HUMANITARIAN INNOVATION FUND
Final Report

Organisation Name	Groupe URD

Project Title	**Sigmah Phase 2: the dissemination of a tested innovation**
Problem Addressed / Thematic Focus	Information management / Project management / Quality
Location	Global
Start Date	09/10/2014
Duration	9 months *Plus an external evaluation after 9 months of implementation.*
Total Funding Requested	£20 000

Partner(s)	Sigmah Steering Cooperative (an open group which currently includes the following organisations: *Acting For Life, Action Contre la Faim, Comité de Secours Internationaux, Croix-Rouge Française, ETC Terra, Groupe URD, Handicap International, Médecins du Monde, Première Urgence- Aide Médicale Internationale, Solidarités International and Triangle Génération Humanitaire*) Coordination SUD Netapsys and Adergo
Total Funding	£89 263

Innovation Stage	Diffusion
Type of Innovation	Paradigm
Project Impact Summary	Sigmah is open source software for the shared management of international aid projects. Its flexible and intuitive design allows organizations to structure and continually improve the methodological framework

	of their activities and thereby improve the Quality and Accountability of their projects.
	Sigmah is the result of a participatory project run by a group of aid organizations. Based on the expertise of Groupe URD and its professional and voluntary partners, they have developed the software so that it corresponds to what aid organizations say they need and have placed it in the public realm so that it is available to all.

Reporting Period	9th October 2014 to 30th June 2015
Total Spent	£99 849

PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

What have been the key achievements of the project?

The aim of the funding from the Humanitarian Innovation Fund was to support the dissemination strategy of Sigmah Phase 2 in the form of a sub-project. The objective of this dissemination strategy is to scale out the project from an innovation supported by 11 French NGOs to a mature innovation supported by 20 European NGOs and at least one NGO from the global South.

As such, the main achievement of the activities carried out in connection with the communication sub-project funded by the HIF is the launch of the first 3 adoptions by non-French NGOs: CARE Nederland, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières – Germany, and the Luxemburg Red Cross. The scaling up strategy supported by the HIF is therefore already beginning to bear fruit at the European level!

What were the major activities and outputs of the project (this may include a description of the activities conducted and how they related to the work plan)?

Numerous activities have been conducted to increase the visibility of the Sigmah project, both in the form of new communication materials and events:

- Communication materials:
    - New quarterly newsletter;

- • Drafting of a press book and development of a model for press releases;
  - • Creation of a Kakemono banner for trade faire stands;
  - • Creation of a short film presenting the project;
  - • Project t-shirt for the future crowdfunding campaign and volunteers;
  - • Drafting of a generic case study « Best practices for a successful adoption » ;
  - • New website template and overhaul of the website contents;
  - • New project brochure.
- • Events
  - • Conference in Brussels, *Sigmah pops up in Brussels !* at the end of November 2014;
  - • Stand at the 2014 ECHO partners conference in Brussels;
  - • Stand at the 2015 ALNAP conference in Berlin;
  - • Meeting to present the project to 3 German NGOs in Berlin in May 2015.

What adjustments and adaptations were made through the course of the project?

As mentioned in our email of 12 May 2015, 3 adjustments had to be made to the activities of the communication sub-project supported by the HIF:

1. The redesigning of the website included revision of the architecture and the complete graphic layout, and rewriting of the new contents, but did not include the final phase of software development;
2. The crowdfunding campaign had to be postponed till after the period of the sub-project;
3. We were unable to take part in the ICT4D2015 conference in Chicago, but we were able to take part in the ALNAP2015 conference in Berlin.

Why were these needed and how were these made?

Last September, our technical partner, Ideia, went bankrupt and was bought by another company: Netapsys. This event had a major impact on the release of Sigmah software v2.0: the software was only made public at the end of June 2015 (having been initially planned for October 2014…). When Netapsys took over the Sigmah project, this also led to overspending on software development (about £15 150 (20 160€)) in order to release version 2.0. Due to the limited budget for Sigmah Phase 2, for which part of the funding has still not been raised (25%), we had to postpone the last phase of development of the website (estimated at £9 926) until the funds that are needed have been raised. During the sub-project funded by the HIF, the architecture of the site was completely revised, the contents were rewritten and a completely new site template was developed.

Moreover, after finishing the crowdfunding campaign feasibility study and setting up its general parameters, we decided to postpone its launch until next semester to maximise its impact and so that a newer version of the software and the website are available for the people the campaign reaches.

Lastly, our application for a stand and presentation slot at the ICT4D2015 conference was rejected. We received only the following explanation: "We had significantly more applications than we are able to accommodate this year". However, our application for a stand at the ALNAP2015 conference was accepted.

Please explain any budget various greater than 15% of the original budget headlines

« Staff costs » budget line

The HIF funding (£20 000) helped to fund the communication activities planned in the project presented to the HIF (total budget £89 263), which is itself a sub-project of the Sigmah Phase 2 project (total budget £615 084). The French Development Agency, the NGOs involved in the project and Rhone-Alpes Regional Council are among the main co-funders of Phase 2, and the sub-project presented to the HIF.

In terms of accounting follow-up, the activities directly covered by the HIF funding were followed up. An accounting report for these £20 000 can be provided if requested by the HIF. However, there has been no specific accounting follow-up for the sub-project (total budget £89 263), only for the Phase 2 project as a whole (total budget £615 084).

The staff costs budget line therefore includes the costs for October 2014 to June 2015 for all the Sigmah Phase 2 activities carried out by all those who worked on the HIF sub-project, and not only the costs linked to the specific activities of the sub-project.

If we take the specific case of the Communications Officer, there is only a variance of £382 for a total initial envelope that was planned at £4 877, or 8% of variance. As this person only worked on communication activities that were specific to the HIF sub-project, this reasonable gap shows that the costs incurred by staff that were specific to the project remained within the initially planned order of magnitude.

« Travel/accomodation costs » budget line

The £1 394 of over-expenditure can be explained in the same terms as above. The two lines, "European travel for conferences and meetings with partners" and "Paris-Plaisians return journeys" are in deficit because they include all the

journeys of this kind made for the Sigmah Phase 2 project as a whole during the period, and not only those made for the HIF sub-project.

« Activities costs » budget line

The under consumption of £8 899of this budget line can be explained by the postponement of the "Externalised development of website" (£9 926), as mentioned above.

« Monitoring & evaluation costs » budget line

As indicated in the workplan in our initial proposal, the evaluation funded as part of the broader Sigmah Phase 2 project was planned for after the implementation period of the HIF sub-project. This evaluation is planned for when a sufficient number of organizations have been using the software for more than a year, in order to have a relevant sample.

This budget line was therefore not used.

INNOVATION OUTCOMES

What were the outcomes of the project (positive or negative) and how did these follow from activities and outputs described above?

The main outcome of the project was that Sigmah was adopted by 3 non-French organizations: CARE Nederland, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Germany (VSF-G), and the Luxemburg Red Cross. This outcome is clearly the result of the communication activities carried out as part of the HIF sub-project. The first contact with CARE Nederland took place when they came to the "Sigmah pops up in Brussels" event, we met VSF-G at the presentation of Sigmah in Berlin at the beginning of March 2015, and then we met the Luxemburg Red Cross at the introductory training course given in partnership with Coordination SUD in December 2014.

40 new organizations contacted us during the sub-project (October 2014 to June 2015), and 59 between November 2013 and July 2015. This was not as many as had been hoped for (the objective was 80), but the nine months of the sub-project were clearly the most intense in terms of contacts made from the beginning of the Sigmah Phase 2 project in November 2013. In addition, certain communication activities such as the quarterly newsletter which have continued since the end of the sub-project should allow the general objective of

establishing contact with 100 new NGOs during the Sigmah Phase 2 project to be achieved.

Only one new organisation (Equilibres & Populations) became a member of the project during the sub-project period. Our initial objective of going from 11 members in 2014 to 20 members by the end of 2015 no longer seems realistic. The end date of Phase 2 has therefore been put back to the end of 2017. The exchanges we have had with other software innovations for the humanitarian sector during the HIP2015 conference last July showed us that the 2 years initially planned to scale up Sigmah is not the right timescale, and the 4 years that we are now planning is a more realistic period for this type of complex transition.

Has the project demonstrated the success of the innovation?

No, the success of the innovation has not been demonstrated within the given time. This will be analysed as part of the final external evaluation that is planned as part of the broader Sigmah Phase 2 project.

If yes, what evidence is there for the performance of the innovation?

This will be the subject of the final external evaluation.

If no, what are the key lessons about the innovation or area of practice?

Between mid-2014 and mid-2015, we realised what kind of timescale would be necessary to scale up a software innovation for the humanitarian sector like Sigmah. For each organisation, adopting Sigmah implies making significant changes to their way of functioning, and as a result they are reluctant to make the decision to start the adoption process. Also, the adoption process is very long, beginning with a pilot adoption phase which has to last at least a year in order to learn lessons from the full cycle of several humanitarian projects. Finally, the software developments themselves take a lot of time, and depend on funds which are difficult to raise, and can therefore hold up their launch.

Do the outcomes support the initial rationale for the innovation?

Yes, the outcomes obtained by the sub-project show that the initial idea of the project is on the right track. New NGOs have decided to launch pilot adoptions, and the older ones continue to support the project.

How has your understanding of the innovation changed through the project period?

As indicated above, the main change in our understanding of our innovation is the timescale in which we need to project ourselves.

Did the innovation lead to any unexpected outcomes or results? How were these identified and managed?

The most unexpected outcome was the level of attendance at our event: "Sigmah pops up in Brussels". We had organised a similar event in France in 2011, and this time the attendance was significantly lower than we had expected. For this event in Brussels, we decided to hold it during the week of the ECHO partners meeting. Once there, we learned that ECHO had organised a meeting on another subject at the same time that we had planned for our event. Several people who had registered did not come in the end. We nevertheless went ahead with the event and took advantage of the reduced numbers to allow greater participation by those who attended.

Henceforth, to avoid this kind of mishap, we have decided to organise smaller scale events for the end of the Phase 2 project. A permanent survey, "Sigmah pops up at home", was created as a way of reaching organisations who would like us to provide them with an introductory training course or organise a presentation event near where they are based. This allows us to wait till we have reached a critical mass before launching an event or a training course.

What are the key lessons learnt relating to the innovation (this should relate to the innovation itself, rather than project implementation)?

In addition to the lesson learned about the issue of the timescale mentioned above, we have realised that we need to readjust our strategy in relation to the software development. Up till now, the majority of the effort made on the project was on the development of major features (the offline mode, data importation, a new system of indicators, etc.). These developments took a long time: the time to raise the necessary funding was long, as was the time needed to develop the features (for example, 23 months between the release of v1.2 and v2.0). The very low frequency of new versions of Sigmah may discourage certain organizations from deciding to adopt it. During a meeting about strategy with the partner NGOs on 30 June 2015, the decision was made to put in place a short response cycle for the short-term needs of NGOs who use the software or want to adopt it, in addition to the necessary long-term cycle, in order to make adoptions easier. The aim now is to release two versions of the software per year.

METHODOLOGY

Was the methodology successful in producing credible evidence on the performance of the innovation?

Sigmah is an innovation that is currently being scaled up. The aim is to produce evidence of Sigmah's performance by the end of Phase 2 via the final external evaluation. The evaluation will be carried out not only to produce evidence of the performance of the innovation, but also potentially to define performance indicators to be monitored once the change of scale has been successful.

As it is currently a pilot innovation, the performance indicators that are currently monitored are: the number of new adoptions and participation in the quarterly meetings of the Steering Cooperative.

What adjustments were made to the methodology during the course of the project? Why were these needed and how were they made?

No adjustments were made to the methodology during the course of the project.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Describe the partnership arrangements and how these may have changed during the course of the project.

As presented in the initial project proposal, the main partners involved are **(i) the NGO members of the Steering Cooperative**.

(ii) Coordination SUD has been an important partner since 2012. It has communicated information about the project to its members since the beginning of the project and it has co-organized 3 full training sessions since April 2013.

Finally, the third circle of partners was initially made up of **(iii) the technical partners Ideia and Adergo**, who were respectively a computer engineering company in charge of the development of Sigmah, and a software ergonomics company in charge of the intuitive design of the software interfaces.

During the course of the project, the main change to these partnerships concerns the bankruptcy of Ideia and its acquisition by Netapsys, already mentioned above.

In addition, a new NGO (Equilibres & Populations), which began to adopt Sigmah during the summer of 2014, formally joined the partner NGOs at the beginning of 2015. Several other adoptions by NGOs are also underway.

DISSEMINATION

Indicate the steps taken to disseminate the outcomes of the project.

Sigmah is an open source project, and the main objective of the sub-project funded by the HIF is communication. However, the results of the project mentioned above have not been communicated a great deal. It is problematic to communicate about new contacts established with NGOs or pilot adoptions before they have become firmly established.

What dissemination activities have or will be conducted (whether or not included in the budget)?

The communication activities carried out in connection with the project are described above.

What publications have resulted from the project, or are forthcoming (i.e. research and policy reports, journal articles, case studies, evaluations etc.)?

A document, "Best practices for a successful adoption" was written to be distributed at the ALNAP2015 conference.

An external final evaluation is planned at the end of the broader Sigmah Phase 2 project, and will be published.

Finally, as mentioned above, numerous publications to communicate about the project have been produced:

- New quarterly newsletter;
- Drafting of a press book and creation of a model for press releases;
- Creation of a Kakemono banner for stands at trade fair type events;
- Creation of a short video presenting the project;
- Writing of a generic case study – "Best practices for a successful adoption".

Has the project received any third party coverage during the project (from news media, third party blogs, researchers or academics etc.)?

Yes, an article by Be-Linked based on an interview in the review "B&C Brief" (http://be-linked.net/).

TRANSFERABILITY

Please indicate if there is any potential to replicate the project and how.

Sigmah is designed to be easily adopted by other organisations:

- The project is open source, and a shared server has been made available to host the software at minimum cost (around 1000€/year for the smallest installations): costs are therefore reduced to a minimum;
- 4 organisations (1 French and 3 non-French) have begun to adopt the software, thus showing the potential to replicate the project;
- One NGO has already adopted Sigmah without any assistance: there is therefore also potential for organisations that do not have a lot of resources.

What are the plans for scale-up beyond the pilot?

The communication sub-project supported by the HIF is one of the central activities of the plan to scale up Sigmah. This scaling up is the specific objective of the broader Sigmah Phase 2 project of which the HIF funded sub-project is part. The scale up plan is presented in the project's strategic plan that was submitted with the initial proposal. Its main objectives are:

- Community
  - Extension of the group of NGOs beyond France and beyond relief NGOs
- Software
  - Extended features to make complete adoption of the software more attractive
- Adoption
  - First complete adoptions of the software within partner NGOs
  - New pilot adoptions by new organisations
- Economic model
  - Broader coverage of expenses by the members of the Cooperative
  - Launching of long term partnerships with businesses for skills-based sponsorship

Are any other organisations planning to use or adapt the innovation?

Yes, several organisations are considering adopting the software: half a dozen organisations, some of which are members of the Steering Cooperative, have shown interest in adopting it in the near future.

What steps have been taken to ensure the transfer of the innovation and the learning from the project?

To transfer the innovation and reduce its dependence on the organisation that has been running the project (Groupe URD), a guide for facilitating the Sigmah project has begun to be written. This guide presents all the processes to be implemented to manage the innovation. It is also a good resource for the transition involved in scaling up the innovation, as it can be used to structure and rationalize its management.

In terms of learning lessons from the project, in addition to the publication of the final external evaluation, we are considering giving an experience-sharing presentation of the Sigmah innovation at the next edition of the Humanitarian Innovation Conference in Oxford.