Mapping Innovation in Humanitarian Action

Overview of ongoing initiatives and strategies by some of ECHO's partners

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Overview

This mapping reviews how humanitarian actors understand and implement "innovation." It summarises how ten different ECHO-funded agencies place and explain innovative practices within their vision, goals and policies and which formal institutions or strategies they have established to support and implement new ideas and projects. The focus is on organizations that work on more short-term innovations for immediate relief as well as longer-term adaptations and innovation leading to change.

A few elements were identified as formal signifiers of innovation. These are not meant as a rating of an agency's ability or willingness to innovate, but serve as useful indicators to establish "innovation profiles" of the different actors. These signifiers ask:

- Did the agency appoint a dedicated team to support innovations?
- Was an "innovation lab" or "hub" established to develop or refine innovations?
- Does the agency prioritise partnerships to further the objective to innovate?
- Is a fund in place that directly supports innovations?
- Were innovative pilot projects implemented?

Agency	Definition or use of the term "innovation"	Team	Lab	Partners	Fund	Pilots
WFP	Key element in ambition to end hunger.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
UNHCR	More efficient, effective and creative solutions to challenges facing refugees.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
UNICEF	Technologies and practices that improve children's lives around the world.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
ICRC	Path toward improving humanitarian action.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
IOM	Community-based mechanisms that improve the lives of migrants.	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
NRC	Simple, creative solutions that combine local knowledge and new technologies.	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Save the Children	A means to create change that improves the lives of children.	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
OXFAM	Long-term solutions that start with the problem, not the tool.	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
IRC	Einstein-inspired innovation now embedded within strategic plan.	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
OCHA	Essential steps toward remaining relevant as humanitarians.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No

Table 1: Overview of aid agencies' understanding and formal implementation of innovations as indicated in their policies and publications.

Summary of Trends

In comparing different actors' approaches to innovation, a few underlying trends and commonalities can be observed:

- At least on paper, many organisations self-identify as actively fostering innovations to improve their programming. Many mention innovation as core to their work and vision, and explain that they establish or plan dedicated teams and funds to that end. This, however, stands in contrast to the findings of a recent DFiD-funded report by the University of Brighton, which suggests that the humanitarian eco-system as a whole lags behind in assuring the elements of fruitful innovation environments.[1]

- That said, all reviewed agencies have clearly integrated an emphasis on innovation and related practices into their communications and language, an emphasis that has become more prevalent in the humanitarian system since 2009.[2] Notably, when aid agencies have established new organisational strategies, innovation often features prominently as a goal or value.[3]

- In detail, the interpretations and implementations of "innovation" can differ significantly between aid actors. To some, it entails setting apart dedicated budgets that support bold new ideas and projects; to others, it means investing more in technologies; and finally, some see it as involving affected communities more actively in aid efforts. Other innovation actors think less about the implementation or outputs when discussing innovation, and more about "mind-sets" that enable creative thinking.

- The difference in definitions as well as prioritization of innovations gives cause for caution: Some actors are much more visible or "noisy" in the innovation field than others. But silence on the topic does not always correlate with inaction. It is important not to overlook those organisations that may not advocate for "innovation" as a field or set up dedicated teams and spaces, but that are implementing innovation as core business. Similarly, bottom-up innovations might not always self-identify with the term innovative. "Invisible innovation" in the sector has not yet been studied extensively.

- Another terminological difference is seen in the way aid agencies approach partnerships for innovations. Each agency reviewed in this mapping states the importance of cooperating with actors from other sectors in order to improve its work, delivery and relevance. But, unsurprisingly, the levels of engagement are varied. Some actors push the "innovation envelope" actively through collaborations and mutual funding mechanisms especially with the private sector, while others approach connections to other sectors in standard programming that does not explicitly promote innovation.

This review is based on web resources and the relevant literature, which tends to capture top-down innovation as practiced, documented and promoted by headquarters and communication teams. Although the information was verified through interviews, further research could be undertaken to review agencies' support for bottom-up innovations and a broader portfolio that relates, sometimes indirectly, to innovation.

NB: The field of innovation is rapidly changing. For example, the websites cited here have changed, sometimes several times, during the course of this research alone. The report should thus be considered a snapshot, giving insight into organisations' progress with regard to innovation by the end of 2105.

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[1] "Strengthening the humanitarian innovation ecosystem: Final report," Ben Ramalingam, Howard Rush, John Bessant, Nick Marshall, Bill Gray, Kurt Hoffman, Simon Bayley, Ian Gray and Kim Warren, 2015.
[2] "Innovations in international humanitarian action," Ben Ramlingam, Kim Scriven and Conor Foley, 2009. The study is often cited as the first formal investigation and embracement of innovation in humanitarian aid.
[3] This includes the IRC's new vision, several of Oxfam's recent policies, the development of a more specifically dedicated innovation unit at OCHA and others.

Innovation Profiles

In the following pages, the assessment of each aid agency reviewed is explained in further detail. After a brief summary of the organisation's efforts and ethos around innovation, the following elements[4] are assessed:

Strategy	Does the actor consider innovation to be of central importance, as evidenced through policies or other clear signals?
Dedicated resources	Are there dedicated budgets, funds, teams, spaces, etc.?
Knowledge openness	How open is the actor to working with partners to harness the full potential of innovations by building on complementary strengths and capacities?
Publications & outreach	Which documents or articles highlighting innovation has the actor published?
Areas of innovation	In which sectors or clusters is innovation taking place?
Projects	Which pilot or long-term projects is the actor implementing or supporting?

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[4] The first three indicators were adapted from the DFID-funded study on the humanitarian innovation eco-system (Ramalingam et al 2015), which highlighted five factors that indicate whether a system provides a fruitful setting to foster innovation. Two additional factors were identified (active end-user involvement and ambidextrous working) but these were left out here since they cannot be assessed through desk review.

World Food Programme (WFP)

"Innovation" is a clearly recurring theme in WFP's projects and publications. Even though the agency does not currently have dedicated or specific funding for innovation, it has often been an early adaptor or central developer of new approaches in the field. The innovations typically revolve around WFP's central goal to end hunger. Perhaps the most prominent innovation that WFP implemented and helped shape early on was the shift towards cash-based delivery options. There is also increasing interest in introducing technology innovations. Late in 2015, WFP set up an "Innovation Accelerator" in Munich, where it will further encourage and develop ground-breaking projects.

Definition or use of the term "innovation"	Team	Lab	Partners	Fund	Pilots
Key element in ambition to end hunger.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Strategy	**There is no formal policy, but rather a strong emphasis on innovation as a core element in enabling and improving food assistance.**
	Innovation is prominently displayed as "critical" to WFP's work and to developing cost-effective sustainable solutions. Online, WFP emphasizes its long-term commitment to innovation, but recognizes that "these efforts have been somewhat fragmented and dispersed across the organisation." WFP thus aims to "create operational space and accept reasonable risk to innovate programme tools and approaches."
	Even without a formal policy in place, innovation seems well embedded as a tool to solve problems and improve programming across the agency. In its 2014–2017 Strategic Plan, innovation is referenced as an objective and an approach that WFP will "continue" to pursue with respect to developing new food assistance tools.
Dedicated resources	**Innovation is understood as a part of aid programming. Some dedicated resources are under development.**
	WFP set up the division "Innovation and Change Management,"[5] which is tasked with supporting the UN Zero Hunger Challenge on behalf of WFP.
	WFP established innovation funding in 2012/2013 with a dedicated focus on collaboration, partnerships and mutual strengths "to promote broad-based innovation of food assistance tools and approaches." The fund grants a total of US $1 million to support early-stage ideas and innovations through an open competition.
	In 2014, WFP ran an Innovation Challenge to celebrate creative projects that made a positive difference towards achieving "zero hunger."
	The "WFP Innovation Accelerator" was set up in 2015 to "create value through prioritizing and better harnessing innovative ideas, as well as scaling up transformative projects to a global level." It offers on-demand support, a boot camp, a sprint programme and an innovation fund.
Knowledge openness	**A few partnerships are dedicated specifically to innovation.**
	Beyond partnering with numerous aid agencies (including FAO, IFAS, UNICEF, UN Women, UNDP and many NGOs), WFP specifically sought

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collaborations to further its innovative capacity, including:

- MasterCard: Since 2012, WFP draws on MasterCard's technical abilities with electronic vouchers and online donation systems.
- Red Rose: The company implements WFP, UNHCR and Mercy Corps innovations around biometric identification/electronic cash transfers.

Publications & outreach

Numerous articles and publications highlight innovation.

WFP has published widely on the importance and details of its innovations. A keyword search on the website returns dozens of entries. A short selection of relevant publications includes:

- In 2010, a WFP-published book already highlighted three paradigm shifts toward innovation: (1) expansion of the aid toolbox to include food, cash, vouchers and insurance; (2) framing of food assistance as future investment; and (3) adjusted capacities to improve information, delivery and connection around hunger solutions.
- In 2011, WFP published an article urging, "We need to innovate," namely in three areas: (1) food, (2) social media and (3) finance.
- In 2014, the magazine "Innovation International" highlighted WFP as outstanding because it aimed to have one third of its work involve cash, vouchers or "new kinds of digital food" by 2015.

Projects

The most prominent innovations revolve around cash & vouchers and other approaches to improving or accelerating food supply.

Unless otherwise specified, WFP mostly funds these innovations from core budgets:

- Food assistance for assets: Vulnerable people receive food in return for helping build or boost assets that benefit the whole community.
- Cash & vouchers: Cash-based assistance offers recipients more choice and variety and can cut down costs of transporting and storing food.
- One Card: A joint project with UNRWA, UNICEF, Medecins du Monde and HelpAge as well as the Palestinian Authority to provide beneficiaries with a single card for all cash-transfers, e.g. in Gaza.
- Biometrics project: Introduced in Kenya in 2013, this system uses hard- and software to check the fingerprints of refugees collecting food against a registration database called preGres.
- Mobile Vulnerability Assessment Mapping, mVAM: Mobile voice and SMS are used to collect household food security data. The project was initially supported with a Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF) grant.
- SCOPE Platform in Bangladesh: The online/offline platform enables beneficiary information management across the distribution cycle.
- ShareTheMeal: People around the world can download this app to donate 50 cents toward meals for children. Funding for the app came from "generous donations from the business community and philanthropy."
- Purchase for Progress (P4P): The pilot links WFP's demand for staple food commodities with the technical skills of local farmers, especially women, to help them sell their supplies and boost their income.

Areas of innovation

Food

Logistics

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UNHCR is a prominent and vocal actor in the evolving humanitarian innovation discourse, having dedicated innovation-specific resources and capacities comparatively early. Its globally active innovation team supports new pilot projects and explores various ideas. One flagship innovation is the "Better Shelter" project; its easy-to-assemble housing units are more like small, robust buildings than fabric tents. Even though most pilots have not yet expanded beyond the regions where they are first implemented, the team is actively working on and likely to expand its scaling capacity.

Definition or use of the term "innovation"	Team	Lab	Partners	Fund	Pilots
Effective and creative solutions to challenges facing refugees.	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Strategy	**Unlike other agencies, UNHCR made innovation one of its four core strategic objectives and lays it out as an approach to various goals.**
	One of UNHCR's four strategic objectives 2014-2018 is to "develop and expand proven and innovative ways of supporting peoples' economic self-reliance." The other three objectives are promoting the right to work, increasing food resilience and livelihoods development.
	Innovation is considered one of six strategic approaches and the different UNHCR strategies (for livelihoods, shelter, education, public health, etc.) all point out specifically how technologies support their work.
	Innovation itself is typically referenced as "*with* and *for* refugees."
Dedicated resources	**A dedicated team piloted various projects and is growing rapidly.**
	UNHCR Innovation was set up as a small team in 2012, tasked to work with different divisions to foster innovative approaches across all programmes. The team, based in Geneva, works with innovation labs in nine locations worldwide. Their efforts focus on emergencies, learning, technologies and energy.
	The team also runs an innovation fellowship, through which about 20 staff and affiliates are funded for a year to work on relevant projects.
	In addition, UNHCR Ideas is an online platform that crowd-sources and selects new ideas for innovations that empower refugees.
Partnerships	**UNHCR has always fostered partnerships and now is focusing on innovation.**
	• IKEA Foundation: provided US $50 million to fund the Better Shelter project and collaborated closely on shelter strategies.
	• Vodafone Foundation: set up Instant Network classrooms to support UNHCR's education work with communication technologies.
	• UPS Foundation: provided millions in in-kind donations since 2010.
	• Worldreader: built technology solutions to help improve literacy skills.
	UNHRC Innovation also partners with UPS, Hunt Power and universities. Online, UNHCR lists over 30 partners who have contributed.
Publications & outreach	**UNHCR Innovation has a very strong web and media presence with many texts, but few longer reports so far.**

A simple search on UNHCR's website for the term "innovation" returns around 500 unique entries. This includes blog articles, strategic documents, project descriptions and more. Most notably, the Innovation Unit published a 2014 innovation review taking stock of its work.

On the UNHCR Innovation website, a dedicated blog with articles around innovative projects and theoretical underpinnings is updated frequently, with new posts being written every few days. It also includes diary series for specific projects. In addition, a monthly newsletter as well as a monthly web series inform and spur debate around innovation and the teams actively share relevant materials via Twitter.

Projects

A number of pilot projects are highlighted and UNHCR Innovation is working actively to increase its ability to scale projects up and out.

The following projects are supported by the different "labs" the agency runs, including the link, learn, energy and emergency labs. The UNHCR Innovation Lab typically raises its own funds to cover the project budgets, working closely with companies and foundations.

More than a dozen concrete innovation projects are listed on UNHCR's website taking place in Africa, the Middle East and Latin America. They include:

- Better Shelter: Alternative "dignified" refugee-housing unit for emergency relief in Ethiopia and Iraq. Funding came from the IKEA Foundation to develop the pilot.
- Refugee-Designed Cookstoves: The stove requires less wood and thus preserves fuel. It was designed in Ethiopia's Dollo Ado camps.
- Biometric Cash Assistance: In Jordan, cash distribution was a challenge but abandoning cash assistance was no option; biometric registration (iris scans) in collaboration with Cairo Amman Bank offered a solution.
- Social Media and SMS Outreach: Because mobile phones are popular among Syrian refugees, UNHCR started disseminating information via SMS in 2012 in the Za'atari camp.
- UPS ReliefLink: Improving information management by interlinking refugee registration and distribution data collection within one software in Mauretania and Ethiopia. Funding came from UPS.
- Ideas Box: UNHCR and Librarians Without Borders (LWB) set up portable, quick-to-use kits to enable education after natural disasters. Several French associations funded the project, which was led by LWB.
- Axis: The internal tool for easy information analysis and data visualization helps staff improve and explain decision-making.
- Ascend: SMS-based project to improve communication between urban refugees, UNHCR and partner NGOs, based on FrontlineCloud.
- Help.unhcr.org: This project in Costa Rica assures that urban refugees have access to current and relevant information online.
- Liter of Light: LED-lamps in water bottles are built together with refugees to provide a sustainable, cheap lighting solution in Ethiopia.

Areas of innovation

Shelter
Education
Logistics

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

With a network of 14 Innovation Labs around the world, a dedicated Innovation Unit in New York, a Global Innovation Centre in Nairobi and additional teams in San Francisco and Copenhagen, UNICEF has positioned itself strongly in terms of promoting innovation in its own work and across the sector. It also runs multiple websites in which innovation is discussed and addressed from numerous angles. In contrast with this strong push for innovation, other actors in the space often perceive UNICEF as tending to work alone.

Definition or use of the term "innovation"	Team	Lab	Partners	Fund	Pilots
Technologies and practices to improve children's lives worldwide.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Strategy

Innovation is prominently pursued and guided by principles.

UNICEF developed nine principles to guide its work with technology-enabled innovations. These are endorsed or adopted by 14 other UN and NGO actors: (1) design with the user, (2) understand the ecosystem, (3) design for scale, (4) build for sustainability, (5) be data driven, (6) use open standards, (7) reuse and improve, (8) do no harm, (9) be collaborative.

Innovations are pursued with the explicit goal of "improv[ing] children's lives around the world." Many of UNICEF's innovation pilot projects focus on long-term engagement or development, rather than rapid response.

In the main menu of UNICEF's website, the category "where we work" links not only to its regions of operation but also to a sub-site on innovation.

Dedicated resources

UNICEF is a clear leader in terms of capacity, funding and investing publicity in innovation.

There is a dedicated, multi-disciplinary and international UNICEF Innovation Team. It is "tasked with identifying, prototyping, and scaling technologies and practices that strengthen UNICEF's work." This includes supporting existing projects, developing new ideas and looking ahead, planning the next years of UNICEF programming. The team oversees and works with 14 innovation labs that are strategically placed across the world, as well as the Global Innovation Centre based in Nairobi, Kenia.

UNICEF also set up a fund for projects moving from pilot phase to reaching scale, with support from The Walt Disney Company and the government of Denmark. It provides "rapid, relatively low-value funding for a large number of 2nd stage projects (in the $25-100K range)." In addition, it reserves back funding (US $1M+) for successful projects that can scale.

Partnerships

The importance of partnerships is recognised and practiced.

UNICEF emphasises the importance of partnerships with various sectors. Collaborations with the private sector support technology development, e.g. for mobile health, but these rarely are used within disaster response:

- Frog Design (since 2011): Built mHealth for maternal and infant health.
- General Electric (since 2012): Support community health in Rwanda.
- MTN Nigeria: Corporate Social Investment supports mobile innovation.
- Thoughtworks (since 2011): Tech company helped develop RapidFTR.
- Uganda Telecom: Mobile vital record system to register births/deaths.

Various UNICEF country office websites also provide details on private sector collaborations, e.g. with American Airlines and Giorgio Armani, though these are not always specifically innovation-oriented.

Publications & outreach

A very strong web presence highlights innovation with stories, projects descriptions and articles, though few research reports.

UNICEF runs and maintains several separate websites:

- Stories of UNICEF Innovation: The website highlights stories, articles and brief reports about innovation in different contexts.
- UNICEF Innovation: The main website of the agency has a sub-site that prominently features links to various innovation resources.
- Map of UNICEF Innovations: On an online map, hundreds of innovations are highlighted with links for more information.

In addition, numerous articles and publications capture and review the work UNICEF has completed or is undertaking with regard to innovation. This includes the various annual reports that cover innovation as a topic as well as the UNICEF X, a first report that details the agency's innovations "from start-up to scale-up," providing details on 25 projects.

Projects

Worldwide, hundreds of innovative projects are listed. In addition, UNICEF develops a few new tools for global use.

Hundreds of innovation projects that UNICEF supports in some capacity are listed and visualized on an interactive map. Many are either built in or supported by one of the regional innovation labs and some are implemented globally or by specific country offices. A few stand out as flagship pilots, including:

- RapidPro: The open source software is a platform for building various mobile-based applications. Many other innovations are based on it.
- UReport: A direct, real-time youth engagement tool where kids can send reports via SMS (in Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan…)
- Project Mwana: The mHealth initiative aims to reduce delays in sending HIV test results from labs to rural health facilities.
- EduTrac: Built on RapidPro, the app supports the education system. It can send and receive information, track indicators and more.
- mHERO: Also powered by RapidPro, it tailors communication tools to the medical sector to improve health information systems (HIS).
- EquiTrack: The partnering tracking tool developed in Lebanon serves as an online repository of cooperation agreements, and tracks details.
- RapidFTR: The smartphone app helps with family reunification by quickly collecting vital information from separated children.
- MobiStation: This is a tiny, solar-powered school in a suitcase. It includes a laptop, projector, camera, speaker and other useful tools.
- Emergency Kit for adolescents in Indonesia: The training tools help young adults deal with the psycho-social stress of emergencies.

Areas of Innovation

**Children
Health
Education
Development**

International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (ICRC)

Rather than an innovation "lab," the ICRC has launched a global partnership initiative that is concerned with strategically fostering and growing innovations. A small team is dedicated to supporting innovation efforts as well as sporadic innovations that occur in everyday ICRC work. Staff, including top-level management, have frequently highlighted and recognised the importance of seeking new ideas and approaches to provide the best deliveries and services possible.

Definition or use of the term "innovation"	Team	Lab	Partners	Fund	Pilots
Path toward improving humanitarian action.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Strategy

The ICRC has implicitly supported innovation for a long time and, more recently, launched a few innovation-specific initiatives.

According to its strategy, the ICRC "aims to distinguish itself by the collaborative and innovative nature of its work at field level as well as within legal and policy circles." It does not elaborate on what this involves. Elsewhere, innovation is referenced with regard to improving communication with communities.

In late 2014, high-level management staff attended and backed the launch of the ICRC's innovation partnership, emphasising the importance of organisation-wide support and active pursuit of innovation.

In its writing, the ICRC also recognises and highlights innovations "that spontaneously take place in different delegations" as distinct from concerted efforts to move ahead with separate ideas and projects.

The ICRC has taken steps to shape the emerging discussion of innovation ethics and standards, especially as related to data and technology.

Dedicated resources

A new emphasis, though innovation is typically as described as embedded within partnership.

Dedicated teams at headquarters level work on innovation as well as information communication technology. This includes technical experts.

The Global Partnership for Innovation (GPHI2) was launched to gather "thought-shapers and innovators from a broad range of sectors around one common purpose: improving the impact of humanitarian action." The partnership's goal is to promote the development of innovative solutions to humanitarian challenges by harnessing the creative capacity of ICRC and its partners to respond to the needs of conflict victims.

Website Red Innovation aims to crowd-source ideas and help select the most important needs and best solutions. People can submit needs and vote to choose the most urgent projects. Built together with the start-ups Catalyx and 100%Open, the website itself represents an innovative effort.

The ICRC also recently established a full-time position to further and deepen partnerships with the private sector.

Partnerships

The importance of partnerships is emphasised and reference is made to "numerous" of them, though detailed information is not easy to find.

In addition to partnering with private sector actors like the UEFA, two

Rotary Clubs and the International Olympic Committee, ICRC has more recently also focused on partnerships specifically around innovation.

Together with the Philips Foundation, they explore "innovations and technology that could assist in providing relief to people affected by humanitarian crises," especially in healthcare and energy solutions.

The ICRC's GPHI2 partners are the Evian Group @ IMD and Fondation Lombard Odier. They will explore innovation and new collaborations.

Publications & outreach	**The ICRC seems overall less active in promoting innovation through publications and outreach, but has put out some contributions.** In June 2015, the ICRC wrote and later that year publicised a narrative report reviewing its innovation initiatives from 2014, including video-game-based tools for teaching IHL, messaging systems to communicate with Ebola victims and real-time data projects on migrants' needs. In addition, a number of online resources describe and foster its efforts: • In at least one webinar and some other innovation-related events, innovation trends and challenges were outlined and discussed. • On its website, the ICRC has published a few articles, some of which take a constructively critical perspective on the innovation "buzzword." • It also published a report on "ICRC Innovation for the 21st Century."
Projects	**Various projects have been launched, though not all have been reported on sufficiently.** Three projects are listed online, though there may be more: • Virtual Reality: The tool simulates military battlefield situations as an interactive medium for teaching international humanitarian law (IHL). • Last Mile Mobile Solutions: After having identified several limitations with paper-based beneficiary registration processes, the ICRC shifted to a digital data entry system, starting in CAR and South Sudan. • Body Bags: Partnered with THE Port association to organise a hackathon to invent, prototype, test and produce a low-cost body bag aimed at improving recovery and analysis of the dead in humanitarian settings. In addition, the ICRC has written about looking into innovations in the following areas, with different levels of progress so far: • Telemedicine • SMS-based dialogue with communities • Mapping of Key Humanitarian Concerns in areas of little access • Tracking the needs of migrants • Mapping for Forensics • Mobile Cash delivery systems, e.g. in Somalia: mobile money transfer • Management of structural issues in prisons • Sustainable humanitarian response
Areas of innovation	**Health** **Energy** **Communications**

International Office of Migration (IOM)

IOM does not advocate its involvement in innovations quite as "loudly" as some of the other actors. The use of the word "innovative" does not seem as communications-oriented, coming up in the descriptions in some, but not all, of its smaller, agile community-oriented initiatives. This is partly because its emphasis is much less on "product innovation," and more on everyday-grassroots efforts or processes that may take more time to implement or generate outputs. That said, the type of work IOM describes as innovative in its publication nowadays has guided its portfolio for a long time already.

Definition or use of the term "innovation"	Team	Lab	Partners	Fund	Pilots
Community-based mechanisms that improve the lives of migrants.	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Strategy	**Innovation is not directly emphasised, but rather referenced as a necessary, practical approach to local, operational solutions.**
	One staff member explained that "IOM's innovative grassroots approach has boosted the productivity and efficiency of small enterprises. It has also promoted community resilience and sustainability through disaster risk reduction and building of government capacity."
	In its strategy review from 2010, IOM explains that it conducts research in order to "stimulate innovative programmatic approaches and activities at the operational level."
Dedicated resources	**No team or department is directly tasked with innovation, but it seems implicitly relevant for all staff.**
	Interestingly, IOM's broader Development Fund has been "providing essential seed funding for innovative initiatives" since 2001 (but it was not set up along with other innovation funds within the system).
	Even if no designated team is publicised online, some of IOM's staff are known experts in the field and actively contributed to the WHS Thematic Group and other international fora.
	In September 2015, IOM opened the Global Migration Data Analysis Centre (GMDAC) in Berlin to create and support better data on migration trends. Characteristically, the centre is not branded as "innovative" but a press release does say that the centre will explore innovative approaches.
Partnerships	**Many partnerships have been fostered, but few focus on innovation.**
	In its general programming, IOM describes partnerships as providing "an important platform for advancing cooperation on migration." The organisation cooperates with multiple private sector actors including Chevron, Starbucks and AmeriCares. It also places a strong emphasis on engaging donors and governments, the research community and civil society and it is a member of the Global Migration Group.
	In addition, at least two recent partnerships emphasise innovation:

- Deloitte: improving camp management through communication, coordination and delivery support during crises.
- Panasonic: distributing solar lanterns to the most vulnerable.

Publications & outreach	**Publications show little emphasis on and almost sporadic uses of the word "innovation," yet clearly embrace the concept.**

Although IOM itself does not use innovations to publicise its work and has not put forth many innovation-specific publications, proof of its innovation successes abound.

- In 2011, IOM received a [prize](#) at a social innovation fair in Latin America (ECLAC) for its work in Panama with indigenous migrants.
- Its post-earthquake efforts in Indonesia were [recognized](#) as "one of the world's most innovative" by the World Bank for combining individuals' MSE selection, training and asset support with attention to the needs of small-producer groups and village communities.
- The IOM Director General [called](#) for partnerships and innovation to end violence against women and children in 2012.
- A 2013 [statement](#) explaining why IOM needs innovation pointed to a number of projects that give direct aid to migrants to help them support themselves in their hosting countries. "Innovative" seems to be understood as the core of business for grassroots work.

Projects	**IOM does not seem to emphasise or invest in pilots, but rather highlights some grassroots projects as particularly innovative.**

The following projects are described as "innovative" in one way or another on IOM's website and in publications:

- [Displacement Tracking Matrix](#) (DTM): The online map captures, processes and disseminates information to help track and monitor population displacement. It is used in [Haiti](#), [Nepal](#), [Iraq](#), [South Sudan.](#)
- [Centre for Assistance and Counselling of Family Aggressors](#) in Moldova: It is described as "the first institution of its kind to provide rehabilitation services to perpetrators of domestic violence."
- Supporting the formation of [self-help groups for migrant men](#) to increase their awareness of gender inequality issues in Vietnam.
- Program for [integration of trafficked young women in Tanzania.](#)
- [Psycho-social support and family therapy to migrant women](#) in Ecuador (notably, this work is emphasised as innovative, though also done through similar projects in other countries).
- [Solar lanterns](#) purchased for IDPs to decrease gender-based violence at night and provide women greater safety in Somalia and Pakistan.
- [Reintegration of Ex-Combatants in Controlled Environments](#) in Colombia via intensive agricultural training.

In all these projects, the grassroots emphasis of innovation stands out.

Areas of innovation	**Health** **Development** **Migration**

Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

When describing "innovation," NRC staff or publications tend to highlight the importance of creative and simple solutions. Even though the importance of innovation is not pronounced as directly as in other organisations, there is evidence that innovative approaches are core to its activities. NRC contributed specifically to the experience with and use of various technologies in the sector. Most of its innovative projects stem from refugee and camp or shelter contexts, a common space for "frugal" innovations, where both aid actors and aid recipients invent new approaches with limited resources.

Definition or use of the term "innovation"	Team	Lab	Partners	Fund	Pilots
Simple, creative solutions that combine local knowledge and new technologies.	No	No	Yes	No	Yes

Strategy	**There are several mentions of innovation as core to NRC's approach, though the most recent strategy itself does not reference it.**
	In a review of its work in the Horn of Africa in 2014, the NRC makes specific note of innovation as a strategy for reaching durable solutions. It explains that this will be core to its work in 2015-2017. The report also states that "the most successful innovations have effectively made use of readily available local resources, which, through a combination of local knowledge and new technology, were turned into good use."
	In the organisation-wide 2015-2017 strategy, the NRC describes itself as "courageous" but does not refer to innovation, partnerships or new projects. Rather, it commits to increasing accountability to refugees and displaced populations. In its 2015 Global Overview, little reference is made to finding innovative solutions.
	Though seemingly no longer stated on its own website, other sources (e.g. this 2016 job posting) highlight that innovation was at some point one of the organisation's four core values, along with accountability, dedication and inclusiveness.
Dedicated resources	**There is no clear evidence of a dedicated lab, team or fund.**
	As part of programme development in 2014, NRC mapped innovative approaches that staff and communities in the field already were undertaking.
	This suggests that the emphasis on innovation at NRC may be less explicit, but that innovation is considered inherent to daily operations.
Partnerships	**Partnerships to foster innovation seem to be set up project-by-project.**
	There is no obvious place online where the NRC introduces the types of partnerships it initiated to further innovation-related goals. Within articles describing individual projects, however, the value of finding the right partners to implement technical ideas comes through. These partners include:

- InterNews and ACAPS
- Hewlett Packard
- Microsoft
- Safaricom Foundation

Publications & outreach	**Though less prominently displayed or shared than on other organisations' websites, there are a number of articles on innovation.**

In a speech at the Humanitarian Innovation Conference 2014, NRC Head of the Secretary General's Office Erik Abild highlighted how "the importance of innovation is not new" but has always been core to humanitarian action. Rather than suggesting an emphasis on "innovation" he warns against the opposite – "being overconfident in our previous experience" – to highlight how innovation should be at the core of all aid.

In July 2015, NRC convened a conference focusing on how innovation can help improve education and its delivery.

The organisation also underscores ways in which refugees and aid recipients themselves are improving their daily lives with the help of simple technologies, recycled materials and solar power; for example in Dadaab, Kenya.

In the report "1 million: Learning in Emergencies," the NRC commits to expanding innovation in order to improve the quality of its work. It describes actively pursuing technology innovations to foster education efforts.

Projects	**The NRC has undertaken numerous innovative projects in different refugee camps to try and solve different problems and challenges.**

Examples of innovations listed in NRC's annual report include the Biogas project in Benishangul-Gumuz, Ethiopia, harvesting water from air in Assosa, Ethiopia, generating fuel from waste in Kenya and solar-powered water harvesting projects in Kenya and Somalia:

- In the instant Network School Project in Dadaab, 10-inch WiFi-enabled, Android solar-powered tablets connect students to educational materials on a server. This is used for formal education, vocational training and e-learning.
- An "innovative" cash programme in Jordan was used to distribute winter assistance to refugees in major camps, allowing greater choice.
- Also in Jordan, the NRC provided a new type of shelter solution that piloted renewable energy features.
- Solar photovoltaic systems: currently soliciting bids for Jordan
- In the Dadaab camp, residents decided to recycle plastic waste. Information technology teaches refugees the skills that ultimately make them marketable.
- Also in Dadaab, a solar-powered water distribution system was piloted in 2013. It serves a population of 8,000 with solar energy alone.
- Zaatari, Jordan: Working with recycled tents to make new products such as furniture saved US $3 million. A Jordanian engineer led this project, which the NRC supported.
- Renewable energy project: In Ethiopia, biogas from human and animal waste helps reduce dependency on firewood and increase refugee self-reliance.

Areas of innovation	**Shelter** **Technology** **Energy** **Education**

Save the Children

As the host of ELRHA, which hosts the Humanitarian Innovation Fund, Save the Children is clearly connected and linked to innovation efforts in the humanitarian sectors. That said, in its projects and across country chapters and offices, there does not seem to be one core strategy on how to foster innovation. The practice is rather understood as a key way to improve children's lives and as such core to the agency's work. Overall, however, Save the Children's likely accomplishments with regard to innovation are hard to find through public sources and seem un-coordinated.

Definition or use of the term "innovation"	Team	Lab	Partners	Fund	Pilots
A means to create change that improves the lives of children.	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Strategy	**Innovation is defined as core in all work for children. Moreover, as the host of ELRHA and thus the HIF, there is a clear link.**
	Clearly stated: "Save the Children sees innovation as a means to creating positive change for children. Our 'Theory of Change,' which describes our understanding of how we can create that change, begins with innovation."
	Several country chapters define innovative approaches as part of specific objectives within their strategies, though there is no clear consolidation of these approaches at the global level.
Dedicated resources	**Beyond a well-renowned innovation award for child healthcare, few clearly pronounced resources could be determined.**
	Save the Children manages and provides an annual US $1 million award for child healthcare innovation, though this would not cover other innovations or its own efforts. The award is provided in partnership with GlaxoSmithKline.
	The Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF) is a clear leader in the emerging innovation discussions and expertise in the sector. ELRHA launched the HIF in 2010 and it since has supported dozens of innovations, some to scale.
Partnerships	**Save the Children has established numerous partnerships worldwide, but it is not clear how much these focus on innovation.**
	On its website, the agency emphasises that it "partners with the private sector to drive innovation in product, process and services to address global development challenges for children and their families."
	Online, the following partners are featured amongst 44 others. Some focus on channelling synergies toward innovation:

- Accenture: The two aim to leverage technology for development of a more secure future for young people.
- ToysRus: The company helps give needy US children a healthy start.
- Goldman Sachs: Committed US $1.3 million to Japan relief efforts.
- IKEA Foundation: Funds Soft Toys for Education campaign since 2013.
- Zynga Inc.: The creator of the Facebook game FarmVille has made more than US $3 million in donations through its social network games.

Publications & outreach	**The online presence and weight in the literature of Save the Children is comparatively low.**

A [position paper](#) submitted to the WHS, though filed under the Transformation through Innovation thematic areas, did not actually speak to this topic.

On the international office [website](#), most references to innovation are related to partnerships within which new solutions are being explored or implemented.

The [HIF Resource Hub](#), though, provides abundant relevant materials, including theoretical underpinnings and research on innovation as well as numerous case studies and detailed reports of the initiatives it has supported.

Projects	**Though the organisation has implemented several projects that are innovative in nature, they are not always highlighted as such.** • [Literacy Boost](#): The toolkit is used worldwide to support the development of young children's reading skills. It was developed together with World Vision International. • [Backpack PLUS](#): The toolkit empowers local community health workers. It is implemented together with UNICEF and others. • De-germers and other innovative products to prevent children from dying from diarrhoea. • [Neonatal resuscitation for new-borns](#): Together with Johnson & Johnson, Save the Children set out to train birth attendants on neonatal resuscitation. The two agencies state that they are committed to a joint vision: "Inspiring innovation to improve survival and healthy development of children under five, with a particular focus on newborns."
Areas of innovation	Health Education

Oxfam GB

Oxfam GB, more so than Oxfam International, has promoted innovations in a variety of fields, particularly with the use of technology in disasters. The NGO has developed a number of home-built products and approaches and, unlike other actors, endorsed a "responsible data policy" to foster a human rights-based approach in its technology-enabled work. A lot of its innovation takes place in development contexts.

Definition or use of the term "innovation"	Team	Lab	Partners	Fund	Pilots
Long-term solutions that start with the problem, not the tool.	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Strategy	**"Innovation" is named frequently, typically as openness to new approaches and a way to improve programming.**
	In its Strategic Plan 2013-2019, Oxfam International connects innovations closely to its goals and approaches. The document states the importance of continuing to foster innovations along with developing new sources of finance, making resources go further and promoting participation of all.
	Oxfam GB has pushed a lot of research and work around technologies and data, taking a user-centred and responsible approach: "We start with the problem, not with the tool; recognise the limitations and ensure the way we implement projects takes into account ethical applications which integrate ICTs in an appropriate way." A specialised team ICT in Programme, developed, amongst other things, a Responsible Data Policy.
	Elsewhere, Oxfam describes innovation as taking market systems approaches to support economic growth and healthy markets and to help overcome poverty by sustaining long-term solutions in development.
Dedicated resources	**A small but dedicated team has been working on exploring and fostering innovation since at least 2009.**
	Oxfam GB has had a Director of Innovation since 2009, when the NGO started expanding its networks and fostering innovation in finance, leverage and urban programming. Various Oxfam-branded innovations have been realised and "Innovation and leadership" is today (as then) placed within Oxfam GB's Policy & Practice work.
	In the US, Oxfam also runs an Innovation Lab, which focuses on engaging the private sector and provides a number of case studies.
Partnerships	**Oxfam is managing countless industry partnerships, though these are not always specifically dedicated to innovation.**
	Promoting innovation is stated as a core objective of partnerships, which Oxfam considers fundamental to its work. In addition, partnerships are governed based on six principles: shared visions and values, complementarity, autonomy and independence, transparency, clarity and commitment to joint learning.
	Commercial partnerships include work with Unilever, Nokia, Marks & Spencer, Accenture and others.

Publications & outreach	**Even without a dedicated platform, Oxfam GB has published many articles, blog posts and other publications on innovation.**

On Oxfam GB's website, almost a thousand entries come up in a search for "innovation." They include numerous publications and blog entries, as well as products (books). Many of these texts date back several years.

Perhaps the most prominent and comprehensive publication on the topic is the 2015 report "Unlocking Innovation," which reviews Oxfam practices and progress with various innovations and takes a constructively critical approach to the NGO's successes so far. It describes ongoing innovations in detail to enable lessons learning. A core theme is that innovation depends on fostering a creative environment in which people are willing to take risks and imagine new approaches.

Together with 100%Open, Oxfam developed an "innovation toolkit" that "cover[s] just about all aspects of innovation, from how to create an actionable strategy and run an ideas workshop to how to prototype, test and record the finished innovation."

Projects — **There are several in-house built innovations used in humanitarian settings, as well as initiatives in other sectors.**

Humanitarian innovations:
- ECHO and Oxfam are collaborating on EUsaveLives, You Save Lives, an innovative communications project to better convey the experience of displaced persons to EU citizens.
- Pee power: urinal used to light cubicles in refugee camps, research concluded in March 2015
- 3D printing: seen as an effective alternative way to supply tools in emergencies for sanitation and shelter
- MNutrition: implementing a DFID and GSMA initiative to develop and scale-up the delivery of nutrition messages
- MLink Somalia: SMS for polio prevention, reached 1 million
- Electronic prepaid solutions in the Philippines: working with Visa to provide financial access to disaster-affected populations

Development and market-based innovations:
- Women in Small Enterprise (WISE), Behind the Brands (BTB), Rural Resilience Initiative (R4), Poverty Footprint Study (PFS), Equitable Food Initiative, Lanka Social Venture, Nairobi sanitation project, I Care About Her Zambia

Climate-change innovations:
- Climate change forecasting in Uganda, Africa Climate Change Resilience Alliance

Resilience, insurance and finance innovations:
- People's Survival Fund, Flood Insurance for Bangladeshi farmers, Urban safety nets in Kenya, Chukuat Hatua

Areas of innovation — **Technology**
Nutrition
Health
Cash

The International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Innovation seems closely tied to the IRC's organisational identity, which is rooted in Albert Einstein's original vision and lasting inspiration as a co-founder. Recently, this was endorsed specifically in the strategic plan through 2020. At the same time, staff members have been publishing critical articles, questioning the hype around innovation as a buzzword, which perhaps describes a general ethos of prioritizing innovation but not wanting to highlight or compartmentalise it. Communications do not seem to report on or highlight innovation strategically, but rather sporadically. The lack of written statements or formal initiatives in innovation somewhat contrasts with a number of high-level statements on its critical importance. The IRC is positioned quite strongly in technology development and, perhaps by extension, innovations.

Definition or use of the term "innovation"	Team	Lab	Partners	Fund	Pilots
Einstein-inspired innovation now embedded within strategic plan.	Yes	No	Yes	No	No

Strategy	**The IRC has recently strengthened its communication on pursuing goal-oriented innovation.**
	In its IRC 2020 Strategy, which sets out ambitious goals to respond to the increased "intensity of humanitarian crises," innovation, as inspired by Einstein, is set as core to finding solutions. In particular, the IRC commits to "borrowing from other sectors, and developing our own innovative approaches to crisis situations," in order to answer the most basic but also most challenging humanitarian questions.
	There are no clearly pronounced principles or strategies on pursuing innovation, however.
Dedicated resources	**Instead of dedicated labs, funds or spaces, there is high-level management urging and support for innovation.**
	There is a unit called "Strategy and Innovation" led by a former communications director at the UK Department of Energy and Climate Change. But it is difficult to find reference to its precise portfolio.
Partnerships	**A clear focus on partnerships for innovation is not apparent, though the organisation has made statements on its importance.**
	On its own websites, the IRC states the importance of partnerships and lays out how corporate companies can become partners. There is no direct list, however, nor is there a concrete discussion on whether and how these partners can support innovation.
	One (non-corporate) partnerships stands out:

- Innovations for Poverty Action: Together, the two organisations have undertaken at least six different projects, e.g. seeking to empower girls and reduce gender-based violence.

Publications & outreach	**Publications and contributions to the wider debate exist, though they are not as actively promoted as in other organisations.**
	On the website, a search for the keyword "innovation" returns a number of results, but no dedicated sub-sites or articles that discuss the topic directly.
	There are, however, a few think pieces and articles (some of which are quite provocative) and the head of the IRC, David Miliband, speaks on Innovation and Partnership in a video. He highlights the IRC as particularly able to work in partnership with companies that are interested in humanitarian action. In a lecture in late 2014, he also spoke on economics and markets as important fields for innovation.
Projects	**Based on the IRC's communications, all projects share an innovative spirit. Some projects stand out, but are not necessarily promoted as innovative.**
	On its website, the IRC highlights a small number of projects as innovative, though it does not always seem clear why some projects are considered innovative, while similar projects are not:
	• ServiceInfo: Sometimes called a "Yelp for refugees," the online platform allows Syrian refugees in Lebanon to search and rate aid and commercial services.
	• Commodity Tracking System: Also referred to as an open-source "FedEx for aid deliveries," the CTS allows organisations to track essential, life-saving commodities, e.g. medical supplies, in crisis locations. It is based on smartphone forms built with the OpenDataKit and currently used inside Syria.
	• Girl Power in Nairobi: "This successful and innovative project helps teenage girls escape the cycle of poverty by helping them to partner with established companies with the goal of creating their own small businesses."
	• Making All Voices Count: Using technology and SMS to monitor and improve the health and nutrition services provided by 12 health facilities and 37 outreach posts in Kenya.
	• In the US, the IRC focuses on outreach and integration, running programmes like beekeeping with refugees and connecting newly arrived refugees with interpreters.
Areas of innovation	**Gender** **Livelihoods**

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

With its Policy Briefs, OCHA has been shaping the state of research around innovation in humanitarian aid as well as the agenda and decision-making. As the agency behind the World Humanitarian Summit, it has had substantial influence in bringing greater attention to innovation as a core concern for the entire sector. Perhaps less likely to implement innovations of its own, OCHA is well placed to support innovative actors and has set the promotion of innovation as one of its two strategic goals.

Definition or use of the term "innovation"	Team	Lab	Partners	Fund	Pilots
Essential steps toward remaining relevant as humanitarians.	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No

Strategy	**Through its strategy, OCHA has taken a fairly strong stance on supporting innovation.**
	OCHA's 2014-2017 Strategic Plan includes two goals: The first is to provide strategic leadership and coordination and the second to "[foster] a spirit of innovation." In that sense, OCHA appears to have positioned itself more clearly than all the other actors when it comes to supporting, enabling and unblocking innovative projects and ideas, though of course it is unlikely to run these by itself.
	Having placed "transformation through innovation" as one of the original four thematic areas of the WHS consultation process, the OCHA-led initiative significantly raised the profile of innovation efforts and launched a new emphasis and focus, resulting in research endeavours, pilot projects and more.
Dedicated resources	**A comparatively small team has brought OCHA's focus on innovation quite far, especially in the context of the WHS.**
	OCHA used to run a small Research and Innovation Grant, which supported a small group of applicants from around the world to write 20- to 40-page papers on an innovation topic of their choice. In the private sector, the statement highlights collaborations with DHL and Deloitte in particular. On the website, OCHA states that "the fund is currently closed."
	Though not specifically an innovation fund, the Common Humanitarian Fund already has supported a number of different innovative projects.
	Most of OCHA's work on innovation is steered or completed by the Policy Analysis and Innovation unit.
Partnerships	**In OCHA's role as a convener and coordinator, networks play a big role in innovation work, though there are no implementing partnerships.**
	In its 2014-2015 Plan and Budget, OCHA set the establishment of wider partnerships with new actors as a key priority.
Publications & outreach	**Most notably, various OCHA Policy Briefs have helped both capture and shape the discourse around innovation in humanitarian aid.**
	Relevant policy briefs around innovation and technology include:

- Shrinking the Supply Chain: Hyperlocal Manufacturing and 3D printing in Humanitarian Response
- Crowdfunding for emergencies

- [Humanitarian Innovation: The State of the Art](#)
- [Hashtag standards for emergencies](#)
- [Humanitarianism in the Age of Cyber-warfare](#)
- [Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in Humanitarian Response](#)

In addition, on OCHA's website, "innovation" is listed as a highlighted theme, which brings up 26 [top stories](#). These cover how to handle data, deal with mobile network operators and understand the WHS, and they introduce several innovative projects from around the world, including Sri Lanka, Sudan and many other countries.

Projects	**OCHA has both supported external innovations and initiated a few projects focusing on coordination and information sharing.** OCHA has supported, built or managed a number of online portals that use innovative media to connect or organise aid actors, including: • [The Humanitarian Data Exchange](#), HDX: an online platform where organisations and individuals can upload their own and download others' data in an effort to achieve greater transparency. More than 3,000 datasets have been uploaded so far from more than 200 locations and 600 sources. • [Environmental Emergencies Centre](#): Run together with UNEP, the centre seeks to build capacity of high-risk and middle-income countries to respond to environmental emergencies. • [Arab Humanitarian Portal](#): a site for information sharing on Gulf humanitarian action. • The [Humanitarian Exchange Language](#) (HXL): an easy to use data standard that makes different spread-sheet-based datasets comparable and compatible with the help of simple "hashtags."
Areas of innovation	**Coordination** **Information**