to raise complaints with humanitarian aid providers and the local government, they frequently don't feel included in decision-making processes related to aid delivery.

A recent CDAC Network mapping also shows there is a strong desire by the communities receiving aid to have access to a system that not only listens but also speaks to their concerns.<sup>160</sup> That sentiment was reflected in this IEA. A participant reported for example, that host communities do not have access to humanitarian agencies in the area and that they are frustrated about the lack of follow-up: *"even when we manage to complain, nothing happens, nothing!"*

Some refugees report that they can influence decision-making by expressing complaints in writing and through face-to-face meetings with humanitarian staff. Some people express complaints and needs through suggestion boxes; others through leaders who participate in weekly coordination meetings with COR; or by submitting verbal complaints to the COR site manager; or by forming advocacy groups and peaceful protests in the camp. As a 37-year-old

man, a religious leader from Um Rakuba camp says: *"I sometimes feel our community is included when we are invited by COR or camp management to coordination meetings"*.

However, most refugees - including elected community representatives - don't feel included in the decision-making processes of aid agencies and the government. As a 35-year-old refugee mentioned: *"I personally don't feel included in the decision-making because everything is carried out by the community leaders, who sometimes don't represent our needs well"*.

A 46-year-old refugee religious leader from Um Rakuba expressed that informal leaders like himself are not included either: *"all the decisions come to us from the top down. As a community leader and a clergyman, I tried to address this issue, but I was unable to do so"*. Another 33-year-old refugee man reported: *"those who make decisions sometimes don't invite me. I complained so much, but it does not give any result"*. This is problematic, express respondents: *"all refugees must participate in all decisions that concern the community"*.

Host community members report that they are not included in the refugee response because: *"humanitarian organizations only*

***"There is a need for real community engagement – we should say this is the service we'd like to provide and then ask people what the best way is to provide it to you?" says a humanitarian worker in Hamdayet***

*work for refugees in the camp"*. One Sudanese participant mentioned: *"I don't feel that our community is included in decision making in relation to the response because we cannot go directly to humanitarian organizations only through their community leaders (meaning: Ethiopian representatives, not Sudanese)"*.

Whilst formal leaders of host communities report that they at times are included in meetings with Sudanese camp officials and humanitarians, however, this does not translate into more service provision.

A humanitarian worker reported: *"humanitarian agencies always say that they are going to involve them – and that it doesn't happen"*.



## 6. INFORMATION DYNAMICS

>> Instead, he says: “we go with a lot of demands and put pressure on them”. Another aid worker adds: “the host community is like a side project – you never get to it. There should be a response plan for the host community. It has been unfair how this has been designed”. Furthermore, humanitarian workers reported that there is frustration of host community members with humanitarian organizations asking them questions, conducting surveys and assessments which is not resulting in support for them. Our data collection team also reported that host community members: “want support, otherwise they don’t see the point of all these questions”.

Moreover, most refugees and host community members report that they are unable to provide feedback and complaints to humanitarian workers about aid and services available. As a Sudanese man in Hamdayet simply said: “I want to know how to communicate with the United Nations agencies to raise complaints”. Refugees ask for humanitarian agencies to monitor complaints and to set up a follow-up process focused on responding to their concerns.

Humanitarians agree that: “people are not participating in the design of the activities”; “they are not shaping the response”; “we were

focusing on implementation; to deliver and deliver – we missed out the population’s point of view”. A recent CDAC mapping exercise concluded that humanitarians were not focused on setting up complaints and feedback mechanisms, rather on providing immediate aid – food, shelter and protection.<sup>161</sup>

Humanitarian workers furthermore report that camp management has an “authoritarian style and does not listen to the affected population, rather just tells what is going to happen without including them in decisions making processes”. “The more space we offer them the more they can influence. We need to give them space to tell us how they want to be engaged”, added an aid worker. Moreover, whilst aid recipients are asked for their opinion during implementation and monitoring and evaluation activities<sup>162</sup>, they are not asked to offer an opinion on the response overall and are often not involved in the program design phase.

A CDAC mapping also shows that feedback mechanisms in place in Um Rakuba are not working effectively: “complaints are not receiving feedback promptly”.<sup>163</sup>

Women, people with disabilities, and older people are particularly excluded from

***“The project design is always done in a rush – humanitarians think people are dying and that they need to save lives... so the response is just done, but minus them”, says a humanitarian worker in Um Rakuba camp***

decision-making processes, say refugees and host community members. They request that additional attention should be given to population groups who are already excluded from decision-making processes. Women, for example, reports a female teacher: “people in this camp marginalize women in such decision-making”.

Women often meet in gender segregated groups and: “norms may prevent them from feeling comfortable expressing themselves”.<sup>164</sup> A 46-year-old religious leader reported: “it is difficult for vulnerable people [such as some women and girls] to submit complaints and express their concerns as they do not get the opportunity”; “they are not involved at all in decision-making as they are not able to communicate with aid workers”.

>>

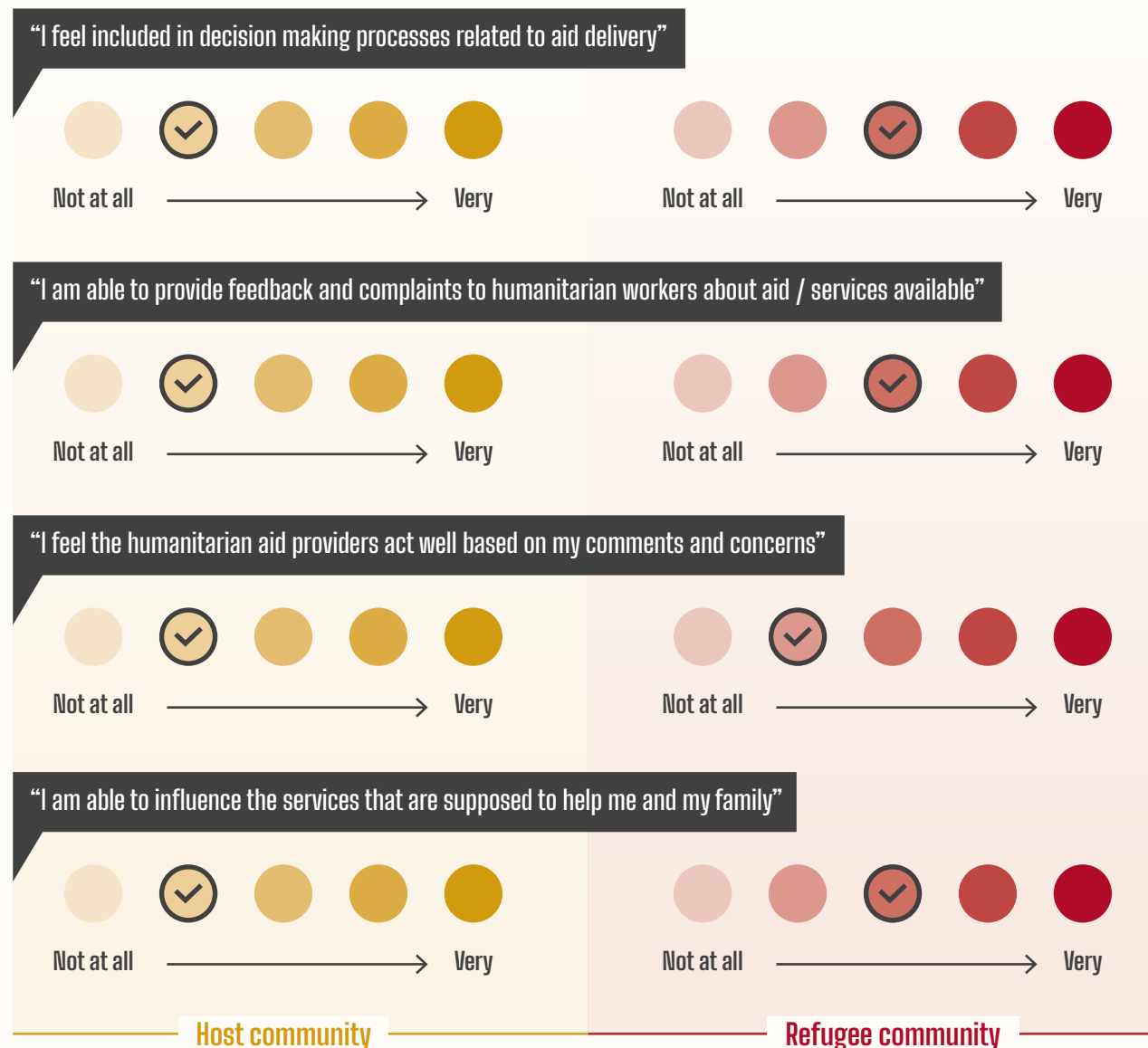
## 6. INFORMATION DYNAMICS

>> Another informal community leader at the refugee camp reported: *“this is true and unacceptable for everybody in this community”*.

The lack of participation has been noted by humanitarian agencies and some solutions have been identified. A humanitarian worker from an international NGO reports that they, in coordination with UNHCR, are in the process of setting up a centralized feedback system.<sup>165</sup> The plan, she explains, is that there will be (perhaps multiple) community feedback desks across the camp where *“the community can come at any time”*, to enable humanitarians to collect feedback, complaints and to respond to *“people’s need for information”*. The desks may be operated by individual organizations or by an interagency focal point.

Whereas humanitarians report that it would be good have a collective service that coordinates the concerns and answers across organizations and clusters, they also report that in practice it may be challenging to operate this in a functional manner *“as each organization has different donor requirements, and this may require additional communication with communities activities”*.<sup>166</sup> •

Image 16 - Scorecard capturing the perceptions of participants on inclusion and participation in decision-making around service delivery





## 6. INFORMATION DYNAMICS

### Impact

Host communities and refugees report that the level of available information, the way decision-making processes and complaint mechanisms have been set up, have direct impact on their actions and well-being. In line with the 2021 CDAC assessment, this research found that aid recipients may miss out on service provision due to a lack of information because they were not aware that they had the right to access services or were not aware of practical aspects like time, place and duration.<sup>167</sup>

Humanitarians recognize this need but say that presently coordination structures and donor processes are not set up to deal with this need.

The impact of not having accurate information about the availability of humanitarian services was significant, say refugees. A group of men in Um Rakuba camp said: *“inaccessibility, unreliability and misunderstanding of information has many effects on our lives”*. Another group of men reported: *“without it [information] we feel marginalized, and it has a negative impact on our economic situation and family life”*. Others report



## 6. INFORMATION DYNAMICS

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>> the fear of “losing their right to get services like food, health, care, shelter and water. This will make us suffer from hunger and our children can die”. Refugees reported that the lack of information could also lead to theft and insecurity in the camp settlements, as people may miss out on critical services due to misunderstandings: “our lives will just become worse and worse”.

Humanitarians report that it is important to listen to the concerns of host communities and to react to the requests in a trustworthy manner and by always keeping promises.<sup>168</sup> A humanitarian worker in Um Rakuba camp for example reports that the lack of participation of refugees in aid design can create negative situations. He reported, for example, that the lack of communication and information around relocation procedures from the transit sites on the (dangerous) border with Ethiopia to the refugee camps created resistance to reallocation. According to him: “The information that is needed is not there. It is really appalling... to have people to speak to refugees when they arrive that is the least that they can do”.

Another example of such a situation was when a UN agency wanted to address hygiene and sanitation related issues as many refugees stopped using the latrines. The agency believed refugees did not use the latrines because “they did not know how”, according to a humanitarian worker who was interviewed for this study. To inform refugees, the agency responded with health information activities.

However, according to the humanitarian worker, the problem did not exist due to a lack of information, rather because there had not been enough latrines in the camp, and that cleaning was challenging. As such, refugees opted for using the river for defecation. Another example of how the lack of participation of refugees in decisionmaking process negatively influenced aid delivery was related to food distribution. In the beginning of the response - and for several months - food packages provided by humanitarians did not include injera, an important staple food in Ethiopia. Receiving sorghum porridge created feelings of discontent amongst refugees. This could have been prevented, report humanitarians, by

***“When the information is clear and understandable to us, then we can access services from the government or humanitarian organizations in a good and timely manner. Then it even increases our knowledge and has a positive impacted on us, our families and the stability of our society”, says a Sudanese woman from Um Rakuba village***

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asking people for their food preferences: “The first step is to ask them what food is appropriate to them”. The change of food reportedly has had a positive impact on aid providers-refugee relationships since. According to an aid worker not consulting refugees in this instance was a “complete failure to provide a dignified response”; and it: “wasted money, time and effort”. •



## 7. CONCLUSIONS & USER-CENTERED RECOMMENDATIONS

Refugees and host communities reported preferences for how they would like humanitarian partners to communicate with them and set up engagement activities. This section sets out how refugees and host communities want to be included within humanitarian processes:

- **Map people's specific needs and preferences.** Explore who you want to reach, for what reason and what the most effective way would be to reach them, in what language. Answering these questions before implementation, together with affected populations, would improve the effectiveness, efficiency and the impact of humanitarian information delivery.

- **Improve coordination.** Respondents suggest that *"humanitarian workers should work together to ensure that correct and reliable information is provided to the community"*. Humanitarians should coordinate and set up mechanisms to deliver "good" information to the community. This includes sharing "fixed plans and programs" with aid clients.

- **Include informal and already trusted leaders.** Respondents report that they would like *"other community representatives"* than just elected, official leaders to be included in decision-making processes. This includes traditional leaders, religious leaders, women and youth activists and other locally trusted people. As a female teacher in Um Rakuba camp suggested: *"proper coordination must be made to include all community*





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>> *components into decision-making*". Meetings with these alternative leaders should be set up periodically and frequently.

- **Include the vulnerable and marginalized.** To ensure that vulnerable audiences are reached, humanitarian partners should take additional action. This could include reserving space for women in decision-making bodies; providing specific support to elderly in the community; adapting communication material to be understandable and user-friendly for people with disabilities.

- **Provide material in the right language.** All information should be provided in the preferred languages (so, in Tigrinya for refugees from Tigray) to prevent *"misunderstanding"*; and stop people *"getting unreliable information and losing services"*.

- **Increase information about humanitarian aid delivery.** Refugees want to know which humanitarian organizations work in the camp and transit sites, which services they offer and when they provide such services to whom: *"It would be good to have a list of all humanitarian partners and the services they provide"*; *"we need a banner about all organizations to identify the locations of these organizations and their field of work"*.

- **Be transparent.** Participants want *"honest information"*. This also means explaining to refugees and host communities that services are not available, for how long, and the reasons why, and who is excluded from accessing the series. This involves taking time for communication on a daily basis, in particular when activities are not going as planned, in a fair manner: *"Treat people with dignity even if it delays"*.

- **When it concerns all, let all know.** When it comes to issues that concern the entire community (e.g., the availability of food; resettlement; the safety situation; disaster prevention) respondents request that all members of the community should be able to get the information. As one woman explained: *"we should meet in a group when the information is related to public services, and on-one-on only when the information is about a specific need or serves a specific group in society"*. This may be an argument for providing mass information services about humanitarian service delivery.

- **Use multiple platforms.** Information should be disseminated *"using different and multiple means"*. This would include spreading word-of-mouth information in places

that refugees and Sudanese communities frequent (*"in public places where refugees already gather"*) including shops, tea and coffee houses; audio via social media to reach young people; and by partnering with trusted community representatives for dissemination.

- **Listen, respond and act.** Efforts should also focus on collecting and responding to feedback (anonymously if people desire so) and acting on this feedback and transparently reporting on what actions were taken based on the feedback you received.. Refugees reported: *"we want to know what happens with our complaints"*.

- **Include us in decision-making processes.** Refugees and host communities want to be included in decision-making processes. This also includes allowing *"regular people to be heard"* and not only requesting feedback and solutions via formal leadership structures. This may take time, but people report rather wanting good information and services that fit their needs, rather than not be included in aid processes.

- **Include the host community.** Host community members would like to be included in response activities as they are suffering >>

## 7. CONCLUSIONS & USER-CENTERED RECOMMENDATIONS

>> from similar challenges as refugees. This involves: “giving people the option to express their thoughts, not just by doing surveys”. This would also involve including the host community in decision-making around humanitarian delivery for refugees: “you have to work with both sides... if we triangulate that would be friendly and helpful for both sites”.

- **Timing is crucial.** For some information, face-to-face meetings are a preferred method of communication with humanitarians but should be scheduled in at a time where they are convenient for both humanitarians, refugees and host community members.

**This next section contains conclusions and recommendations for stakeholders working in the humanitarian sector and government agencies working to provide critical services to Ethiopian refugees and host communities in eastern Sudan:**

- **Increase information provision about humanitarian services.** There is an urgent need for more information about humanitarian services in both refugee and host communities. Currently, people who need humanitarian services frequently miss out of services because of unreliable informa-

tion, which is increasing their suffering.

- **Map the unique information needs of the various audiences at the most local level.** Both refugees and host communities have unique information needs and humanitarian agencies should carefully map the audiences they want to reach and design specific communication activities based on their unique information needs, at the most local level.

- **Work through existing channels, including new technologies and digital media.** Refugees and host communities already access information via various channels. Some people use technological tools to access information including smartphones, mobile phones and television. However, across both communities, even if technology is available and frequently use, it does not always work. Communication via such technological tools could be explored by humanitarian agencies but will not always be a viable channel to reach all in the community, particularly not the already vulnerable.

- **Partner with local media.** Local media can be an avenue to better share information about the response with the host community, host discussions between humanitar-

*“You need to listen to their worries. And this has not happened in this crisis. Listening to people’s concerns is a matter of human dignity”, says a humanitarian worker in Hamdayet*

ians, refugee and host community leaders and reduce community tensions. Media can be supported to report on refugee and host community issues responsibly.

- **Prioritize inclusive information provision.** Age, gender, socio-economic and contextual dynamics have influence on the type of information required, the way and where people access information. Also, people with disabilities are often excluded from information about aid delivery as there are no hearing aids or sign language translators available. Humanitarian agencies should be sensitive of such dynamics and take additional steps to ensure that these particularly vulnerable people are able to understand information.

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## 7. CONCLUSIONS & USER-CENTERED RECOMMENDATIONS

>> • **Involve people in decision-making processes.** To ensure sustainability and community ownership, it is critical to involve refugee and host community populations into decision-making processes related to the humanitarian response. This does not mean only conducting needs assessments with the affected community, rather focusing more on co-creating of response activities, co-implementation and effective co-monitoring and evaluation involving those who will receive the aid. Humanitarian agencies should always act on the requests, concerns and complaints of the communities they serve.

• **Prioritize co-design of response processes and delivery modalities.** An aid worker explained it as follows: *“actors are coming with predefined programs. This rigidity is not allowing you to adapt to the reality”*. Setting priorities and designing humanitarian activities should be done collaboratively with affected populations to ensure that there is shared understanding of current needs and adequate solutions.

• **Improve coordination across sectors.** Along with CDAC (2021) we conclude that better coordination across all sectors,

would also increase participation and trust. This would include, establishing a common approach to classify and share information, to collect, aggregate and analyze data from different systems together, and to report and address as one. This includes coordination of messaging about aid, food and cash distribution across partner agencies and UN agencies to avoid confusion and contradiction.

• **Where appropriate, partner with the communities you serve.** A localized re-

sponse may be more effective. As an aid worker working in the refugee response explains: *“It is important to take into consideration cultural sensitivities. People are more willing to speak to people from their own communities. We should consider more diverse humanitarian teams”*. This was reflected in interviews with other humanitarian workers whilst refugees reported looking for (temporary) work and volunteering opportunities and stated to prefer a localized response. •





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# ANNEX 1 – METHODOLOGY (CONTINUED)

## Research activities

This IEA was carried out in eastern Sudan between February - June 2021 in three phases:

**Phase 1:** In the first phase, a quick literature review of grey and academic literature determined the research design and methodology of the study. An inception report from ISP established the sampling strategy and approach. Internews designed the research tools in English, with support of Translators without Borders (TWB) for the language related questions, and they were consequently translated into Arabic and Tigrayan by professional translators contracted by ISP and Internews.

**Phase 2:** In the second phase, a mixed method research approach was implemented in four research locations in eastern Sudan, making use of a quantitative survey with data collected through a mobile phone-based application, key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FDGs). The data collection tools were designed by Internews. ISP carried out fieldwork in Sudan between May and June 2021, and managed translations.

Table 4 - Sample size calculations for the quantitative sample

Site	People	Households	Sample size
Um Rakuba camp	21,190	4,238	325
Um Rakuba village	3,000	500	46
Hamdayet	24,670	4,934	379
Gedaref city	-	-	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>48,860</b>	<b>9,673</b>	<b>800</b>

**Phase 3:** In the third phase, analysis was carried out on all qualitative and quantitative data. The emerging findings and results were presented and discussed by the research team during debriefing sessions with data collectors across the four research locations.

## Participants and recruitment

Study participants were selected using purposive, non-probability sampling for the qualitative research and making use of a randomized sampling strategy for the quantitative research. To ensure that participants reflected the diversity of the different communities, participants with gendered, age and ability-related vulnerabilities were included in the research.

In total 804 people were involved in quantitative research activities. To set the quantitative sample, ISP used data on the actual number of refugees in the camps and host communities which they received from the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) in Gedaref city (see below). These numbers were used to set a representative sample size. All participants surveyed were from male or female head of households and an effort was made to include people with disabilities.

Given there was no complete listing of households available in the survey locations, the ISP data team had to resort to using a sampling interval for a select number of households. They calculated the sampling interval by dividing the total number of



# ANNEX 1 – METHODOLOGY (CONTINUED)

>> households by the sample size and were needed adapted the sampling interval by the same factor in case the sampling interval was too great. The first house was selected in a random method by assigning a number to each data collector and letting the data collector selecting the first house on the basis of counting that number from the closest house to the drop off point. Consequently, the sampling interval is used for selection.

Where households were unoccupied that house was revisited later that day; if still not present the closest household would be included (in line US CDC, 2008). In Um Rakuba camp and in Um Rakuba village, given it concerned such a large area, the area was first divided across the four zones equally. In total, 804 participants were included in quantitative research activities.

In total 143 people were involved in qualitative research activities. The participants were selected according to four participants groups: 1) humanitarians working in the Tigray response; 2) media representatives in host communities; 3) service providers working in the Tigray

Table 5 - Composition of participations of the quantitative sample

	Host communities	Refugee communities
<b>Gender</b>	56% male, 44% female	51% male, 48% female
<b>Age</b>	0 -18 years - 0% 18 - 24 years - 20% 25 - 25 years - 24% 35 - 44 years - 27% 45 - 54 years - 13% 55 - 64 years - 7% 75+ - 9%	0 -18 years - 3% 18 - 24 years - 20% 25 - 25 years - 25% 35 - 44 years - 22% 45 - 54 years - 14% 55 - 64 years - 10% 75+ - 1%
<b>Household composition</b>	Male headed HH - 69% Female headed HH - 31% Child headed HH - 0%	Male headed HH - 53% Female headed HH - 38% Child headed HH - 6%
<b>Disability</b>	11% had a disability, 2% were living with someone with a disability	7% had a disability, 2% were living with someone with a disability
<b>Nationality</b>	Sudanese	Ethiopian
<b>Refugee status</b>	No - 100%	Yes, 98%, No - 2%
<b>Education level</b>	No formal education - 40% Completed primary - 44% Completed secondary - 38% Completed university - 2%	No formal education - 13% Completed primary - 32% Completed secondary - 34% Completed university - 20%
<b>Main languages spoken at home</b>	Arabic - 100%	Tigrinya – 99% Amharic – 6% English – 3%

response and 4) community leaders from both host and refugee populations currently living in eastern Sudan. Efforts

were made by ISP to include people with disabilities, female heads of household and other underrepresented groups.

>>



# ANNEX 1 – METHODOLOGY (CONTINUED)

## >> Consent

ISP ensured that consent – where possible written - was obtained from all research participants. In the quantitative survey, research participants were asked to consent to participating in the study. If participants did not agree, the survey would be stopped immediately. During qualitative activities participants were informed about the research's goal, their rights as participants and of the voluntary and anonymous nature of the research. Participants were consequently asked for verbal consent, which was recorded in audio recordings.

Additionally, ISP received permission from the relevant authorities in Sudan to carry out the research, including from the Commissioner for Refugees Sudan (COR) and relevant camp authorities, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

## Data collection

ISP recruited data collectors for the quantitative survey across the four research sites. ISP selected collectors who had previous experience in data collection and aimed to select an equal number of male and female data collectors.

Table 6 - Composition of participations of the qualitative sample

Location	Um Rakuba camp	Um Rakuba village	Hamdayet	Gedaref	Total
<b>KIIs</b>					
Community leaders	4	4	4	-	12
Service provider	1	1	1	-	3
Media representatives	-	-	-	5	5
Humanitarians	6	-	-	-	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>FDGs</b>					
Female (18-35 years)	10	10	10	-	30
Female (35 to 55 years)	10	10	10	-	30
Male (18-35 years)	10	10	10	-	30
Male (35 to 55 years)	10	10	10	-	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>120</b>

>>

# ANNEX 1 – METHODOLOGY (CONTINUED)

>> In Um Rakuba camp, members of a local youth initiative named the Tigray Student Association - made up of university students currently studying at universities in Tigray, and graduates from those universities - supported data collection. Five male and five female data collectors were part of the data collection team.

In Um Rakuba village, four data collectors (2 male, 2 female) were selected based on their levels of literacy. A local schoolteacher and adult students were recruited to support data collection.

In Hamdayet, a mixed research team was recruited with 9 data collectors (5 Sudanese and 4 Ethiopian; 5 males and 4 females). In Gedaref town, three data collectors - 2 men, 1 woman - were recruited for the work.

All data collectors were paid for the work and conducted activities in their own languages.

## Data management

Audio recordings were taken by the lead researcher during all qualitative data collection activities. Additionally, basic socio demographic data was collected prior to the activities. All qualitative data activities were

conducted in Arabic or Tigrayan. The translation in qualitative activities was done by a member of the Tigray Student Association from Arabic to Tigrinya and back to English. For the host community the lead researcher conducted all activities in Arabic.

Consequently, all qualitative research recordings were transcribed and translated to English. The quantitative data was translated into English by an independent translator from Tigrayan to English before analysis.

## Analysis and reporting

Qualitative data was analyzed thematically making use of narrative analysis. Codes were developed and applied in two rounds of coding, using thematic analysis and color codes. Dominant themes, relationships and patterns were identified through the systematic review of interviews, FGDs, and compared with findings in the literature and from the quantitative data survey. Salient concepts were coded, and their occurrence and reoccurrence labelled by hand.

The quantitative data was collected and analyzed through KoboToolbox. KoBoToolbox is a free open-source tool for mobile data collection. Basic numerical analysis was also done in excel to supplement the findings. •



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 - **Obstacles to Access** details infrastructural, economic, and political barriers to access; government decisions to shut off connectivity or block specific applications or technologies; legal, regulatory, and ownership control over internet service providers; and independence of regulatory bodies.  
 - **Limits on Content** analyzes legal regulations on content; technical filtering and blocking of websites; other forms of censorship and self-censorship; the

- vibrancy and diversity of the online environment; and the use of digital tools for civic mobilization.
- **Violations of User Rights** tackles legal protections and restrictions on free expression; surveillance and privacy; and legal and extralegal repercussions for online speech and activities, such as imprisonment, extralegal harassment and physical attacks, or cyberattacks.
- See for more information about the indicators see: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net>
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138. The resistance committees (Arabic: *الجنة المقاومة*) or neighborhood committees are informal, grassroots neighborhood networks of Sudanese residents who started organizing campaigns against the Al Bashir government and now play a critical role in civil society matters. Service committees are closely aligned with neighborhood resistance committees and their role is to ensure equitable access to services and commodities, such as wheat.
139. People on the move tend to be careful about which information they share with aid practitioners or researchers who some may believe are linked with humanitarian providers. It is very likely that a higher proportion of respondents reported having a mobile phone when probed because they may have thought that that level of 'luxury' might impact what kind of services they would have access to: i.e., *"if I have a phone, I may not be thought vulnerable enough to access a wider variety of services"*. Although data collectors in quantitative activities have explained the purpose of the research, and that participation would not lead to inclusion or exclusion from aid services, respondents here may have changed their answers to protect their access to aid. Due to the more personal nature of qualitative research, participants could have been more honest and open to the qualitative research team.
140. [Media Landscapes, 2021. Sudan](#). Last accessed 04.06.2021.
141. Refugees part of the research did not want to publicly disclose the names of the WhatsApp that they use, citing fears over the channels being monitored by the government of rebel forces.
142. Saraya International, 2021. ["They were in a tragic situation, so we stood by their site". Interviews with Host Communities in Eastern Sudan](#). February 2021.
143. Many humanitarian agencies relied on the collective translation services of Translators Without Borders.
144. CDAC Network with OCHA and UNCHR, 2021. Report of Community Based Complaint and Feedback Mechanism (CBCFM) Mapping. Available on request.
145. [Datareportal, 2021. Digital 2021: Sudan](#).
146. Ibid.
147. Ibid.
148. UNHCR, 2021. [UNHCR Regional Update #15: Ethiopia Situation \(Tigray Region\), 12 – 30 April 2021](#).
149. KII with humanitarian worker.
150. UNHCR, 2021. [UNHCR Regional Update #15:](#)





- >> [Ethiopia Situation \(Tigray Region\)](#), 12 – 30 April 2021.
151. Trust can be understood as: “to believe that someone is good and honest and will not harm you, or that something is safe and reliable” (as per the [Cambridge Dictionary](#), 2021).
152. This finding was reflected in a select number of qualitative interviews. No questions were asked about this in the quantitative survey.
153. Saraya International, 2021. [“They were in a tragic situation, so we stood by their site”. Interviews with Host Communities in Eastern Sudan.](#) February 2021.
154. CDAC Network report of Community Consultation with Ethiopian Refugees and in East of Sudan + CDAC CBFM Service Mapping
155. Ibid.
156. CDAC Network with OCHA and UNCHR, 2021. Report of Community Based Complaint and Feedback Mechanism (CBCFM) Mapping. Available on request.
157. Some researchers say that Tigray is a deeply religious society with the indigenous Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity having been formally embraced in the ancient capital of Aksum, to which the majority of Tigray’s population adheres to. Whilst an eclectic and complex tradition, the faith values peace, reciprocity and mutual help as is typically taught by clergy in the countryside (Istratii 2020; 2021).
158. CDAC Network with OCHA and UNCHR, 2021. Report of Community Based Complaint and Feedback Mechanism (CBCFM) Mapping. Available on request.
159. KII, humanitarian worker.
160. CDAC Network with OCHA and UNCHR, 2021. Report of Community Based Complaint and Feedback Mechanism (CBCFM) Mapping. Available upon request.
161. Ibid.
162. KII with humanitarian worker: *“after the food distribution we interviewed people and asked if the money was sufficient; if the process was good and if aspects need to improve for next time around. We have used the feedback from the community to improve the second round. We have taken seriously their feedback”.*
163. CDAC Network with OCHA and UNCHR, 2021. Report of Community Based Complaint and Feedback Mechanism (CBCFM) Mapping. Available on request.
164. KII with humanitarian worker.
165. Currently a TOR on the “Community Response and Feedback Mechanism” has been developed.
166. KII, humanitarian worker.
167. CDAC Network with OCHA and UNCHR, 2021. Report of Community Based Complaint and Feedback Mechanism (CBCFM) Mapping. Available on request.
168. KII, humanitarian worker.

Information Ecosystem Assessment

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