ADOPTING INNOVATIONS IN HIGH SEVERITY CONTEXTS

Funding for scaling humanitarian innovation

HIF Humanitarian innovation fund | elrha

CONTENTS

KEY INFORMATION

To apply for *Adopting Innovations in High Severity Contexts,* submit an Expression of Interest via our Common Grant Application platform.

     Already have an account? Log in to start an application.

     Don't have an account? Sign up to open an account and start an application.

Deadline for Expressions of Interest: 5 June 2023, 14:00hrs BST (UTC+1)

Continue reading this handbook for information about the funding and how to apply. For further information, FAQs and any updates, please monitor the webpage for this challenge on the Elrha website: https://www.elrha.org/funding-opportunity/funding-call-adopting-innovations-in-high-severity-settings/

Queries for further information should be directed to: hif@elrha.org

ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook provides information on the *Adopting Innovations in High Severity Settings* Innovation Challenge, which has been designed by Elrha's Humanitarian Innovation Fund, in consultation with the humanitarian community. It is designed to provide all the relevant information required for potential applicants. It is written specifically for those interested in applying – references to "you" and "your" throughout refer to a prospective applicant.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank all those who contributed to the development of this Innovation Challenge namely: Nicholas Leader and Tarah Friend of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Paula Gil Baizan and Omar Abou-Samra (HIF Advisory Group) and Angela McDermott and Grant Gordon (HIF Funding Committee).

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ABOUT ELRHA AND OUR HUMANITARIAN INNOVATION FUND

We are a global charity that finds solutions to complex humanitarian problems through research and innovation. We are an established actor in the humanitarian community, working in partnership with humanitarian organisations, researchers, and innovators to tackle some of the most difficult challenges facing people all over the world.

Our Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF) aims to improve outcomes for people affected by humanitarian crises by identifying, nurturing and sharing more effective and scalable solutions. We work with the humanitarian community to identify and prioritise key humanitarian problems, and to design innovation challenges that address them. Our portfolio of more than 200 projects has driven the understanding of what successful innovation looks like, and what it can achieve for the humanitarian community.

Our Innovation Challenges are a competitive mechanism used to award grant funding. We work with the humanitarian community to identify and prioritise key humanitarian problems, design Challenges that can support teams to address problems through innovation, and to share what they learn with their communities and the wider sector. Alongside direct funding, we also provide non-financial support to our grantees, by facilitating peer-to-peer learning and delivering training via external and in-house experts.

BACKGROUND TO THIS CHALLENGE
OUR AREA OF FOCUS ON SCALE

To Elrha, Scale means building on demonstrated successes to ensure that solutions reach their maximum potential, have the greatest possible impact, and lead to widespread change. Within the HIF, we aim to support innovations to reach their maximum potential. With a view to maximising the potential of innovations, we have a specific portfolio dedicated to supporting Scale, a toolkit for developing scaling strategies, and a series of learning papers.

In 2017, we released Too Tough to Scale, our study of barriers to scaling innovation in the humanitarian sector. The report identified five key barriers to scale:
1. Too few humanitarian innovations are geared to scale from the outset.
2. The sector has insufficient embedded knowledge and skills for supporting scale.
3. There is a lack of appropriate and adequate funding for scaling innovation in the sector.
4. There is insufficient evidence of the impact of humanitarian innovations.
5. The humanitarian ecosystem frustrates efforts to scale humanitarian innovation.

In recent years, we have launched funding calls which seek to enable innovators to overcome these barriers. In the WASH sector, we have funded an Evidence Challenge and an Adoption Challenge, aimed at targeting barriers 4 and 5 respectively. We run cross-sector *Journey to Scale* funding calls, which support innovators in developing and testing their scaling strategies, leading to the embedding of knowledge and skills and innovations being geared to scale.

Through two rounds of *Journey to Scale* funding, we have supported eight innovations in contexts which span the humanitarian-peace-development nexus. In advance of a third *Journey to Scale* cohort, we are launching a new, multi-sector call which aims to support the scaling of innovations through adoption by other organisations, specifically focusing on supporting the adoption of innovations in very high severity humanitarian settings (see glossary for full definition).

This call is an important complement to our portfolio of scale-focused challenges, which support innovators to overcome barriers to scale. Funding is available to adopt any previously funded HIF innovation in any humanitarian sector, focusing on their adoption in settings where humanitarian assistance is most difficult and most needed.

THE PROBLEM WE ARE AIMING TO SOLVE

Our research has found that the humanitarian sector does not understand or use the full range of scale strategies available (Too Tough to Scale). Most applicants to our first *Journey to Scale* initiative (launched 2016), including *all* shortlisted applicants, were looking to scale the innovation through their own organisation. Additionally, the uptake of innovation in the humanitarian sector can often be stifled due to the underlying incentive structure. Within the sector, there is a lack of normal markets that would exist in other contexts, and a lack of incentives for humanitarian organisations to adopt innovations.

Innovations funded by the HIF have historically been developed by universities, public–private partnerships and smaller NGOs, as well as global agencies and/or innovation labs associated with them. For pioneering academics and private sector innovators, and even for small–to–medium sized NGOs with a limited global footprint, following the successful development and pilot of innovations, many of our grantees experience a "what now?" moment, when faced with the limits of internal scaling within their own organisation.

Elrha is committed to using research and innovation to solve the most pressing humanitarian problems in acute crises and complex protracted settings. It is often most practical and ethical to develop and test new solutions in more stable settings, but many innovations struggle to make the leap to where both the need and the difficulty of operating are greatest. We believe there are a number of reasons for this, including increased risk and operational complexity and shorter timelines, which lead responders to rely on solutions they are already familiar with. This challenge aims to explore a potential route for scaling for innovations – though the incentivisation of adoption by larger, multinational organisations in very high severity settings.

ABOUT THE CHALLENGE
CHALLENGE AIMS AND APPROACH

This Challenge aims to support the scaling of evidenced–based, HIF–funded humanitarian innovations, by incentivising their adoption and use in very high severity settings (see Glossary).

There are two key elements to the challenge:
— adoption of a HIF–funded innovation by an organisation not already using the innovation,
— use of the innovation in a very high severity setting.

ADOPTION OF A HIF–FUNDED INNOVATION

Applicants can adopt any of the innovations supported through one of the 200+ HIF grants disbursed since 2012. An extensive list of past grants from 2012–2022, and the project web pages related to them, is available in Handbook Annex 2: HIF Innovations 2012–2022. Applicants must not have already implemented the innovation or been a part of its development.

We encourage adopting organisations to establish the necessary relationships with innovators and / or originating organisations that developed the innovations being adopted. These relationships may take various forms ranging from implementing partnerships, through technical advisory roles, to minimal contact. Our Scale Learning Paper "How to Adopt: Tactics to Adopt Humanitarian Innovations" presents an illustrative spectrum of such relationships where humanitarian innovations are adopted.

This is also an opportunity for innovators of HIF–funded innovation which are ready to scale to approach potential adopters, highlighting this rare opportunity for funding that specifically targets adoption as a pathway to scale. **Please note that the lead applicant must be the adopting organisation, not the innovator**; however, the innovating organisation may be included in the project as a partner, for example, providing technical guidance or support for contextualisation (but not using funding as a general resource for further work on their innovation).

USE OF THE INNOVATION IN A VERY HIGH SEVERITY SETTING

We are looking for organisations with extensive reach in acute phases of emergencies, and in complex, conflict–affected and protracted settings, to pilot a HIF–funded innovation. The pilot should aim to test the impact of the innovation where humanitarian aid is most needed and most difficult, by using it effectively in one of the following very high severity crisis settings[1]:

- Afghanistan
- Central African Republic
- Chad
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Ethiopia
- Haiti
- Mali
- Myanmar
- Nigeria
- Sudan
- Somalia
- South Sudan
- Syria
- Ukraine
- Yemen

In addition to the immediate outcomes of this innovation challenge, we are aiming to draw lessons on adoption as a pathway to scale, and on scaling innovations into very high severity settings, through monitoring and learning from a funded cohort of several organisations working simultaneously on adoption, benefitting from our provision of non–financial support and from our facilitation of experience–sharing and peer–to–peer learning.

[1] Countries defined as very high severity by ACAPS Inform Index. See 'very high severity setting' in the glossary for further information.

IDENTIFYING ELIGIBLE HIF–FUNDED INNOVATIONS

All projects must propose to adopt a HIF–funded innovation. Since 2012, HIF has disbursed over 200 grants to fund research and innovation, spanning every stage of the innovation process. Links to project pages can be found in Handbook Annex 2: HIF Innovations 2012–2022.

These projects span multiple humanitarian sectors, and include non–sector–specific innovations that have relevance across humanitarian action. As well as maintaining funding which is not specific to any sector, we have also developed thematic areas of focus (water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), gender–based violence (GBV) and the inclusion of persons with disability and older persons (DOAI)), through which we support projects which address thematically defined problems.

After the challenge launch, we will be spotlighting a selection HIF–funded innovations on the challenge webpage.

Through our areas of focus, we have produced tools that help to highlight the value and potential impact of HIF–funded research and innovations. However, as these tools focus on specific areas within our portfolio, these do not provide a comprehensive list of eligible innovations (for a full list of HIF–funded innovations, please refer to Annex 2).

Tools include the following overviews and catalogues:
- WASH Catalogue (Second Edition)
- WASH Marketplace
- Overview of Innovation to Improve the M&E of Humanitarian GBV Programming
- Disability and Older Age Inclusion (DOAI) Innovation Catalogue

While the tools above may help adopting organisations to verify that their intervention features the adoption of a HIF–funded innovation, the Lead Applicant is required to make the case, in their full proposal, as to the value of the innovation as an improvement to current practice, and its suitability to the setting in which the intervention is proposed.

FUNDING AVAILABLE

Organisations interested in adopting a HIF–funded innovation are invited to apply for grants up to 150,000 GBP. Please note that proposals requesting more than this sum from HIF are ineligible. We anticipate funding around four to six projects.

Projects are expected to start at the end of October 2023 and last for up to 12 months. All project–related activities must complete by 31 October 2024. Please see the challenge timeline for further details.

The total duration of projects should cover all project activities, including any development or adaptation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, sharing of lessons learned, and reaching a decision on sustained adoption. We are unable to offer any project extensions, so applicants should be conservative in their planning and leave space to allow for flexibility should changes or delays occur, where possible.

Applicants might also consider, though it is not a requirement, providing initial match funding or in-kind contributions (eg, staff time; monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL) expertise) to cover a proportion of the adoption costs, or reducing the amount of HIF funding used to support the innovation in relation to other funding sources over time. If the application is from a consortium of organisations, this can be a pooled contribution according to the size of the organisation and available resources.

Please note that the funding amount requested at Expression of Interest (EoI) stage can be indicative. Detailed budget plans will be requested at the Full Proposal stage.

CHALLENGE TIMELINE

○	10 May 2023	Challenge launch
○	14:00hrs, 5 June 2023	Deadline for Expressions of Interest (Time zone: BST, UTC+1)
○	Early June 2023	Eligibility checks on Expressions of Interest
○	15 June 2023	Eligible applicants are invited to submit full proposal
○	14:00hrs, 10 July 2023	Deadline for Full Proposals (Time zone: BST, UTC+1)
○	July — August 2023	Scoring of Full Proposals and selection of successful grantees
○	August — October 2023	Due diligence checks and contracting:
○	30 October 2023	Project window starts
○	31 October 2024	Project window ends (all activities must be completed)

APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS
APPLICATION PROCESS

The application process will involve applicants first making an Expression of Interest (EOI), following which, only eligible applicants will be invited to submit a Full Proposal.

The steps are outlined in detail below.

Step 1: The Call for Expressions of Interest will launch in May 2023, allowing around one month for applicants to prepare an EOI which will be submitted online, using our Common Grants Application portal. Deadline for EOI: **14:00hrs BST (UTC+1) on 5 June 2023**.

Step 2: HIF staff will review EOIs to determine whether the applicant meets eligibility criteria. Applicants that have submitted an eligible EOI will be invited to submit a Full Proposal.

Step 3: Full Proposals should be submitted using our Common Grants Application portal. The Full Proposals should continue to adhere to the eligibility criteria, while also providing a detailed project work plan and budget, as well as responding to the additional questions required for a Full Proposal (see Handbook Annex 1: Eligibility and Assessment Criteria and their corresponding questions).

Step 4: Our staff will review Full Proposals to ensure that they are complete and continue to adhere to the Eligibility Criteria.

Step 5: Complete and eligible proposals will be reviewed by our external expert technical reviewers, and independently scored by each of them against the assessment criteria. For each funding call, we select a set of technical reviewers with expertise relevant to the focus of the call.

Step 6: Individual HIF Funding Committee[2] members – drawing on their expertise in humanitarian innovation and informed by the comments and scores of our technical reviewers – independently score each application against the assessment criteria. The Committee meets to jointly review strong scoring projects and to make final decisions on which are the most promising projects to fund.

Please note that, in addition to the criteria listed, a consideration towards the overall balance of the grantee portfolio will also be factored into final decision-making by the Funding Committee, to ensure a complementary mix of different approaches are funded.

[2] The HIF's independent Funding Committee make the final funding decisions for all of the HIF's innovation challenges. The Funding Committee is made up of experts in humanitarian innovation, acting in an independent personal capacity.

HOW TO SUBMIT AN EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

Expressions of interest (and subsequent proposals) must be submitted using the Common Grants Application (CGA) system.

If you already have CGA login details, you will find the application form here:
https://www.commongrantapplication.com/login.php?refOrgId=20971&refProgId=879&refProgType=all

Otherwise, you should first register on CGA, and will then be able to access the form. To register, follow this link:
https://www.commongrantapplication.com/register.php?refOrgId=20971&refProgId=879&refProgType=all

If you face difficulties with the CGA system that you cannot resolve, please contact hif@elrha.org for support.

Applicants are advised to submit in advance of the deadline, to minimise the risk that any technical issues prevent the submission of an EOI or Full Proposal.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

At EoI stage and with the submission of the Full Proposal, applications must meet the following criteria. (See also the Handbook Annex 1: Eligibility and Assessment Criteria, and their corresponding questions).

A.   The Lead Organisation must be a legally registered entity (including but not limited to an international non–governmental organisation, national non–governmental organisation, private company, Red Cross / Red Crescent movement, United Nations agency or programme, civil society organisation, academic / research institution, government). Applicants are expected to provide relevant evidence (eg, a registration document) at the EoI stage.

B.   The proposed project should not exceed the maximum duration and grant size limits for this Innovation Challenge: projects should last up to 12 months and all project activities should be complete by 31st October 2024.

C.   The proposed innovation to adopt should have previously been funded by the HIF. One organisation cannot apply to adopt multiple innovations within the same application, but you can submit as many applications as you want.

D.   The proposed project should apply a humanitarian innovation to at least one of the following contexts, in a very high severity setting: complex conflicts; complex protracted crises; acute responses. The project should aim, directly or indirectly, to benefit crisis–affected populations, inclusive of refugees, internally displaced persons, and host communities.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA (CONTINUED)

E.   The Lead Organisation must have substantial ongoing operations in at least three very high severity settings, including the setting of proposed project implementation. Where the innovation being used is specific to a humanitarian sector (WASH, Nutrition, Protection, etc.) the ongoing operations should include substantial work in that sector.

F.   The Lead Organisation must be proposing to adopt and use an innovation that was not developed in-house or by a part of the same organisation, and that it is not already routinely using. *The lead applicant and the organisation that previously developed the innovation through the HIF should not be members of the same wider or federated organisation, such as separate members of the Red Cross movement or different country offices of the same INGO. Exceptions to this are members of alliances or networks such as CHS Alliance, and separate UN agencies. If you are unsure as to whether this makes you ineligible, please contact hif@elrha.org.*

G.   The Lead Organisation must demonstrate awareness of ethical risks related to the proposed project (this could include conflict sensitivity and relationship with local contextual and gender dynamics).

H.   At EOI stage, you should be able to affirm that you are in contact with the innovators/originating team of the innovation that you are proposing to adopt, or to articulate briefly why contact with the innovators is not relevant to this innovation. At the full proposal stage, the assessment of the proposal's feasibility will include judgement of relationships/partnerships with key stakeholders including the innovators.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The scoring of Full Proposals by Technical Reviewers is used to generate a shortlist of eligible and high-scoring projects which are judged by the HIF's Funding Committee to decide on the most promising cohort of projects.

Please note that in addition to the criteria listed, a consideration towards the balance of the grantee portfolio will also be factored into decision-making to ensure a complimentary mix of different approaches are funded.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA (CONTINUED)

The assessment section headings are as follows. (See also the Handbook Annex 1: Eligibility and Assessment Criteria and their corresponding questions)

Strong Alignment with the Aims of the Challenge

The proposal sets out a plan to effectively adopt a HIF–funded innovation, into a very high severity setting where there is a problem that the innovation can impact.

High Quality Scaling/Adoption Process

The proposal sets out specific details demonstrating an understanding of the adoption and scaling challenges and an awareness of underlying assumptions for scaling the innovation in a new very high severity setting; it describes credible plans and processes to face and overcome such challenges.

Demonstrates Feasibility and Value for Money

The proposal demonstrates suitability for scaling in the chosen very high severity setting, articulates a feasible plan for implementation, involving key stakeholders and equitable partnerships where necessary, and sets ambitious targets which are appropriate to the cost of the project. The project team has the required expertise and experience to execute the project.

Good Potential for Impact in the Humanitarian Sector

The proposal has clear definitions and measures for the success of the adoption, scaling and implementation of the innovation, additionally describing a credible pathway for impact beyond the funding period. Some examples of the type of metrics that we would expect to see include number of people benefitting, outcomes for those people, costs of adopting and implementing the innovation and measurement of scalability in similar contexts.

Comprehensive Consideration of Ethics and Other Risks

The proposal demonstrates an awareness of ethical risks, and has plans, processes, or resources in place to mitigate such risks. This criterion will be assessed as pass/fail by Funding Committee members (with Technical Reviewers providing comments and an advisory opinion on whether a project should be excluded on ethical grounds). Projects that are judged by the Funding Committee to have unmitigated serious ethical, or other, risks that cannot be easily addressed will not be funded.

EXPECTED ACTIVITIES AND DELIVERABLES

Develop adoption plan

You will be expected to develop the adoption plan for your chosen innovation in collaboration with the innovator. You will also be expected to carry out a stakeholder mapping and consider involving any other relevant internal and external stakeholders and partners in the design of the adoption plan to ensure buy–in and long–term commitment. At this stage, you will also be expected to refine your hypotheses for the grant period and develop your evaluation plan for collecting relevant data on the performance of your chosen innovation.

Begin adoption activities

You will be expected to engage with relevant internal and external stakeholders to adapt the innovation to the respective organisational context and chosen humanitarian setting. The expectation here is that the adoption process will be iterative and require an ongoing dialogue between adopters, the innovators, and other stakeholders actively involved in the process to ensure ownership of decision–making surrounding the innovation.

Monitor and evaluate the adopted innovation

You will be expected to monitor and evaluate the performance of your chosen innovation in your selected humanitarian setting over the duration of the HIF grant. If preferred, your application can include partnering with an independent evaluator (eg, academic or research institution) who could undertake and complete relevant M&E activities within the proposed project duration. We value the role of monitoring and evaluation, especially where an organisation is applying new approaches; we recognise as such that costs for monitoring and evaluation of this project may be higher than in routine humanitarian programming. We welcome peer reviewed, academic articles sharing the findings of the adoption process, and are usually able to cover open access publication fees beyond the grant period.

Share ongoing findings with other grantees

We aim to create an open and collaborative environment for you to share your progress with other adopting organisations, and discuss any challenges faced and lessons learned with each other. This will take the form of two to three HIF–facilitated engagements throughout the grant period – one structured engagement at the beginning, and one at the end of the programme, and a few other informal ones to share insights from the projects as they emerge. We expect successful grantees to allocate approximately three to four days of their budget to engage in, and make the most of, these sessions. It will be mandatory for at least one representative from each adopting organisation to join these sessions.

Share learnings at a public event and with the HIF's Adoption Learning Partner

The HIF will contract a Learning Partner for this Challenge to evaluate the success of the adoption support across all grantees. We ask that all Adoption Challenge grantees provide information and inputs where needed. We anticipate that this will be in the form of interviews, group discussions and review and feedback of case studies. Furthermore, we ask all grantees to provide the results from the adoption and testing of their chosen innovation (with no sensitive data shared and all data anonymised) to Elrha as requested, for this to feed into the Learning Partner's evaluation.

At the end of the funding period, we will organise a learning event for adopters to share their learning (both successful and unsuccessful outcomes) from the adoption process. This will be an opportunity for other interested humanitarian actors to learn about the adoption challenges you faced and explore whether they would be interested in implementing the different innovations.

GLOSSARY

Complex emergency

In 1994, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) drafted the following definition of a complex emergency, which has formed the basis for definitions used by various agencies. The full definition, available online, includes further details such as likely characteristics of a complex emergency. A Complex Emergency is defined as:

A.   humanitarian crisis which occurs in a country, region, or society where there is a total or considerable breakdown of authority resulting from civil conflict and/or foreign aggression;

B.   humanitarian crisis which requires an international response which goes beyond the mandate or capacity of any single agency;

C.   humanitarian crisis where the IASC assesses that it requires intensive and extensive political and management coordination.[3]

Equitable partnerships

If you apply in partnership with other organisations, we would expect to see equitable partnership principles reflected across your submission. This may include ensuring fair budget allocation, such as equitable access to overhead costs recovery, and equal participation across the project lifetime, ensuring that all partners are part of programme design, delivery, and learning.

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[3] Inter-Agency Standing Committee (1994) "Notes from the Sixteenth Meeting of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Working Group: Definition of Complex Emergencies"

Humanitarian innovation

Humanitarian innovation can be defined as an iterative process that identifies, adjusts and diffuses ideas for improving humanitarian action (see Humanitarian Innovation Guide – Innovation basics).

Innovation process

The innovation process acts as a map that will help you to identify where you are on your innovation journey, what milestones you need to reach, and what tools or approaches you can use to navigate the different stages. See Innovation Process in the Humanitarian Innovation Guide.

Scaling

Building on demonstrated successes to ensure that solutions reach their maximum potential, have the greatest possible impact, and lead to widespread change.

Very High Severity Settings

Various attempts have been made to categorise conflicts, disasters and emergencies, as well as corollary factors such as economic development, state fragility and hazard risk.[4] For this challenge, we will use ACAPS Inform Index as the best-suited index to identify the most severe humanitarian settings, and will select from their "Very High Severity" countries (a severity score for the country of 4.1 or above). For clarity, we will focus on the country-level index, rather than the list of regional responses. The Inform Index is a pre-existing and credible tool from a respected organisation, which incorporates factors such as impact of the crisis and the conditions of the people affected, which correlate to our work having impact where humanitarian aid is most needed, while the incorporation of the complexity of the setting (with factors such as operating environment and humanitarian access) correlates to our aim for impact in the hardest contexts.

At the time of preparing the challenge and based on the index as updated in January 2023, the countries listed as Very High Severity, and as such the countries in which eligible projects can be implemented are: Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Haiti, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sudan, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, and Yemen.

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[4] Other indexing initiatives include the Human Development Index, the Multidimensional Poverty Index, and the Fragile States Index.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO RECEIVING YOUR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST!

Submit your Expression of Interest via our Common Grants Application platform by Monday 5 June 2023 at 14:00hrs BST (UTC+1)

For any questions that are not covered by this handbook, the Challenge webpage or our Application Guidance page, please email us at hif@elrha.org, referencing 'High Severity Scale' in the subject line.