



WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT
BUSINESS CONSULTATION ON INNOVATION

SAN FRANCISCO
27-28 MAY 2015

- FINAL REPORT -

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INTRODUCTION

The World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) is an initiative of United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The WHS seeks to map out a new approach to humanitarian action that is better attuned to the realities of the 21st century. The summit aims to make humanitarian action more inclusive, diverse, global, and effective. In the lead-up to the summit, regional and global discussions will take place to identify how partners who are currently engaged in this work but who fall outside the current definition of “humanitarian” can be better involved. These consultations will also result in practical deliverables and help to promote the role of the private sector in humanitarian action.

The Business Consultation on Innovation aimed to identify ways to maximize the power of innovation and technology through greater public-private collaboration in emergencies. The Bay Area is one of the world’s leading innovation hubs, bringing forth creative technical solutions that bear enormous potential for emergency response. Challenges in the areas of communication, humanitarian financing, or data collection and analysis require innovative solutions. The consultation helped identify needs and possibilities as well as link humanitarian actors with the business community.

SUMMARY

The World Humanitarian Summit Business Consultation on Innovation was organized by UN OCHA and UNICEF. Kind support was provided by Airbnb by hosting the event on their premises and by Visa in hosting a cocktail reception to highlight innovative solutions the evening before the consultation.

Participants were representatives from companies in the technology and innovation sector, mainly located in the San Francisco Bay Area as well as several UN agencies and NGOs. During the evening reception, innovative solutions to emergency response by private sector companies were highlighted in a panel discussion, featuring examples from Cisco, Facebook, LinkedIn and Visa. The consultation was held as a half-day session and commenced with a general overview over the opportunities and challenges arising in the context of the development of new technologies and their application during emergencies. A plenary session on operational constraints, identifying challenges in the areas of infrastructure and connectivity as well as coordination among participants was then followed by two breakout sessions. The first breakout session outlined potential partnership models for successful collaborations between the UN and the private sector. The second breakout session laid a focus on the emerging need to adequately invest in humanitarian R&D financing and aimed to explore ways to fund innovations in the humanitarian field.

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS IN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE – COCKTAIL RECEPTION**CONSULTATION OPENING**

OCHA opened the consultation by describing the current challenges facing the humanitarian system.

The global humanitarian system is stretched beyond its capacity. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance has almost doubled over the past ten years, and is expected to keep rising. More people are affected by conflict and disaster, more frequently, and for longer than in previous decades. Last year, the number of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced people worldwide **exceeded 51 million people** for the first time since the Second World War.

By 2050, OCHA estimates that up to **one billion people** could be displaced by climate change. Economic losses from natural disasters have now reached **\$300 billion annually** and are projected to increase dramatically.

The humanitarian sector was developed to deal with wars between states, not the civil wars that the world is increasingly seeing today. Two thirds of those who are displaced are internally displaced, and yet there is no UN agency mandated to handle internally displaced people – only a UN agency for refugees who cross international borders. In sum, the sector was created to meet the demands of an environment that is very different than the present: Demand is far outstripping supply. The UN and other responders need to take stock, rethink humanitarian response, and pivot the humanitarian sector's model so it can adequately and sustainably address today's challenges.

In May 2016, the UN and partners will hold the first ever **World Humanitarian Summit**, which presents a historic opportunity to bring major systemic change. This is the first global summit on humanitarian action, and the goal is to bring all stakeholders together to commit to improved ways of working together to resolve humanitarian crises. OCHA and the World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat (WHSS) began consultations over a year ago and will continue throughout the rest of 2015 to take stock and gather your recommendations on how to shape the future humanitarian landscape.

PANEL DISCUSSION

OCHA then opened the floor to the panelists from private sector companies to present and discuss their engagement in the humanitarian sector.



While respective companies are at different points in their engagement with the humanitarian sector, it became clear that they share a common approach with the aim to apply their core business skills, assets and comparative advantages to make a difference in emergencies. Cisco and Visa show advanced experience and expertise in this regard. Cisco maintains a well-established disaster response capacity and is actively involved in the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster, a group of UN, NGOs, and technology firms working to improve connectivity and data sharing in emergencies. Visa has been engaged in cash transfer initiatives, working with other industry leaders. Facebook recognized that they were relatively new to their work in international emergencies, but are now actively engaged in leveraging their core expertise and the potential of their massive user base. Facebook raised over \$17 million for the Nepal response which they donated to International Medical Corps (IMC).

LinkedIn is still in the early stages of exploring their engagement, but sees tremendous potential in their large member base, currently encompassing over 360 million people. They noted their ability to leverage their network to provide solutions rapidly as they did in Nepal, where they identified UAV operators near Kathmandu.

Panelists shared frustration over receiving broad or vague requests from the humanitarian community that were not easy to field, nor aligned with their practice. Responding to calls from OCHA for business-to-business collaboration similar to that of the telecommunications industry, it was noted that formal forums do not exist yet in many other industries. Nevertheless, informal consultations between Facebook and Google on crisis response solutions, or between Visa, MasterCard and Western Union do exist.

There is a clear request to help digital companies explore how to use their core skills for their contribution in humanitarian response. All panelists and participants welcomed a stronger convening role from the UN, to help companies find their way through the UN system's "heavy door", and facilitate and broker collaboration between relevant humanitarian agencies and digital partners.

BUSINESS CONSULTATION ON INNOVATION - 28 MAY**OPENING REMARKS**

Airbnb's Global Disaster Relief Team provided a welcome address, noting their relatively new but growing interest in working in international emergency response. The company used their system to find accommodation for international responders after the Nepal earthquake.

Building on the previous night's introduction, **OCHA detailed some opportunities that UN partners had identified for the humanitarian system to take advantage of the Digital Revolution:**

1. **CONNECTIVITY:** Rise in the use of mobile phones: Affected communities are able to communicate their needs, demands, and to provide feedback on aid and services offered. Further, affected communities have access to information and can benefit from a range of services now possible via smart phones, including cash transfers. Examples are:
 - a. Zaatari refugee camp, which now hosts over 80,000 Syrian refugees in the desert of Jordan, has become an informal city and a complex ecosystem. A recent survey showed that 86 per cent of youth own a mobile handset and more than 50 percent use the internet at least once a day.
 - b. Mobilizing communities has been the key to end the current Ebola epidemic. For example, text-messaging-based tools connect young people in Liberia to vital information and services about the virus.
 - c. Cash transfers, particularly those done through mobile phones, are increasingly being used to complement in-kind assistance during emergencies. Where there are functioning local markets, cash transfers can empower affected people to decide how to best meet their own needs using locally available resources, while simultaneously boosting the local economy. Cash transfers have been used in the Philippines since 2009, including after Typhoon Haiyan in 2013.
2. **DIGITIZING** humanitarian services and systems to enable greater efficiency and transparency: OCHA, for example, is investing in re-designing and developing five core information services to support its core mandate – to ensure the humanitarian community provides an effective and coordinated response. The focus lies on risk analysis, needs assessment, financial tracking and project monitoring, and contacts management. Applied solutions should be designed in an open, inter-operable manner and serve as a public good for the aid community.
3. **DATA:** We are seeing an exponential rise in data available to humanitarian actors, e.g. data generated by social media and mobile phone usage. This data provides an opportunity to increase situational awareness and inform decision-making, but also presents new risks and challenges. It will be key that data governance policies are in place to ensure data is responsibly and ethically used and privacy is respected.

4. **NEW PARTNERSHIPS** and new networks are forming around humanitarian action: These partnerships have the potential to be transformative, with some precedents worth noting:
 - a. The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) is a global network of telecommunications service providers and humanitarian actors that work together to provide communications services and internet connectivity in humanitarian emergencies. For example, after the Nepal earthquake, the ETC floated inflatable satellite antennas to provide internet connectivity for humanitarians, set up shared internet services for affected communities and helped to restore – and in some cases even to extend – service in coordination with local service providers.
 - b. Humanitarian Connectivity Charter – for mobile industry GSMA. The GSMA (Groupe Speciale Mobile Association) represents around 800 mobile operators and 250 equipment and software companies. Under the charter’s operational framework, mobile operators pledge to make mobile services more accessible in crises through the provision of free or subsidized access to SMS, data and voice to affected people and humanitarian and government actors, as well as to establish disaster-preparedness plans. The launch of the mobile industry Humanitarian Connectivity Charter has spurred the effort to launch a similar charter for the satellite industry.
 - c. Digital Humanitarian Network links professional humanitarian organizations with informal volunteer and technical communities located at a distance from an emergency who can conduct digital tasks in support of humanitarian responses. This can include social media monitoring, mapping, GIS and big data analysis, satellite image tagging and tracing and time sensitive web research.

5. **A NEED FOR A NEW APPROACH TO INNOVATION:** We recognize that the most innovative ideas and practices can come from anywhere. Therefore, to innovate successfully, the humanitarian sector must join up with partners, calling upon their diverse expertise and working jointly to solve challenging humanitarian problems. While current approaches to digital technology innovation has made some progress, far greater impact may be possible with new business models that bring together humanitarian organisations, business and technology, government, entrepreneurs, research groups and multiple funding options into an innovations marketplace.

UNICEF LEADERSHIP ON INNOVATION

The UNICEF Innovation Unit operates out of the UNHQ in New York and the UNICEF Innovation Centre in San Francisco, with a strong link to on-the-ground staff in field offices and a network of 12 innovation labs. Additionally, UNICEF partners with private sector, academia, and other UN agencies to run these innovation labs.

A key focus of UNICEF's innovation work is within these areas:

1. Identifying tools and methods for addressing bottlenecks
2. Real time data, access to information, youth engagement/youth as resources
3. Private sector: Calling upon tech expertise, products and services; ecosystems and networks the private sector has access to; and opportunities for new markets, co-creation, and joint industry challenges

As collaborating with the private sector is a relatively new field and challenges arise in the areas of contractual agreements, R&D, testing cycles, or the timeliness of implementation, a set of guiding principles, the Greentree Principles, has been established by several UN agencies and other to ensure that partnerships align with their mandates. Principles include the following:

- Design with the user - look at their actual workflows, how will this help, what would be their motivation for adopting a new thing?
- Understand the eco-system
- Design for scale/sustainability - assume this will go big, go national
- Prioritize open source work – ensure the interoperability of systems so governments do not get locked into contracts for products they cannot afford or otherwise find local support for in the long term

Examples of partnerships in an emergency or humanitarian context came from the Ebola crisis, where UNICEF was approached by numerous private sector actors, especially in the technology field, which led to the creation of a guide.

The following lessons learned were derived from the experience in the field:

- During a crisis, there is usually insufficient time to implement a new software or hardware solution. Rather, it makes more sense to explore opportunities to include existing solutions
- While mobile phones are available, there are often constraints in terms of power availability and network capacity. In terms of the use of SMS, sometimes low literacy rates, especially in rural areas, can be a challenge to their effectiveness
- Networks of people already exist, but there is work needed in gathering basic contact information which UNICEF is currently catching up on
- Software tools are there, but for them to be accessible to local developers, translation of the interface might be necessary

The following key questions were identified for the private sector companies in order to identify ways for engagement:

- Do you have a human network centred around your product – in country or in the region – that you can activate? Do local and regional connections and affiliates exist?
- Do you have specific expertise to strengthen infrastructure and help in other critical areas that typically fail in times of crisis?
- What are your core competencies that can support the efforts on the ground (not replace or duplicate them)? To what extent do you have the capacity to connect local networks and groups already on the ground with your workforce in the region?

PLENARY SESSION: OPERATIONAL CONSTRAINTS IN EMERGENCIES

UNFPA coordinated a discussion on the challenges for private sector engagement in emergencies, constraints on infrastructure and connectivity, and lack of coordination among humanitarian responders.

Key discussion points:

- Participants discussed operational constraints for both humanitarian and private sector actors in forging impactful and effective partnerships whilst in the midst of a humanitarian response.
- Constraints are both practical (infrastructure, connectivity, power, weather, terrain, access) and organizational (coordination, capacity and communication of actors).
- Information is also a constraint (to and from people affected, governments, the UN, other humanitarian actors as well as to and from the outside world).
- Trust is a less tangible, but equally important, constraint: between affected people and those trying to deliver humanitarian aid, i.e. the government, UN and other actors. Constraints for establishing private sector partnerships were also a lack of information and too little coordination: Companies are overwhelmed by requests, and do not always understand the situation or the UN and were unsure about how best to help or what needs have to be addressed.
- All constraints could be mitigated in part by good coordination and communication, which in turn helped to build trust and provide an effective response. This was a critical role for OCHA and was helping to improve not just the humanitarian response, but also partnership facilitation in responses.

Key recommendations:

- Partnerships should focus on problem solving using business expertise
- Preparedness for resilience and partnering ahead of time was very useful (although not always possible or predictable)
- Data should be analyzed for lessons learned from one disaster for the next
- The UN needs to accelerate both the engagement of partners and the partnership process, acting as a broker between companies and the needs of actors/people
- The UN should connect local entrepreneurs and businesses to global or US based companies who were providing partnerships to ensure that partnership solutions and expertise were locally grounded and lived on after a disaster
- Where possible, solutions and partnerships should be 'open source' whilst recognizing the importance of a company's intellectual property and that open source requirements could penalize or disincentives companies who want to help
- Where possible, partnerships should deploy existing technology and not pilot new systems (whilst recognizing that every disaster was unique and every partnership would need to be tailored)
- The UN could identify opportunities for software solutions within generic crises
- The UN and others should build trust with partners before a crisis, creating pre-partnerships that can be rolled out, helping to ensure people react in a set agreed way, quickly moving into partnership mode once a crisis strikes: 'codify trust' and create partnerships that are iterative
- The UN and others could look at creating a 'crisis lab' that acted as a knowledge hub for challenges, solutions and partnerships, creating a list of companies who had pre-agreed to lead crisis partnerships around certain themes (i.e. supply chain). The lab would keep track of recurrent challenges (e.g. supply chain, data management, coordination) and monitor partnerships and solutions from one crisis to the next.
- The UN should learn not just about the products or innovation solutions from Silicon Valley, but more importantly, the models and approaches of working, HR, and organizational aspects of these organizations to foster creativity and innovation.
- It is essential that local trust is built before disaster strikes. The perfect technical tool or technocratic solution will not work without people's trust. Do not underestimate the power of faith and social networks- there is a science and art of trust (i.e. Ebola response).
- Companies mentioned they need capacity building themselves to respond effectively to disasters and how to best leverage their strengths in a strategic manner.

BREAKOUT SESSION I – PARTNERSHIP MODELS - ALIGNING INCENTIVES

The United Nations is rethinking how it can partner with the private sector. This session discussed emerging partnership models and the incentives that need to be in place for better humanitarian results. Three challenges in the digital technology space were highlighted, followed by a discussion around potential approaches, models and incentives.

Key discussion points:

- There is a need for clarity on humanitarian needs and how businesses can respond. Businesses need a clearer sense of the challenges and priorities, and how they can specifically contribute and help using their skills and expertise. Need to identify what the problems that the humanitarian sector needs to have solved are and how businesses can help.
- Facilitator, Broker and Matchmaker role. Participants noted the importance of a convening role if there is to be meaningful engagement between the humanitarian and digital tech communities. Both have very distinct cultures, jargon, approaches and modalities. There is a need to better understand each other, in order to then identify how we can best come together to work on problems and challenges. A facilitator would help digital technology partners better understand the humanitarian sector, navigate the UN system (get past the heavy door), identify potential challenges that they might tackle. A brokering role is also considered important to help put the right partners in touch.
 - The question was raised as to whether we needed a new forum, or whether existing fora could be extended.
 - Noted that global forums served a purpose, but we needed to compress the forum down to local level if we wanted to see stronger engagement at a country or regional level. For example, noted that the GSMA did not have much resonance in large parts of Africa.
 - Convening role recognized as a discipline in its own right
- Humanitarian and digital tech fora (i.e. like the ETC, WGET, GSMA) were noted as a way to bring the two communities together. Considered to be a good way for respective communities to better understand each other, they allow actors to engage in a flexible way (i.e. as little or as much engagement as they were comfortable with), and discover and detect possible challenges and initiatives they might engage on, align interests over time, help clarify the process of partnership and respective standard approaches (Digital Tech community has very standard operating procedures around how they identify and take on new initiatives).

- In terms of accessing the technical expertise of digital companies, specific requests were much easier to address than broad requests for help. For example, Google, Idibon, said that technical experts were often able to tackle a specific problem – and this could even take the form of a specific project over time (Google developers have the flexibility to work on their own projects for 20% of time). Worth exploring this concept further – but would need to package a problem carefully.

There was also a debate over the assumptive benefits of open source. It was noted that humanitarian agencies are very committed to open source software solutions, but at least one participant shared a view that these were not always the best options if development was in the hands of amateurs and non-profits. Also noted was the vast difference between technical experts working for a company in Silicon Valley, and an independent contractor with different outcome in terms of quality and security.

Key recommendations:

- OCHA and UN actors need to address demands for a convening role. Internal consultation is needed to map ‘existing convening landscape’ and fora (e.g. Nethope, other groups), and determine whether it is worth extending the remit of one or to create a new forum. One suggestion was to have a private sector engagement directly with the cluster system.
- Consider a dedicated focal point for the digital tech community and follow up.
- Humanitarian Tech workshop planned at end of 2015 with Frog facilitation – invite Bay Area digital tech partners and shape agenda to foster engagement.



BREAKOUT SESSION II: HUMANITARIAN INNOVATION AND R&D FINANCING

Despite the growing consensus that the humanitarian system needs a more systematic infusion of new thinking and solutions, humanitarian actors are not investing adequately in innovation R&D. This discussion drew on best practices from business and other sectors, to make recommendations for how the humanitarian sector can develop sufficient funding to make innovative practices a reality.

Key discussion points:

- Investors require concrete examples of priority areas to invest in.
- There is a need to show metrics for investing in innovation in the humanitarian space in order for investors to be able to anticipate returns.
- In order to appeal to social impact investors, we need to better articulate the end goals, metrics and indicators. These could be developed for the humanitarian sector by an independent auditing firm.
- The Silicon Valley model of VCs is premised on a lot of failure, and a high return on a relatively small percent of successes. Can the UN communicate and implement that model to its donors? To that end, there is a need to show how the UN, and other humanitarian organizations, are able to fail, as this is a commonly understood expectation on the part of VCs and other social impact investors. There is a need to understand the economics of innovation and sell it through better storytelling and quantification of metrics (example: a Deloitte study analyzed the R&D investment made in different industries, and extrapolated that analysis to the humanitarian sector). The UN should develop models for measuring impact in humanitarian situations. We need to build out the suite of tools/approaches for these models.
- Donor governments, given strong risk aversion for reasons of tax payer accountability, should remain focused on relief while tapping on VC/Social Impact/Foundations to fund innovation.
- Humanitarian investing is a new space; there is a need to create a picture of the humanitarian landscape and opportunities for investors, in order to encourage interest.
- The UN provides a significant new market for investors, in terms of its own clients; this is a selling point that should be capitalized upon.
- There is a need to develop standards to professionalize UN engagement with impact investors/venture capitalists.
- Instead of internalizing innovation, separate labs should be established which would buffer the failures from the UN. Numerous models for this exist, such as the Unilever Foundry based in Singapore that allows access to Unilever's offices around the world in order to test ideas and to receive technical support.

- The Digital Service of the US Government could serve as another useful model, with the case of the task force from Google going in to revamp Healthcare.gov after its shaky launch.
- Innovation is almost always done by individuals or small groups of people with creative freedom and autonomy.
- Crowdfunding can be used as a means to make best use of the diaspora and can also be used for R&D.
- There is a need to improve how we track individual donations (e.g. Kiva). NGOs are trying to do this but it is costly and resource intensive.

Key recommendations:

- Develop an overview document of the humanitarian sector, aimed at attracting private funding, particularly from social impact investors: the document should include specific priority areas for investment and rates of return, in so far as they are known.
- Develop an incubator/accelerator with the UN and its partners providing opportunities to access markets, but the accelerator itself being led by a consortium of impact investment firms, foundations, and diaspora organizations. The accelerator should target a few priority areas of investment, identified by OCHA in collaboration with field partners.
- Work on a model whereby entrepreneurs and academics in residence/fellows/start-ups work within or with the support of the UN system to pursue humanitarian innovation.
- Commission research to capture the return on investment within the humanitarian innovation space: the research should objectively examine the successes and failures of existing humanitarian programmes, and compare the relative advantages and disadvantages of innovation in different cases.

USEFUL LINKS AND INFORMATION

World Humanitarian Summit

<http://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/>

General Information about the ongoing consultation process in the lead up to the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.

http://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/whs_get_involved

Opportunities to get involved in the World Humanitarian Summit process.

ReliefWeb

<http://reliefweb.int/>

Source of humanitarian information on global crises and disasters, including reports and new updates.

Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX)

<https://data.hdx.rwlab.org/>

Online repository of humanitarian data sets.

Humanitarian ID

<http://humanitarian.id/>

Contact management solution for humanitarians working in crises.

Humanitarian Response

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/>

Online platform with operational information to help responders coordinate their work on the ground.

Humanitarian Innovation and R&D

Betts, Alexander and Louise Bloom. "Humanitarian Innovation: The State of the Art." November 2014. Available for download: <http://bit.ly/1F6kXjr>.

Humanitarian Innovation Fund, "Core Grants": <http://www.elrha.org/hif/funding/core-grants/>.

Deloitte & WHS, "The Humanitarian R&D Imperative: How other sectors overcame impediments to innovation." March 2015. <http://bit.ly/1QMP5TM>



WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK OUR PARTNERS AT UNICEF INNOVATION CENTER IN SAN FRANCISCO FOR CO-HOSTING THE CONSULTATION AS WELL AS OUR HOSTS AIRBNB AND VISA FOR SPONSORING THE BUSINESS CONSULTATION AND SUPPORTING AND FACILITATING THE ORGANIZATION OF THE EVENT.

FURTHER, WE WOULD LIKE TO THANK THE SILICON VALLEY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION AND USAID FOR REACHING OUT TO THEIR NETWORKS IN ORDER TO ENSURE A DIVERSE SET OF BUSINESSES TO BE INVITED.



ANNEX

AGENDA

27 May 2015, 6.00 pm Cocktail reception and overview session	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An introduction to the humanitarian response system. • Private sector solutions for emergency preparedness and response. • Opportunities for business technology and innovation. 	
6.00	Arrival of guests; cocktail
6.30	<p>Welcoming remarks: Doug Sabo, Visa</p> <p>Opening address: Mark Dalton, Chief of Information Services Branch, UN OCHA – Overview of humanitarian system, background on World Humanitarian Summit consultations.</p>
6.45	<p>Panel on private sector solutions in emergency preparedness and response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Douglas Sabo, Visa • Tiago da Costa Silva, Cisco • Jaime Coleman, LinkedIn • Marcy Lynn, Facebook
28 May 2015, 8.30 – 12.30 Business Consultation on Innovation	
9.00 - 9.30	<p>Opening & Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcoming remarks: Airbnb • Opening address: Mark Dalton, UN OCHA – Overview of trends in humanitarian emergencies, new demands on traditional humanitarian actors, new opportunities with tech and innovation industries. • Terra Weikel, UNICEF
09.30 – 10.00	Plenary Session I: Operational constraints in emergencies
10.00 – 10.45	Breakout sessions – 1 st rotation
Breakout Session I: Partnership Models - Aligning incentives	Breakout Session II: Humanitarian Innovation and R&D Financing
11.00 – 11.45	Breakout sessions – 2 nd rotation
11.45 – 12.30	<p>Wrap-up session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plenary review of breakout session discussions • Key messages and recommendations

LIST OF ATTENDING COMPANIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

African Technology Foundation	UNFPA
Airbnb	UNICEF
American Red Cross	UNHCR
Box.org	UNOCHA
BrownFlynn	
Cisco Systems	
Communitare International	
Dalberg Global Development Advisors	
Facebook	
Fund for Second Order Change	
Google	
Google.org	
Idibon	
LinkedIn	
Orange SV	
Pacific Gas and Electric Company	
Premise Data Corporation	
Reaction Housing	
Rogue Genius	
San Francisco Division of Emergency Management	
Silicon Valley Community Foundation	
Twilio	
Visa	
Walmart Foundation	
World Vision	
Yahoo	
Zenysis Technologies	

BACKGROUND MATERIALS

Partnership Models: Aligning Incentives

Context

The UN is currently working on addressing a number of technology challenges through various funding and partnership modalities. In this session, we would like to highlight three challenges the UN is addressing in digital technology space and discuss how, given an alignment of incentives, partnerships could play a catalysing role.

The recent advances in digital technology have brought unprecedented opportunity for the humanitarian sector to significantly improve how it delivers assistance in disaster and conflict situations. First, the world is becoming connected.¹ In particular, crisis areas are now increasingly connected environments, where affected communities and partners are online and able to communicate, report on their situation, articulate needs and receive assistance (e.g. through cash transfers on their phones). There is a great opportunity to design and build better solutions for humanitarian response. There is also recognition that we need different business models and approaches – where we bring in expertise from the commercial sector and the public sector - to design and deliver the best, most innovative solutions.

Sample Initiatives

OCHA has a mandate for providing information and data services in support of international humanitarian responses. Here are some initiatives that we are currently working on, which might be candidates for a different, more innovative, business model:

- Building new information and data services for humanitarian response. OCHA is currently digitizing and upgrading its services to the humanitarian community. This includes developing a mobile needs assessment service, upgrading its financial tracking and programme monitoring service (of the entire aid response), a contacts management service, so that aid workers can easily locate each other; and an open data-sharing platform for the aid community. Work on these services is being done via traditional contracts with digital development firms or individual contractors.
- Data strategy and policy. With increasingly large volumes of information and data that need to be responsibly and securely managed, OCHA is now developing a data strategy and policy. We have identified that a broad range of expertise (e.g. security, legal, policy, data technology) is needed to come up with a comprehensive policy that can be regularly updated. Rather than approach this through a traditional model, we will be working with a network of data experts, institutions and organisations to develop a comprehensive policy and strategy.
- Situational Analysis. In an emergency response, information and data can be hugely valuable and help inform decision-making that saves lives and improves the overall humanitarian response. There remain many barriers to sharing information within the aid community, and OCHA and partners are working to overcome these. With respect to private sector, the concern is to

¹ A recent UN report noted there were seven billion mobile phone subscriptions globally today. It also predicts that 3.2 billion people will be online by the end of the year – half the global population.

ensure that we are not spending time and energy designing systems that could more easily be provided by a partnership or by adapting a commercial solution. Similarly, with data sharing – what incentives would encourage companies to share datasets (e.g., call data records or social media data) that can make a difference in a humanitarian crisis?

Questions

The above are specific examples that OCHA is currently focused on, however the discussion does not need to be limited to these. We are equally interested in broader partnership models, including any worthy precedents.

- What alternative business models are worth considering? Would new business models for partnership improve our ability to deliver information and data solutions - more quickly, more effectively and without having to re-invent solutions that already exist?
- Are forums, working groups and associations (such as the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster², the Digital Humanitarian Networks³) concepts that are worth expanding to meet different challenges?
- Is the concept of an innovation lab an idea worth pursuing for the development of information and data solutions in the sector? What are the key ingredients that need to be in place for this to lead to effective partnerships between diverse partners? Should an innovation lab be designed to address the priorities of a specific organization, or should it be a broader concept that draws on a range of partners to work jointly on initiatives?

How can the UN/ OCHA partner with companies on initiatives such as digital development, data sharing, and leveraging existing solutions? What incentives need to be in place for companies to engage in a meaningful way? What are the incentives that would spark interest?

² The [Emergency Telecommunications Cluster](#) is a global network of telecoms service providers and humanitarian actors that work together to provide communications services and internet connectivity in humanitarian emergencies, which enable humanitarian workers and affected communities to make calls and get online.

³ The [Digital Humanitarian Network](#) links professional humanitarian organizations with informal volunteer and technical communities located at a distance from an emergency who can conduct digital tasks in support of humanitarian responses. This can include social media monitoring, mapping, GIS and big data analysis, satellite image tagging and tracing and time-sensitive web research.

Increasing investment in Humanitarian Innovation R&D

Problem statement

Despite growing consensus that the humanitarian system needs a more systematic infusion of new thinking and solutions, humanitarian actors are not investing adequately in innovation R&D. As a result, there is insufficient analysis of what works, and the process of delivering better humanitarian outcomes through innovation remains underdeveloped. These shortcomings are linked to the conceptualisation of humanitarian aid as a public good: its provision benefits governments and humanitarian actors, thereby creating a disincentive toward competition with providers from other sectors. As such, there has traditionally been no competitive market for humanitarian assistance, leading to a situation where a few select providers work with a similarly limited group of suppliers to provide assistance.⁴ Nevertheless, in the context of expanding humanitarian need, a new way of doing business is needed that encourages the following: choice on the part of affected populations to determine the type of assistance best suited to their needs; openness to non-humanitarian actors participating in humanitarian response; a rethink of rigid procurement rules; and the provision of limited grants and start-up capital for humanitarian enterprise.⁵ In particular, R&D in the humanitarian sector must be supported in order to adequately meet the needs of affected persons.

Current situation

There is modest, but growing, interest in investing in humanitarian innovation R&D. While the sector's impact is limited by a lack of strategic organisation, there are already several examples of the type of investments being made in this area, including pooled funds,⁶ bilateral donor funding, corporate and foundation partnerships, and services-in-kind, amongst others. Nevertheless, a recent study identified two particular challenges to humanitarian innovation: first, there is a lack of quality proposals in the humanitarian innovation space, which donors are therefore reluctant to support; second, even when good ideas are identified, there is little capacity to bring those ideas to scale. Nevertheless, research shows that a concerted effort toward addressing those impediments, coupled with investments in R&D, will ultimately lead to improved outcomes for affected populations.⁷

Key Questions

- Based on research into the levels of private sector R&D investment across different industries, there is momentum toward formalising a benchmark of 1.5% of overall humanitarian funding to be purposed for innovation R&D⁸. Is there a way to more effectively package the work that humanitarians do in the innovation R&D space, in order to encourage government donors to support flexible forms of funding?

⁴ See Betts, Alexander and Louise Bloom. "Humanitarian Innovation: The State of the Art." November 2014. Available for download: <http://bit.ly/1F6kXjr>.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ See Humanitarian Innovation Fund, "Core Grants": <http://www.elrha.org/hif/funding/core-grants/>.

⁷ See Deloitte., "The Humanitarian R&D Imperative: How other sectors overcame impediments to innovation." March 2015. <http://bit.ly/1QMP5TM>

⁸ This would amount to approximately \$374 million, based on total annual humanitarian expenditures of \$22 billion.

- What are the incentives needed to encourage commercial firms to invest in the humanitarian innovation sector? How would you propose that the commercial sector and humanitarian sector collaborate to reach the 1.5% benchmark?
- What solutions can be drawn from the private sector and applied to the humanitarian sector to support innovation R&D? Are there models to promote innovation R&D in other sectors that could also be applied within the humanitarian system?
- More broadly, what should be the role of the UN in working on innovation, from the perspective of the private sector? What types of evidence bases have been created in other sectors to support innovative practices, and are there lessons that could be applied in the humanitarian sector that would help make the case for investment?