

FORCED MIGRATION review

Supplement
September 2014



Innovation & refugees



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Innovation involves looking at things in new ways...
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The Syria crisis, displacement and protection

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The 6.45 million displaced people inside Syria make this the largest IDP crisis in the world, with possibly also the largest number of people who are 'trapped'. In addition, the number of refugees from Syria continues to increase. The international community has an opportunity to set up, from now, an effective response to what will clearly become protracted displacement. Twenty articles discuss how to increase protection for the displaced and how to shape assistance to both the displaced and their 'hosts'.

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Forced Migration Review (FMR) provides a forum for the regular exchange of practical experience, information and ideas between researchers, refugees and internally displaced people, and those who work with them. It is published in English, Arabic, Spanish and French by the Refugee Studies Centre of the Oxford Department of International Development, University of Oxford.

Staff

Marion Couldrey &
Maurice Herson (Editors)
Nina E Weaver (Finance and
Promotion Assistant)
Sharon Ellis (Assistant)

Forced Migration Review
Refugee Studies Centre
Oxford Department of International
Development, University of Oxford,
3 Mansfield Road,
Oxford OX1 3TB, UK

fmr@qeh.ox.ac.uk

Skype: fmreview
Tel: +44 (0)1865 281700

www.fmreview.org

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ISSN 1460-9819

Designed by

Art24
www.art-24.co.uk

Printed by

Fine Print (Services) Ltd
www.fineprint.co.uk



From the editors

Innovation is not new. Displaced people themselves and those attempting to assist and protect them have always been having new ideas about how to deal with their needs. Everything that we think of now as part of the 'normal' landscape of displacement – the whole infrastructure of institutions, organisations and governments that circumscribes the context within which displaced people find themselves – was at one point new. There are reasons for much that is now considered normal yet the imperfections are obvious in the challenges that we continue to face, challenges which ensure that displaced people are often unable to do what they need to do, that they do not receive the support they need, and that the organisations providing support do not function as effectively as would be desirable.

And the world of course goes on changing and new contexts arise. With a deliberate focus on looking at old problems in new ways, and on seeking and fostering innovation itself, there should be an enhanced likelihood that new products can be developed, new ways of working can be devised, new modalities and paradigms can emerge, to make the lives of displaced people better, more sustainable and less risky.

The title – 'Innovation and refugees' – of this special supplement of *Forced Migration Review* reflects the focus of the Humanitarian Innovation Project (HIP) with whom we have worked to publish this collection of articles. The eleven articles include contributions from HIP's Humanitarian Innovation Conference (held in Oxford in July 2014) and reflect some of the thinking behind humanitarian innovation for displaced people, and some of its current manifestations.

We are very grateful to Alexander Betts of the Refugee Studies Centre for his support and assistance on this issue. We would also like to thank the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their generous financial support.

The full issue and all individual articles are online in html, pdf and audio formats at www.fmreview.org/innovation. It will be available in print and online in English only, and is being distributed along with FMR 47 on the 'Syria crisis, displacement and protection' www.fmreview.org/syria.

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With our best wishes

Marion Couldrey and Maurice Herson
Editors, *Forced Migration Review*

Introduction: refugees and innovation

Alexander Betts

Doing innovation well presents challenges for how we can work better together as organisations and with displaced people, and how we can break down traditional barriers between actors – all while upholding ethical principles and protection standards relating to displacement.

Innovation is not the same thing as invention; it need not involve the creation of something novel but often takes the form of adapting something to a different context. It may be incremental (step by step) or disruptive (breaking the mould). It may relate to change in a product, a process or a paradigm.

And it may involve technology or it may not. The innovation cycle can be thought of as a four-stage process, although the stages do not need to be linear: 1) defining a problem or identifying an opportunity; 2) finding potential solutions; 3) testing, adapting and implementing a solution; and 4) appropriate scaling up of the solution.

The term ‘innovation’ is often poorly understood in humanitarian circles or is viewed sceptically as a buzzword brought in from the private sector. It is often used broadly as an umbrella term to cover the roles of technology, partnership and business. However, more precisely, it can be understood generally as a process for adaptation and improvement.

HIP2014

In July 2014, the Refugee Studies Centre hosted the Humanitarian Innovation Conference (HIP2014) in Oxford, bringing together over 200 people from the UN, NGOs, governments, community-based organisations, academia and business for two days. Innovation relating to refugees was one of the major themes. This special supplement, generously supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, takes stock of some of the themes that emerged at the conference.

At HIP2014, Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees Alexander Aleinikoff offered the definition that innovation represents “dynamic problem solving among friends”.¹

These elements highlight that one of the key components is simply finding ways to enable people to work together – to better connect staff at headquarters to those in the field, to better connect refugees to international organisations, and to link people with problems to people with potential solutions, cutting across traditional sectoral, geographical and socio-economic boundaries.

We know from the literature about innovation that innovation usually comes from cross-fertilisation, through nurturing collaborations among people of diverse backgrounds and from different sectors. Such collaborations often emerge from ‘ecosystems’ – networks of complementary actors. Innovation also relies upon iteration or repetition, and includes a willingness to fail in order to learn and improve. Yet, the global refugee regime is not generally recognised as strong in these areas and has historically been sclerotic and rigid in its human resources structures, procurement processes and professional development opportunities for staff. It is also often highly risk averse, with a fear of failure.

Yet in the humanitarian world more generally, a number of UN organisations and NGOs have been pioneers in drawing upon ideas and language more commonly used by the private sector in order to rethink humanitarian response and gradually integrate innovation as a methodology for change and adaptation. Innovation ‘labs’, ‘challenge grants’ and dedicated innovation units have begun to proliferate across the humanitarian system to stimulate new ways of solving problems and adapting to opportunities.

A significant and growing part of the humanitarian innovation debate focuses on

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refugees and displaced populations. This has in part been triggered by the recognition that the majority of the world's refugees are in so-called protracted refugee situations, in which they are often left in closed camps or settlements, indefinitely dependent to varying degrees on humanitarian assistance, without the right to work and with limited freedom of movement. The growing number of humanitarian crises and the changing nature of displacement have further strengthened the need for innovation. Innovation is increasingly seen as an imperative to make responses more effective and sustainable.

Improving organisational responses

Much of the overall humanitarian innovation debate has focused on improving organisational response, particularly by drawing in outside ideas and solution-holders.

In 2012, following UNICEF's development of an innovation unit in-house and innovation labs around the world, UNHCR created 'UNHCR Innovation'; NGOs such as the Norwegian Refugee Council have begun to explore the role of innovation in relation to refugees; universities, including Oxford, Stanford and Southern Methodist University, have developed research on the relationship between refugees and innovation; governments, including the UK's Department for International Development, have provided funding for innovation relating to refugees and displacement; and a growing number of businesses and social entrepreneurs have also begun to enter the refugee innovation space, for a wide array of motives.

UNHCR Innovation, for example, has adopted a core approach of 'Amplify, Connect, Explore' – reflecting the three-fold aspiration to promote internal good practice, better connections in-house, and better partnerships and links to solutions outside the organisation. Much of its early work has used two of the Dollo Ado camps in Ethiopia as a field laboratory for a series of early pilots, and it has created four virtual learning spaces across the thematic areas of Learning, Linking, Self-Reliance, and Energy. Among its most notable

achievements so far have been the creation of a Refugee Housing Unit in collaboration with the IKEA Foundation, which has been piloted in Iraq and Ethiopia, and the development of 'UNHCR Ideas', an online ideas-management platform, connecting field and headquarters staff, developed in collaboration with software company Mindjet/Spigit.

A key part of UNHCR Innovation's work has been reaching out to private sector actors, drawing upon their ideas, funding and networks, and appealing for their involvement on the grounds of a combination of philanthropy, corporate social responsibility and the desire to innovate. Its partners have included the UN Foundation, Hewlett Packard, Ashoka, IDEO, Vodafone, IKEA Foundation and the Hunt Foundation, as well as universities such as Oxford, Stanford and Georgetown.

UNHCR is not alone in seeking to improve organisational response through innovation. Across a range of NGOs there is a growing receptivity to piloting new ideas across and within the health, nutrition, WASH, education and shelter sectors. In food delivery to refugees, for example, WFP is now using cash² as an ever-growing proportion of its aid delivery, and the organisation now sees its role not as emergency food aid but as "ensuring access to nutrients".

Innovation by refugees

Organisational approaches too often address pre-defined problems using solutions provided by external actors and sometimes neglect the skills, talents and aspirations of crisis-affected communities themselves. In the refugee context, it is important that innovations be responsive to end-users who are best placed to specify problems and to identify solutions that will be relevant to the context of local cultures and markets.

It is also crucial to recognise 'bottom-up' innovation by refugees themselves. When refugees flee across borders, they are faced with new markets, new regulatory environments and new social networks.

They have to adapt by necessity, and so, despite the constraints, they often innovate in their income-generating activities and their adoption of appropriate technologies, for example.

The Humanitarian Innovation Project conducted research with refugees in Uganda to explore their own innovation in respect of their livelihoods, including the ways in which they use technology and engage with the private sector. Based on participatory, mixed-methods research, including a survey of 1,600 refugees in Kampala and two settlements, Nakivale and Kyangwali, we were able to reveal vibrant and complex economic ecosystems that are nationally and transnationally interconnected, and that thrive despite the constraints they face.

In terms of technology, our data showed, for example, that mobile phone and internet use is greater among refugees than in the general population, with 96% of refugees in urban areas and 71% in rural settlements having mobile phones, and 51% and 11% respectively having access to the internet, often using them for income-generating activities.

Many refugees adapt their own appropriate technologies with a wide array of livelihoods innovations – from Congolese wooden bicycles to sustainable rain-water cooling systems for maize-milling, to video-game parlours based entirely on re-assembled second-hand equipment. One of the two keynote speakers at HIP2014, Ntakamazé Nziyonvira, himself a Congolese refugee in Uganda, described his role in setting up a youth organisation, Ciyota, in the Kyangwali refugee settlement, which has offered educational and entrepreneurial opportunities to young refugees. He also discussed how members of his family and community set up a cooperative to collectively sell sorghum to Nile Breweries, a large beer producer.

These are examples of the need to draw upon ideas from human-centred design and participatory methods to provide an



Repairing and selling used phones in Nakivale.



Modified bike for sharpening farm tools in Nakivale.



Workers making MakaPads at factory in refugee settlement. See article on page 14.

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alternative model of bottom-up innovation that builds on the capacities of displaced populations. This model requires an approach that recognises and understands the capacity for innovation within communities and also puts these communities and local systems at the heart of the innovation process, regardless of where key ideas or resources originate.

Metrics and standards

One of the crucial observations of HIP2014 was that “there can be no innovation without evidence”; unless we can measure the impact of pilots and have metrics – standards for measurement – for what success or failure mean, then attempts to innovate are likely to be dead-ends, and potentially even harmful. Yet we have few good metrics for innovation, and monitoring and evaluation standards in the area remain underdeveloped.

In the refugee context, one of the principal aspirations for innovation is that it can contribute towards refugees’ self-reliance. But we lack accepted metrics for self-reliance or, more broadly, for what UNHCR is now calling ‘progressive solutions’, the gradual move from some degree of dependence on humanitarian assistance and protection towards greater autonomy and reintegration within the state system. So by what standards, and on whose behalf, should we judge a refugee innovation?

Here there is a crucial role for research in general and for universities in particular. Any refugee innovation project should build into its programming a research component that can establish metrics and baseline data in order to measure the impact of a pilot or prototype against clearly defined criteria. This also requires broader research to establish standards and metrics for the normative goals of the refugee regime – including empowerment, protection and sustainability of solutions – which are currently lacking.

It is also important that ethical and normative standards for refugee innovation should be developed. As the range of actors engaging in refugee assistance broadens, so UNHCR’s role as the central guardian

or gatekeeper in the refugee regime will change. A range of non-traditional actors will interact with the refugee regime for an array of complex motives. Businesses, for example, are diverse and come in many forms. While it will be difficult to exclude particular actors, ethical standards and codes of conduct will have a central role to play in outlining the requirements for an actor to be regarded as legitimate in its engagement with innovation in the refugee context.

The humanitarian innovation debate represents an opportunity to re-think key aspects of how we do refugee assistance. Many of the challenges of refugee protection and solutions are longstanding. However, many of the currently applied ‘solutions’ are not fit for purpose, encouraging dependency rather than facilitating sustainable opportunities.

HIP2014 brought together many of the key stakeholders in this debate. It exemplified the value of dialogue and debate across sectors, connecting people who might not otherwise speak to one another. It led to new ideas and new networks. It engaged international organisations, NGOs, community-based organisations, governments, universities, researchers and, crucially, refugees themselves in a shared conversation. The challenge, however, is to transform dialogue into action and to find ways to – collectively – learn better and pilot better approaches. This requires conceptual and moral clarity. There are immense opportunities, especially if the skills, talents and aspirations of displaced populations themselves are at the heart of the conversation.

Alexander Betts alexander.betts@qeh.ox.ac.uk is Associate Professor in Refugee and Forced Migration Studies at the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford. www.rsc.ox.ac.uk He is the Director of the Humanitarian Innovation Project www.oxhip.org and will be Director of the Refugee Studies Centre from October 2014.

1. See article by Alexander Aleinikoff on pages 8-10.
2. See article by Erik Abild on pages 23-5.

Innovation – what, why and how for a UN organisation

T Alexander Aleinikoff

The purpose of innovation is to make humanitarian work more effective and more reflective. We do innovation to improve human lives by doing things better. Innovation, for UNHCR, is a humanitarian imperative to be carried out with partners.

As practised at UNHCR, innovation is a strategy for change and for problem solving that relies on new modalities and products and that seeks to benefit from the ‘minds of many’ (with the ‘many’ drawn from both inside and outside the organisation). So let me offer a definition of innovation as ‘dynamic problem solving with friends’.

In a world of tens of millions of persons displaced by violence, we need to constantly challenge ourselves to think in new ways to maximise the impact of our life-saving and life-sustaining efforts. Innovation can also help us mobilise resources for our work to the extent it produces better delivery and introduces efficiencies. Lastly – and this value should not be underestimated – innovation within an organisation can improve *esprit de corps*; staff take pride in belonging to an innovating organisation and, if encouraged, will contribute their creativity in ways that advance the organisation’s mission.

How does an organisation think differently with friends? From our experience at UNHCR, there are several crucial elements. First, innovation requires executive-level support; staff need to know that they will be rewarded, not punished, for thinking about new ways to do our work. Second, organisational innovation will need, at least at the start, dedicated additional funding. One cannot expect the development and deployment of new ways of working if we ask our organisational units to do it while they are doing everything else we are asking them to do. At UNHCR, our Innovation Team has been effective at raising funds from the private sector and individual donors – and I would suggest that other UN organisations

can do the same: outside funders are eager to support efforts by the UN that foster innovation. Third, an organisation needs to create safe spaces and reserved time for innovation to take root. We have done this at UNHCR by establishing a cadre of staff in the field – we call them iFellows – who are given time by their supervisors to pursue defined innovation projects, overseen by the headquarters-based Innovation Team. Fourth, successful innovation requires partners (the ‘many minds’) – academic, UN organisations, private sector and foundations – who can provide an outsider perspective, new ideas and, perhaps, funding.

Inside the organisation

Large bureaucratic organisations are by nature hostile to innovation. They have established ways of doing things, set forms of funding and budgets that are committed to on-going projects, and well-understood avenues for career advancement for staff that tend to reward those who support the existing culture and corporate practices. And yet in saying this, I am glad to report that I have found in every operation at UNHCR that I have visited staff who are experimenting with new ways of working – they just don’t tell headquarters about it! As stated above, there needs to be a clear message from the top that field-based innovation will be fostered and supported, not squashed.

Let me give one example. For several years, headquarters units at UNHCR have been devising a plan for introducing an organisation-wide strategy for capturing biometrics of refugees. Faced with emergency needs and concerned about the time the project was taking at headquarters, UNHCR’s

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Jordan operation came up with its own biometric strategy, one that it could implement in a short time for the hundreds of thousands of recently arrived Syrian refugees. The initial response from headquarters was negative, as there was concern that a Jordan-specific solution might not be compatible with the eventual global approach that would be adopted. After lengthy discussions, the Jordan operation was given the go-ahead, and its technological solution has now spread to other operations dealing with the Syrian refugee emergency; all told, more than 750,000 refugees have been registered with the locally developed biometric solution. The headquarters project is currently still in its development and testing phase.

An organisation must also create incentives for staff to take risks. I have mentioned the iFellows project at UNHCR. Another innovation has been the introduction of a social media platform that allows us to put out to our field colleagues specific ‘challenges’ (such as how to better teach languages to refugees). Staff are invited to contribute proposed solutions and to comment on solutions provided by others; the winning idea is given funding for implementation.¹ We have also established a designated award for innovation as part of our general staff award programme. And in the future, we will feature staff innovation efforts on a new Innovation website.

Another important internal element of successful innovation is the organisation’s willingness to accept failure. This is crucial to the project of incentivising risk-taking. Our Innovation Team has failed in a couple of interesting ways. The failures led us to re-think the projects and then re-launch them for additional testing.

Finally, innovation benefits, I believe, from processes that are more horizontal and networked than vertical and hierarchical. I am rather startled by the hierarchy in UN organisations, where it is seen as unusual for high-ranking directors to speak with and treat low-grade staff as peers and colleagues.



A Syrian refugee in Mafraq, Jordan, takes cash from an ATM after using iris scan technology to identify herself.

A ‘minds of many’ approach recognises that creativity is a human characteristic, not one linked to a particular grade of staff.

The role of outsiders

It should be obvious that persons and institutions outside UN organisations can be sources of good ideas and new approaches. But it is an interesting puzzle as to how to benefit from outside innovation in the most efficient ways. I can testify that a great many good ideas come to UNHCR on a regular basis. I am presented with new products and new processes that – I am told – will transform the way we do our work and dramatically improve the lives of refugees. Unfortunately, we do not have adequate time to analyse them, test them and compare them with other suggested solutions. I would suggest that it would be better for organisations like UNHCR to identify and publicise problems we are seeking to solve and then engage others to work with us in developing and implementing solutions. And perhaps an outside institution could take on the role of collecting and screening innovative suggestions for UN organisations.

Two types of innovation: sustaining and disruptive

Literature on innovation distinguishes between **sustaining innovation** and **disruptive innovation**. Sustaining innovation works within established institutional paradigms to carry out existing tasks and functions faster, cheaper and better. Disruptive innovation is more radical; if

successful, it supplants the previous paradigm. It is, for example, the challenge that email poses to the postal service. Disruptive innovation relies on new technologies and succeeds when it can supply services similar to or better than existing services for less.

Insiders, if we practice innovation at all, are generally of the sustaining innovation variety. For example, we will seek product innovation (e.g. a more efficient cook-stove) or programme innovation (such as better monitoring of health needs and delivery) that does not substantially challenge existing institutional structures or processes. Innovators inside an organisation rarely seek to be seen as an 'insurgency'; they generally want to work within the system in order to preserve their chances at career advancement. And for every internal innovation effort that seeks to be disruptive, there are insiders with a stake in the status quo who are expert at killing, stalling or domesticating the disruptive proposal.

Disruptive innovation is therefore likely to require the help of outsiders – those who can help insiders see the box we are in so that we can think outside it. Surprisingly, however, I find that many outsiders who support innovation in the UN – academics, policymakers, activists and NGO staff – generally recommend forms of sustaining, not disruptive, innovation. This tendency may arise from their recognition of what is possible as well as their desire to be relevant. And while much of this outside work is both excellent and helpful, I would nonetheless urge that those on the outside be more bold: we depend on them to challenge our premises, to tell us that we are asking the wrong question and what the right question is, to contend that we cannot solve the problems that confront us unless we are willing to undertake fundamental institutional and programmatic change.

Let me close by underscoring that last point. UN organisations could well benefit from a disruptive innovation approach to programmatic change. Disruptive innovators might ask: instead of building health clinics, why not provide refugees

with medical insurance? Instead of giving people food and non-food items, perhaps their autonomy would be enhanced if we gave them cash assistance? Instead of talking about the three sustainable solutions of return, resettlement and local integration, should we talk about a fourth, destabilising solution of labour migration, giving people work visas? These are potentially paradigm-shifting kinds of interventions.

We have created and we maintain a regime, an industry, a culture, of dependency through which humanitarian relief becomes long-term assistance. We know that we do not move quickly enough from relief to development and reconstruction, and that we do not have adequate strategies to foster self-reliance among displaced populations. This needs to change. We need new approaches that merge humanitarian and development programmes into a new paradigm for improving the lives of the millions of displaced persons in today's world. This is a disruptive thought that has both deep programmatic and product implications, and it will surely face the usual obstacles to innovation – entrenched interests, and entrenched ways of thinking and acting.

I have suggested that innovation requires leadership, resources, incentives and partners. But ultimately success must begin with an organisation's desire to change. This desire arises for humanitarian organisations, I hope and believe, not from motivations to preserve our own relevancy, or our 'market share', but from a deep and shared commitment to the work of relieving suffering, restoring hope and building robust human communities.

T Alexander Aleinikoff is UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees. www.unhcr.org He also manages the UNHCR blog at <http://blog.unhcr.org/globalviews/> and welcomes comments there on innovation. He can be contacted through rossfi@unhcr.org.

This article is adapted from his keynote address to the Humanitarian Innovation Conference in Oxford, 19 July 2014.

1. See article by Alice Bosley on pages 15-16.

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Learning curves and collaboration in reconceiving refugee settlements

Mariano-Florentino Cuéllar and Aparna Surendra

A collaboration between UNHCR, Ennead Architects and Stanford University uses settlement design to promote innovation and further development in the refugee protection model but collaborators initially face a steep learning curve.

Located in the hilly western edge of Rwanda, Kiziba refugee camp is home to some 16,000 refugees. Kiziba's population is young, with 50% of its residents under the age of 18. The children born within the camp have spent their entire lives there and have few prospects for a long-term solution. They are fortunate to have access to shelter, nutrition assistance and protection but, eighteen years after Kiziba was established, the camp still operates on foundations designed for short-term residency; food is rationed at a distribution point, the education system is stop-gap, refugees have minimal interaction with host communities, and livelihoods opportunities are small-scale and limited. When we visited in May 2013, UNHCR had just received permission from the government to replace the shelter roofs of plastic sheeting with sturdier, more permanent, iron ones.

In an ideal world, refugees would rarely if ever live in camps. Yet people who flee persecution and violence across borders routinely face staggering gaps in the refugee protection scheme and may end up living in camps for years, if not decades, while long-term resettlement, repatriation or local integration remain elusive goals. The average time a refugee spends in a camp now approaches 20 years, and 6.4 million of the world's 10.5 million refugees live in protracted refugee situations.¹ The complicated reality is that dedicated settlements will remain a part of the humanitarian landscape for some time.

In April 2012, UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner Alex Aleinikoff approached Stanford University as part of a broader effort to develop UNHCR's innovation agenda, with a focus on the planning, design and

administration of refugee settlements. Given the realities of protracted refugee situations, how could UNHCR build its capacity to negotiate difficult and time-constrained circumstances for creating settlements, and how might those settlements advance a more robust conception of refugee protection, self-sufficiency and well-being at a reasonable cost?

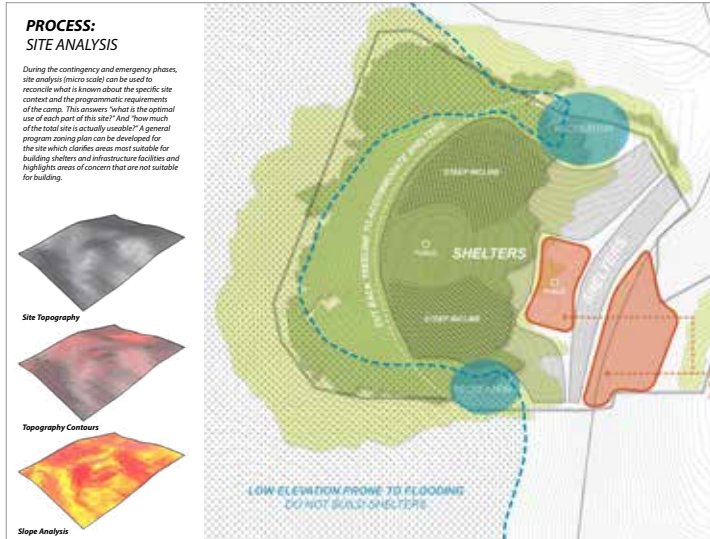
Stanford responded by developing several projects to support UNHCR within the context of the university's research and teaching mission. Mariano-Florentino Cuéllar of Stanford's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies formed multi-disciplinary working groups of students, researchers and professionals (including a group from Ennead Architects, working *pro bono*) who asked how UNHCR could rethink its design process and facilitate a camp's transitions over time.

Despite best intentions, the initial conversations between Stanford, Ennead, and UNHCR were often daunting. Participants brought to the project distinct cultures, experiences, norms and priorities. UNHCR staff were all too familiar with the intricate web of overlapping roles and responsibilities involved in setting up ostensibly temporary homes for newly arriving refugees but the picture was far more opaque to the architects and researchers. The UNHCR *Handbook for Emergencies* has a mere 11 pages dedicated to planning strategies, and UNHCR often struggles to meet minimum Sphere standards during crisis response. Many site planners default to using a standard grid layout, which can be executed quickly in an emergency but can lead to long-term problems (for

instance, poor drainage) when applied to topographically varied sites. To add to the operational complexity, camp planning has a significant political dimension; UNHCR management can negotiate with a host government for a site only to find that the allocated land is unusable or unsuitable.

Two years and three mission trips to refugee camps later, our concept has evolved into a flexible design toolkit that can be deployed in a variety of situations, including those where planners have limited time and resources to begin providing shelter and protection for arriving refugees.² In its current iteration, the toolkit aims to support UNHCR's contingency planning processes and to insert design features and considerations that prepare a camp for future modification. It comprises three main tools, which the participants continue to refine and expect to test further in the field.

The **Contingency Phase Mapping Tool** uses publicly available data and a list of critical drivers, ranging from topographical features to the size of the local population, to map potential settlement sites. Site planners would use the tool to quickly identify and filter viable sites before field visits, and to better plan for a given site's insufficiencies. UNHCR management would use the data during site negotiations with host governments and could link use of preferred sites with host government priorities, such as limited environmental impact. Crucially, the tool makes it more feasible for users to include long-term considerations – such as opportunities for refugee livelihoods and proximity to local services – in the site selection process itself. Unquestionably, political constraints and logistical challenges can pose difficulties



Example of site analysis tool, taken from *Toward a Unified Approach* (published April 2014) http://issuu.com/enneadarchitects/docs/toward_a_unified_approach-highres

but, nonetheless, by allowing planners to consider the interaction of site, design and the adjacent environment, the contingency mapping tool can help UNHCR and its partners make the best use of available options to support refugee self-sufficiency.

The **Site Layout Tool** uses publicly available data to identify usable land and plot the placement of shelters, communal facilities and marketplaces at a site-specific level. It aims to help planners move away from a standard grid model, and to create a camp with an immediate functional infrastructure that can be easily modified over time. As the camp grows older, this tool could plan additional features, such as a connective pathway between the camp and a neighbouring community to facilitate economic and social interaction.

The **Best Practices Database** would help site planners with specific problems quickly learn of methods used in other UNHCR settlements. It aims to provide inspiration to individual site planners and enable UNHCR to collect and retain institutional knowledge of actions in the field.

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The two-year collaboration has been an immense learning experience for the architects and researchers involved. Our first year was dedicated to familiarising ourselves with UNHCR's language, developing relationships throughout the organisation, and adjusting our approach to include the mix of flexibility and focus necessary to working successfully together. We grew increasingly familiar with the pace of work; key contacts would travel for weeks at a time with limited connectivity, and the mission trips critical to our work would often be coordinated at the very last minute. A planned pilot in Mugombwa, Rwanda, was indefinitely delayed when our staff contact moved to a new field office and UNHCR funding for the project did not come through. And while our

investment of time has allowed us to develop the trust and in-depth relationships necessary for significant innovation, our organisations require outcomes within the medium term. To date, Ennead has volunteered over \$200,000 of its time, and Stanford has similarly committed staff and resources to the project; a pilot or other tangible milestone is needed to help us continue our respective organisations' involvement in the project. With the help of a dedicated UNHCR liaison, our next steps will bring the Contingency Phase Mapping tool to a pilot phase by identifying a funding source and field site, and securing country-level UNHCR commitment to include our team in their contingency planning process.

Beyond the pilot, what might success mean in this context? At its core, the toolkit recognises that a refugee settlement's long-term social isolation and UNHCR- and partner-administered services can create a refugee population overly dependent on humanitarian aid and a local population resentful of refugees' comparatively higher standards of living.³ Our hope is that the toolkit will move camps toward a connected village model, where settlements have the capacity to support refugee interaction with neighbouring

communities through shared services such as hospitals, schools and marketplaces. The toolkit invites much-needed conversations on funding development initiatives within camps and on refugees' rights to movement and to work, while providing a framework for this discussion.

Empowering refugees to achieve economic self-sufficiency depends on far more than the existence of treaty provisions or even organisational support. Unquestionably, political constraints and logistical challenges can bedevil planning efforts for refugee livelihoods and better-functioning settlements, particularly given the constraints on settling refugees in urban areas or the choice of locations available for a settlement. By allowing planners to consider the interaction of site, design and the adjacent environment, these tools can help UNHCR and its partners support refugee self-sufficiency through best use of constrained options.

Against the large and complicated backdrop of humanitarian action, the toolkit is both an example of innovation within a humanitarian organisation, and an opportunity for actors involved in refugee response – from donor nations to host governments – to re-think the ingrained constraints that hobble a broader vision for refugee protection. Practical interventions such as the toolkit can create a space to question, test and innovate on these problems and, in time, may make the challenges ahead increasingly tractable.

Mariano-Florentino Cuéllar tcuellar@stanford.edu is Director and Senior Fellow and Aparna Surendra aparnas1@stanford.edu is Program Manager, both at the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University. <http://fsi.stanford.edu>

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Technology, production and partnership innovation in Uganda

Moses Musaaazi

Since 2007 a partnership between UNHCR, the Government of Uganda and 'MakaPads' inventor Moses Musaaazi has helped provide affordable sanitary pads for thousands of refugee girls and women while substantially reducing UNHCR's expenditure on these essential items.

In 2006 UNHCR was looking for ways to reduce its spending on sanitary pads for refugees in Uganda. Staff read about Dr Moses Musaaazi, a Ugandan entrepreneur, who in 2004 had been supported by the Rockefeller Foundation to come up with a design that would meet the demand for affordable sanitary pads for primary schoolgirls, many of whom miss school every month during their menstrual periods. Existing sanitary pads were all imported and were too expensive. The result, launched in June 2006, was 'MakaPads', sanitary pads made primarily out of papyrus (which grows locally) and recyclable paper, and priced some 50% cheaper than imported pads. In addition, the home-based production process entailed simple, low-energy machinery, and the skills could be acquired by anyone.

UNHCR Uganda recognised an opportunity to reduce the cost of providing sanitary pads while providing employment for refugees. The Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda gave permission for refugees to be employed in producing MakaPads, and in 2007 a new MakaPads factory opened in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement. Production grew from 30,000 MakaPads in 2007, employing 18 refugees, to 1,080,000 MakaPads in 2013, employing 48 refugees. In 2005-06 UNHCR had spent over US\$400,000 on (imported) sanitary pads; in 2012-13 they purchased MakaPads only, at a cost of US\$230,000.

The model of MakaPads production encourages entrepreneurship; while there is an overall manager of the plant in Kyaka II, each sub-process allows a group of refugees to form an enterprise and produce as many items as possible since the pay is per unit. This

model requires less supervision, encourages high quality and increases production rates; furthermore, employees may sub-contract to increase capacity, thereby providing wider employment. With the money earned, some refugees have been able to send their children and relatives' children to better, fee-paying schools. Having acquired entrepreneurial skills, some refugees have also set up a spinoff business to rear goats while others have established shops.

The MakaPads project stands out as a good example of innovation involving the private sector, the UN and refugees themselves, which offers both direct and indirect benefits.¹ MakaPads production could and should be expanded within Uganda and in other countries as appropriate, so that other refugees can be provided with the same skills training and income-generating activity. Furthermore, the model could work in other sectors. There are refugees engaged in agricultural production in all refugee settlements in Uganda. They sell their produce to middlemen who transport it to Kampala and elsewhere, with the middlemen making huge profits on the refugees' efforts. There could be a win-win situation whereby refugees are contracted (as a cooperative) to produce maize, process it into flour and sell it to UNHCR and/or the World Food Programme to then be supplied to refugees.

Moses Musaaazi mkmusaazi@t4tafrica.co is Managing Director, Technology for Tomorrow Ltd. www.t4tafrica.co

1. For more information, see Humanitarian Innovation Project (HIP) Mission Report #4: *Technology and Innovation in Kampala - June 2013* www.oxhip.org/wp-content/uploads/HIP-Mission-Report-4-FINAL.pdf and www.oxhip.org/innovations/locally-made-sanitary-pads-maka-pads/

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UNHCR Ideas: an online platform for change

Alice Bosley

'UNHCR Ideas' aims to enable collaborative problem solving and idea generation among an online community.

In August 2013, UNHCR's Innovation team launched the UNHCR Ideas platform – an online crowdsourcing tool¹ that enables members of the humanitarian community to put forward and develop innovative solutions to challenges in refugee protection and assistance.

Each Ideas initiative – or 'Challenge' – presents a particular issue that refugees or humanitarian communities face, either global in nature or specific to a certain region, operation or population. Viewing, comments and votes on ideas are registered by the crowdsourcing software, and the most popular ideas are automatically filtered up through the system to different stages including an 'expert rating' and a final Leadership Committee review. When an idea is chosen by the Leadership Committee, it becomes an active project pursued by UNHCR Innovation and collaborating offices or organisations. Since the platform's launch, three global UNHCR Ideas Challenges have taken place, each proving the power of the crowd in humanitarian problem solving.

The first Challenge

The first problem statement posted on the Ideas platform was: "How can access to information and services provided by UNHCR and partners be improved for refugees and people of concern residing in urban areas?" Participants in the Challenge posted 114 ideas, voted over 430 times, and made over 1,200 comments on the online discussions over the six-week pilot period. Participants were mainly UNHCR staff (78%) from over 50 countries but also included a handful of representatives from partner and refugee organisations. The winning idea is being implemented as a project in UNHCR for 2014.²

In an organisation that is often thought of as hierarchical or bureaucratic, UNHCR Ideas provides a possibility for staff in the

field and around the world, no matter what their rank or job, to engage in the problem-solving process. Ideas progress through the system based on community response and merit rather than by who came up with them. Additionally, the ratings of each idea are visible to all participants on the platform, allowing members to better understand how the final ideas are chosen, and giving participants a feeling of ownership and engagement throughout the whole process. Surveys after each Challenge have shown that the flat structure and transparency of UNHCR Ideas are major advantages of the initiative.

"...it's a fascinating application – the fact that it allows people with little authority, who are usually filled with ideas, to express their ideas along with more senior staff and receive equal consideration." (participant)

"Finally, there is a place where you can share your ideas and those ideas can be commented [on], improved, and utilised!" (participant)

From the beginning, UNHCR Ideas has also presented an opportunity to involve refugees in problem solving and programming. In the first Challenge, for example, one of the most active participants was a refugee who tapped into his community in Kampala to add their expertise and feedback to the discussion. However, it has been difficult to make the platform open and widely accessible, with issues of internet connectivity, computer access and other barriers such as language, literacy rates and lack of awareness preventing widespread participation by refugees, and our experiences have shown that a blending of technology with traditional off-line solutions is necessary to make each Challenge more widely accessible. In the most recent Challenge, focus groups in Zambia and Kenya generated ideas and

solutions that were then introduced onto the platform; this dual approach is proving effective in enabling broader conversations.

UNHCR Ideas was created through a number of private partnerships. The platform and concept were created through a close working relationship between Mindjet, the software

company that built the crowdsourcing tool, and UNHCR Innovation – a good example of private sector culture successfully meshing with nonprofit culture. To date, funding from the IKEA Foundation and the Hunter and Stephanie Hunt 'Return on Innovation' project have enabled us to launch Challenges with a pledge to pursue the winning ideas – which is felt to be essential to the success of the initiative.

Forthcoming Challenges

In the second half of 2014, UNHCR Ideas will launch Challenges on sexual and gender based violence, energy, livelihoods and education. The 'Safe from the Start' Challenge will run from mid-August until early October 2014 and asks participants to find solutions to the question: "What innovative energy and/or livelihoods programmes can most effectively protect persons of concern from sexual and gender-based violence at the onset of humanitarian emergencies?"

www.unhcr.org/53f31d739.pdf

Alice Bosley bosley@unhcr.org is Associate Innovation Operations Officer with UNHCR Innovation. www.unhcrinnovation.org/

1. Using Mindjet software and powered by SpigitEngage.
2. For more information about the first Challenge and a review of the initiative, see Bloom L (2014) *UNHCR Ideas: Open innovation inspiring collaboration and new ideas within the UN: Independent review of an online platform pilot used for collaborative innovation within and beyond The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)* <http://tinyurl.com/HIP-UNHCRIdeas-review-2014>

Resettlement and livelihoods innovation in the US

Faith Nibbs

Conversations with multiple stakeholders in the US help to highlight barriers to economic self-sufficiency for resettled refugees and opportunities for innovative approaches.

The US has admitted over 2.5 million refugees for permanent resettlement since 1975. Its goal has always been for them to achieve economic self-sufficiency in the most expedient manner, under the assumption that legal entry into the workforce would provide refugees with dignity and sustainable livelihoods. But despite the US having some of the world's most liberal work rights, many refugees have been living in poverty for long periods of time, never acquiring the health care, language skills, market access or human capital to become self-sufficient.

The Forced Migration Innovation Project at Southern Methodist University is investigating the long-term outcomes of those who have been in the US for more than 20 years in order to better understand where the constraints and opportunities lie, from the points of view of all stakeholders involved

in livelihoods.¹ Whereas humanitarian innovation calls for including 'user' or refugee opinions in the process of problem solving, our participatory approach falls more in line with facilitating an exchange of knowledge between stakeholders, and then drawing on those conversations for collaborative livelihoods design and implementation. Below are the primary barriers to refugees obtaining sustainable livelihoods in the US as seen by the stakeholders, and the implications for potential innovation solutions.

The view of the service provider: Service providers in our research lament the fact that they are required to get as many refugees as possible into work within 180 days, which allows little time to focus on the quality or appropriateness of the jobs. Because renewal of agency funding depends on numbers into work, service providers lack incentive

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to draw out refugees' potential, often pressurising them to take low-paid jobs.

The view of the private sector: Mainstream job training programmes within the private sector often do not include refugees, who lack job-appropriate language and educational skills. There is also misunderstanding within the business community about who is a refugee, their rights to work, and the standing of credentials earned abroad.

The view of the receiving society: Refugees are strongly perceived to be passive recipients of help, and their contributions to the host societies often go unnoticed. They are also widely assumed by the general public to fit better into the lowest paid jobs, regardless of their educational backgrounds or the skills they bring from before they became refugees. One significant challenge in resettlement is that the host community is largely unaware of the diversity and complexity of refugee economies.

The view of the refugees: By and large, the refugee population sees that learning the language, and gaining skills and entrepreneurial training is the quickest path to a living wage. However, because government support ends after just a few months in the country, they are forced to take jobs at minimum wage to survive rather than develop skills for the long term. The barriers they face to gaining vocational skills include limited access to training, lack of language proficiency, course fees, limited time, and unreliable access to child care and transportation.

However, in listening to refugees we uncovered a more complex picture. Firstly, many characterised a 'good job' as one that paid enough money for them to survive rather than a career path that offered substantial growth opportunities. Secondly, recently resettled refugees tend to think of themselves as having no marketable skills even when this was not entirely the case. Many Burmese refugees whom we interviewed were reluctant to inform caseworkers about particular job skills, because they felt that without

being able to speak English, they would not be able to utilise those skills in a job. Additionally, many did not think their skills would be transferable in the US market.

The view of the state: In the current anti-immigration climate it is difficult to secure support for immigrant-specific programmes or funding to enable immigrants to access mainstream services. Policy debates over raising minimum wages to living wages are undermined by assumptions that those working these jobs are transient, temporary workers who do not rely on that income for a living.

Innovative solutions

Examples of innovative solutions that seek to enhance refugee livelihoods include partnerships with the private sector and policymakers. The Holt Bread Kitchen, for instance, is a business started by an American master baker with a passion for social justice. This group works to increase the economic security of refugee women by providing artisan baking and culinary business skills that lead to jobs in the higher paying specialty food industry. This programme works because it is sensitive to refugee women's pre-flight skills, market demands, and the need to earn a living wage.

Many among the Ethiopian community in Dallas use easy-to-find jobs at convenience stores with managerial programmes, for example, as a training ground for business management skills. "We have dreams of opening our own businesses but we need to learn the [market] system here first." Better understanding of this strategy – used in the absence of affordable entrepreneurial training – could help shape possible future collaborations with companies willing to offer programmes for refugees. Small business administration classes designed for refugees could also help orient newcomers toward loan opportunities and the skills that would facilitate entrepreneurship. Resettlement agencies could consider building more partnerships with businesses that pay living wages, provide on-the-job training, offer

distinct career development opportunities, or scholarships to online universities.

Capturing the enabling environments for sustainable livelihoods from each of the stakeholders holds promise beyond the US. For example, what if skill training programmes for multinational corporations could begin in protracted situations? Not only would it prepare those bound for resettlement for living-wage jobs but it could simultaneously train a skilled overseas workforce that could

open up new potential markets for the private sector. In this way we propose an expanded relationship between refugees, resettlement states, humanitarian actors and the private sector in livelihood innovation.

Faith Nibbs fnibbs@mail.smu.edu is Assistant Research Professor and Director of the Forced Migration Innovation Project, Southern Methodist University, Dallas. www.smu-fmip.org

1. Thanks to MaryBeth Chrostowsky, Lydia Rodriguez, Sergio Lopez and Carrie Perkins for their contribution to this article.

Entrepreneurship and innovation by refugees in Uganda

Robert Hakiza

In order to make a living, refugees have to be innovative, and refugees in Uganda have contributed tremendously to entrepreneurship and innovation in the country.

Uganda hosts nearly 380,000 refugees and asylum seekers, of which the majority come from DRC, South Sudan, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya. The majority live in approved settlements while some 54,000 live in the capital, Kampala. Contrary to common assumptions, refugees in Uganda have contributed tremendously to entrepreneurship and innovation in the country, and their entrepreneurial success and innovation is highlighted by the Humanitarian Innovation Project in its report *Refugee Economies*, based on research conducted in Uganda in 2013.¹ The report shows that in order to make a living, refugees have to be innovative, and there are several small and medium enterprises which are owned or are run by refugees all over Uganda. This is possible because of Uganda's refugee policy which gives refugees freedom of movement and the same right to jobs and employment opportunities as the host community.

The government's policy of providing agricultural land to refugees in the settlements enables refugees to produce food both for their own consumption and to sell

the surplus. In addition, remittances have been a big source of funding for refugee entrepreneur start-up, in particular for the Somali refugees as there is a large Somali diaspora. Furthermore, while refugees in Uganda have limited access to information and communication technologies, many have nonetheless successfully overcome these hurdles to become effective technology users. Others go further, creating or adapting technological innovations for their business activities using locally available resources.

In the remote locations of Nakivale and Kyangwali settlements in Uganda's rural countryside, some 70% of refugees now regularly use mobile phones and, despite limited access, refugees have higher levels of internet use than the general population. Half of those using the internet in Nakivale get online using the Community Technology Access Centre (CTA) – an internet café in the settlement which is also a computer literacy training centre. The CTA was set up with the support of UNHCR and donations but is now run by a board of refugees and generates income from classes and internet use to pay for the teachers, director and

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maintenance, leaving UNHCR needing only to support the internet connection.

Some CTA customers use the internet to buy and sell items they need for their businesses, and to support entrepreneurial ventures. Demou-Kay, a young Congolese refugee, visits the CTA in Nakivale every day with his laptop, which he rents from another refugee, to use the café's internet connection and electricity supply to do his video editing work. He has also used his self-taught technical skills to make a radio transmitter to create a radio station, the only one in the settlement. The radio transmitter was constructed out of second-hand electrical parts and a mobile phone found in the settlement. His radio station transmits

over a 5-10 km radius, providing songs, news updates and health messages to listeners in and near Nakivale. By charging a small fee for song requests, he has begun to generate income from the station, helping to maintain the project.

Music shops are common in both Nakivale and Kyangwali, and rely directly on computers and phones for their services. Henry, a young Congolese man who owns one such shop in Nakivale, leaves the settlement every month for the neighbouring town of Mbarara. There he loads up a USB stick with hundreds of MP3 files which he purchases from a Ugandan merchant. On returning to Nakivale, he transfers the files from his USB onto a laptop; from his computer, he then loads

the files directly onto his customer's mobile phones, charging a fee per song.

Refugee-led organisations are also providing employment to a number of refugees. My organisation, the Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID), is one such organisation, set up initially to address the problem that many young refugees who had no work were turning to crime and drugs. A

group of Congolese refugees in Kampala decided to start a regular football game for both refugees and local people, after which young people would stay to discuss issues affecting their lives. As language barriers were seen as the main thing preventing them from finding jobs and integrating into their new society, the group of founders decided to start providing English

classes for free every morning. Today YARID has three English classes with an average of 30 students in each, including Ugandans. It has also set up tailoring and craft-making training for refugee women; among the eight graduates to date, three have started their own businesses. Finally, YARID, in collaboration with charity organisation the Xavier Project, run Tamuka Hub, a space where refugees can come together and use the internet for free and where they can receive training courses in social media, business skills and distance learning online.

Robert Hakiza roberthakiza2001@gmail.com is Executive Director of Young African Refugees for Integral Development. www.yarid.org

1. Report online at www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/refugeeeconomies



Demou-Kay running his radio station in Nakivale.

Innovation and refugee livelihoods: a historical perspective

Evan Elise Easton-Calabria

It is difficult to speak convincingly of 'new' or innovative practices towards refugees, especially in refugee livelihoods assistance, while there remains a significant gap in historical knowledge and institutional memory.

More than a decade ago Jeff Crisp wrote that "Since its inception...refugee studies has been notoriously ahistorical. Preoccupied with the latest emergency and with the plight of living people, researchers in this area of study have all too rarely looked into the past." This still rings true for the discipline, particularly in literature regarding refugee livelihoods and how to assist and 'innovate'. Without knowledge of past assistance practices we are unable to identify either truly novel innovations or those protracted challenges where innovation would be most beneficial.

Refugee livelihoods are currently discussed mainly as a self-evident concept or a new phenomenon altogether but research in the League of Nations, UN and International Labour Organisation archives, as well as the University of Oxford's Tristram F Betts grey literature collection, reveals that the main livelihoods assistance practices used today have been employed since the 1920s. These practices include agricultural production in settlements, vocational training and micro-finance. The evolution of terms, such as micro-finance instead of revolving funds, demonstrates more of a repackaging than true innovation. A drastic change is evident, however, in the administration and implementation of these practices – from bottom-up to top-down – which suggests that it is the **structure** of livelihoods assistance that needs innovation more than **what** is being provided.

The years between the two world wars saw the emergence of a participatory refugee regime through the League of Nations. Partly due to budget constraints the League had a strict 'no-charity' philosophy that required

the participation of refugees in their own resettlement. Reports from the 1920s detail the creation of both urban and rural refugee settlements in countries such as Greece and Bulgaria where agricultural production, vocational training and small loans and revolving funds were successfully employed to support refugees' self-reliance as well as to boost host-country development. Refugees became employees and delegates of the Nansen International Office for Refugees, construction workers for settlements, and benefactors of refugee livelihoods through paying for a Nansen Passport; this money then went into a revolving loan scheme to help refugees establish livelihoods.

This participatory approach changed drastically after World War II. The advent of large-scale foreign-led development projects meant that settlement was no longer funded or co-led by refugees but by organisations and institutions. In stark contrast to settlement efforts in the interwar years, where employed staff were largely host-country nationals or refugees, the 'experts' employed by the UN and other organisations were mainly Westerners, and an increased emphasis on host countries' national development led to the production of cash crops in settlements.

Overwhelmingly negative reports about many East African refugee settlements cite a highly authoritarian administration that constrained refugees' livelihoods strategies and reduced the potential self-reliance of the settlements. Refugees were often forced to disregard their own knowledge and skills in order to adhere to settlement stipulations, and were even punished for pursuing livelihoods other than farming. Concomitant with the top-down

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structure of settlements at this time was the limited knowledge of those foreign 'experts' as well as the ill-fitting nature of the technical 'innovations' they brought with them.

In some cases, the failed rural settlements of the 1960s and 1970s have become the refugee camps of today, with many practical challenges persisting. An examination of long-term Sudanese refugees in Uganda in 2006¹ discusses problems of soil quality and inadequate settlement plot size – precisely the same issues reported for the same population in Uganda in the 1960s. In 2010 UNHCR cited 'lack of early planning' as a major issue in responding to displacement, echoing the lack of soil testing and settlement planning of previous decades.

The post-war assistance approach resulted in a lack of leadership expertise in various areas and a lack of displaced community involvement that persist today. In the case of micro-finance, this has led to programme failings, although a notable adaptation – or innovation – has also been the seeking of outside support, such as UNHCR's 2010

Memorandum of Understanding with the Grameen Bank. While a discourse of refugee capability is widely employed, much of the innovation implemented is reminiscent of post-war administration in that it is still driven by actors other than refugees themselves.

Although innovation by way of adaptation to new situations and emerging technologies is present within refugee assistance, history suggests that innovation in the case of the main livelihoods assistance practices largely does not mean the creation of something new. It is instead their structure and implementation that have changed. Focusing on refugee livelihoods with this understanding may be one of the most innovative forms of assistance yet.

Evan Elise Easton-Calabria is a research assistant with the Humanitarian Innovation Project, University of Oxford.

evan.eastoncalabria@gmail.com

www.oxhip.org/

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Innovation for equity in Lebanon

Luciano Calestini

Innovative approaches in Lebanon aim to address, in two very different ways, the particular needs of the most vulnerable among the refugee and host populations.

For over three years, Lebanon has been hosting refugees fleeing the violent conflict in Syria; today, there are over 1.1 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon, comprising over 20% of the country's population. The continued escalation of the crisis has required UNICEF to find new ways to respond to the vast and growing needs of the most vulnerable children and their families. New and innovative approaches have been developed to plan for and reach those who need it the most, two of which are discussed here.

The first innovation focuses on how to plan to reach the most vulnerable children in an

environment where vulnerable groups are dispersed across the country. The second innovation focuses on unconventional ways to complement learning for out-of-school children in a country with more children out of school than there are children enrolled in public schools.

Mapping for targeted interventions

With large numbers of refugees spread across Lebanon, it is important to think about what geographical areas to prioritise if scarce resources are to be used effectively and efficiently. In order to identify the most vulnerable areas, in 2013 UNICEF Lebanon



The Pi4 Learning programme being showcased at Dhour El Shweir public secondary school in Lebanon.

developed a vulnerability map of the country in collaboration with the Prime Minister's Office. The map, which has now evolved to highlight a range of aspects of the crisis, reflects five strata of vulnerability, inclusive of both the vulnerable Lebanese population (living on less than US\$4 a day) and the registered Syrian refugee caseload – the best available data in a context where data is scarce. The resulting composite map of 1,561 localities highlights those places with the largest numbers of vulnerable people. The most vulnerable fifth amounts to 225 localities which together contain 86% of the registered refugee population and more than 66% of the vulnerable Lebanese population. Therefore, a relatively restricted geographic focus for programming allows for significant coverage of the most vulnerable populations in the country.

The mapping can also be used to drill down further to rank the most vulnerable locations within those 225 localities. For example, it is striking that half of all refugees and 40% of the Lebanese poor reside within the 90 most vulnerable localities of Lebanon, less than 6% of the total number.

Vulnerability mapping presents a new way of prioritising interventions for the most vulnerable, identifying defined geographical areas of vulnerability around which to coordinate action. Informed by this vulnerability analysis, UNICEF and its partners are using a variety of delivery 'gateways', such as schools and health centres, to reach Syrian refugees and vulnerable Lebanese communities, an effort that will have even greater impact as others follow suit.

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The Pi for Learning (Pi4L) Programme

The Pi4L pilot to give Syrian refugee out-of-school children the chance to learn skills in numeracy, literacy and technology was launched in May 2014.¹ This programme consists of tailored courses that utilise Raspberry Pi computers to offer a scalable and affordable solution that supports children in learning basic skills.

The Raspberry Pi is a credit-card-sized 'single-board' computer developed in the UK by the Raspberry Pi Foundation in order to promote the teaching of basic computer science in schools. Its small size, affordable price (£25/\$41) and the fact that it uses an open-source operating system means it is suitable and cost-effective for the large-scale Pi4L outreach programme.

Pi4L is a joint initiative between the International Education Association (IEA) and UNICEF Lebanon, in collaboration with Lebanon's Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Currently in testing phase, it seeks to provide refugee children in Lebanon with access to learning opportunities in

non-formal education programmes, teaching not only basic core skills to displaced Syrian children but also fundamental computing skills, as well as child rights. Access to the internet is not required.

The Raspberry Pi can be used in classrooms and informal refugee settlements while the growing Raspberry Pi community offers resources and support for students and teachers, such as software dedicated to learning coding to create stories, games and art. Teachers and students will also have access to video exercises that can help identify learning difficulties that students may face.

More Syrians are likely to try to seek refuge in Lebanon in the coming months. Where resources are over-stretched, innovative solutions are required if needs are to be adequately addressed.

Luciano Calestini lcalestini@unicef.org is Deputy Representative, UNICEF Lebanon. www.unicef.org/lebanon

1. www.facebook.com/Pi4Learning and www.facebook.com/UNICEFLebanon

Innovation and new ways of working across sectors

Erik Abild

Humanitarian actors will have to adapt to a changing world but it will not be easy or straightforward. Operations are changing as a result of innovations which bring many improvements but also throw up challenges.

There is real willingness and prioritisation within the humanitarian sector to invest in innovation in terms of developing new methods and approaches. One example is cash and market-based assistance, where during the last decade humanitarian organisations have developed innovative ways of delivering cash and market-based assistance instead of in-kind goods and services.

Delivered in the right way, cash and market-based assistance can be more effective than traditional aid in terms of supporting

local markets; more efficient in terms of cutting costs; and most importantly, it empowers beneficiaries to be more in control of assistance. The shift of cash from innovative to mainstream – presumably by diffusion of the understanding that cash brings advantages and opportunities – is shown by how, for example, WFP aims to have one third of its aid delivered through so called 'digital food' by 2015. In the Syria response, UNHCR estimates that more than 30 different agencies across six countries are using cash and voucher programming.

However, as with all change, cash-based assistance also represents challenges to existing systems and structures. A concrete challenge is how cash-based assistance crosses traditional sector and agency boundaries. Today, we mostly define needs and responses according to sectors, such as food, shelter, education or health. This is reflected in the cluster system and forms the basis of much of the humanitarian infrastructure, including UN agencies and specialised NGOs. Needs assessments are usually carried out by specialised agencies according to these sectors. Often it is the same agencies who implement the response, as well as evaluate their programmes in reports.

The challenge becomes evident when applying a cross-sectoral tool such as cash. In a situation where several agencies are assessing needs only within their respective sectors, it is possible to end up with several parallel cash transfer programmes, all potentially using different transfer methodologies, focusing on different sectors, but all with the identical objective of directing cash to the same beneficiary.

The potential for collaboration is obvious; providing one holistic cash-transfer programme to cover multiple needs would be more efficient and effective. But the structural issue is to decide who should be responsible for such a programme: which UN agency, or for that matter, which NGO? The challenge of introducing the innovation of cash into a sectorally divided system is neither to stop using the cluster system nor to ask agencies to stop specialising but to find new ways of working together.

Two concrete suggestions to achieve this are, firstly, to develop and improve collaboration around multi-sectoral needs assessments, and secondly, to strengthen the approach to response analysis; we, as a community, need to develop the way we decide on how to respond to a crisis and, taking the context and affected communities perspectives into account, we need to analyse which modality of response is best suited in a

specific context – and ideally also agree on who is best placed to respond.

Multi-sectoral needs assessments and joint response analysis require trust and genuine openness from all partners. We need to be willing to give up the inherent power that lies within the existing structures today, and we need to go beyond agency politics and territorial thinking. Creating such environments of improved cooperation will be crucial - but not easy.

This does not only apply to cash-based programmes, but relates to any innovation that leads to new forms of partnerships. Forming genuine partnerships entails moving towards more strategic levels, where decisions are taken in consultation, as opposed to relationships based on ‘funder’ and ‘implementing partners’. This is particularly relevant between donors and agencies, and also between international and local actors.

It is also relevant in terms of management structures, where more decisions should be taken closer to the field and actual needs. This should not be driven by risk-averse strategies but because local empowerment is seen as more effective and efficient. In the Norwegian Refugee Council we have time and time again seen the value of empowering local staff and involving beneficiaries to be part of designing programmes and implementing new approaches.

It is not just a case of working more together; leadership and decision making will be key challenges in terms of innovation and joint operations. Inter-cluster mechanisms will play an important role in this, and there will probably be a further increase in the use of consortia. In terms of cash-based programmes specifically, the private sector and the diaspora will play an increasing role, since they both have specialisation and a long tradition of transferring cash to customers or relatives. National governments will also have a role to play, as cash-transfer programmes have crucial links to governmental social protection programmes.

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A challenge – especially for big agencies – is to accept that new actors will come in, including small start-ups. These should be seen as valuable contributors to the humanitarian ecosystem, not as a challenge to existing positions. Inevitably, we will have to accept that not all agencies and approaches created in the past will be fit for tomorrow.

A central aspect of innovation is to create a culture for continuous improvement. However, despite the fact that all serious humanitarian actors recognise the importance of learning in terms of monitoring and evaluation, the problem is often not that the lessons are not identified but that the challenge often remains to learn the lessons and apply them. We must also acknowledge and address the fact that many of the obstacles to innovation lie within organisations themselves. These include rigid procedures and hierarchical systems, as well as risk-averse attitudes in terms of trying out something new with a risk of failure.

The importance of innovation is not new; as humanitarian actors, we have always been dependent on adapting to local contexts, working with people on the ground to find local solutions to diverse challenges. In this sense, innovation – emphasising local solutions and strategies by people in need themselves – is an essential aspect of good programming. It is when we stop being innovative in our approaches, by being overconfident in our previous experience and overlooking local realities and opportunities, that we fail; humility, openness and a willingness to learn are important values related to innovation.

Erik Abild erik.abild@nrc.no is Head of the Secretary General's Office in the Norwegian Refugee Council. www.nrc.no

This article is based on a presentation given at the Humanitarian Innovation Conference 2014. It represents the views of the author and does not necessarily reflect NRC policy.

Humanitarian innovation, humanitarian renewal?

Kristin Bergtora Sandvik

The continued evolution of the humanitarian innovation concept needs a critical engagement with how this agenda interacts with previous and contemporary attempts to improve humanitarian action.

Accountability and transparency have been central to discussions of humanitarian action over the past two decades. Yet these issues appear generally to be given scant attention in the discourse around humanitarian innovation. The humanitarian innovation agenda is becoming a self-contained field with its own discourse and its own set of experts, institutions and projects – and even a definitive founding moment, namely 2009, when the ALNAP study on innovation in humanitarian action was published.¹ While attempts to develop a critical humanitarian innovation discourse have borrowed extensively from critical discussions on innovation in development studies, humanitarianism is not development done

in a hurry but has its own distinct challenges, objectives and methodologies.

I will focus here on concrete material innovations, most commonly referred to as 'humanitarian technology'. Discussions on such humanitarian innovations regularly acknowledge the need to avoid both fetishising novelty in itself and attributing inherently transformative qualities to technology rather than seeing how technology may fit into and build upon refugees' existing resources.

Renewing humanitarianism

While it is obvious that internal and external reflections on a humanitarian industry and a

humanitarian ethos in need of improvement are much older pursuits, I will start – as most scholars in humanitarian studies do today – with the mid-1990s and the ‘Goma moment’. To recover from the moral and operational failures of the response to the Rwanda genocide and the ensuing crisis in the Great Lakes region of Africa, humanitarianism turned to human rights based approaches (HRBA) to become more ethical, to move from charitable action to social contract. Yet HRBA always suffered from an intrinsic lack of clarity of meaning as well as the problem of states being the obliged parties under international human rights, a particular problem in the context of displacement, whether internal or across borders.

A decade or so later, in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and in the face of accusations about poor governance, insufficient coordination, incompetence and waste, the humanitarian enterprise embarked on institutional reform to become better. Responses were to be maximised through Humanitarian Coordinators, funding was to become more efficient through Central Emergency Response Funds and, most importantly in the everyday life of humanitarian practitioners, the Cluster approach allocated areas of responsibility to the largest humanitarian actors.

The need for greater accountability and transparency were drivers for both HRBA (with its moral intricacies) and humanitarian reform (with its bureaucratic complexities). What is now happening with accountability and transparency within the technological-innovation-as-renewal paradigm?

If Rwanda and the Indian Ocean tsunami were the events ushering in HRBA and humanitarian reform, Haiti was the much heralded game-changer for technology whose use there (despite many practical problems and malfunctioning solutions) is generally assessed as positive.² In the years since, a host of new technology actors, initiatives, technical platforms and methodologies has emerged. New

communications technology, biometrics, cash cards, drones and 3D printing have all captured the humanitarian imagination.

Thinking about problems and difficulties is often framed in terms of finding technical solutions, obtaining sufficient funding to move from pilot phases to scale, etc. However, as ideas about progress and inevitability dominate the field, the technology is seen not as something we use to get closer to a better humanitarianism but something which, once deployed, is itself a better, more accountable and transparent humanitarianism.

So institutionalised have transparency and accountability become that they have now vanished off the critical radar and become part of the taken-for-granted discursive and institutional framework. Accountability and transparency are assumed to be automatically produced simply by the act of adopting and deploying new technology. (Interestingly, the third tenet usually listed with accountability and transparency, efficiency, is also a basic assumption of this agenda.)

Accountability, participation and transparency

A 2013 report published by UN OCHA, *Humanitarianism in the Network Age*, argues that “everyone agrees that technology has changed how people interact and how power is distributed”.³ While technology has undoubtedly altered human interaction, an assumption that proliferating innovative humanitarian technology unveils power, redistributes power or empowers needs to be subjected to scrutiny.

The classic issues in humanitarian accountability – to whom it is owed and by whom, how it can be achieved and, most crucially, what would count as substantively meaningful accountability – remain acutely difficult to answer. These issues also remain political issues which cannot be solved only with new technical solutions emphasising functionality and affordability; we cannot innovate ourselves out of the accountability problem, in the same way as technology

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cannot be seen as an empty shell waiting to be filled with (humanitarian) meaning.

This speaks particularly to the quest for participation of those in need of humanitarian protection and assistance, “helping people find innovative ways to help themselves”. In practice, we know that humanitarians arrive late in the field – they are not (at least not outside their own communications) the first responders. Affected individuals, their neighbours and communities are. Yet we should be concerned if the engagement with technological innovation also becomes a way of pushing the resilience agenda further in the direction of making those in need more responsible than well-paid humanitarian actors for providing humanitarian aid.

The arrival of the private sector as fully respectable partners in humanitarian action is in principle a necessary and desirable development. Nevertheless, while expressing distaste for the involvement of the private sector in humanitarian response is *passé*, talk of the importance of local markets and of ‘local innovation’, ‘indigenous innovation’ or ‘bottom-up innovation’ inevitable begs the questions: is the private sector one of the local participants as well as those in humanitarian need, and what do they want out of the partnership?

The current drive towards open data – and the belief in the emancipatory potential of open data access – means that transparency is a highly relevant theme on the humanitarian innovation agenda. Yet, on a pragmatic level, in an avalanche of information, it is difficult to see what is **not** there, particularly for individuals in crisis with limited access to information technology or with limited (computer) literacy.

Accountability and transparency thus seem to be missing in the implementation of the humanitarian innovation agenda, although innovation should be a means to enhance these objectives (among others) to produce a better humanitarianism.

Conclusions

First, we must beware of the assumption of automatic progress. We may be able to innovate ourselves out of a few traditional challenges and difficulties but most will remain, and additionally there will be new challenges resulting from the new technology.

Second, innovation looked at as a process appears suspiciously like the reforms of yesteryear. What, for example, is the difference between ‘bottom-up innovation’ and the ‘local knowledge’ valued in previous efforts to ensure participation? And are the paradigm shifts of innovation really much different from the moral improvement agenda of approaches such as the human-rights-based humanitarian aid?

Third, the increasingly self-referential humanitarian innovation discourse itself warrants scrutiny. With almost no talk of justice, social transformation or redistribution of power, we are left with a humanitarianism where inclusion is about access to markets, and empowerment is about making beneficiaries more self-reliant and about putting the label ‘humanitarian’ onto the customer concept in innovation theory.

Kristin Bergtora Sandvik bergtora@prio.no is Senior Researcher at the Peace Research Institute Oslo www.prio.org and Director of the Norwegian Centre for Humanitarian Studies. www.humanitarianstudies.no

The research on which this article is based was funded by the Research Council of Norway,⁴ and the article is adapted from a presentation made at the Humanitarian Innovation Conference held in Oxford in July 2014.⁵

1. www.alnap.org/resource/9207
2. See IFRC *World Disasters Report 2013* on Technology and Humanitarian Innovation. www.ifrc.org/publications-and-reports/world-disasters-report/world-disasters-report-2013/
3. www.unocha.org/hina
4. www.humanitarianstudies.no/2014/06/17/rcn-aideffect-programme-funds-two-new-prio-projects/
5. www.oxhip.org/2014/07/hip2014/



HUMANITARIAN INNOVATION PROJECT

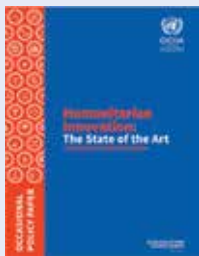
Researching the role of technology, innovation and the private sector in refugee assistance

www.oxhip.org

The **Humanitarian Innovation Project (HIP)** is housed within the Refugee Studies Centre at the University of Oxford and focuses specifically on the refugee context.

HIP's aim is to research the role of innovation, technology and the private sector in refugee assistance. Its guiding ethos is a focus on 'bottom-up' innovation by refugees themselves, examining ways in which refugees' own skills, aspirations and entrepreneurship offer opportunities for more sustainable approaches to refugee assistance. The project has undertaken extensive research in Africa on the economic lives of refugees, showing how recognising refugees' existing market-based activities offers the potential to promote greater self-reliance. The project aims to make both an academic and a practical contribution, partnering with a range of international organisations, NGOs, governments, businesses, universities and community-based organisations. Beyond its initial refugee focus, it seeks to play an active convening role within the emerging debate on humanitarian innovation.

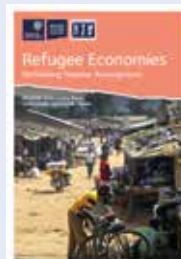
Recent/forthcoming HIP publications



***Humanitarian Innovation:
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[forthcoming]

Alexander Betts and
Louise Bloom (2014),
OCHA Occasional
Policy Paper Series
www.oxhip.org/publications



***Refugee Economies:
Rethinking Popular
Assumptions***

Alexander Betts et al
(2014), Humanitarian
Innovation Project
[http://tinyurl.com/HIP-
Refugee-Economies-2014](http://tinyurl.com/HIP-Refugee-Economies-2014)

The **Humanitarian Innovation Conference** held in Oxford in July 2014 brought together over 200 people from across the humanitarian ecosystem – including from governments, international organisations, NGOs, businesses, community-based organisations and universities – who might not often have the opportunity to engage in conversation and dialogue with each other.

Over two days, participants worked to develop a common language and a collective understanding of the role of humanitarian innovation in improving responses in emergencies, protracted crises and post-conflict recovery. Panels and audiences debated the emergence of best practices of innovation within and across organisations and sectors, and reflected on ways to more effectively include affected communities in current innovation models.

To read the conference report and selected conference papers, access digital and PPT presentations from selected panel speakers, and watch videos from the conference, please visit www.oxhip.org/2014/07/hip2014/



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