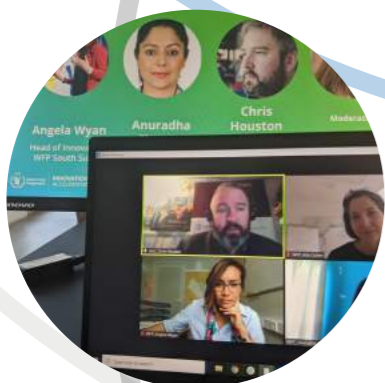


THE STORY OF
CREATING HOPE
IN CONFLICT:
A HUMANITARIAN
GRAND CHALLENGE



CREATING HOPE IN CONFLICT



In November 2019, 26 individuals from around the world met for the first time after being selected to join the Humanitarian Grand Challenge. From humanitarians to engineers, academics to local leaders, this group connected around a shared motivation to reduce the number of deaths caused by conflict, and build back the infrastructure of their communities, by testing and scaling new products, services and systems. Over a year, a community unfolded and grew, through a global pandemic.

"Greater than the sum of its parts: Where might different organisations be able to collaborate to support the same community?"

"Being part of a community of people coming up with creative solutions to some of the hardest problems. It is rare to be with a group like this."

“The most positive thing about the week was connecting with other innovators and learning about their innovations, approaches, challenges and lessons learned.”



LEARN FROM EACH OTHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCE

Powerful learning comes from hearing about others' lived experiences.

What if you need go no further than this community to gain knowledge, skills and ideas that support your innovation?

As they connected, and relationships were built, it became clear that there were 3 things this community could do together to accelerate their innovations and the impact of these on communities experiencing conflict - learn from one another's lived experience, work together, and drive the sector forward. Now with 116 members, this is the story so far of how the Humanitarian Grand Challenge Community is evolving in these three pathways.

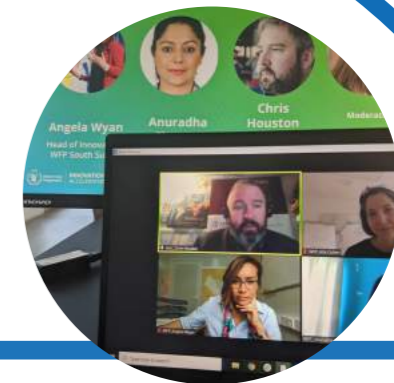


WORK TOGETHER

Innovators need collaborators and partners to test and scale their innovations effectively.

What if the connections made within this community became collaborations and the beginning of new, unimagined opportunities?

"People are still reacting to the pandemic differently. Take time to acknowledge emotions and take a break - recognise when that's needed because it's important"



DRIVE THE SECTOR FORWARD

Despite the diversity within these innovations, they all operate within the complex humanitarian system.

What if these innovators could act collectively to accelerate positive change in the humanitarian sector?

"We all have different data sets relating to the same issue or community. How might we harness data from across our innovations to support all our work?"

The energy of meeting face-to-face after the Innovation Acceleration Week, run by the World Food Programme, helped the community stay connected virtually through emails, monthly calls and our virtual discussion platform, Slack. When COVID-19 hit, discussions shifted focus to respond to the pandemic, supporting one another and the communities most affected, on top of existing crisis. Innovations faced new challenges, had to pause or pivot, and this group developed new ideas and collaborations to meet these emergent needs.

"Going forward, I'd like to hear more success stories and read innovators' 'how to', focussing on this is where we failed and this is what we learned. This would help us all overcome any similar challenges."



Community seeks know-how and further funding to develop their innovations

We launched the community newsletter to share external resources, opportunities and showcase their work to one another's work. The first community newsletter receives an 82% open rate. Links that got the most clicks were funding opportunities and insights into each others' work. This demonstrated that the community see links to funding and wisdom from their peers as most valuable to supporting their own work.



Time spent together sparks the first community collaborations

Following a week together in Munich conversations continue and turn into collaborations.

The Yemen Relief Foundation becomes Humanitarian Data Systems' first client and MegMadLabs is connected by Mighty Children to a community in Afghanistan to carry out user research.



Creating open space builds trust and surfaces ideas

Online, innovators share supportive messages and ideas emerge about how this unforeseen moment of COVID-19 could prompt wider sector changes.

As a result Field Ready, Humanitarian Open Street Maps and Needs List pivot to support the production of PPE locally and collaborate to do so in Kenya, Uganda, Iraq and Bangladesh.

LEARN FROM EACH OTHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCE

"It's been really engaging; the different streams are really helpful, and the support is great. I'm glad Slack is there."

As the community get to know each others' work, so their appetite to learn from each other grows. We started to support the community to easily surface their commonalities; from specific offers and asks, to serendipitous conversations, and stories of lessons learned. 76% of innovators say they understand the skills and experience of others in the community; what's possible as this percentage increases?

"He is working on innovative crutches and is having troubles shipping some parcels from South Korea to Bangladesh, can anyone help?"



Identifying common goals and challenges enable skills and expertise to be shared

Innovators have received vital travel advice about working in South Sudan making it possible to visit, make in-country connections and pilot innovations. Two innovators working with the same partner in Syria were able to connect and share experiences and learnings from the partnership.



Connections increase when innovators advocate for one another

When innovators ask for and give support within the community, they are able to harness their wealth of experience to learn and overcome challenges quickly. In virtual meet ups, Innovators start to coach one another towards specific asks e.g. remote working, technical expertise, and logistics advice. Then innovators could advocate for each others' needs. This approach enabled the number of offers and asks to triple.



Inviting local in-country partners diversifies and improves the community

An intentional invitation through current members to their local colleagues and in-country partners enables new people with different perspectives to contribute and gain from the community. Membership more than doubles in size from 51 to 116. Most new community members are based in conflict-affected communities, which elevates front-line experience and expertise.

WORK TOGETHER

"The Translators without borders presentation was excellent. I most enjoyed the informative case studies."

The community seek connections with other members who are aligned to their mission, innovation and location. By fostering spaces for the community and its wider network to come together as equals, innovators start to explore collaboration opportunities. Over time, these might lead to new partnerships.

"If I can offer anyone help in thinking about maps or satellite imagery or geospatial data in your work I am happy to do that."



Quick connections enable innovators to truly overcome day-to-day challenges

By having regular contact and conversations, the community becomes a go-to-space for getting quick advice, connections and ideas that overcome small but important hurdles in innovation. Two innovators collaborated to convert their training into Arabic via the same online platform, one innovator finds an evaluation partner in another innovations organisation and a range of business tools are crowd sourced on Slack.



Partnership building stories provide incentives and tips for others

At every community workshop or webinar, innovators share their stories and experiences particularly those who are leading implementation on the ground, and their local partners. 78% of the community say that they find these case studies to be the most useful aspect of community events: "applications of how the partnership has worked was most useful".



Conversations with external agencies catalyse new strategic ideas

Through workshops with external organisations, the work of internationally recognised agencies is explored. Discussions make it easier for opportunities to emerge organically. UNITAR introduces an innovator to a World Food Programme contact in Nigeria to support the project's expansion. USAID provides critical friendship to an innovator on a new project idea. Microsoft offers a connection to one innovator to aid ideation for a project.

DRIVE THE SECTOR FORWARD

"I really appreciate [discussing] different topics that gave me other ideas and ways of improving our work."

This group of ambitious innovators have a powerful opportunity to leverage their collective voice in a way that supports the humanitarian ecosystem and their own innovations. By starting small, and with ambition, tangible ideas put innovators at the forefront of sector recommendations and change.

'It was interesting to have a more global discussion to open new perspectives.'



Collective potential arises through setting expectations and hosting open spaces

26 new innovations won funding and were invited to join the community. When given the opportunity to set the agenda, innovators wanted to work together beyond the boundaries of their innovation. The topic they chose to address together was, 'what's the most important challenge the sector faces?' As a result, 35 innovators came together to talk about tackling social and political barriers to scale and 18 attended a follow up session.



Bringing in sector actors makes change tangible

In response to a call from USAID for recommendations, the gap between discussion and action is narrowed through focussed conversation. Two exploratory workshops on 'Private sector partnerships in fragile states' bring 10 innovators together to collate their learnings on the topic and informs USAID guidance.



Letting ideas emerge motivates collective action

Innovators come forward with new ideas that could support innovation in the humanitarian sector such as speaker suggestions and event ideas. As a result, they organise a 'Humanitarian Grand Challenge: COVID-19 Lessons Learned Webinar'. Innovators align with funders and sector decision makers on what matters and what should be done differently which sparks ideas for new experiments.

ONGOING MOMENTUM

This is a community starting to build their own rhythm and momentum, and harness their collective intelligence: seeds of potential are flourishing. As new innovations from across the world join the community in July 2021, they will continue to welcome a diversity of members and grow as a space for learning, collaboration and action.



INNOVATORS ARE LEARNING FROM ONE ANOTHER'S' LIVED EXPERIENCE BY:

Making their own skills and knowledge more visible to support each others' work.

Joining moments of celebration where innovators work is showcased to the wider community.

Advocating for peers, and offering their own experience and expertise, to support one another.



INNOVATORS ARE WORKING TOGETHER BY:

Staying connected with one-another virtually to enable new collaborations to flourish.

Keeping in touch with potential external partner opportunities and harnessing these when the time is right.

Exploring relationships with external organisations as a community.



INNOVATORS ARE DRIVING THE SECTOR FORWARD BY:

Continuing to join and create inclusive spaces for discussing challenging topics.

Pro actively offering their collective expertise to sector decision makers.

Bringing ideas and enthusiasm to the table in order to transform conversations into collective action.

BRINK ←

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HOPE
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GRAND CHALLENGE

A
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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the
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