



The Humanitarian Innovation Fund External Evaluation

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Cover photograph

Survivors at Panzi Foundation's Music Therapy program create and share joy©Jeppe Schilder

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Acronyms

4Ps	Product and services; processes, positions and paradigms
ADDRN	Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance
CHS	Common Humanitarian Standard
DFID	Department for International Development (UK Government)
DIP	Development and Implementation Phase
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
Elrha	Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance
Eol	Expression of Interest
ESI	Early Stage Innovation (i.e. recognition and invention)
GAHI	Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation
GBP	British Pounds (sterling)
GBV	Gender-based violence
HIEP	Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (DFID-funded)
HIF	Humanitarian Innovation Fund
HOMT	Humanitarian Open StreetMap Team
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDS	Institute of Development Studies, Sussex University
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross / Red Crescent
INGO	(International) Non-Government Organisation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MSF	Medécins sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders, an international NGO)
mVAM	Mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (the World Food Programme's HIF project)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs
R&D	Research and Development
SG	Secretary General
START	Network for international agencies run by Save the Children
TA	Transformative Agenda
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToR	Terms of Reference
TWB	Translators without Borders (an NGO and HIF grant-holder)
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USD	United States Dollars
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
WHS	World Humanitarian Summit
WoR	Words of Relief (an NGO and HIF grant-holder)

Executive Summary

This is an independent evaluation of the Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF), from the Fund's launch in 2011 until December 2016. Its object is the HIF's global performance, process, and strategy. Its purpose is to provide accountability to stakeholders by delivering an independent assessment of the HIF's effectiveness; support learning about how the HIF's processes support or hinder effectiveness; and contribute to strategy development. It was conducted from December 2016 to June 2017 in three stages: (i) inception; (ii) data collection and analysis phase; and (iii) synthesis and reporting.

The methodology was developed with the HIF team and the Panel appointed to oversee the evaluation. At the inception stage, an evaluation framework was developed based on evaluation questions derived from the ToR, judgment criteria were proposed to define 'what good looks like' for each question, a draft Theory of Change was developed, a stakeholder analysis and mapping exercise was conducted, and a sampling strategy developed. At the data collection and analysis phase, a mixed methods approach was used, including data analysis of the HIF's existing portfolio and project data, a document review with a detailed review of 24 selected documents, global consultation with 21 'governance actors', an online implementer survey among grantees (and unsuccessful applicants), and three case studies (WFP's mVAM, IFRC's MHM, and Translators without Borders' Words of Relief), two of them using field visits. At synthesis and reporting stage, evidence was compiled, analysed, triangulated, and discussed by evaluators and in a joint reflection session with the HIF team; and a first draft was prepared and developed with feedback from the HIF and the Panel.

The evaluation contended with three main evaluability challenges. It struggled to assess performance compared to an overarching strategy and objectives; lacked data about the HIF's overall performance and accessible data collected about projects and performance; and heard relatively little from stakeholders not directly invested in the HIF and humanitarian innovation, notably local and national actors, and people affected by humanitarian emergencies.

Context

In 2009, a ground-breaking study by ALNAP identified gaps in the ability of international humanitarian action to innovate, unpacked the process of innovation into five stages (problem recognition, solution invention, development, implementation, and diffusion), and proposed a '4Ps' model for innovation in the humanitarian sector. Since then, humanitarian innovation has become a growing field of interest and activity in the humanitarian system, and funding for innovation substantially increased. Within this field, the HIF and ALNAP maintained a focus on the humanitarian innovation process and 'innovation management', seeking to define and understand 'what successful innovation looks like in the humanitarian sector'.

But the field of humanitarian innovation faces substantial challenges. It is limited by gaps in dedicated resources and spending; constrained by a lack of innovation management capacity; focused on innovation by humanitarian actors, without much involvement from populations affected and other stakeholders; and requires many years to foster large scale, 'transformational', or 'disruptive' changes in the humanitarian system.

The HIF's purpose is to 'support organizations and individuals to identify, nurture and share innovative and scalable solutions to the challenges facing effective humanitarian assistance.' It is managed by elrha within the legal structure Save the Children UK. It was founded in 2010 with exploratory funding from DFID, which remained the largest donor through the Department's Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (HIEP), and received additional funding from Canada, Sweden, the Netherlands and ECHO. Since 2010, the HIF has committed GBP 9.5m in grants and made a total of 109 grants, mostly through its 'core grants window' to Early Stage Innovation (ESI) projects (43) and Development and Implementation Phase (DIP) projects (41). It also made grants through its 'thematic' windows to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) projects, gender-based violence (GBV) projects and scaling projects.

Effectiveness

The HIF did an excellent job of supporting innovation through grant-making and did well at supporting it through learning and advocacy. From 2011 to end 2016, the HIF emerged as a leader in grant-making for humanitarian innovation, and provided structured finance to a variety of innovations at different stages of development along with valuable additional support, which was often indispensable to evolving innovations. The HIF also encouraged innovation projects to offer evidence of positive change, committed to learning from failure, offered flexible funding, and fostered learning among grant holders.

At the same time, the HIF commissioned, participated in, and shared important research on humanitarian innovation, with an increasing focus on innovation management, and conducted influential advocacy work to increase humanitarian innovation.

Nonetheless, the quality of evidence generated was variable, the HIF's appetite for risk remained limited in practice, and the notion of acceptable failure remained unclear. The Fund did not effectively engage all its grantees in learning activities, and remained limited in its ability to systematically collect, synthesize, and disseminate lessons learned from across projects to support wider humanitarian innovation practice.

Outcomes

Overall, the HIF appeared to contribute very well to improving humanitarian performance through the projects it supported. The HIF's grant-making to over 100 innovation projects contributed clearly to increasing humanitarian innovation in the system; several projects made notable impacts on humanitarian action and people affected (e.g. case studies); and most of them self-reported improvements in humanitarian action and intended to benefit populations affected.

The HIF's thematic grant-making appeared to be developing WASH and GBV solutions, while HIF funding could be contributing to progress in other thematic areas (e.g. information technology and communication with people affected). Separately, the HIF's advocacy also may have contributed greatly to sector-wide acceptance of innovation and its innovation management work may have strengthened innovation practices in the sector.

However, questions arise about the quality of evidence generated and the scale of the HIF's impact. HIF grantees often provided weak evidence about improved humanitarian action, positive outcomes for beneficiaries, and increased cost-effectiveness, while little evidence was available yet to assess thematic outcomes. The HIF's grant-making to scores of projects contributed modestly in scale compared to the size of the system, and the HIF's advocacy and innovation management activities (unsurprisingly) showed few signs yet of contributing to changes in system-wide policy and practice.

External factors

The HIF's effectiveness and outcomes depended on a combination of internal and external factors. Most significant among external factors were its donors' support and an increasingly favourable policy environment. However, progress remained constrained by the wider challenges to innovation in the system, including gaps in dedicated resources and spending; resistance among humanitarian actors; and a system that remains unsupportive of innovations.

Internal factors

Among internal 'process' factors, the HIF's effectiveness was determined by five key elements: strategy management, grant-making, grant management, fund management, and resource management, including funding, staffing and technical expertise. Each of these proved independently effective and fit for purpose, and made useful contributions to the Fund's performance. The strategy management and grant-making functions worked particularly well; whereas grant management, fund management, and resourcing showed some room for practical improvements.

- ≡ Strategy management: The HIF's strategy management and overall approach greatly supported the Fund's performance. Its strategic decision making was perceived to be effective, and its grant-making approach evolved appropriately to become increasingly purposeful. The HIF's strategy now requires revision and formalization, as planned, and is expected to further emphasize support for DIP and taking innovations to scale over ESI grant making.
- ≡ Grant making: The HIF's grant-making model employed a healthy range of funding windows across the innovation model, although the balance and focus of effort could usefully be re-examined through the strategy review. The HIF recognized a need for sustaining innovations, showed limited accessibility to national and local actors, and appeared to support relatively more technology and products innovations.
- ≡ Grant management: The HIF's grant management processes were crucial to the Fund's performance, but left some clear room for improvements. The application process was thorough and well-managed, and generally met with the approval of applicants; but it required resource-intensive management, and involved some seemingly inappropriate due diligence systems. The implementation support was highly valued by many projects and its flexibility was particularly appreciated; but it was not evenly provided or appreciated by grantees, and disbursement of grants was sometimes significantly delayed. The HIF's monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems left notable room for improvement, and HIF support was clearly beneficial where provided; but this was limited by resourcing constraints, and data management systems did not adequately capture and store project data. The HIF's project closure system made important efforts to capture projects' overall achievements and learning, but the range of difficulties encountered (and overcome) offered useful learning opportunities for innovation management.
- ≡ Fund management: The HIF's fund management effectively supported performance, but persistent questions are raised about its structuring. The HIF management team moved recently from a 'lean' structure to a more established one, but many global stakeholders and grant applicants felt the Fund's wider management systems were overcomplicated, and questioned the smooth running of operations involving the HIF and elrha, and Save the Children UK.
- ≡ Resource management: The HIF team demonstrated a high degree of competency, and hopes were raised about recent increases in HIF's capacities. But HIF managers and advisers were often overburdened and overstretched, with most significant gaps in relation to research, learning and innovation management; monitoring and evaluation of impact; and strategic reflection.

Funding channels

The combination of HIF funding channels seems an effective approach, even if each channel has strengths and weaknesses, but there is insufficient data to support robust conclusions about the relative performance of different funding channels. Core grants (large and small) which account for majority of HIF financing served an important purpose in creating space for new ideas and providing support to innovations through different stages of the process; although risk both lack of focus and missing truly innovative ideas. Thematic grants may allow greater prospect of impact, if supported by stronger innovation management, collaboration, and learning; but the WASH funding has not yet delivered the anticipated benefits, the GBV funding generated conflicting views and it is too early judge its success. The scale grants are strategic investments to build on previous successes, where the HIF could make a real impact.

Common components contributing to project success were flexibility to context and challenges, and relationships both within the team and with the community. Meanwhile projects encountered a range of difficulties, some specific to their focus (e.g. technology projects) but others common to any development or humanitarian project, such as contextual challenges, and not specifically 'innovation' projects.

Efficiency

The HIF is very efficient overall and offers a relatively low-cost means of supporting innovation. The HIF did well with a small team and a lean structure, relying on inputs from the Board and consultancies; and its management costs compared favourably to other funds. The HIF's investment in innovation management to support projects also supported efficiency in the deployment of project funding, but support for innovation management was often hampered by its very lean capacity. In addition, the HIF's application process showed room for improved efficiency.

Relevance

The HIF's strategy remained relevant overall, with some aspects requiring further clarification. The HIF is very relevant to humanitarian innovation requirements, and continues to offer added value and key strengths compared to other humanitarian innovation actors. Its strategy is clearly relevant to increasing the humanitarian effectiveness of its 109 grant-holders; and sometimes clearly relevant to the needs and priorities of people affected and increasingly concerned to engage people affected.

However, the HIF's strategy may require adjustment to a changed context for humanitarian innovation; more clarity about its relevance to improving the humanitarian system and addressing its primary weaknesses; and clearer connections to the needs and priorities of people affected, as well as local and national innovation actors.

Conclusions

- ≡ The HIF demonstrated consistent strengths across most areas of the activity evaluated, including the seven evaluation criteria and the 23 proposed judgment criteria.
- ≡ The HIF showed strongest performance in supporting innovation through grant-making, learning and advocacy, making substantial contributions to humanitarian innovation.
- ≡ The HIF struggled most with generating reliable evidence, supporting wider learning, and meeting expectations of large scale change.
- ≡ The HIF's process was managed effectively and efficiently overall and each element proved independently effective and fit for purpose, making useful contributions to the HIF's performance.
- ≡ The HIF's process struggled most with practical challenges in grant management, and inadequate resources for innovation management and M&E.
- ≡ The HIF's strategy relied on an effective grant-making approach, and remained relevant to humanitarian innovation.
- ≡ The HIF's strategy would benefit from formalization, rebalancing, and adjustment to a changed context.

Recommendations

- ≡ Develop and articulate a formal strategy to guide the HIF's activity from 2018 to 2023.
- ≡ Conduct a review of the evolving humanitarian context for the HIF's activity.
- ≡ Rebalance the HIF's mix of grant making activities towards achieving impact.
- ≡ Review and streamline specific aspects of the HIF's grant management.
- ≡ Expand learning about innovation management to a wider community of innovation actors.
- ≡ Devise and implement a purpose-built monitoring and evaluation system for the HIF.
- ≡ Connect more with people affected and engage them in the innovation process.

Introduction

This report offers an independent evaluation of the Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF), from the Fund's launch in 2011 until this evaluation was commissioned in December 2016. The report opens with an explanation of the evaluation's purpose and methodology, followed by a description of the HIF's context and evolution. It presents main findings in response to the seven evaluation questions (Section 1) covering: effectiveness (1.1), enabling factors (1.2), internal factors (1.3), funding channels (1.4), efficiency (1.5), relevance (1.6), and outcomes (1.7). It concludes with proposed lessons learned to inform an updated Theory of Change (Section 2) and preliminary recommendations for discussion with the HIF Board and stakeholders (Section 3). Annexes provide further information about the methodology, including evaluation questions and judgment criteria (Annex 3), documents reviews (Annex 4), global stakeholders consulted (Annex 5), project data analysis (Annex 6), and the online survey (Annex 7); and about the portfolio of projects funded (Annex 8). The three case study reports are not included (but available upon request).

A. Evaluation

The object of the evaluation is the Humanitarian Innovation Fund. The evaluation is focused on the HIF's performance, process, and strategy. The temporal scope is from the HIF's launch in 2011 to the evaluation's start in December 2016. The spatial scope is all countries facing humanitarian crises, with a particular focus on the countries where the HIF's grants are being implemented. Based on requirements in the Terms of Reference (ToR) (see Annex 1) drawn up by elrha, who manage the HIF, the purpose and objectives of the evaluation were elaborated in consultation with key users at the inception phase.

Purpose

The primary purpose of the evaluation is to provide accountability to stakeholders by delivering an independent assessment of the HIF's effectiveness. The ToR stresses accountability as the main purpose of the evaluation, calling for a 'detailed assessment of the performance of the HIF to date; including assessing if the HIF has supported successful innovations through its funding.' Key users consulted supported the evaluation's role in providing accountability (with accountability to donors as clearly important); looking independently at how effectively and efficiently the HIF is managed, for whom and with what impact; and sustainability for end-users.

A secondary purpose for the evaluation is to support learning about how the HIF's processes support or hinder effectiveness. The ToR indicates a learning function for the evaluation, suggesting it would be useful to identify 'the most relevant internal and external enabling and hindering factors for the HIF's success,' and looking at the contributions made by HIF's funding and associated support, including core grants and thematic work, wider learning and advocacy, and systems, process and approach. Users also stressed the importance of learning from the HIF in terms of evidence of what works (including impact) and what doesn't work and why, as well as looking at the role of 'failure'. The fitness for purpose of the governance structures for the HIF and decision making are an important aspect of process.

A third purpose for the evaluation is to contribute to strategy development. The ToR suggests a strategic function for the evaluation, in 'assessing the extent to which the HIF has kept pace with wider changes in the humanitarian system, particularly those in relation to the environment for innovation,' and 'mak[ing] recommendations about whether and how to strengthen the HIF in the next five years.' Users express an interest in guidance on the HIF's future direction, taking into account HIF's relationship with elrha's programmes and research more widely and the governance of this, particularly with the establishment of the Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation (GAHI).

Objectives

Based on this understanding of the evaluation's purpose, these evaluation objectives were agreed at inception phase:

1. **Accountability:** Produce a high-quality evaluation report for publication, providing a comprehensive and detailed assessment of the HIF's performance for all stakeholders;

2. **Learning:** Define lessons learned about the HIF's processes, including strengths and weaknesses, to enable its managers to strengthen the Fund's effectiveness; and
3. **Strategy:** Develop strategic recommendations (with key stakeholders) to inform HIF decisions about future work for the next five years, including resource mobilization.

B. Methodology

The evaluation was conducted from December 2016 to June 2017 in three stages: (i) inception; (ii) data collection and analysis phase; and (iii) synthesis and reporting. The methodology was developed during inception with the HIF team and the Panel appointed to oversee the evaluation. The methodology allowed for a rigorous process, credible findings limited only by data availability, and actionable recommendations. The evaluation benefited from useful collaboration with elrha and the HIF team throughout the process.

Framework

The framework required considerable design effort given the HIF's pioneering nature and the absence of agreed frameworks and well-defined measures by which to evaluate such an activity. The evaluation questions proposed to HIF and derived from the Terms of Reference provided the analytical framework for this evaluation. Each question corresponds to recognized evaluation criteria (outcomes - Q1, effectiveness - Q2, efficiency – Q6 and relevance - Q7) or required a comparative analysis of the factors of effectiveness (Q3), and in particular the internal process factors (Q4) and funding modalities (Q5).

Table 1: Evaluation Questions

<p>Q1. Outcomes: How has the HIF contributed to improved humanitarian performance and more lives saved through the projects it supports?</p> <p>Q2. Effectiveness: How successful has the HIF been in supporting innovation, through its funding and associated support? i) Core, challenge area & scaling grants; ii) Sharing of learning & advocacy</p> <p>Q3. Factors of effectiveness: Which external and internal factors have most helped or hindered HIF's success?</p> <p>Q4. Internal factors: How have these internal factors helped or hindered success in grant making and innovation management work? i) Design: strategic approach and choices, log frame, funding criteria; ii) Funding modalities; iii) Grant-making processes; iv) Organisation and systems (including decision-making structures)</p> <p>Q5. Funding channels: How well have the different funding channels (core, challenge area and scaling grants) supported success in improving humanitarian performance? Which have performed better and which less well, and why?</p> <p>Q6. Efficiency: How efficient has HIF been in its use of resources? Q7. Relevance: Has the HIF remained relevant in relation to i) evolving needs in emergencies; ii) wider changes in the humanitarian system, particularly those relating the environment for innovation; iii) other organisations with a humanitarian innovation funding focus (i.e. comparative advantage)?</p> <p>Q7. Relevance: Has the HIF remained relevant in relation to i) evolving needs in emergencies; ii) wider changes in the humanitarian system, particularly those relating the environment for innovation; iii) other organisations with a humanitarian innovation funding focus (i.e. comparative advantage)?</p>

Judgement Criteria

To assess the HIF's work 2011-2016, 23 supporting judgment criteria were developed during the inception phase and drawn from HIF and elrha sources. They represent proposed measures of success ('what good looks like') in relation to each question, based on commitments made by or relevant to the HIF. Their relevance was confirmed by the evaluation although the evidence base was not uniformly strong for each of them. The judgement criteria proved a useful means by which to evaluate the HIF, even if some criteria could be more applicable than others.

Theory of change

A Draft Theory of Change was developed for the HIF in 2014 (see Annex 2).¹ While users consulted during the inception phase felt that the Theory of Change (ToC) was broadly sound, they all welcomed the opportunity offered by this evaluation to review it. A workshop was held for this purpose in February 2017 and the thinking behind the ToC and its underlying assumptions have been tested through the evaluation.

Stakeholders

Three primary stakeholder groups were identified through a mapping exercise undertaken during the inception phase to identify stakeholder categories, actors within each and their stake in the HIF. A sampling strategy was developed for each group, geared to the consultation methodology selected.

Table 2: Stakeholder mapping

Stakeholder Category & consultation method	Sub-category
Governance Actors: Global Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Managers: responsible for managing the HIF planning, strategy, activities, coordination, and implementation ● Advisers: responsible for providing technical advice, programme direction, assessment and selection of applications ● Donors: interested in providing funding to humanitarian innovation in line with policy goals and responsible for ensuring accountability ● Peers: interested in jointly developing the field of humanitarian innovation and learning from experience ● Stewards: interested in and responsible for overseeing, researching, and improving the humanitarian system
Implementation Actors: On-line implementer survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Current grant holders: responsible for implementing HIF innovation projects according to requirements ● Former grant holders: previously implemented HIF innovation projects ● Unsuccessful applicants: sample of recent applicants for HIF funding who were not selected
Populations affected: Case study focus group discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● End users within communities affected: have the greatest stake in humanitarian innovations and best placed to judge their value ● Communities and populations affected by humanitarian crises and their representatives: can perceive the wider costs and benefits of specific humanitarian innovations

Methods

The ToR envisaged development of a detailed research methodology in inception phase and did not specify any particular approach, other than anticipating country visits and desk-based and field-based data collection. This reflected the case study-based approach used previously by the HIF, and useful for understanding innovation. However, a wider, mixed methods approach was taken to allow for a fuller assessment of the Fund beyond specific cases. The methods included data analysis, document review, global consultation, an implementer survey and case studies. The approach resulted in the collection of rich primary and secondary quantitative and qualitative evidence from internal and external sources. A mixed methods approach and good triangulation of findings reduced the impact of the limitations encountered in each of the different methods. A summary of each of the methods follows. **More information can be found in Annexes 4-7.**

¹ ELRHA, Impact Framework – Humanitarian Innovation Fund (October 2014)

Data Analysis

HIF Grant Portfolio: Recognising the importance of making best use of existing sources, considerable effort was invested in the analysis of project data and information. There was no readily available and complete dataset of essential project information (such as title, funding, grant-holder, start date) on which to base methodological decisions about, for example, further project data analysis, implementer survey distribution or case study selection. Construction of a HIF grant portfolio from a spreadsheet of project information supplied by elrha after the inception phase was therefore a key task for the evaluation. The capture of project data at a certain point in time (February 2017) and the ‘cleaning’ of data for the purposes of the evaluation means that the data is not directly comparable to any reported in aggregate in elrha’s reports. The resulting project data was aggregated and analysed to build up a picture of the portfolio as a whole (for example, numbers of projects by funding window, thematic areas, number of completed projects).

HIF Project Data: Elrha’s grant management model does not currently include the capture or aggregation of either information submitted by projects or elrha’s assessment of this. This meant that a sample of primary data from projects had to be reviewed, assessed and analysed in order to gather evidence about project level outcomes and performance. Fifty-seven projects were recorded as having submitted a final report from which twenty (35%) were selected semi-purposively to provide a sample which was both manageable and fairly representative of the portfolio. The sample comprised the single Diffusion grant from the small grants; the single WASH challenge large grant; and 11 DIP and 7 ESI grants from within sorted thematic groupings, to ensure broad thematic coverage. Each report and its associated application was reviewed for the stated purpose and intended outcomes of the project; self-assessment of achievements; strength and quality of supporting evidence; and information about beneficiaries, learning and challenges. The information and data thus captured was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively by Evaluation Question in the evaluation matrix. A larger sample would have added weight to the analysis and been more representative of the portfolio as a whole. Project data contributed particularly to the evaluation of outcomes, effectiveness and efficiency.

Document review

An initial document review was conducted at the inception phase, during which a long list of 32 published and internal documents was developed, both provided by elrha and sourced by the evaluation team. All 32 documents were scanned and selected for their relevance and usefulness to the evaluation, resulting in a sample of 24 for detailed review. The sample included reports about the HIF (e.g. progress reports, evaluations), commissioned by or produced by the HIF (e.g. ALNAP on HIF case study synthesis on innovation management), and influenced by or providing context for the HIF (e.g. UN report on the World Humanitarian Summit). This provided a comprehensive body of literature: it was not felt that any of the non-short-listed documents would have yielded significant new information. Relevant text was identified, compiled, referenced and analysed against the evaluation questions in an evidence matrix as one of the first evidence collection activities of the evaluation. Document review contributed particularly to context analysis, effectiveness and relevance.

Global consultation

Global consultations were conducted with 21 HIF stakeholders. From a list of 62 ‘governance actors’ identified through the stakeholder mapping exercise, a sample frame was selected for interview from across the sub-categories, partly determined by the availability of contact details and the likely responsiveness and interest level of the individual. Thus, semi-structured interviews were conducted with: five HIF managers, five HIF advisers, three HIF donors, five humanitarian innovation actors and three system-level ‘stewards.’ The stakeholders offered converging and diverging views which are reflected in the analysis. Although the sample included HIF and non-HIF global stakeholders, many of the latter category proved to be linked with HIF in direct or indirect ways. This lack of an ‘independent’ voice or the perspective of competitors was a limitation and could have resulted in disproportionately supportive views feeding into the evaluation. Dissenting views were nonetheless expressed by several who were interviewed. The global consultation contributed well to the evidence base across all evaluation questions.

Implementer survey

The online survey generated quantitative and qualitative evidence about respondents' views of the HIF and their experience of applying for and holding a grant. It was sent to primary contacts for the 109 projects in the HIF grant portfolio and to 147 unsuccessful applicants to funding rounds which had concluded about a year previously. The surveygizmo application was used and completion encouraged through a covering letter from elrha and follow-up emails. Of the 72 responses received, 29 were from unsuccessful applicants and 43 from project implementers. Taking into account undelivered emails,² this gives a good response rate of 21% and 42% respectively, whilst recognising the survey was completed by less than half of grant holders. Responses were analysed from the raw data and the system-generated charts and broken down further (e.g. between successful and unsuccessful applicants) where this could provide further insight. Care was taken in the analysis to give less weight to responses generated by only a small number of respondents. The survey generated valuable evidence for the evaluation, whilst recognising that it presents some limitations and could have been supplemented (or replaced with) grant-holder interviews. The survey contributed particularly to the evaluation of effectiveness and internal factors.

Case studies

Three case studies were planned according to a common approach. The studies were intended to determine the impact of the innovation and 'give strong inference' about reasons for its effects, including HIF's contributions and the quality of its support, using impact study and contribution analysis methods. They would allow unique face-to-face interactions with implementers and communities affected, which was particularly valuable given the generally low input to the evaluation from people affected by crisis. Case studies also provide an opportunity to look at longer term project outcomes/impacts and create credible evidence-based 'stories of change'. They can be particularly relevant for challenge fund evaluations to show how innovation works in practice and look at how learning is used and shared more widely.

The case studies were selected with advice from elrha and from ALNAP, which had previously undertaken detailed case studies of 15 HIF projects, and were designed to represent different types of project completed between 12 and 18 months previously, with a view to gauging longer term outcomes. In practice, the three cases selected proved to be those with more notable impact, instead of the majority

Table 3: Evaluation Case Studies

Case criteria	Project selected	Field visit
A big success or 'outlier' case: large grant, evidence of impact of quantity/scale, success and learning, INGO-led, product (possibly tech) focused.	WFP's mVAM (Mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping): A programme that integrates mobile technology, including text messages, Interactive Voice Response and live calls, into established food security monitoring systems.	Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (remote study)
A modest success/'typical' case: small grant, unknown or uncertain impact, questionable success; little evidence and learning.	IFRC's Menstrual Hygiene Management in Emergency Settings: Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) kits that are culturally appropriate and effective in emergencies and complemented by improvement and scale-up of training and participatory hygiene promotion tools	Northern Uganda
An interesting/'strategic' case: any size; impact of quality, multiphase support, coaching/capacity building, learning, failure recognition.	Translators without Borders' Words of Relief project: Local language translation services to NGOs, UN agencies and other actors during humanitarian response.	Mainland Greece

² There were 18 unsuccessful email deliveries. If these are assumed to be distributed evenly between applicants and implementers, this means that 137 unsuccessful applicants and 103 projects received survey emails.

whose success was considered more modest and therefore must be treated as illustrative in the analysis, rather than generalizable in the context of a portfolio of over 109 grants. In the event, two were conducted in the first week of May, and one was conducted remotely since visas to Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) could not be obtained in time following new visa restrictions.

A visit template was developed to guide planning, preparation and execution. Each visit involved a pre-departure document review and practical and logistical arrangements including establishing a schedule of interviews and focus group discussions with humanitarian actors, people affected and other project stakeholders. Case studies were conducted over five days in the field and written up into self-contained case study reports narrating whether and how HIF support contributed to project outcomes/impact. They contributed insights across outcome, effectiveness, internal factors and relevance (for people affected).

Synthesis analysis

Evidence collected from each of the above methods was triangulated, tested and discussed in the synthesis analysis and report writing phases to validate the findings and draw conclusions. Synthesized evidence was presented in a matrix for joint reflection by the evaluation team and HIF users. A joint reflection workshop was held with the HIF team on 17 May, where initial findings and assessments were proposed to inform the drafting process. The first draft was produced and shared with the HIF 2 June 2017 and a second was discussed with the Evaluation Panel on 16 June 2017.

Limitations

The evaluation contended with three 'evaluability' challenges, taking measures to address each one and limit their impact to deliver a more credible evaluation of the HIF. Evaluability refers to the 'extent to which an activity or a program can be evaluated in a reliable and credible fashion'.³ In each case, this required investing additional preparatory effort unforeseen at contracting stage and which, it is hoped, might offer lasting benefits to the HIF going forward.

First, the evaluation struggled to assess performance using the HIF's overarching strategy and objectives. Evaluability requires that an activity's objectives are adequately defined, and clarity in the intent of the subject to be evaluated. But the evaluators found it difficult to pinpoint specific objectives and intended outcomes for the HIF portfolio, which lacked a formalized strategy; and no overarching strategy and objectives was found for 2011-2015. The HIF worked instead towards objectives agreed with its various donors, most notably DFID's HIEP, and to a lesser extent informed by its logframe (phase 2) and draft Theory of Change.⁴ The absence of a rigorous performance and accountability framework may have allowed important flexibility for the HIF in its pioneering work, but it complicated the task of evaluation. In response, the evaluators relied on the HIF's proposal to DFID (2015) which was recommended as a basis for retrospective assessment, and proposed 23 judgment criteria to assess the HIF's activity. At the synthesis and reporting stage, HIF managers provided further advice to help contextualize the findings and ensure their appropriateness. The result, it is hoped, is a comprehensive independent assessment of the HIF's overall effectiveness, offering an appropriate balance of accountability, learning, and strategic insights.

Second, the evaluation lacked data about the HIF's overall performance and struggled to access data collected about its projects and their performance. Evaluability requires that an activity's results are verifiable, and that sufficient data is available or collectable at a reasonable cost. But the evaluators found little data about the performance of the portfolio, and essential data collected by HIF was not available in a usable form. The Fund lacked an overall system for monitoring its progress beyond annual progress reports, which did not report systematically against objectives and criteria, and monitoring and evaluation done by ITAD for the HIEP. In addition, the HIF's projects lacked a complete project portfolio dataset, and aggregated information about project performance, learning and beneficiaries. In short, the HIF appeared to lack essential capacity for M&E and data management. In response, the evaluators relied on mixed methods to assess the Fund's overall performance and conducted substantial groundwork to identify, compile, and

³ OECD DAC (n.d.) Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management

⁴ Elrha, Impact Framework – Humanitarian Innovation Fund (October 2014)

analyse project data. As a result, considerable time was invested in understanding what data was available and compiling it for analysis before embarking on further data collection. But it meant best use was made of existing data, no unnecessary data was collected, M&E and data management gaps were highlighted, and an approach to project data management was developed for the HIF's possible future use.

Third, the evaluation consulted a range of the HIF's stakeholders and heard an informed range of views from HIF managers, advisers, and grantees; but relatively less was heard from humanitarian innovation actors not connected to the HIF or from end users, local and national actors, and people affected by humanitarian emergencies. Evaluability requires that no major factors will hinder an impartial evaluation process, and the process was certainly conducted in an impartial manner, but it is important to note some limitations in the range of stakeholders consulted. The stakeholders most willing and able to share their views on the HIF tended to be those most invested in its activity and success; these included HIF managers, advisers and current donors, as well as some implementers and unsuccessful applicants who had benefited from HIF advisory support. Less was heard from independent humanitarian innovation actors and humanitarian observers detached from the HIF and the humanitarian innovation agenda; from certain categories of innovation projects, perhaps those less successful; and most notably from people affected, local and national actors. In response to this challenge, the evaluators tried from the beginning to analyse stakeholders and to reach out to a wide range of actors at different levels. The result is a multi-stakeholder evaluation drawing on a diversity of informed opinions, but somewhat limited to those most invested in the HIF's activity.

C. Context

In 2009, a ground-breaking study by ALNAP identified gaps in the ability of international humanitarian action to innovate.⁵ The study pointed out how often humanitarian learning and accountability work found the same problems and shortcomings without seeking to generate new and different ways of operating. Humanitarian organizations allow some experimentation, but 'innovative margins' remained at odds with the 'traditional operating core'. Humanitarian learning sought incremental improvements based on 'single-loop learning' focused on correcting deviations from existing practices, policies and norms instead of 'double-loop learning' which involves reflecting on their appropriateness. Nonetheless innovation processes had the potential to stimulate positive change and provide new ways of delivering assistance to those who need it most.

Reflecting on how to support the process of humanitarian innovation towards positive improvements or novel developments, the ALNAP study unpacked the process of innovation into five stages: problem recognition, solution invention, development, implementation, and diffusion. It also proposed the following '4Ps' model⁶ as applicable to the humanitarian sector:

- **Products:** Innovation to introduce or improve products or services – a change in what is offered, such as improved cooking stoves or food products to counter malnutrition;
- **Processes:** Innovation to introduce or improve processes – changing how a product is created or delivered, such as methods for stockpiling goods, improved coordination, or improving learning and quality assurance;
- **Position:** Innovation to define or redefine the positioning of products, organisations or sectors – or a change in the context, and way in which a product or process is applied, for example by changing an organisation's public profile or by changing attitudes to an area of work such as shelter;
- **Paradigms:** Innovation to define or re define the dominant paradigms of an organisation or sector – changes in the underlying mental and business models or combined attitudes and beliefs determining the fundamental approach to humanitarian work, such as the calls for paradigm shifts in humanitarian business models towards beneficiary participation, local ownership and capacity development.

⁵ Ramalingam, B., Scriven, K. and Foley, C. (2009), *Innovations in international humanitarian action* London: ALNAP, Review of Humanitarian Action

⁶ See Francis, D, & J Bessant (2005) 'Targeting innovation and implications for capability development'. *Technovation*, 25 (3), 171–183.

Since 2009, humanitarian innovation has become a growing field of interest and activity in the humanitarian system. The very idea of innovation gained importance as agencies established new units and initiatives aimed at developing new ideas for programming and operational improvements. This evolution is documented by a joint HIF-ALNAP study,⁷ which highlights key developments:

- ≡ In 2010, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) founded the Humanitarian Innovation Fund to support innovation for humanitarian purposes, the first dedicated grant mechanism for humanitarian innovation.
- ≡ In 2011, DFID's Humanitarian Emergency Response Review identified innovation as a key area for investment, leading to the establishment of the Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (HIEP), a seven-year GBP 48m programme aimed at improving research and development in the humanitarian system. The HIF was a main component of this umbrella programme.⁸
- ≡ In 2013, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) released a report surveying the level of innovation practice in humanitarian action, identifying dozens of research programmes, funding programmes and networks for humanitarian innovation, many of them newly formed.
- ≡ In 2014, the importance of innovation was recognised in the highest levels of policy, including in the World Humanitarian Summit called for by the former SG, Ban Ki Moon, and in significant publications such as UNICEF's State of the World's Children report. Innovation was a central theme in global consultations leading up to the World Humanitarian Summit of May 2016.⁹
- ≡ In April 2015, private sector actors were consulted in San Francisco to identify ways to maximize the power of innovation and technology through greater public-private collaboration in emergencies, highlighting examples from Cisco, Facebook, LinkedIn and Visa.
- ≡ In June 2015, a HIF event 'Managing Innovations in Emergencies: Linking Principles to Practice', convened leading practitioners and policy makers to share and build on their experience.

During this time, funding for innovation also substantially increased, through traditional models with bilateral donors, such as the US Agency for International Development–DFID joint-funded Global Innovation Fund, as well as internal mechanisms, in the form of organizational innovation funds and labs. More recently, focus has shifted towards an exploration of the system-wide capacities and characteristics needed to support innovation and the degree to which these currently exist in the system. Deloitte's Humanitarian Innovation Programme and the Brighton-based Centre for Research in Innovation Management (CENTRIM) used a 'systems perspective'¹⁰ to make the case for investments in collective research and development activities and for addressing the poor incentives for innovation at a system level.¹¹

Within this field, the HIF and ALNAP maintained a focus on the humanitarian innovation process and 'innovation management'. In 2016, HIF and ALNAP aimed to define and understand 'what successful innovation looks like in the humanitarian sector'. Drawing on fifteen case studies from HIF-funded innovations, the study defined a successful humanitarian innovation process as 'an iterative process that identifies, adjusts and diffuses ideas for improving humanitarian action;' thus differentiating it from standard programming by 'doing something differently with the aim of improvement at a system or sector level, where adaptation and invention require a uniquely iterative process.' Such innovation may lead to:

⁷ Obrecht, A. and Warner, A. T. (2016) *More than just luck: Innovation in humanitarian action*, HIF/ ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI

⁸ ITAD (2016) *Final Report - Department for International Development, Evaluation of the Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (HIEP) Summative Evaluation Phase 1*, HIF Case study

⁹ More initiatives could now be added to this list, many of them emerging from 2014-2016 as the World Humanitarian Summit cast a spotlight on innovation

¹⁰ Ramalingam, B., Rush, H., Bessant, J., Marshall, N., Gray, B., Hoffman, K., Bayley, S., Gray, I. and Warren, K. (May 2015) *Strengthening the Humanitarian, Innovation Ecosystem*, Humanitarian Innovation Ecosystem Research Project, Final Report, University of Brighton

¹¹ Obrecht, A. and Warner, A. T. (2016) *More than just luck: Innovation in humanitarian action*, HIF/ ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI

- ≡ Consolidated learning and evidence: New knowledge generated, or the evidence base enhanced around the area the innovation is intended to address, or around the performance of the innovation itself.
- ≡ An improved solution for humanitarian action: The innovation offers a measurable, comparative improvement in effectiveness, quality or efficiency over current approaches to the problem addressed by the innovation; and/or
- ≡ Wide adoption of an improved solution: The innovation is taken to scale and used by others to improve humanitarian performance.

Updating initial thinking about stages of innovation, the study found that successful innovation processes often featured five different types of activity or ‘stages’: recognition, ideation, development, implementation and diffusion.¹² It further identified seven ‘success factors’ that can help innovations achieve success:

Seven factors for successful humanitarian innovation

- **Collaborating with others:** how an innovating team collaborates with other actors to innovate
- **Organizing an innovation process:** how an innovation manager or innovating team plans the innovation process and manages it in a timely manner
- **Generating and integrating evidence:** the generation of information that can be used to support the various parts of an innovation process
- **Engaging with end users and gatekeepers:** how innovating teams relate to the end users and gatekeepers relevant to their innovation, both to elicit input for the innovation and to influence to encourage uptake
- **Resourcing an innovation:** how an innovation process is financially supported
- **Managing risk and accountability:** how an innovating team thinks about the risks posed to the innovation’s success as well as those posed by the innovation to other stakeholders
- **Creating a culture for innovation:** the background norms and practices within an organisation that support the skills and activities needed for successful innovation

But the field of humanitarian innovation faces substantial challenges. First, humanitarian innovation is limited by gaps in dedicated resources and spending. The system does not consistently invest in innovation,¹³ current incentives are poorly aligned to support innovation,¹⁴ and there is a lack of flexible financing, appetite for risk or a marketplace for new ideas.¹⁵ A review of the innovation ecosystem found significant gaps in resources, most notably in financing, information and skills.¹⁶ Deloitte found the humanitarian sector was ‘underspending’ compared to other sectors, much less than the lowest spending industries such as paper products or basic metals, which invest an average of USD 75m on research and development (R&D) annually. DFID, broadly recognized as a leader in humanitarian R&D spending, spent USD 8.2m annually on R&D, and other actors like UNHCR, UNICEF, MSF, and World Vision spent between USD 300,000 and USD 2.6m of their own budgets on innovation annually, including R&D and adoption.¹⁷ Barriers continue to exist due to rigid funding requirements by donors, greater aversion to risk, the ways in which political economy and interests inhibit scaling of proven ideas (like cash programming), and the absence of a consolidated evidence and knowledge base.¹⁸

¹² These stages may be iterative, non-linear or overlapping, but they broadly reflect the chronology of an innovation process and each helps answer a question that is necessary to achieve success

¹³ Obrecht, A. and Warner, A. T. (2016) *More than just luck: Innovation in humanitarian action*, HIF/ ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI

¹⁴ World Humanitarian Summit, (14-16 October 2015), *Global Consultation Final Report*, Geneva

¹⁵ Betts, A. and L. Bloom (2014), *Humanitarian Innovation: The State of the Art*, OCHA Policy and Studies Series, November 2014)

¹⁶ Ramalingam, B., Rush, H., Bessant, J., Marshall, N., Gray, B., Hoffman, K., Bayley, S., Gray, I. and Warren, K. (May 2015) *Strengthening the Humanitarian, Innovation Ecosystem*, Humanitarian Innovation Ecosystem Research Project, Final Report, University of Brighton

¹⁷ Deloitte (2015), *The Humanitarian R&D Imperative: How other sectors overcame impediments to innovation* March 2015

¹⁸ World Humanitarian Summit, (14-16 October 2015), *Global Consultation Final Report*, Geneva

Second, humanitarian innovation is constrained by a lack of innovation management capacity. Humanitarian actors have struggled to successfully manage innovation processes, and understanding of best practices remains limited.¹⁹ Very few humanitarians have a clear understanding of what distinguishes innovation from other forms of programming, no common definitions exist for what success looks like in innovation, little guidance exists on how to evaluate innovation, and limited practical guidance exists on how to achieve successful innovation. Innovation management practice is limited by a lack of empirically grounded research into the specific features of project-level innovation. Concerted investment in innovation management skills and capacities is proposed, since innovation processes are subject to multiple interests and biases, offering too little consistency and predictability to support innovation processes.²⁰ Even the term humanitarian innovation has lacked conceptual clarity, leading to misuse, overuse, and the risk that it may become hollow rhetoric.²¹

Third, humanitarian innovation remains focused on innovation by humanitarian actors, without much involvement from populations affected and other stakeholders. The humanitarian innovation debate has been broadly top-down, focusing mainly on improving the tools and practices of international humanitarian actors; but this focus overlooks the talents, skills, and aspirations of crisis-affected people themselves.²² Calls have been made for the innovation ecosystem to be more open to new and excluded actors: end-users, scientists, private sector operators and non-traditional partners;²³ and to work closely with affected people to generate innovative solutions to their problems. Precautions would need to be taken to manage expectations and risk, but promising examples exist of applying user-centred design principles to work with affected people at different stages of an innovation process.²⁴ More broadly, principles for humanitarian innovation reportedly raised ethical dilemmas during the World Humanitarian Summit consultations, including the need for humanitarian innovation to be for a humanitarian purpose and to strengthen the primary relationship in humanitarian response between provider and beneficiaries.²⁵

Fourth, humanitarian innovations may take many years to foster large scale, 'transformational', or 'disruptive' changes in the humanitarian system. Whereas the humanitarian system has a proven ability to produce innovations, it does so sporadically and often struggles to take good ideas to scale quickly.²⁶ Cash programming may be the most notable innovation in humanitarian action, described as 'a paradigm shift in the underlying business and mental models around food assistance', but it grew from bottom up in a variety of contexts, over a long period of time, and remained a fringe activity without much evidence or acceptance until its expansion in the last decade.²⁷ More broadly, multiple change initiatives are currently underway in the humanitarian system as well as calls to transform the fundamentals of humanitarian action, but there is little evidence of change or understanding of how change occurs, despite considerable investments of time, money and energy.²⁸

¹⁹ Obrecht, A. and Warner, A. T. (2016) *More than just luck: Innovation in humanitarian action*, HIF/ ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI

²⁰ Ramalingam, B., Rush, H., Bessant, J., Marshall, N., Gray, B., Hoffman, K., Bayley, S., Gray, I. and Warren, K. (May 2015) *Strengthening the Humanitarian, Innovation Ecosystem*, Humanitarian Innovation Ecosystem Research Project, Final Report, University of Brighton

²¹ Betts, A. and L. Bloom (2014), *Humanitarian Innovation: The State of the Art*, (OCHA Policy and Studies Series, November 2014)

²² Ibid.

²³ Ramalingam, B., Rush, H., Bessant, J., Marshall, N., Gray, B., Hoffman, K., Bayley, S., Gray, I. and Warren, K. (May 2015) *Strengthening the Humanitarian, Innovation Ecosystem*, Humanitarian Innovation Ecosystem Research Project, Final Report, University of Brighton)

²⁴ Obrecht, A. and Warner, A. T. (2016) *More than just luck: Innovation in humanitarian action*, HIF/ ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI

²⁵ World Humanitarian Summit, (14-16 October 2015), *Global Consultation Final Report*, Geneva

²⁶ Obrecht, A. and Warner, A. T. (2016) *More than just luck: Innovation in humanitarian action*, HIF/ ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI

²⁷ Bessant, J. (2015), *Case study: cash-based programming in the food assistance sector*, (UK Aid, May 2015)

²⁸ Knox-Clarke, P. (2017) *Changing humanitarian action?* ALNAP Working Paper. London: ALNAP/ODI.

D. The Humanitarian Innovation Fund

The HIF's purpose is to 'support organizations and individuals to identify, nurture and share innovative and scalable solutions to the challenges facing effective humanitarian assistance.'²⁹ The HIF works towards achieving 'a humanitarian system that is capable of innovating and adapting to meet the needs of today and tomorrow,'³⁰ which ultimately would 'reduce mortality and morbidity, maintain human dignity, enhance protection and sustain livelihoods in humanitarian crises by improvements in humanitarian practice.'³¹ In 2014, the HIF presented its Impact Framework³² and a Theory of Change with three 'mid-term' outcomes, delivered through 'inputs' of financial facilities (grants), evidence around the innovation process, new research and development partnership brokering and a growing community of practice:

- ≡ Increased innovation in humanitarian practice resulting in demonstrated and cost-effective improvements in humanitarian action
- ≡ The capability of the humanitarian sector to innovate is increased
- ≡ Innovative solutions to major WASH and GBV challenges are developed and measurably improve effectiveness when used in humanitarian responses

The HIF is managed by elrha within the legal structure Save the Children UK.³³ HIF is one of two programmes operated by elrha, which was set up to support partnerships between researchers and practitioners to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian action.^{34 35} (Elrha stands for Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance.) The HIF is overseen by a Board of leading humanitarian practitioners, academics and private and public sector innovators. Elrha has a detailed Government and Management Document setting out the responsibilities and Terms of Reference for the various bodies involved in the delivery of the HIF.³⁶

- Save the Children;
- the elrha steering group;
- The HIF Board;
- the HIF Grants Panel; and
- The HIF Programme Team.

In 2009, DFID allocated an initial GBP 3m in exploratory funding for humanitarian innovation, part of which was used to establish the HIF in 2010.³⁷ DFID's Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (HIEP)³⁸ provided GBP 3,575,359 to the HIF for a first phase (2011-2014), and plans to provide GBP 7,829,918 for a second phase (2015-2018).³⁹ In 2015, the HIF signed a new agreement with DFID, which underpins most of the HIF's deliverables until 2018 and outlines its programmatic activities in detail.⁴⁰ While DFID remains its main funder, the HIF has gained the support of other donors: the Canadian International Development Agency, the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish International Development Agency, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and most recently ECHO.

²⁹ HIF website, www.elrha.org/hif/home

³⁰ Elrha, The Humanitarian Innovation Fund (January 2015) p8

³¹ The Humanitarian Innovation Fund—Draft Theory of Change 2014

³² Elrha, Impact Framework – Humanitarian Innovation Fund (October 2014)

³³ The Humanitarian Innovation Fund—Draft Theory of Change 2014

³⁴ Elrha Impact Strategy 2014-2016 (ELHRA), undated p.1.

³⁵ The other programme is the Research for Health in Humanitarian Crisis (R2HC)

³⁶ HIF Proposal to DFID 2015, p.29

³⁷ Obrecht, A. and Warner, A. T. (2016) *More than just luck: Innovation in humanitarian action*, HIF/ ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI

³⁸ From 2012-2020 DFID's HIEP programme has a budget of GBP 50.2m to fund projects to generate new evidence or synthesise existing evidence, partly on innovation in the humanitarian sector.

³⁹ ITAD (2016) *Final Report - Department for International Development, Evaluation of the Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (HIEP) Summative Evaluation Phase 1*, HIF Case study p165

⁴⁰ Elrha and the HIF, the Humanitarian Innovation Fund, (Elrha January 2015)

In 2015, HIF's proposal to DFID sought to define mutually reinforcing activities to contribute to 'increase[ing] innovation in humanitarian practice resulting in demonstrated and cost-effective improvements in humanitarian action'. It defined three outputs that would collectively contribute to this outcome: ⁴¹

- ≡ Output one: Finance is provided for innovations at different stages in their development, supporting them to make tangible and verifiable contributions to improving humanitarian performance
- ≡ Output two: Specific support to Innovation Management and intermediation, enhancing the ability of the HIF to identify, support and share the best solutions across its portfolio.
- ≡ Output three: Increased ability to engage with and shape the systemic and institutional environment for innovation, to the benefit both of the portfolio of HIF projects and innovation more broadly.

HIF's newest area of work is concerned with accelerating the journey to scale. The work is supported by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs with funding of about £1.5 million over three years. The three individual grants (of £400k) are the largest made by the HIF and represent a strategic shift from a focus on early stage innovation and testing, to engaging in the wider processes of scale that are increasingly of interest to those working in the humanitarian innovation space.⁴²

The HIF timeline, documented through a workshop with elhra at the start of the data gathering and collection phase of the evaluation, sets out significant moments in the evolution of the HIF and key external influences (opposite).

Data compiled for the evaluation offers an overview of HIF grant-making from 2010 until February 2017. It shows that a total of GBP 9.5m was committed in grants, comprising GBP 5.5m (57%) for DIP grants, GBP 1.8m (19%) for WASH grants, GBP 1.2m (13%) for the three 'scaling' grants and just GBP 0.9m for the ESI grants. A total of 109 grants were made, mostly through the core grants window to ESI projects (43), DIP projects (41), and diffusion projects (4), and fewer made through 'thematic' windows to WASH projects (18) and scaling projects (3). The HIF portfolio covers a broad range of themes (18 in total), most notably WASH (33 grants); disaster preparedness, risk and resilience (13 grants); health and information, communications and technology (9 each); assessments, monitoring and learning and protection, human rights and security (8 each). The HIF portfolio is set out in a series of charts in Annex 8.

⁴¹ Elrha, The Humanitarian Innovation Fund January 2015

⁴² Handover notes, Kim Scriven for Anna Skeels (n.d.)

HIF Timeline 2009 - 2017

Events which Erha identified as particularly significant are in blue

External Events and influences		HIF Evolution
ALNAP publication: 'Monitoring humanitarian innovation'		Partnership developed with Asia Disaster Reduction and Response Network
		Change of HIF Programme Officer; new Head of Innovation post created
		Proposal to SIDA for HIF funding 2017 - 2019
ALNAP publication: 'Evaluating humanitarian innovation'	2017	First GBV challenge round launched
		HIF secures funding from ECHO
Alliance for Global Humanitarian Innovation launched		Change in HIF Programme Manager
Regional Innovation Forum Asia held, with emphasis on localisation		'Scale' learning retreat and funding window launch
World Humanitarian Summit at which HIF convenes session on humanitarian innovation		GBV gap analysis launched: summary of actionable challenges
Launch of The Grand Bargain initiative - agenda for humanity		New post of Outreach and Engagement Adviser brings HIF team to 5 members
		HIF strategic research partnership with IDS, Sussex University
		WASH problem exploration reports and challenge candidate lists
ALNAP publishes 'More Than Just Luck: innovation in humanitarian action'	2016	HIF secures funding from Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Dutch Coalition for Humanitarian Innovation		Two new Innovation Manager posts created in WASH and GBV
Private actors meet in San Francisco to consider how to maximise the power of innovation in emergencies	2015	Managing Innovations in Emergencies: linking Principles to Practice' event for leading practitioners and policy makers
		HIF proposes DFID Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme Phase 2 (2015-2018)
Early start of World Humanitarian Summit innovation stream leading to WHS engagement		HIF secures SIDA funding for GBV challenge
Innovation identified as central theme in the World Humanitarian Summit called for by the UN Secretary General		WASH health-check report; budget adjustment
Oxford Humanitarian Innovation Conference 2014/2015; IDS Centrim Ecosystems report	2014	HIF publishes Impact Framework, with a logical framework and a Theory of Change
		WASH gap analysis commissioned from Oxfam
Erha launch of R2HC (Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises)	2013	HIF develops thematic grant facility in WASH (DFID grant)
		Change in HIF Programme Manager
OCHA publishes report surveying level of innovation practice in humanitarian action		Grants from CIDA and Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Humanitarian education and training Geneva conference	2012	Successful pilot of phase 1 DFID grant
Academic focus on humanitarian innovation and digital humanitarian technology e.g. Harvard Humanitarian Initiative		HIF awards first core grants
More interest in innovation within the humanitarian sector and from donors	2011	HIF agrees to implement DFID Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme Phase 1 (2011-2014)
DFID establishes Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (HIEP)		HIF Core Grants mechanism designed
UK Government's Humanitarian Emergency Response Review identifies innovation as a key area for investment		HIF established with initial DFID funding - £1m pilot
Haitian earthquake provides context for proof of concept for digital technology in humanitarian settings (e.g. crisis mapping)	2010	Erha partnerships conference
Beginning of new corporate social responsibility / private sector innovation partnership models (Iisea, Nokia etc)		
Erha partners with ALNAP		
DFID allocates £3m in exploratory funding for humanitarian innovation		Erha grants programme for collaboration and partnerships
ALNAP publishes 'Innovations in international humanitarian action' - landed in fertile ground	2009	Erha established and identifies innovation as priority focus

1. Findings

1.1. Effectiveness

Q. Effectiveness: How successful has the HIF been in supporting innovation, through its funding and associated support? i) Core, challenge area & scaling grants; ii) Sharing of learning & advocacy

The HIF did an excellent job of supporting innovation through grant-making and did well at supporting it through learning and advocacy. From 2011 to end 2016, the HIF emerged as a leader in grant-making for humanitarian innovation, and provided structured finance to a variety of innovations at different stages of development along with valuable additional support, which was often indispensable to evolving innovations. The HIF also encouraged innovation projects to offer evidence of positive change, committed to learning from failure, offered flexible funding, and fostered learning among grant holders. At the same time, the HIF commissioned, participated in, and shared important research on humanitarian innovation, with an increasing focus on innovation management, and conducted influential advocacy work to increase humanitarian innovation. Nonetheless, the quality of evidence generated was variable, the HIF's appetite for risk remained limited in practice, and the notion of acceptable failure remained unclear. The Fund did not effectively engage all its grantees in learning activities, and remained limited in its ability to systematically collect, synthesize, and disseminate lessons learned from across projects to support wider humanitarian innovation practice.

This section offers an assessment of the HIF's effectiveness or the extent to which its activities achieved their purpose. The HIF's strategic objectives were well defined in the Fund's comprehensive proposal to DFID (2015), which listed three outputs that would collectively contribute to 'increased innovation in humanitarian practice resulting in demonstrated and cost-effective improvements in humanitarian action':

- Output 1: Finance is provided for innovations at different stages in their development, supporting them to make tangible and verifiable contributions to improving humanitarian performance
- Output 2: Specific support to Innovation Management and intermediation, enhancing the ability of the HIF to identify, support and share the best solutions across its portfolio.
- Output 3: Increased ability to engage with and shape the systemic and institutional environment for innovation, to the benefit both portfolio of HIF projects and innovation more broadly.

The assessment is made on the basis of evidence triangulated from project data analysis, document review, global stakeholder consultations, online survey, and case studies. It is limited by the absence of portfolio-wide performance monitoring and reporting.

Over just a few years, the HIF developed into an effective and respected leader in financing humanitarian innovation. Global stakeholders described how the HIF developed effectively over its six-year lifespan. Beginning as a small grant-making organization that provided pioneering venture capital in the humanitarian sector, it developed a five-stage support model drawing on learning from other sectors, and established itself as a credible grant-making fund. In a second stage, it developed from funding projects to funding thematic 'programmes' with the establishment of challenge funds in WASH, and GBV. In a third stage, it rose to the challenge of scaling innovation, which was identified as a major gap in the sector. Moreover, the HIF continued to grow with yearly increases in donor funding, renewed partnership agreements with its key donor DFID, interest from new donors, and a recent agreement with ECHO. Survey responses show the HIF is very well regarded by a large proportion of potential and actual grant-holders, who gave it consistently high approval ratings for statements about its performance. The HIF's evolution marked a clear change from 2009, when a 'sector-wide mechanism to promote and facilitate innovation' was found to be missing.⁴³

⁴³ Ramalingam, B., Scriven, K. and Foley, C. (2009), *Innovations in international humanitarian action* London: ALNAP, Review of Humanitarian Action

Grant making

The HIF provided financing to a variety of innovations at different stages of development. Project data shows the HIF financed some 109 innovations over six years, tailoring its funding to different stages of innovation: 43 grants were made for early stage innovations (ESI), 41 for development and implementation projects (DIP), four for diffusion, and three for 'scaling' innovations. Although grants were typically made to different organizations, five grantees held two or three grants and one held five grants. Global stakeholders noted this was an impressive rate (given the size of the HIF), that it had built a diverse and wide-ranging portfolio, and that it had established a highly regarded funding process. The case study for Words of Relief shows it received grants at various stages: development, implementation, diffusion, and now scaling. Survey responses also suggested organizations used HIF funding to progress innovations at different stages. 'There are few, if any, other donors who can provide support for these critical steps toward longer term impact,' noted one respondent.

The HIF provided valuable non-financial support to innovations. Global stakeholders generally felt the HIF worked well with limited capacity to provide additional support to projects, referring to this support as 'nurturing', 'hands-on', and 'grant-making plus' funding. Compared to other grant-making organizations, it offered added value through technical support for grantees, especially through its thematic windows for which it recruited two innovation managers to support grant-making. The case studies underscore the importance of HIF's financial and non-financial support to the innovations. Words of Relief, for example, received important funding from HIF but benefited equally from the flexibility and timing of HIF funding, as well as early guidance on governance and organizational structure; the validation and legitimacy gained from ALNAP studies; and overall encouragement to learning. Despite the value of HIF's non-financial support, such support remained limited for most core grant holders due to capacity constraints and the size of the portfolio.

The HIF often provided highly valued or indispensable support to innovations. HIF grant making clearly supported many of the key factors identified by HIF-ALNAP for a successful innovation process: resourcing the innovation, organizing the innovation process, generating and integrating evidence, collaborating with others, and creating a culture for innovation.⁴⁴ The three case studies showed the HIF's financing and additional support played crucial roles in developing innovations. For mVAM, HIF funding was 'fundamental to getting the project off the ground,' lent important credibility to the innovation, and required data collection which helped to diffuse the project. For MHM, the HIF provided 'appropriate funding at just the right time', enabled a small-scale initiative to gain momentum and have a much wider impact, and enabled the innovations to be progressed to a higher standard than without. For WoR, the HIF provided highly valued 'untied' funding and useful process support to WoR, without which the innovation would not have evolved as effectively and quickly, and might not have started up at all. Survey responses also showed that considerably more innovations sought HIF funding than secured it, suggesting the HIF has been a highly-valued funding source responding to clear, often unmet, demand.⁴⁵

Evidence generation

The HIF encouraged innovation projects to offer evidence of positive change, although the quality of that evidence was variable with clear room for improvement. Documents show the HIF carried out substantial work with applicants to establish M&E metrics for their proposals, and required evidence of the success or failure of the innovation before completion.⁴⁶ All projects reviewed provided final reports, and the quality of evidence to support stated achievements was relatively strong for about half of projects. However, significant gaps in evidence were also identifiable in the other half, and few projects commissioned external evaluations to provide additional evidence about outcomes. Global stakeholders report the HIF generated evidence of effectiveness from projects, and its collection improved by the second DFID/HIEP study, and with support

⁴⁴ Obrecht, A. and Warner, A. T. (2016) *More than just luck: Innovation in humanitarian action*, HIF/ ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI

⁴⁵ Of 25 respondents who were not awarded a HIF grant, 16 either hoped to implement their innovation but had not yet secured funding or remained unclear/undecided how to proceed. Only five had secured funding (from internal / external sources). Just three said they were no longer actively pursuing the innovation. This suggests the importance of HIF funding to innovations.

⁴⁶ Elrha, (October 2014) *Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in the Humanitarian Innovation Fund*, Elrha

from the HIF's research function. Improved M&E was also noted for the scaling grants where HIF managers offer dedicated support. Nonetheless, some stakeholders suggested too little was known from across the projects about the effectiveness of investments and about 'what works and what doesn't', in the absence of a robust M&E system with a standardized approach and dedicated capacity to manage it.

Acceptable failure

The HIF tolerated appropriate levels of failure in principle, and offered relatively flexible funding to innovations. Some global stakeholders praised the HIF for developing a risk management approach with DFID that allowed for constructive 'innovation failures' in a very risk averse environment. The agreed ratio was 1:6 succeed in recognition and invention stages; 1:5 succeed in development, implementation and testing stages; and 6:1 succeed in diffusion stage. Grantees and applicants surveyed tended to agree the HIF 'allowed appropriate levels of failure'. Documents and case studies suggest stakeholders appreciated the HIF funding for its flexibility.⁴⁷ In contrast to many humanitarian donors, the HIF did not require from grantees log frame, results-based management and reporting. For Words of Relief, such flexibility of process was a primary enabling factor facilitated by HIF grants, allowing it to develop the model in Kenya, test it and learn quickly in West Africa, and continue collecting quick feedback and adjusting its approach.



However, the HIF's appetite for risk remained somewhat limited in practice, and the notion of acceptable failure remained unclear. Many global stakeholders suggest the HIF initially defaulted to standard 'risk averse' funding requirements, and perhaps missed valuable high risk ESI projects, while selecting less innovative ideas 'repackaged' by INGOs. This may explain why 88% of grant-holders were based in developed countries while most of the projects were implemented outside them, and a perceived preference for funding through large INGOs compared to local and national actors. In addition, stakeholders suggest a wider 'culture of not reporting failure' complicated learning from humanitarian innovation. The majority of projects reviewed and survey respondents reported success (80-70%), with few reporting even 'partial failure' (20%) and none reporting 'complete failure.' Even the least successful of the projects reviewed (Gaza Risk Reduction and Mitigation) could not be described as 'completely unsuccessful'. Until recently considerable flexibility was allowed in defining success,⁴⁸ whereas the notion of constructive or acceptable failure remains poorly defined. Some HIF actors differentiated 'good' failures that allowed learning about innovation and 'bad' management failures that did not.

Innovation management

The HIF fostered learning among grant holders, and many DIP-stage innovations shared lessons widely. Survey respondents agreed strongly that the HIF 'increased learning about humanitarian innovation', and virtually all projects reviewed undertook learning and dissemination activities, mostly with wider audiences. HIF required grantees to share learning through blogs and a web-based user platform, and over half of them disseminated beyond immediate location, organization and stakeholders, involving social media and press coverage, donor groups, universities and UN bodies. The case studies provide further evidence, with MHM disseminating operational research findings to wider WASH partners and mVAM using data captured for learning to diffuse the innovation and share in published articles. However, almost all reports assessed as demonstrating 'wide' learning activities were DIP or diffusion grants, suggesting it is easier to disseminate learning from innovations that have progressed further through the cycle, or that additional support may be needed for ESI grants in particular. Further, some stakeholders felt learning was limited by uneven degrees

⁴⁷ Elrha, (October 2014) *Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in the Humanitarian Innovation Fund*, Elrha

⁴⁸ Recent HIF guidelines specified that 'success' means the innovation 'achieved the planned positive impact/outcome or (...) performed better than the current process, product or system.'

of participation in web-based learning. HIF managers had planned to establish a 'Community of Practice'. Although constrained by capacity gaps thus far, it was hoped that recruitment of a new Community Outreach and Engagement Officer in September 2016 would enable this.

The HIF commissioned, participated in and shared important research on humanitarian innovation, with an increasing focus on innovation management. Global stakeholders point to collaborations with ALNAP and IDS, including the HIF-ALNAP report 'More than Just Luck', an in-depth study of what makes for successful innovation based on 15 HIF case studies,⁴⁹ and the development of Humanitarian Innovation Principles for the World Humanitarian Summit. This work was launched at an event with a range of actors from the humanitarian sector and featured grant-holders who shared their experiences. Previously, the HIF collaborated with ODI to produce an edition of Humanitarian Exchange focused on innovation in the humanitarian sector,⁵⁰ which was shared with the HPN's 8,000 members.⁵¹ Most recently, stakeholders observe the HIF increasingly sought to support the process of innovation management in the sector, recognizing the gap facing would-be innovators: how to do it? what works and what doesn't? To this end, the HIF is providing workshops and commissioned an Innovation Management Guide, which would draw on learning from across the HIF portfolio. This is seen as key to delivering on HIF's learning and advocacy function, following the HIF and ALNAP's 2016 study.



The HIF remained limited in its ability to systematically collect, synthesize, and disseminate lessons learned from across projects to support wider humanitarian innovation practice. Global stakeholders reported that evidence from projects was not consistently aggregated into learning for the wider system, more could be done to synthesize learning from across the projects with greater capacity to analyse and mine data, and more needed to be known from across the projects about impact, effectiveness, and good practices. Survey respondents questioned whether the HIF adequately shared lessons with humanitarian innovators, also perceiving gaps in learning and support at the project level. Case studies suggest some innovations might have benefited from more lessons learned, although they were also limited in capacity to generate further evidence. As noted above, humanitarian innovation is constrained more broadly by a lack of innovation management capacity.

Advocacy

The HIF conducted influential advocacy work to increase humanitarian innovation. In broad terms, global stakeholders felt the HIF's advocacy and related activities promoted, supported or 'enabled' innovation at the systemic level, while survey respondents strongly agreed the HIF 'advocates for and supports innovation in the humanitarian system'. Documents suggest the HIF 'emerged as a leading actor shaping efforts to create a more innovative humanitarian system, contributing to the WHS's innovation theme area, and working to shape the development of the Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation (GAHI).⁵² Global stakeholders agree the HIF did well to influence the humanitarian system by engaging in 'all the right forums', commissioning and disseminating 'cutting edge' research, and recently recruiting a head of innovation to lead this area of work. But some stakeholders also recognize this advocacy remained a 'drop in the ocean' and felt humanitarian innovation was too often 'siloes' from wider humanitarian policy debates.

⁴⁹ Obrecht, A. and Warner, A. T. (2016) More than just luck: Innovation in humanitarian action, HIF/ ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI

⁵⁰ Humanitarian Exchange (April 2016) Special Feature Humanitarian Innovation, Humanitarian Practice Network, Number 66 April 2016 <http://odihpn.org/magazine/humanitarian-innovation/>

⁵¹ According to ODI data, 1,348 people viewed the editorial page and 440 people downloaded the PDF April 2016-June 2017

⁵² HIF Proposal to DFID, January 2015; HIF Proposal to ECHO, December 2016

1.2. Outcomes

Q. Outcomes: How has the HIF contributed to improved humanitarian performance and more lives saved through the projects it supports?

Overall, the HIF appeared to contribute very well to improving humanitarian performance through the projects it supported. The HIF's grant-making to over 100 innovation projects contributed clearly to increasing humanitarian innovation in the system; several projects made notable impacts on humanitarian action and people affected (as in the case studies); and most of them reported improvements in humanitarian action and intended to benefit populations affected. The HIF's thematic grant-making appeared to be developing WASH and GBV solutions, while HIF funding could be contributing to progress in other thematic areas (such as information technology and communication with people affected). Separately, the HIF's advocacy may have contributed greatly to sector-wide acceptance of innovation and its innovation management may have strengthened innovation practices in the sector. However, some questions arise about the quality of evidence generated and the scale of the HIF's impact. HIF grantees often provided weak evidence about improved humanitarian action, positive outcomes for beneficiaries, and increased cost-effectiveness, while little evidence was available yet to assess thematic outcomes. The HIF's grant-making to scores of projects contributed modestly in scale compared to the size of the system, and the HIF's advocacy and innovation management activities (unsurprisingly) showed few signs yet of contributing to changes in system-wide policy and practice.

This is an assessment of outcomes achieved by the HIF through grant-making and wider activities. The HIF holds itself accountable for mid-term outcomes (as below) and not for the ultimate impact of reducing mortality and morbidity, which it seeks to achieve indirectly through improvements to humanitarian action.⁵³ Founded on the proposition that innovation was insufficient in the humanitarian system, the HIF set out to shape a system 'capable of innovating and adapting to meet the needs of today and tomorrow.'⁵⁴ Over time, a more innovative system was expected to improve humanitarian practice, and thereby 'reduce mortality and morbidity, maintain human dignity, enhance protection and sustain livelihoods in humanitarian crises (...)' ⁵⁵ Towards this goal, the HIF aimed to achieve these mid-term outcomes at different 'levels' of the system:⁵⁶

- Increased innovation in humanitarian practice, resulting in demonstrated and cost-effective improvements in humanitarian action (project level);
- Innovative solutions to major WASH and GBV challenges developed and improving humanitarian responses (thematic level); and
- Increased capability of the humanitarian sector to innovate (system level).

Project level

The HIF's grant-making to over 100 projects contributed clearly to increasing innovation in humanitarian practice, though modestly compared to the size of the humanitarian system. The HIF currently manages a portfolio of 109 projects with total funding of GBP 9.5 million, ⁵⁷ and most of these are funded through its core grant facility (88 projects at a cost of GBP 6.3m), as well as thematic WASH grants (GBP 1.8m), and scaling grants (GBP 1.2m). These grants injected innovation resources into the system which might not otherwise have existed given the low investment in innovation in 2009, although the situation may be

⁵³ According to the HIF Impact Framework (elrha 2014), the HIF measures the impact and outcomes of funded projects, and of the HIF programme as a whole. [But] ... in general it is not possible to measure the full impacts of a funded innovation within the time frame of that funding; and the significant effects of research may take years to emerge.

⁵⁴ Elrha (January 2015) *The Humanitarian Fund* p8

⁵⁵ The Humanitarian Innovation Fund—Draft Theory of Change 2014

⁵⁶ Elrha (October 2014) *Impact Framework – Humanitarian Innovation Fund*

⁵⁷ There were 109 HIF projects in the portfolio dataset provided to the evaluation team by elrha in February 2017, including completed projects, projects in implementation and projects which had been approved but had yet to commence. See Annex D for further information

changing with growing innovation activity and funding since then (see introduction). The project review and grantee survey show that all grants reported achieving either intended impact, comparative improvement, or partial success. None reported failure. Each innovation involves different stakeholders, partnerships and collaboration within the grant-holding agency, within a specific humanitarian response, and sometimes more broadly. But the number of agencies and budget seems little compared to a humanitarian system comprising some 4,480 operational aid organizations and a combined expenditures of over USD 25 billion (GBP 19bn).⁵⁸ As noted in the introduction, humanitarian innovation is limited by gaps in dedicated resources and spending.

A majority of grantees reported improvements achieved in humanitarian action. In self-reporting, 80% of grant holders sampled considered their projects ‘successful’ either in achieving positive impacts or comparative improvements in humanitarian action. In the grant holder survey, seven out of 10 respondents rated their project as either completely or largely successful. Global stakeholders were more circumspect,



estimating roughly 20% made a notable difference, 50% made comparative improvements (citing HIF-ALNAP case studies 2015-2016), and many others were ‘not memorable’. Although no project sampled or HIF-ALNAP case study reported complete ‘failure’, it is suggested by global stakeholders that a majority (around 80%) were expected to fail as innovations, mainly because they were ‘unsustainable’ or ‘one-off’ projects that would receive no follow-up funding, even where the project was successful in its own terms. As one survey respondent commented, ‘we undertook a feasibility study which manifested in a proof of principle prototype and scored the project as “completely successful” but wider impact was limited when associated parties could not agree on specification and usage scenarios.

A minority of grantees made notable impacts on humanitarian action and people affected. In discussions of impact, global stakeholders consistently point to a handful of HIF-funded projects that made a valuable quantitative impact, qualitative impact, or ‘catalytic’ impact on improving humanitarian action. First, some projects had a direct tangible impact and ‘went to scale’ bringing about important quantifiable changes and reaching more than one million people included IFRC’s Listening to the Voice of Haitians and WFP’s mVAM (Mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping). Second, some projects had a direct tangible impact and brought about qualitative changes included IFRC’s Improving Menstrual Hygiene Management in Emergencies, and Motivation’s appropriate and affordable wheelchairs. Third, some projects had an indirect ‘catalytic’ impact and brought changes in process included mapping projects, insurance projects, Translators without Borders (TWB)’s Words of Relief, (also START, AIDMI). However, global stakeholders agree none of the projects have yet brought about major changes in humanitarian business models or paradigm shifts that might compare with cash-based transfers, which are feted as the archetype of ‘transformative’ innovation but are known to have taken decades to evolve.

A majority of grantees expected to benefit populations affected. All projects reviewed were ultimately oriented towards improving outcomes for ‘end users’, and in many cases this meant people affected by crises. Yet impact on these populations was often expected after the end of the project, so half of the sampled project reports judged it ‘too early to tell’ impact on end users. Still, the mVAM and MHM case studies showed more immediate benefits, sometimes unexpected, to populations affected, and a cluster of survey respondents agreed strongly that ‘the project generated positive changes for people affected by disasters’ (all 6 respondents to this question gave a score of 7, 8 or 9). Further, some projects demonstrate well that they appreciate the importance of responding appropriately to different beneficiary needs when planning and implementing a project. A quarter of the projects reviewed were specific about the types of beneficiaries the innovation was aimed at.

⁵⁸ Stoddard, A., Harmer, A., Haver, K., Taylor, G. and Harvey, P. (2015) *State of Humanitarian System 2015* London: ALNAP

The HIF Evaluation Case Studies

Case study: mVAM

The Mobile Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (mVAM) project is being scaled up in WFP's global operations following the success of the pilots in DRC and Somalia. The innovation delivers fresh food security information from the most complex and insecure environments in way that is fast and cost-efficient compared to traditional surveying techniques, and provides unique information where none might otherwise be gathered. The distribution of free phones and small quantities of air time credit was very popular, and an unanticipated effect of mVAM seems to have been the empowerment of beneficiaries. Other organizations are also now using mVAM-inspired approaches for remote surveys, including UNICEF and FEWS NET. An independent evaluation noted that the 'capacity development based on this knowledge and learning is perhaps the greatest potential role of mVAM at the global level.' While mVAM is widely seen within WFP to have been a significant success, it is not without its problems, such as the lack of network coverage in some areas and lack of access to mobile phone among the poorest and most vulnerable people. The HIF's support was seen as fundamental to getting the project off the ground, through its funding at a time when WFP was facing significant funding constraints, and through an emphasis on evidence generation which helped to diffuse the innovation through WFP and provided information that was then written into other proposals and grant agreements.

Case study: MHM

The Menstrual Hygiene Management in Emergencies (MHM) is a novel approach that was trialled within humanitarian settings and, through the generation of evidence, laid the ground for it to be mainstreamed by IFRC in East Africa and beyond. MHM kit distribution both through the project and subsequently was an appropriate and improved dimension of emergency response which met a clear need. As the MHM's final report states, 'the surveys in all three countries did demonstrate significant improvements from the baseline in relation to knowledge, health, dignity and hygiene,' and it was clear that the kits were highly appreciated and had made a difference to women's lives. As well as procurement and distribution challenges in Uganda, the need was recognized to manage distribution expectations and include men in planning. The HIF's contribution was particularly valuable for the timeliness of the grant which enabled MHM to build on momentum, the size of the grant which allowed the project to be conducted in three countries, and additional opportunities for IFRC and national society staff to develop management skills and research skills.

Case study: Words of Relief

The Words of Relief (WoR) project is supporting a growing number of humanitarian actors to remove language barriers that complicate people's access to information in specific emergencies. It does so through the humanitarian agencies that use WoR's translation and language services; through wider contributions to communication with communities, shared translation content, and interpreter training support; and through WoR's advocacy efforts to raise awareness of language barriers. While WoR is achieving some success in involving people affected and government authorities, an increasingly active role is foreseen for people affected in eliminating language barriers. In different responses, WoR has supported efforts to improve communication with communities, but its specific contribution to the entire humanitarian system remained constrained by a dependence on humanitarian agencies to adopt its services, when many do not recognize the importance of language in humanitarian responses. WoR received high quality funding and useful process support from the HIF, worth more to the innovation than the financial contribution alone. Without HIF's funding and support, the WoR innovation would not have evolved as effectively and quickly, and may not have been able to start up at all. HIF's scaling grant now offers an opportunity to help WoR with growing and sustaining the programme.

Grantees generally showed little evidence of contributing to positive outcomes for beneficiaries. Most project reports did not articulate the anticipated or actual specific, measurable impact of the project on crisis-affected populations or humanitarian actors and how this could result in improved humanitarian outcomes. The review of project proposals and reports found inconsistent focus on beneficiaries and people affected, rarely articulated the expected impact of the innovation upon crisis affected populations in concrete detail, and left room for greater explanation about how the innovation could ultimately improve humanitarian outcomes. Moreover, few considered impact on people with specific needs or the most vulnerable, or offered adequate evidence of beneficiary disaggregation, so it is not clear to what extent differentiated needs (e.g. by age, gender, ability etc.) were being understood and built into the design of innovative responses. As noted in the introduction, much humanitarian innovation remains focused on innovation by humanitarian actors, without much involvement from populations affected and other stakeholders.

Grantees often provided weak evidence of improved humanitarian action. Global stakeholders observed the HIF lacks an easy and transparent means for measuring outcomes towards achieving impact and what may be expected, for example, in terms of efficiency, cost effectiveness, effect on people affected, adoption, and sustainability. Multiple questions arose about what constitutes evidence, how to measure it, and the importance of HIF's contribution. Project documentation reviewed shows a range of success is claimed, but generally high-level descriptions of 'success' which are not systematically assessed against a formal results framework with indicators and metrics. It is recognized that monitoring⁵⁹ and evaluating⁶⁰ humanitarian innovation remain challenges, but project reports generally presented weak evidence of impact and effectiveness related to weak evidence collection and (M&E) systems and not necessarily weak project results. By contrast, a project that benefitted from a high degree of M&E advice from the HIF, the Panzi Foundation USA, stood out for the quality of its evidence about impact, indicating the considerable value of HIF's capacity building and advice role.



Thematic level

The HIF's thematic funding seems to be working towards innovative solutions to a major thematic challenge in WASH. Global stakeholders suggested it was too early to see impact in addressing specific problems at the sector level, in WASH or GBV. Although the one WASH challenge project report available self-assessed as 'partially successful' with mixed results, global stakeholders suggest the WASH challenge approach is progressing well: specific problems were proactively targeted, the intervention was designed by leading technical people in the WASH sector (from leading agencies), a model process was implemented including sector gap analysis and 'deep dive' reports, challenge funding grants made to target solutions, and specialized partners engaged to study evidence across projects and to diffuse learning. Moreover, the MHM case study shows how that innovation could potentially be disseminated and adopted by actors in the WASH sector.

The HIF's funding may contribute to cumulative progress in thematic areas, such as information technology and communication with people affected. As noted above, HIF funding is focused in a limited number of specific thematic areas, such as disaster preparedness, risk and resilience; information, communications and technology; and assessments, monitoring and learning; and protection, human rights and security. Most notably, global stakeholders suggest the HIF is playing an important role in developing mobile data collection innovations, using handheld devices, and strengthening interaction with beneficiaries. These mobile technology innovations were perceived to contribute to better mapping of needs, faster services, strengthened monitoring and accountability to populations affected. Such projects include IFRC Voice project

⁵⁹ See Warner, A. T. (2017) Working paper: Monitoring humanitarian innovation. HIF/ALNAP Working Paper. London: ODI/ALNAP

⁶⁰ see Obrecht, A. with Warner, A. and Dillon, N. (2017) 'Working paper: Evaluating humanitarian innovation' HIF/ALNAP Working Paper. London: ODI/ALNAP

Haiti, Translators without Borders, UNICEF's rapid family tracing, and the Humanitarian Open Mapping Team (HOMT). The HOMT used crowdsourcing to develop street mapping ('Ushahidi'), which was eventually welcomed by OCHA's traditional mapping function and led to the formation of a dedicated mapping community or 'cluster'. ALNAP's system review concludes that the most notable innovations in humanitarian assistance have involved communications, information management and mapping, which have helped to improve the planning and targeting of aid delivery.⁶¹

System level

The HIF's advocacy may have contributed greatly to sector-wide acceptance of innovation. As noted above, humanitarian innovation became a growing field of interest and activity in the humanitarian system since 2009. Global stakeholders suggest the HIF played a lead role in developing the system's acceptance of humanitarian innovation, legitimizing the agenda and reducing 'intransigence' to it. As a result, the system now allows innovative thinking, the notion of innovation is widely accepted, and many donors recognize the need to support innovation. Stakeholders suggest the HIF served as a 'reference point', most recently in the lead up to the World Humanitarian Summit, and played a role in 'moving forward the conversation' owing to its 'thought leadership' status. The document review even suggests the HIF's greatest impact was achieved through advocacy activities, such as encouraging big donors to fund innovations and take them to scale and its work at the WHS, where it played an active part in the innovation theme of the consultation process and beyond, towards conceiving of a Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation.

The HIF's innovation management may have strengthened innovation practices in the sector. Global stakeholders perceive the HIF to have significantly influenced the development of humanitarian innovation functions among agencies, playing an essential role in the increasing number of agencies (including the largest ones WFP, UNICEF, UNHCR) establishing innovation labs, scaling grants, innovation teams in the last 4-5 years. Stakeholders suggest it did so by providing resources (core funding), a framework for innovation, and tools; a hub for knowledge management; and help to understand innovation as a process. In addition, project data shows virtually all HIF-funded projects engaged in learning and dissemination activities, most of them with a wide or fairly wide audience, and project level dissemination is an important element of HIF's wider learning and advocacy agenda. It is recognized that HIF's advocacy and innovation management depends on its practical grant-making work, but it is unclear whether its community of innovation practitioners share the HIF's vision of jointly creating a more innovative system.

Not surprisingly, the HIF's advocacy and innovation management activities showed few signs of contributing directly to changes in policy and system-wide practice, improved system performance, or better overall outcomes for beneficiaries. The HIF may have helped to shape a more innovative system, but that system does not yet seem to be significantly improving humanitarian action or outcomes for populations affected. The humanitarian system still lacks the capacity and scale to meet the world's large and growing humanitarian needs, and the causal link between humanitarian innovation and improving the wider system remains difficult to discern. There remains little evidence on the relationship between innovation and humanitarian performance, resulting in ongoing questions as to whether innovation activity is actually leading to improvements in humanitarian action.⁶² To date considerable time, money and energy has been spent on changing the humanitarian system, but expected change has proven difficult and complicated by politics, culture, and other factors. Change takes longer than the annual funding cycles by which much humanitarian life is measured.⁶³

⁶¹ Stoddard, A., Harmer, A., Haver, K., Taylor, G. and Harvey, P. (2015) *State of Humanitarian System 2015* London: ALNAP (p.14)

⁶² Obrecht, A. and Warner, A. T. (2016) *More than just luck: Innovation in humanitarian action*, HIF/ ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI

⁶³ Knox-Clarke, P. (2017) *Changing humanitarian action?* ALNAP Working Paper. London: ALNAP/ODI

1.3. External factors

Q. Factors: Which external and internal factors have most helped or hindered HIF's success?

The HIF's effectiveness and outcomes depended on a combination of internal and external factors. Most significant among external factors were its donors' support and an increasingly favourable policy environment. However, progress remained constrained by wider challenges to innovation in the system, including gaps in dedicated resources and spending; resistance among humanitarian actors; and a system that remains unsupportive of innovations.

This section offers a cursory review of enabling factors and constraints affecting the HIF's performance. It relies on a ranking exercise conducted among 14 global stakeholders, mostly HIF managers and key advisers, and some evidence from wider consultations, documents reviewed, and the grantee survey. The findings are limited by difficulties in assessing the relative importance of factors and gaps in evidence about external factors affecting the HIF.

The HIF's ability to support innovation depended on a combination of factors. A polling of HIF global managers and advisers highlighted the extent to which multiple internal and external factors were considered important. Similarly, grantees and applicants responding to the survey highlighted a multiplicity of challenges to developing their innovation, including staff turnover, resistance from stakeholders and limited time and resources.

The HIF's effectiveness depended significantly on donor support and an increasingly favourable policy environment. HIF managers and advisers highlighted as primary contributions the humanitarian system's interest in innovation and government donor funding and policy support (e.g. DFID). This is consistent with an initial review of documents which pointed to donor support from DFID, CIDA and SIDA, and ALNAP's help to embed HIF in the humanitarian sector as key external factors in HIF's success. In addition, some global stakeholders point to the opportunities for innovation in the sector offered by new technologies involving data, information, and knowledge management.

The HIF's effectiveness remained constrained by wider challenges to innovation in the system (see introduction). First, gaps in dedicated resources and spending were highlighted as key constraint, by global stakeholders who felt many donors (besides the HIF's donors) maintained a narrow definition of their roles and tight accountability approaches that limited innovation or inhibited a culture of learning from constructive failures. Second, a focus on humanitarian actors was also highlighted as a constraint, by global stakeholders who felt many agencies remained invested in tried and tested approaches while more could be achieved through partnerships with the private sector and academia as well as national and local actors despite their low capacities. Third, the system remains unsupportive of innovations, and despite a tradition of improvisation stakeholders felt the system remained too risk averse and focused on operational priorities.

1.4. Internal Factors

Q. Internal factors: How have these internal factors helped or hindered success in grant making and innovation management work?

Among internal 'process' factors, the HIF's effectiveness is determined by five key elements: strategy management, grant-making, grant management, fund management, and resource management, including funding, staffing and technical expertise. Each of these proved independently effective and fit for purpose, and made useful contributions to the Fund's performance. The strategy management and grant-making functions worked particularly well; whereas grant management, fund management, and resourcing showed some room for practical improvements.

This section offers an assessment of the internal factors that helped or hindered the HIF's performance. The following internal 'process' factors were identified at inception phase, based on an initial document review and user consultations: (i) The HIF's overall approach/strategy, i.e. the provision of financial support and

technical support, according to the five-stage process model; (ii) The range of funding modalities, i.e. large and small 'core' grants, thematic grants (WASH and GBV), and scaling grants; (iii) Grant-making processes, i.e. assessment, implementation, evaluation; (iv) Grant making structures, organization, and systems (i.e. Save the Children, elrha Steering Group, HIF Board, HIF Grants Panel, and HIF Programme Team). A fifth element was added later: (v) Resources, including financial, human resources, and technical capacities. Stakeholder interviews, project data analysis and the on-line survey were the main sources of evidence. It could have been enhanced by stakeholder interviews although the comments provided through the survey went some way to explaining and expanding on responses.

Strategy management

The HIF's strategy management and overall approach greatly supported the Fund's performance. Its strategic decision making was perceived to be effective, and its grant-making approach evolved appropriately to become increasingly purposeful. The HIF's strategy now requires revision and formalization, as planned, and may further emphasize support for development and implementation phase and taking innovations to scale over grant-making for early stage innovation.

The HIF's strategic decision making was perceived to be effective. HIF's direction and strategy is principally set by the HIF Board and executed through grant-making, innovation management and wider advocacy. Global stakeholders generally concurred that the Board and decision-making was effective, and included a good mix of innovation and humanitarian experts, many high profile and respected in their field, who jointly forged the HIF's direction and approach. The HIF's approach is coherent, well understood internally and articulated across several documents.

The HIF's grant-making approach evolved appropriately to become increasingly purposeful. Since its launch in 2011, the HIF's approach to supporting innovation evolved,⁶⁴ as documented in the HIF timeline (see Introduction) and as explained by HIF managers and advisers. At the outset, the HIF took an open approach, making space for improvement across the sector, driven by 'bottom-up' demand, and funding change that could be described as 'incremental.' Funding disbursement in this opening phase was determined by the quality of innovation project proposed rather than an overall understanding of where innovation was most needed in the sector (supply side). In 2013, the HIF started to adopt a more 'active' innovation management approach with the establishment of the WASH then the GBV challenge windows, both informed by externally commissioned gap analyses. Some informants felt these thematic areas were somewhat opportunistic and donor-driven and did not necessarily reflect priority needs across the sector. A prioritization exercise has been recently commissioned in large part to respond to this perception. In 2016, the launch of the HIF's scaling window, signalled a more 'transformative' approach, seeking to go beyond the early stage discovery model to bring existing solutions to scale, by focusing on the development and adoption of innovation, understanding the factors that drive transformation innovation and ensuring ownership, adoption and absorption of innovation. As one stakeholder noted, 'The absorption-based innovation model would support projects that can be applied at the ground level, when we know people can take it, use it and own it. (...) In an absorbed cycle, innovation gets normalized, practitioners ask for a solution and embed the innovation in their workflows and feedback loop.'

The HIF's strategy requires revision and formalization. Whilst the HIF's approach may be coherent and well understood, the HIF Board and team recognize that a formal, documented strategy is needed, complementary to elrha's, and that resources and structures should be explicitly geared to its implementation. Plans are in place to start to develop this in the coming months. Amongst other things, this strategy will need to articulate the HIF's theory of change and relative priorities across its different outputs (e.g. grants and grant



⁶⁴ HIF Proposal to DFID, January 2015

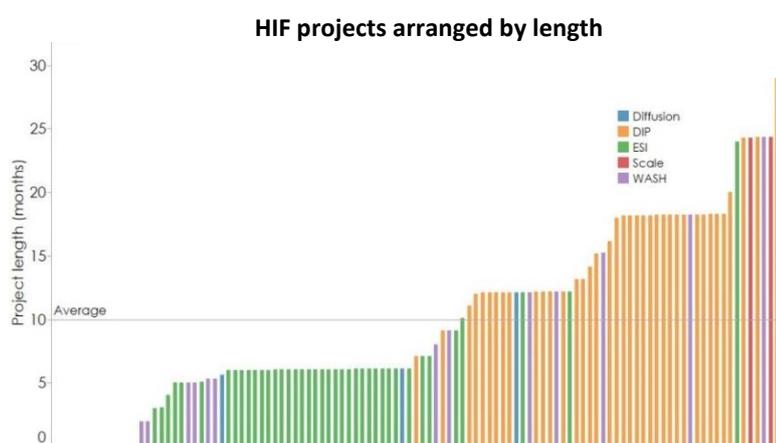
management, evidence, advocacy). Global stakeholders expressed divergent views on what the balance should be but positioning and context is all important: one document source⁶⁵ noted that the HIF's opportunities to influence policy were perhaps diminishing with the increasingly crowded space on innovation funding, a context dominated by large donors and front-line agencies.

The HIF's strategy is expected by some to emphasize support for acceleration or scaling over innovation generation. Within grant-making, several stakeholders suggested a need to shift the balance of funding and effort from innovation generation towards innovation acceleration. They felt that the HIF had more success where it could actively support the innovation management processes of the projects it funded, particularly the challenge facilities on WASH, and it is notable that successful innovation methods have often been seen in those projects with strong, boundary-spanning partnerships, whether between academia and humanitarian agencies, or between humanitarian agencies and private sector.⁶⁶ The MHM case study certainly demonstrated this.

Grant-making

The HIF's grant-making model employed a healthy range of funding windows across the innovation model, although the balance and focus of effort could usefully be re-examined through the strategy review. The HIF recognized a need for sustaining innovations, showed limited accessibility to national and local actors, and appeared to support relatively more technology and products innovations.

The HIF's grant-making employed a healthy range of funding mechanisms aligned with its five-stage innovation process model, although the strategy review could further examine the balance and focus of effort. The range of funding windows previously described shows a diversity of approaches and models acting on different problems. Although there are equal numbers of 'early stage innovation' grants and diffusion and implementation grants, project data shows much more funding goes into the latter. Projects range in length



from two to 30 months, with many requiring no-cost extensions to complete. Forty-three percent of projects were due to last six months or less and only eight were for 20 months or more. This suggests a lot of effort went into selecting and managing ESI grants in relation to the amount of funds disbursed through them. Moreover, global stakeholders expressed different views about the relative value of ESI grants, some of them recognizing its importance as an access route for innovators and the need to help manage

the risk and uncertainty inherent to early stage innovation. A re-branding exercise in early 2015 clarified the purpose of the small grants and raised the funding ceiling to GBP 50k. Few diffusion grants were made, perhaps in part because the ceiling for this had been too low at GBP 20k and because they were restricted to previous HIF projects. Other stakeholders felt the balance needed re-examining between open and targeted funding, and themed funding for particular challenges (which could themselves include a mix of open and more targeted funding), whilst recognising that some sort of 'open' window would always be valuable and necessary for 'unknown unknowns'.

The HIF's grant-making work recognized the need to sustain innovations but more support (financial and non-financial) could be provided. The current HIF model in the long term offers the prospect of drawing in new actors with ESI grants, supporting them through DIP grants, and sustaining them with diffusion or scale grants; even if few grant-holders⁶⁷ have held such multiple grants to date. This model recognizes that a single

⁶⁵ Gray, I. (September 2014) *HIF Innovating Wash: Project Health Check* Elrha

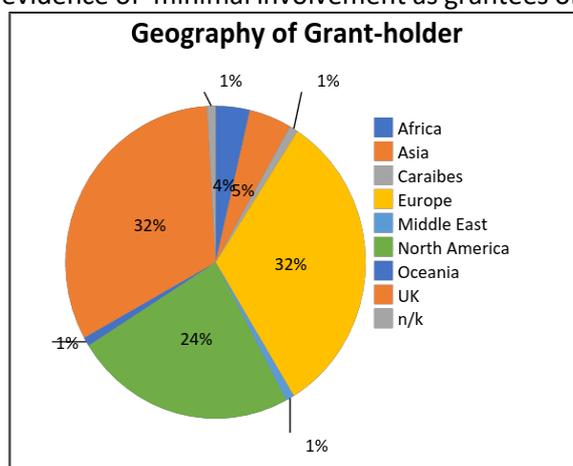
⁶⁶ HIF Proposal to DFID, January 2015

⁶⁷ Six organisations have held two or more grants.

HIF grant is only ever going to be a ‘link in the chain’, taking an innovation to the next level. This reinforces the need for follow-on funding for good projects and promising innovations, and the potential for HIF support to have greater and longer-term significance by continuing beyond the end of project funding through communications, advocacy, technical support and advice. The case studies confirm the catalytic role of the HIF in enabling a small-scale initiative to gain momentum and have a much wider impact. Following HIF support, further phases of the mVAM innovation were supported by the Korean Government and USAID; IFRC are applying for HIF diffusion funding to take the evidence from the MHM operational research to the next level within the organisation; and the Words of Relief innovation has been able to progress with the support of four cycles of HIF funding.

The HIF’s grant-making appeared to show limited accessibility and inclusion of national and local actors.

While the HIF supported collaboration in innovation, global stakeholders point to gaps in the HIF’s inclusiveness and geographic coverage across its grant-making. Portfolio analysis shows that 88% of grant-holding organizations are based in Europe or North America. Some survey respondents also commented on the issue of diversity, one perceiving inaccessibility for grass-roots and community based organisations in developing countries which could ‘effect lasting solutions to many problems but have received little attention and assistance from funders.’ Further analysis would be needed to know what proportion of Northern grant holders worked with in-country partners, but there is some evidence of ‘minimal involvement as grantees or partners of national NGOs from the global south’⁶⁸ whilst the large majority of projects were implemented there.⁶⁹ Both the core grants and the targeted grants seem to favour more established actors that offer the high degrees of financial accountability typically needed by donors. HIF actors are focusing efforts on attracting small Southern applicants and facilitating access, for example, through collaboration with ADDRN, the Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network, but recognize there is some way to go to increase the diversity and inclusiveness of the portfolio and maximize its accessibility to more locally driven innovations.



The HIF’s grant-making appeared to slightly favour technology and product innovations.

The ‘majority’ of HIF grants are focused on the ‘product’ and ‘process’ elements of the ‘4-Ps’ innovation typology,⁷⁰ which tend as a whole to offer more incremental change compared to ‘position’ and ‘paradigm’ innovations. A recurring issue in the literature reviewed is that the grants portfolio is mainly technology and product-focused. The grant process itself may favour certain innovation types above others.

Grant management

The HIF’s grant management processes were crucial to the Fund’s performance, but left some clear room for improvements. The application process was thorough and well-managed, and generally met with the approval of applicants; but it required resource-intensive management, and involved some seemingly inappropriate due diligence systems. The implementation support was highly valued by many projects and its flexibility was particularly appreciated; but it was not evenly provided or appreciated by grantees, and disbursement of grants was sometimes significantly delayed. The HIF’s M&E systems left notable room for improvement, and HIF support was clearly beneficial where provided; but this was limited by resourcing constraints, and data management systems did not adequately capture and store project data. The HIF’s project closure system made important efforts to capture projects’ overall achievements and learning, but

⁶⁸ ITAD (2016) *Final Report - Department for International Development, Evaluation of the Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (HIEP) Summative Evaluation Phase 1*, HIF Case study

⁶⁹ 37% in Africa, 10% in Asia, 19% in multiple countries (unspecified); 8% in Caribbean, Latin America and Middle East

⁷⁰ Francis, D and Bessant, J (2005) referenced in Obrecht, A. and Warner, A. T. (2016) *More than just luck: Innovation in humanitarian action*, HIF/ ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI

the range of difficulties encountered (and overcome) offered useful learning opportunities for innovation management.

The HIF's grant management process is outlined in elrha's Mandatory Operating Procedures, which cover application assessment, grant implementation, and evaluation,⁷¹ and an updated edition of this will extend the focus to address content and quality. Triple Line's learning about grant management highlights the complexity of managing an efficient, effective and value-for-money grant management process which meets multiple and sometimes competing objectives (such as funding innovation and managing risk). This is particularly so when resources are stretched and the portfolio is made up of numerous small grants, implemented by grant-holders who might have capacity gaps and need support. The evolving nature of a grant fund also makes it an ongoing challenge to deliver high quality services, requiring frequent reassessment and adjustment. Accurate and timely fund disbursement may be the most important, but technical support such as providing advice and guidance on project management, performance and risk; supporting and capturing learning; and collecting and analysing valuable project data, may also be very important to project effectiveness. Funds vary in the amount of implementation support, including capacity building, that they provide and clearly this aspect has resource implications.

The HIF application process was thorough and well-managed. Applications to HIF go through a two-stage process:⁷² three assessors screen initial Expressions of Interest (EoIs) for basic project eligibility before two members of the Funding Committee do likewise. Eligible applicants are invited to submit a full proposal containing much more detail in areas such as context analysis and rationale, approach and planned activities, risk and mitigation, capacity and partnerships which is similarly assessed internally and by Funding Committee members, proposals routed to assessors with relevant expertise and involving technical external experts as needed (e.g. for technology projects). Funding decisions are made collectively by the Funding Committee from a short-listed set of scored proposals. Decisions at this stage are communicated to the applicant with feedback which might include advice on how to strengthen any future submission. The application process is therefore thorough and operated by knowledgeable individuals who apply their technical knowledge on innovation and on humanitarianism to the assessment and selection of grant applications.

The HIF application process generally met with the approval of applicants. Applicants to the HIF, both successful and unsuccessful, expressed high levels of agreement⁷³ that information on the HIF website was useful (94%), that the grant application process was clear (89%, rising to 93% amongst successful applicants), and that the amount of effort required to write the application was proportionate (88%). Slightly fewer felt the online application system was easy to use (80%), and HIF staff themselves were quite critical of the system. Previous experience shows that technical difficulties are more likely to be encountered by applicants with lower IT skills or from countries with poor internet connectivity, which, if they prove insurmountable, would have a bearing on the diversity of applicants. Whilst broadly very positive, there was a noticeable difference in the responses of successful and unsuccessful applicants when asked about the quality of advice and feedback provided by elrha: 86% of successful applicants agreed that elrha provided helpful responses to queries about the application process compared to only 73% of unsuccessful ones and 83% agreed that the feedback provided was useful compared to 52% of unsuccessful applicants.

The HIF application process required resource-intensive management. The HIF team were very aware of some of the difficulties and concerned by the time and human resources required to run a funding window, mentioning over-stretch and unmanageable workloads for both elrha staff and the Funding Committee, particularly in 2016 when several funding rounds were launched. The application assessment process was also seen by some stakeholders as unduly heavy, absorbing grant management resources disproportionately towards assessment rather than support for implementation.

⁷¹ Elrha (December 2014) Grant Management - Mandatory Operating Procedures (internal document)

⁷² Interview with HIF Grant Officer, Jan 2017

⁷³ The responses of those either selecting 'no opinion' or 'not applicable' were excluded from the analysis, which is therefore only of those respondents expressing an opinion one way or the other.

The HIF application process involved some seemingly inappropriate due diligence systems.

Due diligence assesses financial risk and leads to specific grant terms and conditions and decisions about the grant payment or reporting schedule. While this is clearly a very important aspect of grant management, HIF respondents and some case studies expressed concern that systems may be disproportionately concerned with time-consuming risk management and due diligence procedures. The HIF team reported that nine months could elapse between application and receipt of funding, which could particularly disfavour Southern



NGOs and community-based

organisations with weaker funding streams. Save the Children's processes were reported to be particularly time-consuming and excessive at times, for example in checking trustees (even for WHO) are not blacklisted, which is not common practice for other funds, and ensuring all projects have child protection policies regardless of whether they work with children. Due diligence backlogs have emerged as new HIF staff struggled to apply procedures.



The HIF provided very valuable implementation support to many projects and its flexibility is particularly appreciated.

The HIF's support services were greatly appreciated by those who received them; case studies emphasized that HIF support, including non-financial inputs, were very valuable. Survey respondents expressed quite high degrees of satisfaction with the HIF's non-funding inputs: 22 respondents out of 32 said that these inputs were significant or highly significant and 24 out of 44 said that they fully or largely met needs. Respondents gave some very positive comments ('HIF team were professional, helpful and supportive'), one case study interviewee commending their flexibility and engagement and understanding that 'what ultimately matters is the innovation.' About three quarters of survey respondents felt that technical advice on projects was good and responses to queries were helpful, and about two thirds felt that advice when projects faced challenges was helpful. There is good evidence⁷⁴ that HIF grant-holders find HIF's flexibility as a donor quite rare and highly value this. This flexibility was viewed as contributing to an innovation team's ability to work with a timeline appropriate to the innovation rather than one that was artificial and externally enforced.⁷⁵

The HIF's implementation support was not evenly received and appreciated by grantees. About half (28) of the survey respondents noted they had received at least one input from elrha apart from funding, selecting from a checklist of nine grant management components. Opportunities to learn (10) and assistance with communications and dissemination (13) were the most frequently selected but partnership brokering and assistance with monitoring, evaluation and learning were also high. However, a similar number of respondents overall (30) said that no inputs were provided from elrha beyond the HIF grant funding itself. The quality of services received was not uniform and a fair number of grant-holders felt it could be improved: 12 respondents commented, several in some detail, on poor communication about requirements and expectations, slow responses to queries, a complex governance process and a general sense of team overload.

The HIF's disbursement of grants was sometimes delayed. Of some concern is the finding that only two thirds of survey respondents expressing an opinion agreed that grant disbursement was timely and accurate. This might relate to delays to setting up the grant ('It took ages to get the funding so we had to apply for an extension') or to disbursements during implementation ('payments were delayed and made difficult the use

⁷⁴ Obrecht, A. with Warner, A. and Dillon, N. (2017) *Evaluating Humanitarian Innovation*, HIF/ALNAP working paper. London: ODI/ALNAP; and case study interview

⁷⁵ Ibid.

of the funds'). One example was given of final project disbursement being nearly a year after submission of the final report. Accurate and timely grant payments is one of the fundamental elements of grant management, having a real impact on how smoothly a project can be implemented. Its absence can create considerable stress and difficulties (*'delays in communication ... led to confusion and misunderstanding on both sides'*). Good communication when there are delays or problems can go some way to reducing the difficulties experienced. The HIF team are very stretched and know that there have been problems. This was probably exacerbated in 2016 / 2017 by high staff turnover.

The HIF's M&E systems left notable room for improvement. Project reports are submitted quarterly by the projects and reviewed by the HIF team, and most (79%) of the 33 respondents expressing an opinion felt that reporting requirements were reasonable, which is positive given the frequency. Projects' intended outcomes and outputs are not captured in a formal results framework but the HIF team compared reported progress with the original stated intention in the application. The review of the quality of evidence and achievement of results (see 1.2) found that project reporting generally is not of particularly high quality, making it difficult for the HIF team to assess progress and therefore spot and respond to problems. Reports are reviewed by the innovation adviser and finance officer and the feedback collated and sent in an email to the grant holder by the HIF project officer to assist project implementation and ensure compliance. This assessment and feedback does not follow specific guidance or have a set format or scoring system, nor is it collated. Project progress and results are therefore tracked to some extent but not supported by systems, guidance and tools and hampered by weak project M&E frameworks and capacity. Addressing this would ensure consistency and allow for comparison and aggregation across the portfolio. HIF staff confirmed the view that overall the monitoring and evaluation function lacked capacity and had considerable room for improvement, from presenting learning and results in an accessible form (whether written or through discussion) to monitoring outcomes over time.

Where the HIF provided M&E support to projects there are clear benefits, but resourcing constraints have limited the extent to which this can happen. Panzi's project with survivors of GBV provides a good example of where support and advice made a real difference to the quality of project M&E (for example through measurement of change against a baseline). The HIF team recognized the value of this support but said that resource constraints limited the extent to which it could be offered more widely. A positive step was the recent engagement of IDS in a strategic research partnership to provide bespoke M&E advice to projects. Due diligence during grant set-up provides some risk management within elrha's processes but apart from that there is no formal approach to risk management across the portfolio, particularly once projects are in implementation.

HIF projects encountered a range of difficulties, offering learning opportunities which could strengthen grant management support to projects. Project reports were open and candid about the difficulties encountered during implementation. Several technology projects had to overcome specific IT or software challenges and included examples of under-estimations in the time required to complete tasks which led to several no-cost extensions. One report observed that there were difficulties arising from lack of international development experience of the software programmers, and another difficulties arising from IT infrastructure capacity constraints in humanitarian settings. These suggest that technology projects need particular support to ensure that the innovation and creativity of the sector is blended with appropriate development or humanitarian expertise to maximise impact. Reports also identified challenges around local capacity constraints, reliance on volunteers and start-up delays; and contextual challenges, relating for example to cultural and gender norms, land ownership and the need to respond to local government requirements. Although applicants are asked to outline context, guidance on the type of difficulties encountered and more rigorous assessment of and support for applications on contextual issues could pre-empt or allow for better risk management of some of these types of difficulties.

The HIF data management systems did not adequately capture and store project data. Whilst reports and emails are saved, information from project reports (either as supplied or summarized) and elrha assessment and feedback are not recorded in a way which allows them to be analysed and compared, for example to find common weaknesses or interesting learning or to develop and analyse a portfolio overview of performance,

learning and risk. Similarly, the evaluation found there were weak systems for basic project data management, which it seems is not systematically collected to aid and inform fund management, or held in a form which makes it easy to access and analyse (although this must be done to a certain extent to inform the annual HIF progress reports and Board reports) and there seemed to be little portfolio-level aggregation of data to inform fund management decisions (for example about funding, reporting, M&E, learning and so on). This could all be addressed through the planned grant management software, although could also be done through a simple database and use of spreadsheets.

The HIF's project closure system made important efforts to capture projects' overall achievements and learning and intended next steps. Elrha has a range of project closure procedures, and the end of a project provides a real opportunity for learning (about both successes and failure). The final project report format was strengthened two years ago and is now more structured, including checklists on overall success, success factors and challenges. Final reports include sections on learning and next steps and projects are expected to undertake dissemination activities, but there is no expectation of any external evaluative assessment of the projects, although a handful of the sampled projects did commission one. Projects can additionally choose to complete an 'After Action Review' report, designed to help identify what elements of the innovation have been successful and should be taken forward, as well as what hasn't worked. Whether or not projects generally do this, only one such AAR report could be found for review. More usual is an informal AAR through a meeting or emails between the HIF team and the grant-holder.

The HIF provides post-project support to innovations through further grants where an application is successful, but not currently in other, non-financial ways. The big issue facing the MHM case study project,



and no doubt many others, is how to take the innovation to the next stage, through dissemination, advocacy and scaling. As noted, the grant-making model provides for successive HIF grants but discussions during the MHM case study confirmed that there are other, non-funded ways in which elrha could support innovations further. This could include publicising other funding opportunities, building the planned community of practice, providing advice and guidance on taking innovation to the next level or fostering collaborative connections between organisations.

Fund management

HIF's fund management effectively supported performance, but consistent questions are raised about its structuring. The HIF management team moved recently from a 'lean' structure to a more established one, but many global stakeholders and grant applicants felt the Fund's wider management systems were overcomplicated, and questioned the smooth running of operations involving the HIF and elrha, and Save the Children UK.

Elrha is hosted by Save the Children and manages several streams of work, the largest of which is the HIF. The HIF is governed by the HIF Board which meets regularly to set overall direction and strategy and review progress. The Funding Committee, chaired by a Board member, meets more frequently to make funding decisions. The specific challenge funding windows are supported by the WASH Technical Working Group and a GBV Advisory Board.

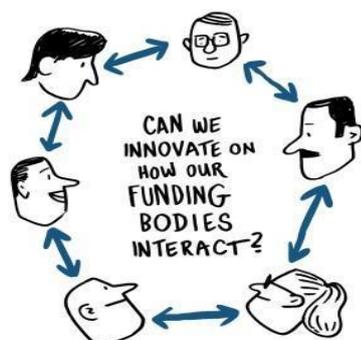
The HIF has moved only recently from a 'lean' start up to a more established structure. As the HIF grew, finance and grant management functions were separated. Whilst Mandatory Operating Procedures are being strengthened, the HIF's administration/management remained 'lean' throughout much of the evaluation period, which meant the selection process was sometimes inadequately supported, with too little initial

screening and too little guidance for the funding panel on selection parameters, such as the balance between early stage innovation and implementation.

The HIF's wider management systems seem overcomplicated. While HIF managers feel the HIF structures generally worked quite well, other stakeholders saw them as 'unclear', 'confusing', 'messy', 'clunky', 'overcomplex', 'overengineered', or 'inefficient' and raise questions about how the various parts of the structure fit together; whether they pull in the same direction; and whether so many boards are needed as well as overall efficiency. One survey respondent commented that the HIF 'appears to have a complex governance structure that obscures the accountability for performance.' The HIF is sometimes seen as an 'organization within an organization' with diffuse locations (Cardiff, London) creating internal communication challenges.



There were divergent views on the HIF's relationship with elrha and Save the Children. Some stakeholders stress that elrha helped build the HIF with its capacities as a convenor, profile and position; and that elrha is very well run, providing 'active governance' and collecting inputs from all parties.



Others suggest that the HIF is a better recognised 'brand' than elrha; that the relationship between the programme and the organisation is unclear; and that elrha's added value remains unclear to donors. More widely, the HIF's reliance on Save the Children systems is considered somewhat problematic. Most stakeholders stress that Save the Children provides vital assurances to donors, supports fundraising, and provides reliable systems for grant management, HR and IT. Others see Save the Children as more of a hindrance for a variety of reasons linked to the complex hosting relationship. The Case Study to WoR highlighted some of the practical difficulties arising from HIF's link with

Save the Children. WoR had had to provide all the same paperwork for their multiple funding applications through Save the Children⁷⁶ and they felt that requiring all WoR employees to sign the child protection policy seemed inappropriate for non-field staff.

Depth in grant-making comes at the cost of efficiency. There were differing views over the balance in quality and efficiency of grant-making and review processes. Some see too many layers and people involved, with the involvement of 12 panel members as well as technical experts leading to slow grant-making, and there were quite a few negative survey comments about time delays within a confusing process. Other stakeholders stressed that the depth of involvement in selection processes was a strength, since all inputs are useful, and required to ensure independence of funding and that good innovations are not missed. Considerable time was spent providing feedback on proposals. This was found useful by about half the unsuccessful applicants responding to the survey and might add value to innovations beyond HIF funding. A large proportion (83%) of successful applicants found the feedback useful.



⁷⁶ 4x HIF, 2x START, and a Save the Children partnership agreement

Resource management

The HIF team demonstrated a high degree of competency and hopes were raised about recent increases in HIF's capacities. However, HIF managers and advisers were often overburdened and overstretched, with most significant gaps in relation to research, learning and innovation management; monitoring and evaluation of impact; and strategic reflection.

The HIF team demonstrated a high degree of competency, but was overburdened and overstretched. The capacity of the HIF team in terms of skills and knowledge is not in doubt, staff being recruited from within Save the Children and externally and bringing relevant experience to their roles. However there has been a high degree of overstretch: in general terms, staff were few and worked extremely long hours to keep up; too much administrative work was left to panels, weighing down the process; and until recently, with the recruitment of an outreach and engagement manager, capacity was lacking in communications. Commissioned studies⁷⁷ found that opportunities had been missed due to a lack of capacities in staff numbers, funds and confidence. In terms of leadership, there may have been competency for strategic direction and vision, engaging private sector and academia, and donor relations from the programme manager and HIF advisory board, but there was insufficient staff capacity by day-to-day. The programme manager was reportedly overworked with responsibility for external representation and wider advocacy as well as day-to-day programme management of the fund.



Global stakeholders felt gaps were most significant in relation to research, learning and innovation management especially monitoring and evaluation of impact and having the time for 'standing back to draw out learning'. Whilst the addition of two well-qualified innovation managers to support the WASH and GBV challenge fund projects was very welcome, it was felt that for structural reasons their contributions were not being adequately felt and there was insufficient capacity to support and guide open call 'core grant' projects. The HIEP reviewers noted the need for more technical support to projects, preparing them for the next stage, and linking them to other funders. The preparation of the Innovation Management Guide will fill the gap to an extent and external innovation management consultancy services are often contracted, but the HIF still spends relatively little on innovation support staffing: 14% compared to a generous 30% at NESTA⁷⁸.

Global stakeholders expressed hope about recent increases in HIF's capacities alongside some continued concern about overstretch. In each of the last two years, the HIF reportedly grew by 50% in budget and staff numbers. In addition to the new innovation manager posts, in 2016 there were major HR changes with the recruitment of a new team and the departure of the Programme Manager; the scaling grants window was added; a partnership was established with IDS to support M&E for targeted grants and development/implementation stages; and via elrha's grant-making unit, both the HIF and elrha's R2HC⁷⁹ fund received additional DFID funding to strengthen financial management and forecasting. The team have remained very stretched however and are aware of the resulting difficulties and delays for some fund applicants, confirmed by survey comments, as noted previously. Some questions were raised by stakeholders about how new capacity is being used, as the team remains overstretched.

⁷⁷ Willitts-King, B. (March 2014) *Humanitarian Innovation Fund: Learning Review Final report*, Elrha; Gray, I. (September 2014) *HIF Innovating Wash: Project Health Check* Elrha

⁷⁸ NESTA is an innovation foundation combines knowledge, networks, funding and skills to back ideas which tackle big challenges. It works globally across sectors including education, healthcare, the arts, technology, and economic policy.

⁷⁹ Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises

1.5. Funding channels

Q. Funding channels: How well have the different funding channels (core, challenge area and scaling grants) supported success in improving humanitarian performance? Which have performed better and which less well, and why?

The combination of HIF funding channels seems an effective approach, even if each channel has strengths and weaknesses, and there is insufficient data to support robust conclusions about the relative performance of different funding channels. Core grants (large and small) which account for majority of HIF financing served an important purpose in creating space for new ideas and providing support to innovations through different stages of the process; although risk both lack of focus and missing truly innovative ideas. Thematic grants may allow greater prospect of impact, if supported by stronger innovation management, collaboration, and learning; but the WASH funding has not yet delivered the anticipated benefits, the GBV funding generated conflicting views and it is too early judge its success. The scale grants are strategic investments to build on previous successes, where the HIF could make a real impact.

This section assesses the relative strengths of the different funding channels. It draws strongly on consultation with global stakeholders and is limited by the available performance-level project data and the early stage reached by the GBV and scaling grants to date.

Core grants (large and small) which account for majority of HIF financing served an important purpose in creating space for new ideas and providing support to innovations through different stages of the process; although risks lack of focus and missing truly innovative ideas. Many global stakeholders see the continued but limited importance of the open call core grants, into which most HIF funding has been invested to date (GBP 6.5m out of GBP 9.5m). They note the HIF was right to fund small grants, openness remains important, and the core window 'works' by creating space for new ideas. It was believed to allow applications from more operational, 'downstream', or unknown actors. However, some note such grant-making is becoming less favoured in the innovation field; questions its diminishing returns and how it could '*change the system*'; and suggest it favours projects with the best proposal writers (i.e. '*the same old players*') rather than best potential solutions, or encourages 'solutions looking for problems'. Some also suggest the open call could itself be '*more directed*', for example, by deploying innovation advisers on the ground to look for potential innovations, an approach deployed in the DFID-funded Amplify initiative.⁸⁰

Thematic grants may allow greater prospect of impact, if supported by stronger innovation management, collaboration, and learning. However, they require more input and support to manage; did not necessarily include end users or downstream actors in the process; and do not present sufficient evidence to evaluate success. Thus far, thematic areas have been determined by donor priorities and funding supply, rather than by an over-arching needs assessment. There are plans for the HIF to draw on elrha's Global Prioritisation Exercise, which will explore and identify priority gaps and needs for humanitarian research and innovation.⁸¹

The WASH challenge funding initiative benefitted from considerable technical expertise but has not yet delivered the anticipated benefits. The WASH funding initiative, established in 2013, is considered to offer a very good model, designed by leading technical experts in the sector and grounded in their practical requirements; it included a gap analysis, deep dive analysis, challenge funding, innovation management support, and evidence collection/analysis by research partners. The model has progressed from inviting proposals to address specific criteria, which were judged not to have encouraged collaboration, and to have resembled a procurement process, to 'accelerated innovation' bringing a mix of participants together to encourage different thinking and novel ideas.⁸² The WASH sector's greater requirement for product-based innovations as solutions may have lent itself particularly well to the challenge funding mechanism. At the same time, some consulted stakeholders felt that the WASH funding process was very slow, unclear in the

⁸⁰ Quotes taken from interview notes

⁸¹ Elrha (2016) *HIF Progress Report 2016*

⁸² Ibid.

success of its overall impact and led by INGO engineers not by downstream end-users. Although nine WASH challenge projects had completed at the time of the ITAD/HIEP evaluation, only one had submitted a final project report so results and outcomes could not be analysed systematically.⁸³

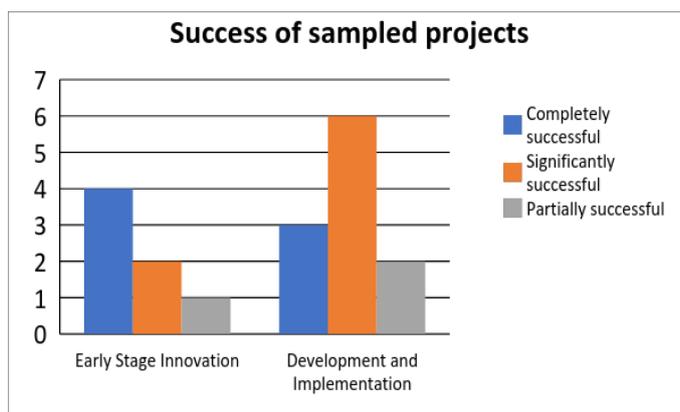
There are conflicting views on the GBV challenge round which will take time to resolve: it is too early to tell how successful and suitable the GBV challenge funding round will be in the longer term. The HIF's GBV work, launched in 2014 but only recently awarded funding, raised greater doubts among stakeholders. The HIF took on this non-product-focused area with support from SIDA and assumed internal ownership, undertaking a gap analysis and partnership brokering. Donors and others consulted question its suitability, the quality of its gap analysis and workshops, the level of effort needed, the level of participation/interest generated, and how it is expected to make an impact. The HIF team however point out how GBV in the sector as a whole is generally under-resourced and under-supported and that the HIF needs to ensure that it does not focus on product innovation and novelty at the expense of process innovation and complexity.

The scale grants were strategic investments to build on previous success, where the HIF could make a real impact. Some global stakeholders expressed great interest in the scaling grants, three of which, each GBP 400k, had been awarded following an intensive selection process which brought together nine previous HIF innovations in a three-day workshop. Launched in 2016 with support from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and just getting off the ground, the scaling grants were considered a wise area for HIF to invest and generate learning, reflecting a wider interest in scaling among humanitarian innovation actors (e.g. UNHCR call; Infuse⁸⁴). Some consulted felt that the HIF's investment in the DIP grants and acceleration innovation funding had been insufficient overall, with development and implementation grants limited to GBP 150k. Some noted that no HIF projects were yet seen as major game-changers or 'trailblazing' projects, but should seek these by focusing on '*significant growth areas*', and identify high-impact ideas from across the system. (It was suggested that HIF has not sufficiently engaged with cash-based funding, although this is a considered an instructive case in high-impact humanitarian innovation. Equally, many other funds have an interest in this.) As one interviewee said, '*Ideas are cheap. We need innovations that can be scaled and operationalized instead of creative ideas without deep experience of the context. We should find people already innovating and testing in a basic format that need our support, finance, guidance, and scaling to take their promising seed innovation to scale.*'

Comparison

There is insufficient data to support robust conclusions about the relative performance of different funding channels (or indeed other variables) but systems could be put in place to do so across the whole portfolio.

The question of relative performance was investigated by analysing project data from the sampled twenty final reports of the core grants to identify the proportion of projects which were 'completely' or 'significantly' successful. (It was too early or there was insufficient data to include challenge area and scaling grants in the analysis.) This analysis indicated a higher degree of success for ESI grants as compared with DIP grants however this figure should be treated with caution due to the small sample size (seven ESI grant; 11 DIP grants) and the subjectivity of the 'degree of success' assessment. Although the data is insufficient to support robust conclusions about the relative performance, this shows the sort of approach which could be taken to doing so, if for example, report assessments rated success consistently, applying guidance or score criteria, and captured this in a way



⁸³ See ITAD (2016) *Final Report - Department for International Development, Evaluation of the Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (HIEP) Summative Evaluation Phase 1*, HIF Case study

⁸⁴ Infuse is a fund within GAVI (the global vaccine alliance) created to take proven innovations to scale by 'infusing' them with capital and expertise. See <http://www.gavi.org/infuse/>

which meant it could be analysed. The resulting pattern across the whole portfolio would be more robust, could be tested more rigorously and could be usefully explored e.g. through interviews with grant-holders. Any emerging pattern might be related to the nature of the innovation stage being funded - or indeed another variables such as type of grant-holding organisation or geography of implementation.

1.6. Efficiency

Q. Efficiency: How efficient has HIF been in its use of resources?

The HIF is very efficient overall and offers a relatively low-cost means of supporting innovation. The HIF did well with a small team and a lean structure, relying on inputs from the Board and consultancies; and its management costs compared favourably to other funds. Its investment in innovation management to support projects also supported efficiency in the deployment of project funding, but support for innovation management was often hampered by its very lean capacity. Nonetheless, the HIF's application process showed some room for improved efficiency.

The HIF uses resources – financial and staff – and time to undertake activities designed to achieve its objectives. Challenge funds are a relatively low cost aid modality which have been favoured by donors for some years.⁸⁵ The efficiency with which these resources are deployed is a measure of not just cost but also quality, and will always involve a judgement about where resources should be invested. The approach taken can to some extent be compared to that of similar funds to benchmark performance, to see whether similar outputs have been delivered for similar resource - at an aggregate level. The main sources of evidence for the assessment of efficiency were global stakeholders, particularly those directly involved in operating the fund. It was a necessarily high level assessment, limited by an absence of metrics around resource deployment and lack of a benchmarking framework for challenge fund management.

The HIF is low cost and did remarkably well with a small team and a lean structure, relying on inputs from the Board and consultancies. Global stakeholders see the HIF as efficient and attribute this to good people and excellent (*'proactive, very competent'*) individuals, notably the programme managers. Additional capacity has been brought in through board members and consultancies when needed. However, the following were not seen as efficient: a grant making process that takes too long; additional layers in HIF governance and management; having 12 people on the grant panel for selecting some 4-5 modest value open call projects each time; and convening 'poorly-attended' workshops or GBV workshops 'that help people fill in grant application forms instead of building capacity in innovation management' [paraphrased]. The online application system is an efficient element of the fund management process although other aspects of data management are not (yet) supported by dedicated software or by more basic software tools and processes.

The HIF's investment in innovation management to support projects also supported efficiency in the deployment of project funding. It has been noted that 'Innovation processes can often appear weak on efficiency, particularly when they involve the development of new technologies or tools. There are, however, clear best practices that organizations can use to improve the timeliness and efficiency of their innovation process.'⁸⁶ This demonstrates how innovation management support can really add value. Elrha favours a funding structure for the HIF which provides a balanced approach between grant making and innovation management support:⁸⁷ they explain that a balanced approach goes further than a cheaper, relatively 'passive' one which distributes funds through open calls with minimal additional support to applicants or successful grantees; but does not go as far as a more expensive model, focusing on investment in innovation policy and management in order to support the environment for innovation, with grant making to projects for delivery as one element of this.

⁸⁵ Presentation to UK Evaluation Society conference 2017, drawing on Triple Line learning about challenge funds.

⁸⁶ Obrecht, A. and Warner, A. T. (2016) *More than just luck: Innovation in humanitarian action*, HIF/ ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI

⁸⁷ HIF Proposal to DFID, January 2015

However, the HIF's support for innovation management has been hampered by capacity constraints. The blended approach chosen strikes a balance between HIF's objectives for the Fund and for supporting wider innovation but has arguably been under-resourced at the expense of quality, reducing overall value, given the issues previously noted. The HIEP summative phase 1 evaluation published in January 2016 states that grant management costs (overheads and staff costs) are 14% of the HIF budget. These figures will be revisited in the final phase of the HIEP evaluation in late 2017. The large majority of costs relate to HIF team staff costs, the remainder to overheads and input from other elrha staff.⁸⁸ In 2017, with the planned recruitment of a Head of Innovation, elrha's HIF team will amount to 6.7 full-time equivalents. Improvements in efficiency would not necessarily solve existing capacity constraints.

The HIF's management costs compare favourably to other funds. Looking more widely for comparator costs, it should be noted that fund management costs are influenced by multiple variables, not least the range and depth of fund management services provided, portfolio size and shape and type of grant holder. Costs as a percentage of fund value therefore vary considerably. DFID's Global Poverty Action Fund provided a wide range and depth of fund management services over 5 years at approximately 6% of total fund value of £120m;⁸⁹ the Health Partnership Scheme fund management costs averaged 16%.⁹⁰ An ODI report from 2013⁹¹ and a UK Aid EPS PEAKS report⁹² in 2014, indicate costs of 20-30% for enterprise challenge funds with higher percentages relating to programmes supporting less experienced partners and including resource intensive impact verification processes.

The HIF's application process shows room for improved efficiency. The evaluation was not able to obtain financial data for either the HIF or other funds on how staff time and costs relate to specific outputs. This might be possible in the future as elrha staff working on the HIF have been keeping timesheets since January 2017 as a condition of their ECHO grant. Output delivery was therefore examined for application assessments, taking volumes as a proxy for costs. Data on the number of EoIs received, proposals invited and grants awarded was reviewed across eleven funding rounds. Large numbers of EoIs are received (an average of 137 per funding round and a range of 56 to 234). EoIs are screened for basic eligibility with no specific approval quotas, resulting in typically one third (on average, 41) being invited to submit full proposals. This is striking when compared with the success rate at grant award, where typically only a handful of awards are made (2 to 6 per round), resulting in a success rate of 10% of proposals or 3% of EoIs. For comparison, two large DFID funds score and rank EoIs to generate a shortlist likely to result in a success rate at proposal stage of 33-50%.⁹³ This is a good example of how costs can be reduced and quality increased, increasing value for money (specifically efficiency).

⁸⁸ This includes work on tasks such as preparing donor budgets, recruitment and governance and 'service agreements' with Save the Children for accommodation and IT and legal support.

⁸⁹ IPE Triple Line data

⁹⁰ Health Partnership Scheme evaluation, IPE Triple Line 2016

⁹¹ <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9086.pdf>

⁹² <http://www.geg.ox.ac.uk/sites/geg/files/How%20can%20enterprise%20challenge%20funds%20be%20made%20to%20work%20better.pdf>

⁹³ Triple Line internal data

1.7. Relevance

Q. Relevance: How relevant has the HIF remained?

The HIF's strategy remained relevant overall, with some aspects requiring further clarification. The HIF remained very relevant to humanitarian innovation requirements, and continued to offer added value and key strengths compared to other humanitarian innovation actors. Its strategy is clearly relevant to increasing the humanitarian effectiveness of its 109 grant-holders; and is sometimes clearly relevant to the needs and priorities of people affected and increasingly concerned to engage people affected. However, the HIF's strategy may require adjustment to a changed context for humanitarian innovation; more clarity about its relevance to improving the humanitarian system and addressing its primary weaknesses; and clearer connections to the needs and priorities of people affected, as well as local and national innovation actors.

This section offers an assessment of the HIF strategy's continued relevance to humanitarian innovation, the humanitarian system, and people affected. The HIF's strategy is aimed at supporting innovation practice in three main ways.⁹⁴

- ≡ Grant-making: 'providing funding for innovations at different stages in their development, including through open calls for proposals';
- ≡ Innovation management: 'seeking to improve the research and evidence base for innovation and its contribution to humanitarian performance';
- ≡ Advocacy: 'working to improve conditions for innovation in the humanitarian system by building and supporting partnerships and relationships between organizations and creating opportunities for the sharing of ideas'.

The assessment relies on evidence from global stakeholders, documents reviewed, survey responses and data analysed. However, it raises questions about the extent to which the relevance criterion can be applied to an indirect humanitarian activity like the HIF and, in particular, its relevance to the needs of people affected.

Humanitarian innovation field

The HIF remained very relevant to humanitarian innovation requirements.

Since 2011, global stakeholders feel the HIF remained largely relevant to the context for humanitarian innovation, with donor support allowing it to evolve and adapt to changing requirements. Initially, it brought innovation methodologies to the sector (lean start-ups, fail fast, learn quickly etc). As the sector began adapting new technologies to its requirements, the HIF turned to more sophisticated targeting approaches to address the more complex multifaceted problems (e.g. GBV, WASH), while recognizing the limitations of mobile technology solutions and the need for solutions that can be integrated ('absorbed') into an innovation's context ('ecosystem'). In its funding, multiple stakeholders (DFID, external, and internal) felt it served as a useful catalyst in a dynamic and important sector that has previously not had enough funding explicitly for innovation, and as such filled a strategic niche.⁹⁵ In innovation management and advocacy, the document review finds the HIF was a pioneer in the development and validation of innovation best practices for the humanitarian sector, and a leading actor shaping efforts to create a more innovative humanitarian system.

'In 2010 the HIF was about adoption of the lean start up model. In 2013 it got into problem space analysis. In 2015 it got into scaling. Now I look forward to seeing the genuine involvement of communities (...) The HIF has been good at recognizing new challenges, developing strategies for addressing them and taking concrete steps. It is unique in the field of humanitarian innovation, and a leader in wider innovation sector for developing strategies and models towards third generation innovation solutions.' (Global Stakeholder)

⁹⁴ ITAD (October 2014) *Report for Department for International Development, Evaluation of the Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (HIEP) – Formative Phase Report*. ITAD

⁹⁵ Ibid.

The HIF continued to offer added value and key strengths compared to other humanitarian innovation actors. HIF stakeholders perceive the Fund offered unique added value, and was a unique initiative addressing a key need.⁹⁶ First, stakeholders report the HIF was the first funder of humanitarian innovation, providing unique venture capital for a range of innovations which would otherwise not be undertaken. Second, stakeholders report the HIF was uniquely independent, established separately from agencies, offering a neutral platform for innovation, and able to ‘speak for the whole the sector’. Third, they report the HIF maintained important comparative advantages as the most established funder of humanitarian innovation, with the broadest and most diverse portfolio of projects, the greatest expertise (i.e. panels), and a highly-trusted reputation. In addition, it may be seen as a leader in innovation management, ‘third generation innovation solutions,’ and context knowledge. Fourth, they report the HIF is good at collaboration, uniquely fostering partnerships between NGOs, academia and private sector actors, and now well placed to work alongside GAHI.



The HIF's strategy may require adjustment to a changed context for humanitarian innovation. The HIF set out to increase innovation in humanitarian action when gaps were found in the ability of international humanitarian action to innovate. But humanitarian innovation has since become a growing field of interest and activity, and funding for innovation also substantially increased (see introduction). Many survey respondents were unconvinced by the HIF’s problem statement (that the humanitarian system is weakened by insufficient innovation), to which only a quarter ‘completely agreed’. Documents show the field of humanitarian innovation is more crowded than before, with many organizations establishing innovation units or networks, and more job descriptions mentioning innovation;⁹⁷ yet their success remains varied and the field remains at a ‘storming’ stage. Some global stakeholders perceive that larger and stronger funders may overshadow the HIF’s grant-making to humanitarian innovation, expanding innovation in a potentially uninformed or uncoordinated manner. Moreover, an evaluation of the HIEP listed a number of key changes in the wider context since its formative phase evaluation, including financial pressures on DFID and a new strategy that emphasizes the inter-linkage of humanitarian crises, poverty and climate change, commits to building resilience to address these, and reiterates the UK ambition to maintain a leading role in rapid humanitarian response.⁹⁸

Humanitarian system

The HIF is relevant to increasing the humanitarian effectiveness of its 109 grant-holders. The HIF’s core grant-making, project proposals and reporting are focused on increasing humanitarian effectiveness among the many HIF projects firmly oriented towards humanitarian actors. Project data and case studies suggest that beyond providing financial resources, the HIF’s support is well aligned with most of the innovation management success factors identified by HIF-ALNAP.⁹⁹ The HIF also remains generally relevant to addressing wider challenges to humanitarian innovation, including gaps in dedicated resources and spending, a lack of innovation management capacity, limited involvement from stakeholders, and long time frames needed to foster large scale, ‘transformational’, or ‘disruptive’ changes in the humanitarian system.

⁹⁶ HIF Proposal to DFID, January 2015; HIF Proposal to ECHO, December 2016

⁹⁷ See Betts, A. and L. Bloom (2014)’s table of humanitarian innovation activities, including grants and finance, research and development, and collaborations and networks; and CENTRIM (2015)’s research into the humanitarian innovation ‘ecosystem’

⁹⁸ ITAD (2016) *Final Report - Department for International Development, Evaluation of the Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (HIEP) Summative Evaluation Phase 1*, HIF Case study

⁹⁹ Obrecht, A. and Warner, A. T. (2016) *More than just luck: Innovation in humanitarian action*, HIF/ ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/OD

Like humanitarian innovation more broadly, the HIF's relevance to improving the humanitarian system and addressing its primary weaknesses remains somewhat unclear. The HIF's targeted grant-making in WASH, GBV, and scaling are designed to be relevant to addressing specific problems in the humanitarian system, however, these problems appear to be identified opportunistically (donor interest) more than strategically in response to the greatest needs and challenges in the system. It remains unclear how the humanitarian innovation agenda (including the HIF) are relevant to the system's major challenges, its lack of capacity and scale to meet the world's large and growing humanitarian needs, or systemic efforts to improve effectiveness through the IASC-led humanitarian reform process, Transformative Agenda, or the World Humanitarian Summit and in particular the 'Grand Bargain'. Further, some global humanitarian stakeholders contest the relevance of humanitarian innovation to improving the humanitarian system, observing that it is often disconnected from humanitarian policy debates and humanitarian principles. As one respondent noted, 'failing forward' sits uncomfortably with 'do no harm'.



People affected

The HIF is sometimes clearly relevant to the needs and priorities of people affected. Just over half (55%) of survey respondents described their project's primary beneficiary as being either a population or community affected by disaster (30%) or a specific community within a population (25%). Well over half the reviewed reports included examples of beneficiary consultation, through a range of methods, which had influenced project design and delivery. Global stakeholders observe tangible examples of innovations that are highly relevant to populations affected, including numerous ICT projects focused on needs assessment and communications with populations affected. In different ways, the three cases study innovations proved relevant to the needs of people affected, i.e. mVAM to food insecure people, MHM to displaced women and girls, and WoR to people in need of information in their language. However, most HIF-supported projects are perceived to be aimed at supporting practitioners and only indirectly relevant to people affected.

The HIF and the wider humanitarian innovation agenda are not transparently and consistently aligned with the needs and priorities of people affected. Global stakeholders suggest the HIF's approach is not specifically driven by end users, including populations affected, who are not adequately consulted or listened to about innovation impacts. There were also concerns that existing HIF review processes might not always adequately ensure humanitarian innovation projects are appropriate on the ground, or that specific groups are not unwittingly excluded from innovations (e.g. ICT innovations may favour young urban literate people, and unknowingly exclude rural women). A key weakness in HIEP has been the inconsistent approach to considering gender and social inclusion issues compounded by a lack of direction from DFID on this issue.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, project proposals and reporting templates do not require explicit alignment and reporting on meeting needs or people affected although this is the ultimate goal. As noted above (see introduction) humanitarian innovation remains focused on innovation by humanitarian actors, without much involvement from populations affected and other stakeholders.

The importance of engaging people affected is increasingly recognized. In its recent study of humanitarian innovation, HIF and ALNAP identified 'engaging with end users and gatekeepers' as a key factor of success in a successful innovation process. The case studies confirm the benefits of engaging people affected, and an increased interest in doing so: for example, WoR foresees an increasingly active role for people affected alongside humanitarians in eliminating language barriers that complicate access to information. The HIF has recognized the need 'to engage more national and local humanitarian agencies without ignoring larger agencies' role in driving innovation,' observing that national actors can have better access to communities

¹⁰⁰ ITAD (2016) *Final Report - Department for International Development, Evaluation of the Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (HIEP) Summative Evaluation Phase 1*, HIF Case study

and local knowledge'¹⁰¹ (Progress Report 2013, p23). A review of the HIF also concluded, 'There needs to be significantly more involvement of affected people in humanitarian innovation, and greater attempts to address problems and solutions from their perspective'.¹⁰²

The HIF could connect better with local and national innovation actors. Some global stakeholders perceive the HIF lacks a strategic understanding of the diverse local and national realities where its grantees operate. Moreover, projects reports and the document review also suggest some insufficient understanding and consideration of context. Project data shows 88% of grant-holders were based in developed countries, although the large majority of projects were implemented in developing countries. As the HIEP evaluation noted, the HIF has a strong international profile as a respected and credible funder but lower profile at regional level.¹⁰³ The HIEP review found the HIF had no visibility in East Africa beyond grantees and limited its focus on UN/INGO actors. To this end, the HIF recently began a collaboration with the ADDR, but this appears to remain at an early stage. Going forward the HIF could capitalize on its thematic experience, for example in information and communication with communities affected, and engage further with the opportunities offered by the localization agenda as outlined in the Grand Bargain.¹⁰⁴



¹⁰¹ Elrha (2013) *HIF Progress Report 2013*

¹⁰² Obrecht, A. and Warner, A. T. (2016) *More than just luck: Innovation in humanitarian action*, HIF/ ALNAP Study. London: ALNAP/ODI page 91

¹⁰³ ITAD (2016) *Final Report - Department for International Development, Evaluation of the Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (HIEP) Summative Evaluation Phase 1*, HIF Case study

¹⁰⁴ [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Grand Bargain final 22 May FINAL-2.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Grand_Bargain_final_22_May_FINAL-2.pdf)

2. Conclusions

This section defines lessons learned about the HIF's activity, aiming to highlight key strengths and weaknesses with a view to strengthening overall effectiveness.

2.1 The HIF demonstrated consistent strengths across most areas of the activity evaluated. The Fund's performance is judged to be excellent in effectiveness and very good on outcomes achieved; its process is very good across the five elements assessed; and its strategy is very good and relevant, but with some aspects requiring clarification. The HIF performed generally very well across to the seven evaluation criteria applied, although strong evidence was lacking for two (outcomes and funding modalities), and one of them (external factors) was not an assessment of the HIF. It also shows positive results across almost all the 23 proposed judgment criteria, 14 of them clearly so, eight of them lacking strong evidence, and one of them (relevance to the system's effectiveness) no or difficult to answer. In all, the evaluation methodology allowed for a rigorous process, credible findings, and actionable recommendations. But the evaluation struggled to assess performance using the HIF's overarching strategy and objectives; lacked high quality data about the HIF's overall performance and its projects; and collected relatively little input from some stakeholder groups, especially local and national actors, and people affected by humanitarian emergencies.

2.2 The HIF showed strongest performance in supporting innovation through grant-making, learning and advocacy, thereby making substantial contributions to humanitarian innovation. In grant-making, the HIF emerged as a leader from its initial activity in 2011, when innovation was insufficient. During the next five years, it provided structured finance to a variety of innovations at different stages of development, and valuable additional support, which was often indispensable to evolving innovations. It encouraged innovation projects to offer evidence of positive change, committed to learning from failure, offered flexible funding, and fostered learning among grant holders. As a result, the HIF appeared to contribute very well to improving humanitarian performance through the 109 innovations it supported, and to increasing humanitarian innovation in the system. Most of the innovations reported improvements in humanitarian action and intended to benefit populations affected; and several of them made notable impacts on humanitarian action and people affected. In addition, the HIF's thematic grant-making appeared to be developing WASH and GBV solutions, while its funding could have contributed to progress in other thematic areas (e.g. information technology and communication with people affected). At the same time, the HIF commissioned, participated in, and shared important research on humanitarian innovation, with an increasing focus on innovation management, and may have strengthened innovation practices in the sector. Further, it conducted influential advocacy work which may have contributed greatly to sector-wide acceptance of innovation and its innovation management. The HIF's strong performance depended on a combination of internal and external factors, most significant of which were donor support and an increasingly favourable policy environment.

2.3 The HIF struggled most with generating reliable evidence, supporting wider learning, and meeting expectations of large scale change. The quality of evidence generated was variable with weak evidence from grantees about improved humanitarian action, positive outcomes for beneficiaries, and increased cost-effectiveness, and little evidence available yet to assess thematic outcomes. The Fund did not effectively engage all its grantees in learning activities, and remained limited in its ability to systematically collect, synthesize, and disseminate lessons learned from across projects to support wider humanitarian innovation practice. In addition, the HIF's grant-making to scores of projects contributed modestly in scale compared to the size of the system, and the HIF's advocacy and innovation management activities (unsurprisingly) showed few signs yet of contributing to changes in system-wide policy and practice. Indeed the HIF's progress remained constrained by wider challenges to innovation in the system, including gaps in dedicated resources and spending; resistance among humanitarian actors; and a system that remains unsupportive of innovations.

2.4 The HIF's process was managed effectively and efficiently overall and for each element. The HIF's process involved five key elements: strategy management, grant-making, grant management, fund management and resource management, which includes funding, staffing and technical expertise. Each

element proved independently effective and fit for purpose, and made useful contributions to the HIF's performance. Strategy management worked particularly well, with effective decision-making, an appropriate approach, and an increasing sense of purpose. The grant-making function worked well too, employing a healthy range of funding mechanisms aligned with its five-stage innovation process model, with its majority of core grants creating space for new ideas and supporting innovations through stages, and more recent thematic grants and scaling offering prospect of greater impact. Grant management benefitted from a thorough and well managed applications process, provided valuable and flexible implementation support to innovations, and sought to capture projects' overall achievements and learning. Resource management was recently strengthened by moves towards a more established structure and increased staffing capacity. The HIF has remained a low-cost operation reliant on a small team and a lean structure, with inputs from its Board and consultancies. Its management costs also compare favourably to other funds.

2.5 The HIF's process struggled most with practical challenges in grant management, and inadequate resources for innovation management and M&E. In grant management, the application process required resource-intensive management and involved seemingly inappropriate due diligence systems; implementation support was not evenly provided or accessed and disbursement of grants was sometimes delayed; and M&E systems lacked essential capacity to support grantees, learning, and data management. In resource management, the HIF team was often overburdened and overstretched, leaving enduring concerns despite increased capacities, especially in relation to learning and innovation management, monitoring and evaluation, and wider learning opportunities. In Fund management, the HIF's wider governance and management systems seemed overcomplicated, raising structural questions about the suitability of HIF's position within elrha and Save the Children.

2.6 The HIF's strategy relied on an effective grant-making approach and remained relevant to humanitarian innovation. The HIF's strategy depended in large part on an effective grant-making approach, which employed a range of funding mechanisms aligned with its five-stage innovation process model. This approach was forged by the HIF's Board which relied on a combination of humanitarian and innovation expertise. The approach also evolved to become increasingly purposeful, recognizing the need to sustain innovations, and seeking greater impact through thematic grants and scaling grants. Meanwhile, the HIF's strategy remained mostly relevant to humanitarian innovation requirements, offering continued key strengths compared to other actors, relevant to increasing the humanitarian effectiveness of its 109 grant-holders, and increasingly to the needs and priorities of people affected as it seeks to engage further with people affected.

2.7 The HIF's strategy would benefit from formalization, rebalancing, and adjustment to a changed context. The HIF's strategy requires revision and formalization to meet the requirements of a larger and more established structure. A revised strategy is expected to emphasize support for DIP and scaling over ESI and innovation generation, and would require a corresponding rebalancing and focus of effort. While there is insufficient data to support robust conclusions about the relative performance of different funding channels, systems could be put in place to do so across the whole portfolio. However, a strategy that prioritizes grant making through the core grant modality, as presently configured, risks a loss of focus while missing some truly innovative ideas. But grant-making through the thematic windows has not yet delivered anticipated benefits, and the GBV challenge raises questions about suitability and effectiveness which will require more time to resolve. In addition, the HIF's grant-making appeared to show limited accessibility and inclusion of national and local actors, and to slightly favour technology and product innovations. At the same time, the HIF's strategy may require adjustment to a changed context for humanitarian innovation, a field of activity which could align itself more clearly with improving the humanitarian system, addressing its primary weaknesses, and meeting the needs and priorities of people affected.

3. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to the HIF Board, with a view to supporting the HIF's strategy development process, as it looks to build on successes and evolve as a more established Fund. The recommendations are derived from the evaluation's main findings and conclusions, informed by specific suggestions gathered during data collection, and shaped by discussions with the HIF Board, HIF managers, and the evaluation Panel. They are broadly listed in terms of priority, and while some consideration is given to cost implications, they are not 'costed' and implementation will depend on resources available. In particular, recommendations 5,6 & 7 will require mobilizing additional resources.

3.1 Develop and articulate a formal strategy to guide the HIF's activity from 2018 to 2023. A strategy should be developed for the growing HIF and its multiple stakeholders acting in a complex environment, to strengthen overall direction, strategic management, relevance, and impact. This will require some investment of resources, but should facilitate additional resource mobilization. Suggestions:

- ≡ Strategy: Develop the strategy with diverse stakeholder participation to produce a clear, concise, and inspiring public document (e.g. 5-pages) covering: (i) purpose and objectives; (ii) activities needed to achieve them; (iii) resource inputs required; and (iv) risks to be managed.
- ≡ Purpose and activities: Define an overarching impact goal informed by a review of context for the HIF and humanitarian innovation; specific and measurable objectives for grant making, innovation management, and overall Fund management; and clear pathways for how these activities will contribute to impact. A revised Theory of Change may contribute to this.
- ≡ Risk management: Outline key risks to manage, such as: (i) insufficient staff capacity to manage the Fund without overstretch; (ii) overreliance on DFID/HIEP funding and policy support amid budgetary pressures; (iii) ethical risks and 'critical incidents' arising from humanitarian innovations supported; (iv) unrealistic expectations of systemic or largescale 'transformative' change from innovations; and (v) remoteness or disconnect from people affected by emergencies and national and local actors.
- ≡ Resourcing: Develop and implement a resource mobilization plan to support implementation of the strategy, through structured outreach to interested humanitarian donors, private companies, and global philanthropies.

3.2 Conduct a review of the evolving humanitarian context for the HIF's activity. The review should inform the HIF's strategy, relevance, intended impact, and added value in the wider context of humanitarian innovation and the humanitarian system. This review could be commissioned by the HIF, conducted in collaboration with the GAHI and other actors, or more simply by brainstorming key assumptions and/or building on existing analyses. Suggestions:

- ≡ Review impact: What is the intended impact of humanitarian innovation on the humanitarian system? Is innovation simply part of a functioning humanitarian system, and if so, what amount of innovation activity would be required (e.g. 1%. 2%, 5%, more)? Or is innovation aimed at transforming the system, and if so, to what end? What is the intended impact of the HIF? Is it primarily intended to increase the quantity or quality of humanitarian innovation? How will this be done through core grant-making, thematic grant making, scaling, innovation management, and/or advocacy? How valid is the HIF's founding proposition that there is too little innovation in the system?
- ≡ Review relevance: What alignment is there between humanitarian innovation and humanitarian principles, priority policies and practical challenges? What alignment is there with the wider humanitarian policy agenda, including the localization agenda and the 'Grand Bargain' of 2016? What need is there for grant-making to generating new ideas (ESI); developing existing innovations (DIP);

thematic funding in WAS, GBV and other sectors; taking successful innovations to larger scale; or share lessons learned about innovation management with a wider community of innovation actors?

- ≡ Review added value: If humanitarian innovation means ‘doing something differently with the aim of improvement at a system or sector level, where adaptation and invention require a uniquely iterative process,’ what does innovation offer that is distinct from ‘learning’ (e.g. ALNAP); research and development (i.e. by agencies); ‘good programming’ (e.g. Sphere, CHS); or system reform activities (i.e. IASC humanitarian reform, transformative agenda, and WHS outcomes)? What is the HIF’s added value, going forward, compared to the increased activity, interest and funding for innovation in the sector? What can HIF offer in addition to the GAHI and other innovation donors, agencies, initiatives?

3.3 Rebalance the HIF’s mix of grant making activities towards achieving impact. HIF grant making should be purposefully oriented towards achieving an overall impact, using a corresponding balance of funding and support through the open ‘core’ grants windows, thematic windows, and other financing approaches. Calibrating the grant making mix should be part of a revised strategy and ongoing strategy management, rather than a separate activity with additional cost implications. Suggestions:

- ≡ Mixed portfolio: Build on the mixed portfolio’s ability to generate a minority of notable impacts, a majority of comparative improvements and partial successes, and a consistent body of evidence of progress and practical learning.
- ≡ Core grants window: Maintain an ‘open’ core grants window using the 5-stage model to harness new ideas, and consider using a more active approach e.g. scanning the horizon for innovative solutions.
- ≡ Thematic windows: Consider increasing grant making through thematic windows to address specific problems in the system, according to the HIF’s ‘prioritization’ exercise and based on learning from WASH and GBV windows.
- ≡ Scaling: Consider increasing grant-making through the scaling window to take the most promising innovations to scale, based on learning from the current round.
- ≡ Other financing: Consider the use of other grant-making and alternative finance approaches for specific purposes e.g. loan finance, equity, and convertible debt.

3.4 Review and streamline specific aspects of the HIF’s grant management. Practical improvements should be made to resource planning, application processing, implementation support, and management arrangements to maximize both effectiveness and efficiency in grant management. This could be done through an expected revision of elrha’s Mandatory Operating Procedures. Suggestions:

- ≡ Resource planning: Strengthen resource planning to identify gaps and forecast resource needs and allow for resource mobilization; ensure disbursement of funding is always timely in support of innovations; and ensure funding rounds are scheduled to avoid overload and delays, as experienced in 2016.
- ≡ Applications process: Review the applications process to make it less resource-intensive, given the high proportion of failed proposals and associated effort involved in both preparing proposals and assessing them. Consider involving fewer people and better differentiating the roles of the Funding Committee and elrha, e.g. the Committee could short-list applicants from a scored list presented by elrha, or provide quality assurance for a full assessment done by elrha.
- ≡ Reinforced support: Redirect resources from applications towards increasing support to grantees, and possibly a wider community of practice (see below). This might include more support for proposal writing or implementation, capacity building or risk management.

- Management arrangements: Review fund management arrangements involving elrha, Save the Children, a dispersed HIF management team, and reliance on HIEP, as well as due diligence systems that may inhibit innovation actors and appropriate risk-taking.

3.5 Expand learning about innovation management to involve a wider community of humanitarian innovation actors. This should maximize the HIF's impact in this area from beyond its current projects to a larger community of practice, and maximize the HIF's added value as a potential leader in innovation management. Ideally it would be done with additional and dedicated resources, but some progress could be made by combining existing resources for innovation management, innovation support to grantees, and research activities. Suggestions:

- Objective: Define innovation management learning as an equal objective to grant making and a specific activity for the HIF aimed at achieving impact alongside grant-making.
- Activity: Systematically analyse project proposals and reports, in smaller feedback loops than at present, to identify what works and what doesn't, factors of success, and actionable insights.
- Themes: Address topics of interest to innovation actors, common problems and frequent questions, for example: ICT innovations, process innovations, ethics of innovation, beneficiary involvement in innovation, etc.
- Dissemination: Share lessons learned among innovation managers and practitioners, through learning briefs and related products, workshops and online seminars, and training activities.
- COP: develop a community of practice for humanitarian innovation actors, by building, supporting and mobilizing activities online and through occasional events.
- Engagement: Involve the wider community of innovation actors in this community of practice: HIF grantees, former grantees, unsuccessful applicants, and 'peer' innovation actors.

3.6 Devise and implement a purpose-built monitoring and evaluation system for the HIF. This should at once help to: (i) provide credible evidence of success in innovations; (ii) allow the HIF to gauge overall performance to inform strategic management; and (iii) contribute to wider learning about innovation management. Ideally, this would require additional and dedicated capacity to manage, but some progress could be made by rethinking current grantee reporting requirements and data management. Suggestions:

- System: Devise a simple and light M&E system to meet the HIF's requirements, including assessment framework, data collection and analysis, and reporting and utilization. The framework will need to define what is meant by 'success' and 'failure' (including 'good' and 'bad' failure), along with key measures of 'comparative improvement', positive impact on people affected, cost-effectiveness etc. Analysis will require strengthened data management, supported by software for data capture and analysis. The system will need to be sufficiently light, flexible and appropriate to support innovation.
- Projects: Devise a 'realistic and rigorous' approach to monitoring the progress of innovation projects, working with IDS and informed by ALNAP's work in this area. Request of grantees clearly-defined project objectives, a baseline to compare against, some indicators to measure progress, and a simple reporting format (e.g. a spreadsheet accompanying). Maintain narrative reporting through blogs and final reports, and consider requiring an end-of-project lessons learned report or evaluation for larger grants. Provide more guidance and dedicated support to grantees on M&E, for example, through capacity building seminars or webinars and M&E support upfront before project starts.
- Portfolio: Ensure the M&E system provides essential data to support the HIF Board and HIF managers, about the HIF's overall progress, collective grantee progress, thematic progress, IM progress, and risks.

Project data should allow for robust portfolio analysis, tracking of performance over time, and comparisons among grantees.

- ≡ IM learning: Ensure the M&E system supports learning about successes and failures in innovation management, so that all projects generate evidence to support innovation. Analysing data across the portfolio and specific indicators will allow better understanding of how different variables contribute to success, e.g. funding mechanisms, innovation stages, grant holder types, geography etc.

3.7 Connect more with people affected and engage them in the innovation process. Take steps to align the HIF's grant making activities more explicitly with the needs and priorities of people affected by disasters and emergencies, and increase their involvement in the innovation process. This should ensure that people affected are always the primary beneficiaries of humanitarian innovation; that grant making remains relevant, appropriate and connected to people affected; and that the HIF supports the humanitarian system's localization agenda and related policy priorities, such as accountability to affected populations (AAP), communication with communities (CWC), and resilience programming. It will require additional resources, and could build on the HIF's existing contributions to innovations using mobile technology to improve needs assessments and communication with people affected. Suggestions:

- ≡ Alignment: Require grant proposals and grantee reports to articulate expected impact on people affected, including specific populations and communities, vulnerable groups and people with specific needs. Where the innovation is concerned with humanitarian 'process' and therefore 'upstream' from people affected, it should clearly explain how it expects to benefit populations affected and report on progress to that end.
- ≡ Engagement: Explore good practices in beneficiary-centred innovation processes and involving people affected with a view to ensuring innovations are more appropriate, accepted and 'absorbed' in specific contexts. Working with intermediaries in specific humanitarian settings, do more to harness the interest and expertise of people affected, local and national innovation actors, including private sector, civil society, and government actors. Consider deploying innovation advisers in these settings to look for potential innovations, using grant-making approaches informed by the experience of other innovation actors (e.g. Amplify).
- ≡ Learning: Draw lessons from beneficiary-centred innovation processes, and share resulting learning with innovation actors. Consider involvement of the 'right people' at each stage of the process, managing negative impacts for specific groups, and ensuring accessibility to the most vulnerable people in emergencies.

Annex 1 HIF Evaluation Terms of Reference

Humanitarian Innovation Fund

External Evaluation

Terms of Reference (DRAFT)

A. Background

These Terms of Reference (ToR) set out the rationale and objectives for an external evaluation of the Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF).

The Humanitarian Innovation Fund supports organisations to develop, test and share new technologies, products and processes to make humanitarian aid more effective and cost-efficient. The Fund was launched in 2011 as a partnership between Elrha (Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance) and ALNAP (The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action). The HIF is managed by Elrha within the legal structure Save the Children UK, and is in its sixth year of operation.

To date the HIF case been supported by the following donors:

- The UK Department for International Development
- The Canadian International Development Agency
- The Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- The Swedish International Development Agency

The HIF's key stakeholders include:

- Current and prospective donors
- Governance structures of Elrha and the HIF
- ELRHA management
- HIF partners and the wider community

The HIF supports organisations to identify, nurture and share innovative and scalable solutions to the challenges facing effective humanitarian assistance. Its work stems from an understanding that increasing the quantity and quality of innovation in humanitarian action through targeted financial support and intermediation will lead to improvements in humanitarian performance and ultimately more lives saved and disaster losses minimised.

In order to achieve this, the HIF works through its core grants, challenge area grants, and scaling initiative grant to:

- Enable and support humanitarian innovators to move creative ideas through the innovation process
- Support them in building new partnerships with key actors
- Enable the lessons from grant funded projects and from analysis of innovation processes in humanitarian contexts to be disseminated more widely
- Strengthen existing relationships between humanitarian agencies, academics and those in the private sector engaged in innovation processes.

The HIF currently holds a portfolio of 76 projects funded through its core grant facility, with a total funding allocation of just over £6 million.

B. Evaluation Aim

The aim of the evaluation is to undertake a detailed assessment of the performance of the HIF to date; including assessing if the HIF has supported successful innovations through its funding. We expect the evaluation to clearly assess and identify the successes and failures of the programme as a whole in order to inform the shape of our work in the future – through, for instance, a review of our logical framework, funding criteria and modalities, and other core grant-making processes.

C. Evaluation Objectives

The HIF accounts to its donors through several different logical frameworks relating to different awards. To assess the fund's performance, an initial priority of the evaluation will thus be to first consolidate these documents into a single evaluation framework, which will then inform the scope and objectives of the evaluation itself. In reviewing the performance of the HIF, the evaluation team may wish to assess what they identify as the most relevant internal and external enabling and hindering factors for the HIF's success. Activities may include, but are not limited to:

- i) Exploring how successful the HIF has been in supporting innovation through its funding work and associated support, covering both core grants and thematic work, and wider learning and advocacy.
- ii) Reviewing the systems, process and approach of the HIF to assess how conducive they are with supporting innovations in humanitarian response. This will include both the grant making and innovation management work. Assessing the value and effectiveness of the key stakeholders engaged by the HIF (Secretariat, Board, Funding committees, Donors and TWGS) in positioning and supporting the HIF to meet its objectives.
- iii) Assessing the extent to which the HIF has kept pace with wider changes in the humanitarian system, particularly those relating to the environment for innovation.
- iv) Make recommendations about whether and how to strengthen the HIF in the next five years.

In addition, the evaluation team are encouraged to suggest additional/alternative criteria to consider, in line with their experience, as part of the inception report.

D. Methodology

The development of a detailed research methodology and workplan will be the first deliverable of the successful evaluation team, to be shared in an inception report. Teams should seek to find practical ways to assess the overall impact of the HIF, both in its operations and its funded projects, and are requested to provide a brief outline of the approach they would employ as part of this application. It is expected that the evaluation will include a staged approach, with an initial inception phase outlining the detailed methodology and scope of data collection. This will be followed by the collection of desk-based and field data, which should include, among other factors suggested by the evaluators:

- An examination of success at the level of specific funded projects (the selection criteria for which will be developed during the inception phase).
- A comparative analysis between the HIF's different funding channels - i.e. how Core Grants and respective thematic windows, WASH and GBV have supported successful innovations through their funding, the selection criteria for selecting these specific thematic windows, etc.
- Analysis of the HIF's comparative advantage compared to other organisations with a humanitarian innovation funding focus.

It is envisioned that the evaluation will reach out to projects that were not selected for funding. We also anticipate 3-5 country visits during the evaluation, and an overall timeframe of approximately 6 months.

E. Composition and Expertise of the Evaluation Team

We are looking for a team of between 2-3 evaluators. It is anticipated that teams will be able to begin work immediately, although exceptions may be considered. The Evaluation Team will likely include a Team Leader with significant sectoral expertise, and experience of conducting evaluations; other members are likely to have specific evaluation and research expertise. All team members must have high-level inter-personal and negotiating skills. Specific knowledge and expertise that will be expected to be present across the team include:

- Previous experience of complex evaluations and organisation reviews
- Knowledge of the humanitarian system
- Understanding of innovation and innovation management
- Experience of grant making organisations

F. Outline of Report and Management Arrangements

The report from the evaluation is intended to be an action-oriented public document of high quality that will provide an assessment of the level of success and impact of the HIF to date and a prioritised set of recommendations with clear action points. It is particularly important that the review report makes clear the strengths and research outcomes from the programme, along with any caveats and clear recommendations for the funders in terms of future support.

The HIF Board will lead in convening an independent group that will manage the evaluation process, with input from the Elrha Steering Committee, and the HIF Funding Committee.

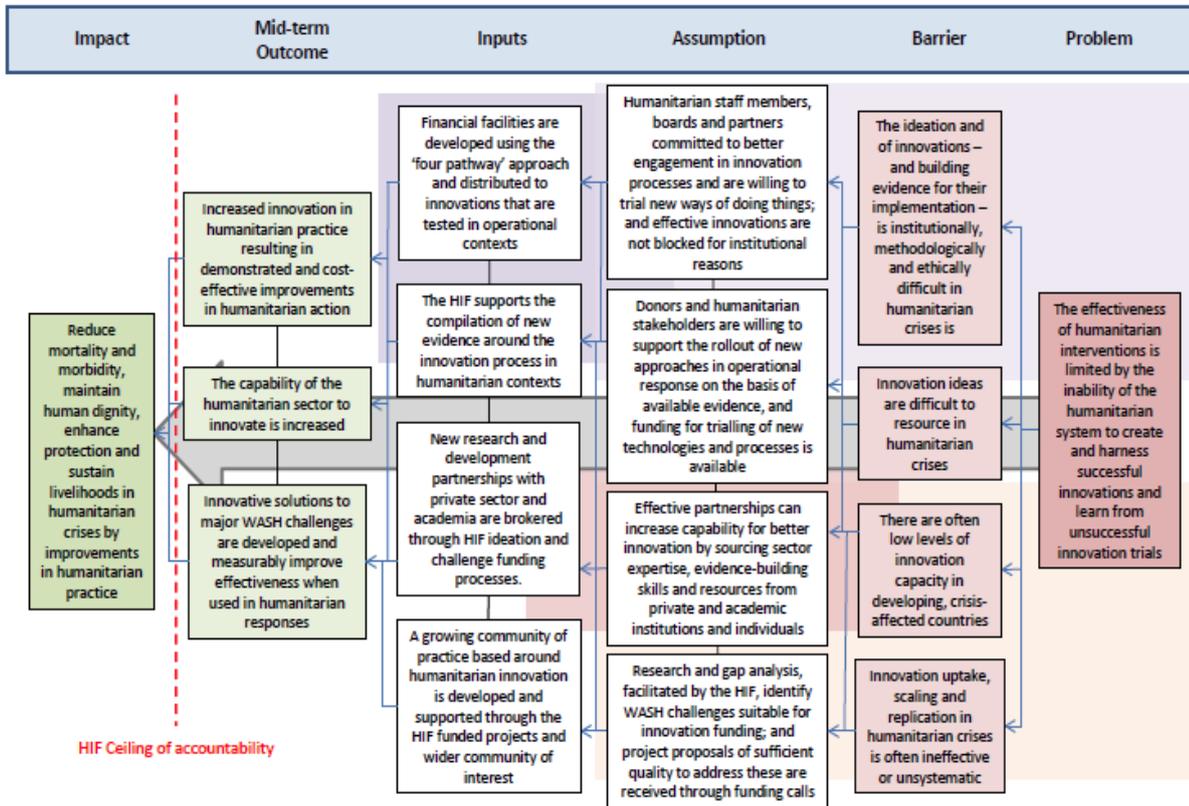
Recommendations should be prioritised and clearly state who the Review Team feel should take responsibility for implementation. The Review Team will be responsible for providing electronic copies of the draft report to the funders and Elrha, as well as a comments matrix indicating how they reacted to comments received in the draft. After amending the draft in response to comments, an electronic version of the final report will be required, by Elrha and the funders. Finally, Elrha intends to generate a formal management response to the evaluation findings, which will be shared with the Review Team. Follow-up on the implementation of this response will be assessed by the evaluation guidance panel.

G. Provisional Timeline for tender process:

- Application for tender due: 7 November 2016
- Interviews of shortlisted candidates: 21 November 2016
- Issue of Contract: 28 November 2016
- Start of work: 28 December 2016
- Inception Report: 20 December 2016
- Final Report: 1 June 2016

Annex 2 HIF 2014 Draft Theory of Change

Annexe 1 Humanitarian Innovation Fund A Draft Theory of Change 2014



Annex 3 Evaluation questions and criteria

This annex presents the seven evaluation questions addressed and related evaluation criteria, along with 23 judgement criteria proposed at the inception stage.

Evaluation questions	Evaluation criteria	Judgment criteria
Q1. Outcomes: How has the HIF contributed to improved humanitarian performance and more lives saved through the projects it supports?	An assessment will be made of outcomes, defined as ‘The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention’s outputs.’ (OECD DAC Glossary)	<p><i>Project level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) HIF grant/s resulted in increased humanitarian innovation (ii) HIF grant/s resulted in measurable impact or evidence of improved or more cost-effective humanitarian action (iii) HIF grant/s contributed to positive change and/or better outcomes for beneficiaries <p><i>Response/sector level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (iv) HIF thematic funding provided measurable innovative solutions to major WASH and GBV challenges in specific humanitarian responses <p><i>System level</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (v) HIF's learning and advocacy activities contributed to sector-wide learning about innovation, changes in policy and practice, improved performance of the system, and/or better outcomes for beneficiaries <p>[Sources: HIF Theory of Change 2014, HIF Logical Framework 2014, ELRHA's Impact Strategy 2014.]</p>
Q2. Effectiveness: How successful has the HIF been in supporting innovation, through its funding and associated support? i) Core, challenge area & scaling grants; ii) Sharing of learning & advocacy	An assessment will be made of effectiveness, described as ‘the extent to which an activity achieves its purpose, or whether this can be expected to happen on the basis of the outputs.’ (OECD DAC criteria, ALNAP guide 2006)	<p><i>Grant-making outputs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) HIF provides finance for innovations at different stages in their development, to make tangible and verifiable contributions to improving humanitarian performance (ii) HIF innovation projects that report success offer evidence, whether qualitative or quantitative, of positive change (iii) HIF tolerates appropriate levels of failure (e.g. 1:6 succeed in recognition and invention; 1:5 succeed in development, implementation and testing; and 6:1 succeed in diffusion) <p><i>Non grant-making outputs</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (iv) HIF collects, synthesizes, and disseminates lessons learned on innovation management (incl. scaling and replicating) (v) HIF's conducts advocacy work aimed at increasing humanitarian innovation in the humanitarian system <p>[Sources: HIF/DFID Proposal 2015, HIF Logframe 2014, and HIF Theory of Change 2014.]</p>
Q3. Factors of effectiveness: Which external and internal factors have most helped or hindered HIF's success?	A light comparative analysis will be made of all effectiveness factors. ‘When analysing effectiveness, the evaluation should attempt to determine why the intervention has or has not achieved its objectives, and any lessons related to this for future interventions.’ (OECD DAC criteria, ALNAP guide 2006)	<p><i>External factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) donors provide adequate funding and support to innovation (ii) innovation actors (private actors and academics) provide necessary additional capacity for innovations (iii) humanitarian needs including scale and specific needs can be appropriately (and ethically) addressed by innovation (iv) humanitarian system takes up humanitarian innovation to improve its performance incl. in specific sectors (v) humanitarian innovation managers/actors are supported by learning and good practices (vi) humanitarian organizations/managers/staff are able to invent, develop and implement innovations (vii) humanitarian managers and project management techniques allow for humanitarian innovation <p><i>Internal factors</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (viii) The HIF's overall approach/strategy supports successful grant-making / grant-management

Evaluation questions	Evaluation criteria	Judgment criteria
		<p>(ix) The HIF's range of funding modalities supports successful grant-making / grant-management</p> <p>(x) Core grants (large and small) supports successful grant-making / grant-management</p> <p>(xi) Thematic grants (e.g. WASH and GBV) support successful grant-making / grant-management</p> <p>(xii) Specific scaling grants and support support successful grant-making / grant-management</p> <p>(xiii) The HIF's grant-making processes, i.e. assessment, implementation, evaluation support successful grant-making / grant-management</p> <p>(xiv) Grant making structures, organization, and systems support successful grant-making / grant-management</p> <p>[Sources: HIF Theory of Change 2014, ToR 2016].</p>
<p>Q4. Internal factors: How have these internal factors helped or hindered success in grant making and innovation management work? i) Design: strategic approach and choices, log frame, funding criteria; ii) Funding modalities; iii) Grant-making processes; iv) Organisation and systems (including decision-making structures)</p>	<p>A comparative analysis will be made of how internal process factors enabled effectiveness.</p>	<p>(i) The HIF's overall approach/strategy, i.e. the provision of financial support and technical support, according to the 5-stage process model enabled effectiveness</p> <p>(ii) The HIF's range of funding modalities, i.e. large and small 'core' grants; thematic grants (WASH and GBV); and scaling grants enabled effectiveness</p> <p>(iii) The HIF's grant-making processes, i.e. assessment, implementation, evaluation</p> <p>(iv) The HIF's grant making structures, organization, and systems (i.e. Save the Children, ELRHA Steering Group, HIF Board, HIF Grants Panel, and HIF Programme Team) enabled effectiveness</p> <p>[Sources: HIF website, ELRHA's Mandatory Operating Procedures for Grant Management 2014, HIF/DFID Proposal 2015, Manager's handover notes]</p>
<p>Q5. Funding channels: How well have the different funding channels (core, challenge area and scaling grants) supported success in improving humanitarian performance? Which have performed better and which less well, and why?</p>	<p>A detailed comparative analysis will be made of funding channels enabled effectiveness.</p>	<p>(i) Core grants (large and small) have contributed most to improved humanitarian innovation; because of its openness to ideas from across the sector; support to innovations through different stages of the process; and reliability</p> <p>(ii) Thematic grants/innovation processes addressed critical needs in priority areas</p> <p>(iii) Specific investment and support helped promising innovations accelerate their journey to scale</p> <p>[Sources: HIF website, ELRHA's Mandatory Operating Procedures for Grant Management 2014, HIF/DFID Proposal 2015, Manager's handover notes]</p>
<p>Q6. Efficiency: How efficient has HIF been in its use of resources?</p>	<p>An assessment will be made of efficiency, which 'measures the outputs – qualitative and quantitative – achieved as a result of inputs.' (OECD DAC criteria, ALNAP guide 2006)</p>	<p>(i) HIF activities seem to use the least resources needed to achieve outputs (i.e. financial, technical/staff, time)</p> <p>(ii) HIF outputs were delivered without using significantly more resources than comparators (e.g. ELRHA, other comparable funds, other Humanitarian Innovation Funds)</p> <p>[Sources: OECD/DAC Criteria, ALNAP Guidance 2006]</p>
<p>Q7. Relevance: Has the HIF remained relevant in relation to i) evolving needs in emergencies; ii) wider</p>	<p>A broad assessment will be made of relevance, which is defined as 'whether the project is in line with local</p>	<p>(i) The HIF's strategy has been relevant to the evolving needs and priorities of intended beneficiaries</p> <p>(ii) The HIF's strategy has been relevant to addressing weaknesses in the humanitarian system and/or increasing humanitarian effectiveness</p>

Evaluation questions	Evaluation criteria	Judgment criteria
changes in the humanitarian system, particularly those relating the environment for innovation; iii) other organisations with a humanitarian innovation funding focus (i.e. comparative advantage)?	needs and priorities (as well as donor policy).’ (OECD DAC criteria, ALNAP guide 2006)	(iii) The HIF's strategy remained relevant to humanitarian innovation requirements by offering added value among humanitarian innovation actors [Sources: ALNAP Guidance 2006, OECD/DAC Criterion, HIF Theory of Change 2014, and HIF/DFID Proposal 2015]

Annex 4 Documents Reviewed

Bastable, A., and Russell, L. (July 2013) *Gap Analysis in Emergency Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion*, Elrha HIF Report http://www.elrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/hif_wash_gap_analysis_1.pdf

Deloitte (March 2015) *Promoting Humanitarian Innovation Exchanges, Developing Models for Humanitarian Innovation Knowledge Bases*, Deloitte https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/About-Deloitte/dttl_cr_promoting_humanitarian_exchanges.pdf

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ELRHA, (October 2014) *Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in the Humanitarian Innovation Fund*, Elrha <http://www.elrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/HIF-MEL-Note.pdf>

Elrha (2014) *HIF Progress Report 2014*

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Elrha (2016) *HIF Progress Report 2016*

Elrha (Jan 2016) *WASH Problem Exploration Report: Faecal Sludge Management*, Elrha <http://www.elrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Faecal-Sludge-Management-WASH-Problem-Exploration-Report.pdf>

Elrha (2017) *HIF Awayday team notes* (internal elrha document)

Gray, I. (September 2014) *HIF Innovating Wash: Project Health Check* Elrha <http://www.elrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/HIF-Wash-Workstream-Health-Check-Report.pdf>

HIF Proposal to ECHO, December 2016 (internal elrha document)

HIF Proposal to DFID, January 2015 (internal elrha document)

HIF Proposal to SIDA, November 2016 (internal elrha document)

Humanitarian Exchange (April 2016) *Special Feature Humanitarian Innovation*, Humanitarian Practice Network, Number 66 April 2016

ITAD (2016) *Final Report - Department for International Development, Evaluation of the Humanitarian Innovation and Evidence Programme (HIEP) Summative Evaluation Phase 1*, HIF Case study https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/590702/Evaluation-of-Humanitarian-Innovation-Evidence-Programme-HIEP.pdf

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Obrecht, A. with contributions from Warner, A. and Dillon, N. (2017) *Evaluating Humanitarian Innovation*, HIF/ALNAP working paper

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Stoddard, A., Harmer, A., Haver, K., Taylor, G. and Harvey, P. (2015) *State of Humanitarian System 2015* London: ALNAP

UK Humanitarian Response Review, March 2011

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67579/HERR.pdf

UN General Assembly (23 August 2016) *Outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit*, UNGA A/71/353

<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A-71-353%20SG%20Report%20on%20the%20Outcome%20of%20the%20WHS.pdf>

Willitts-King, B. (March 2014) *Humanitarian Innovation Fund: Learning Review Final report*, Elrha

<http://www.elrha.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/HIF-Learning-Review-Report-final-version.pdf>

World Humanitarian Summit, (14-16 October 2015), *Global Consultation Final Report*, Geneva

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WHS_GloCon_final_report.pdf

Annex 5 Global stakeholders consulted

HIF Managers
Kim Scriven, former HIF Programme Manager, 9 March 2017
Anna Skeels, HIF Programme Manager, 16 March 2017
Lucy Kingsbury, HIF Grants Manager, 28 March 2017
Jess Camburn, ELRHA Director, 17 March 2017
Josiah Kaplan, ELRHA Senior Research Adviser, 13 March 2017
HIF advisors
Otto Farkas, Director of Integrated Programme Solutions Department, World Vision (former HIF funding committee), 9 March 2017
Randolph Kent, Director of Humanitarian Futures Programme, 16 March 2017
Vincenzo Bollettino, (ELRHA SC) Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, 16 March 2017
John Bessant, (HIF Board) Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship, University of Exeter, 10 March 2017
Dan McClure, (HIF Board) Innovation Design Practice Lead, ThoughtWorks, 13 March 2017
HIF donors
Andrew Clayton, Senior Social Development Adviser, DFID, 10 March 2017
Tamara Giltsoff, Head of Innovation in DFID, 15 March 2017
Maria Thorin, SIDA, 17 March 2017
Humanitarian innovation actors
Barnaby Willitts-King, Research Fellow, HPG, 21 March 2017
Isabel Vogel, ITAD/HIEP, 23 March 2017
Alice Obrecht, Research Fellow, ALNAP, 17 March 2017
Nathaniel Raymond, Director of the Signal Program, Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI), 15/3/17
Professor Howard Rush, Centre for Research in Innovation Management (CENTRIM)
Humanitarian system stewards
Abby Stoddard, Lead author, SOHS 2015, 28 March 2017
John Mitchell, ALNAP director, 24 March 2017
Isabella Jean, Director of Collaborative Learning and Evaluation, 21 March 2017

Annex 6 Methodological Detail: project data

HIF Grant Portfolio: As a first step, a HIF grant portfolio was constructed from a spreadsheet of grant information supplied by elrha. (There was not a suitable complete pre-existing dataset of essential project information such as title, funding, grant-holder, start date set to work from.) This was vital to understanding the shape and scope of HIF funding and being able to make decisions about, for example, further project data analysis, implementer survey distribution or case study selection. Constructing the grant portfolio involved developing a reference system based on numerical system used by elrha (ironing out inconsistencies and repeats); obtaining any missing information (for example country of implementation, value of grant); and rationalising some information to fit the purposes of the analysis required (for example, grant status was reduced to 'pre-start-up', 'ended' and 'implementing' based on project dates). The capture of project data at a certain point in time, and the 'cleaning' of data for the purposes of the evaluation means that the data is not directly comparable to any aggregated data in elrha's reports. The resulting project data could then be aggregated and analysed to build up a picture of the portfolio as a whole, for example grant size, themes, grant-holding organisations and project length.

HIF Project Data: Elrha's grant management model does not currently include the capture or aggregation of either information submitted by projects or elrha's assessment of this. This meant that a sample of primary data from projects had to be reviewed, assessed and analysed in order to gather evidence about project level outcomes and performance. Project final reports were used as the best source of information about project achievements, lessons and challenges. Fifty seven projects were recorded as having submitted a final report:

- 28 large Development and Implementation Project (DIP) grants
- 28 small core grants - 27 Early Stage Innovation (ESI); 1 Diffusion
- 1 large WASH challenge grant

Report Selection: It was decided that reviewing the reports and applications for a sample size of 20 was both feasible and sufficiently representative, at 35% of all reports. Two reports were purposively selected - the one Diffusion grant from the small grants and the one WASH challenge large grant. To give some bias towards the grants which account for a much larger investment of funding, 11 DIP grants and 7 ESI grants were selected from within sorted thematic groupings, to ensure broad thematic coverage. Selection leaned towards those projects which were also the subject of ALNAP case studies and for which there was therefore additional information available.

Tools: The typical content of a grant application and final project report was reviewed to assess what information supplied could usefully be captured, assessed and analysed to answer the evaluation questions. This review informed the construction of a data matrix for collecting the project information and assessments in columns relating to the Evaluation Questions. Each row related to a project and included basic project data from the portfolio spreadsheet. An evaluation matrix was also developed for organising the analysis of the data matrix by evaluation question, including data tables and charts.

Report review: Final reports and grant funding applications for the twenty selected projects were obtained from elrha and reviewed, the findings recorded in the data matrix. Review included the stated purpose and intended outcomes of the project; self-assessment of achievements (as recorded in a tick box for the later reports, and otherwise assessed from the report narrative); strength and quality of supporting evidence; and information about beneficiaries, learning and challenges. Grant-management experience and standards were applied for more qualitative judgements (for example in relation to the strength of evidence presented). The information and data thus captured was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively by Evaluation Question in the evaluation matrix. Also included in the analysis were key documents and interviews of direct relevance to grant management processes. This output fed into the overall synthesis of evaluation findings. A larger sample would have added weight to the analysis and been more representative of the portfolio as a whole but was not feasible in the time available.

Annex 7 Methodological Detail: on-line survey

Sampling: The survey was intended for all grant-holders, whatever the status of the project (ended, in implementation or not yet started), and a sample of unsuccessful applicants. Elhra was able to provide a principle email address for all 109 projects in the HIF grant portfolio constructed for the evaluation. A couple of projects had two contacts and in two cases one individual was the main contact point for two projects, resulting in 111 project email addresses being used. Elhra supplied a project spreadsheet of all 1,660 applicants to the HIF (at Expression of Interest and Proposal stage) received since 2013, generated by the Common Application System. From this was generated a list of 147 unsuccessful applicants from funding rounds which had concluded about a year ago. It was decided that older applicants would be less likely to provide a quality response, and that 147 should generate a sufficiently large sample. The funding rounds selected were: DIP full proposal – 10th Round 2016 – 29

ESI application – continuous 2015 – 23

GBV seed funding opportunity – 1st GBV seed 2016 – 95

The six unsuccessful applicants to the Scale funding round were not selected as their application process had been distinctively different from other rounds.

Preparation and distribution: The survey was developed in relation to the evaluation questions through several iterations, entered into surveygizmo for on-line completion and analysis and tested several times, including by Elhra. A link to the survey was distributed by email by the evaluators with a covering letter from Elhra encouraging completion. This was followed up with two reminder emails. The final dataset was cleaned of any test responses and 16 non-responses (i.e. where recipients had logged on but in the event provided no responses at all).

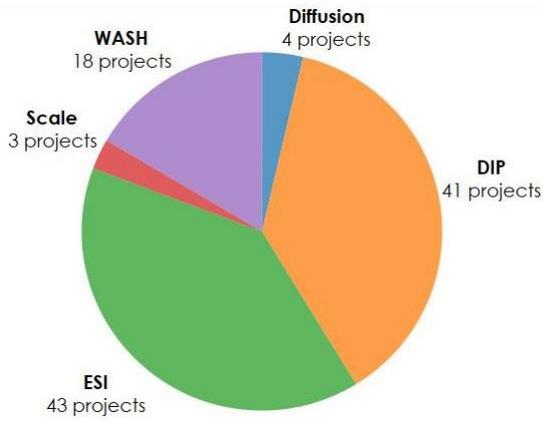
The **response rate** was very encouraging. Of the 258 emails sent, 240 were successfully delivered. Dividing the non-delivered emails proportionately between applicants and implementers, it can be assumed that 137 unsuccessful applicants and 103 projects received survey emails. Of the 72 responses received, 29 were from unsuccessful applicants, a response rate of 21% (out of 137). 43 responses were from implementers, a response rate 42% (out of 103 grant holders). A handful of those who said that they had not been awarded a grant had in fact been successful but were still in the due diligence / pre-grant period. Although there was a good match between respondents and projects, it is not exact: in a handful of cases more than one email went to each organisation so it is important to emphasise that analysis is by **respondent** and not by **organisation** or by **project**.

Analysis: Responses were analysed from the raw data and the system-generated charts and broken down further (e.g. between successful and unsuccessful applicants) where this could provide further insight. For example, the difference in response about the application process between those who had been awarded grants and those who had not was analysed to see whether there was a significant difference in response, which could provide further insight. The number of respondents to each question varied. Care was taken in the analysis to give less weight to responses generated by only a small number of respondents. The survey contributed particularly to the evaluation of effectiveness and internal factors.

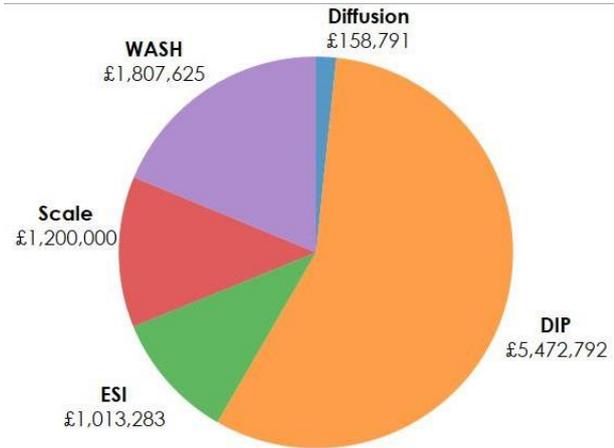
Limitations: It is recognised that an on-line survey presents some limitations. These include a degree of self-selection bias (e.g. to disgruntled unsuccessful applicants; to more engaged grant-holders); disinterest from unsuccessful applicants; lower likelihood of response from 'older' grants; inability to contact every single grant-holder. Interviews with a sample of grant-holders would have been an alternative approach, for example with purposive sampling, to provide better depth of insight into the views of the implementers, although this is itself not without limitations. The survey, a requirement in the ToR for the evaluation, did allow for qualitative input from implementers (which proved very useful), as did the case study interviews. Time did not allow for follow up interviews and it was felt that on balance sufficient evidence was collected without this further step.

Annex 8 HIF Portfolio

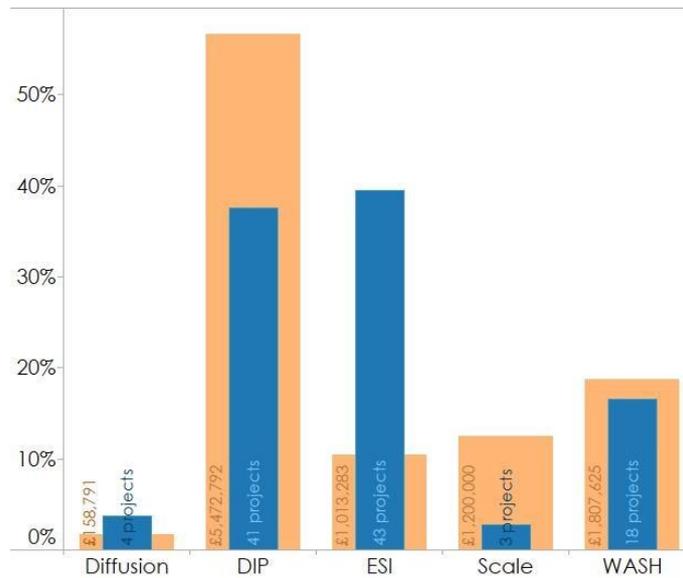
HIF projects by type



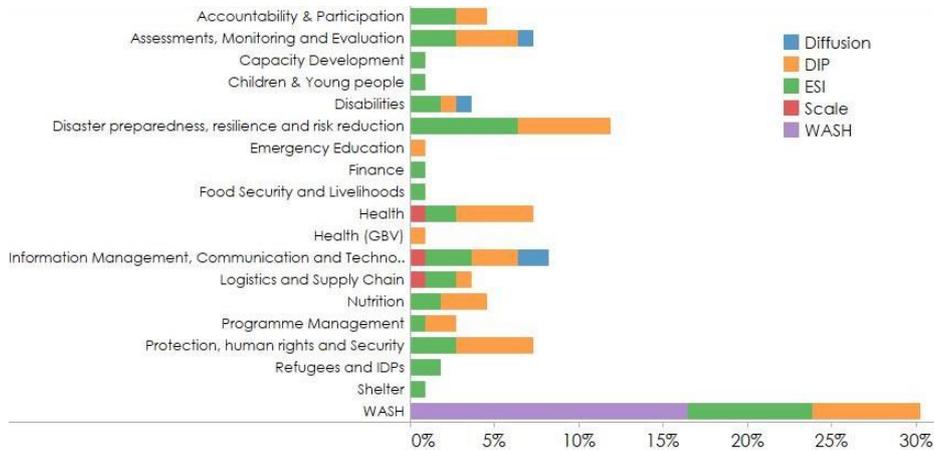
HIF projects by funding



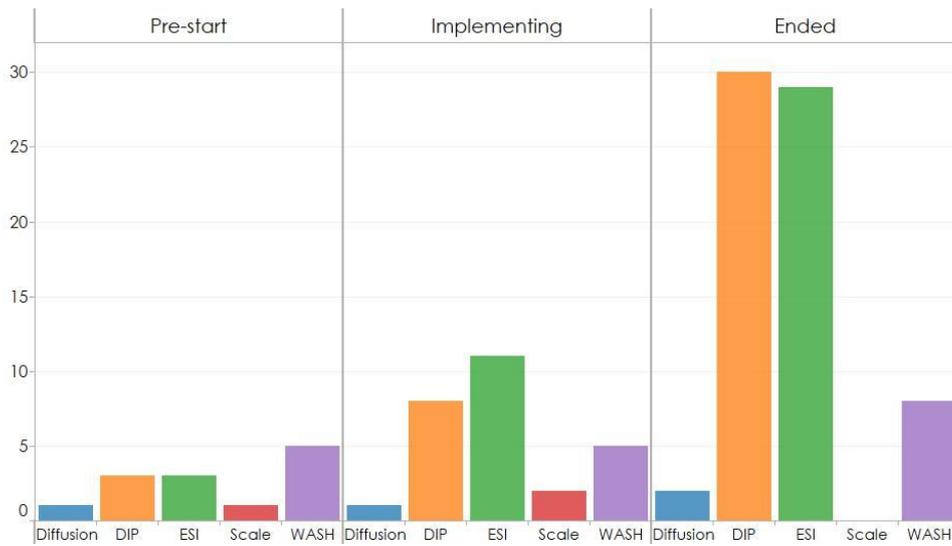
HIF projects by type and funding



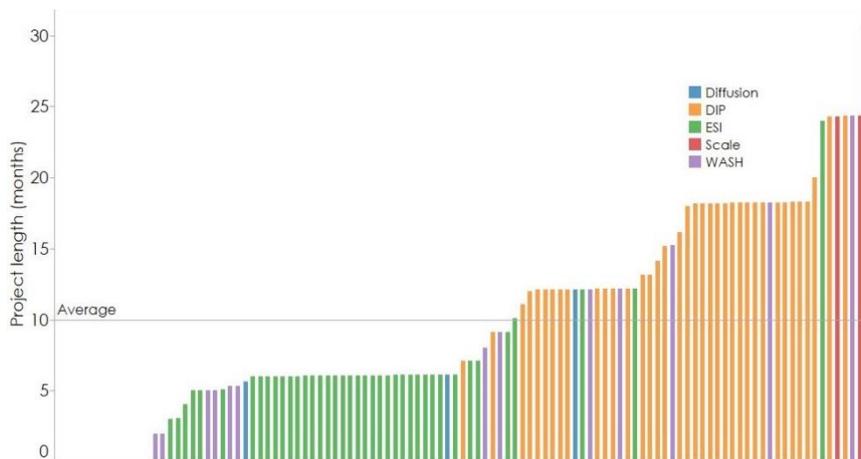
HIF projects by theme



HIF projects by status



HIF projects by length



HIF projects by region of implementation

