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HIF Endline Evaluation
Final report

Contents

Executive summary

This report is an evaluation of the performance of Elrha's Humanitarian Innovation Fund from January 2019 to September 2022. The seven evaluation questions were:

- How do activities implemented within Elrha's strategy contribute to the outcomes identified?
- What impact and outcomes is the HIF generating?
- What is the value for money generated by the HIF?
- How effective is the HIF at learning and adapting?
- How does the HIF support its partners and grantees to learn and adapt?
- How does the HIF navigate risk?
- What is the HIF's contribution to the sector?

The evaluation was conducted from December 2020 to October 2022. An evaluation framework was designed to respond to the evaluation questions, with 31 sub-questions and methods and data sources against each. The methodology drew on qualitative and quantitative data and included a document review, developing nested theories of change, a 'capturing change' exercise to identify outcomes from 68 grants (31% of portfolio), interviews with a wide range of stakeholders, surveys with grantees and wider stakeholders, and a series of six illustrative highlights designed to explore the process of change in more detail.

As with any evaluation, the methodology had several limitations. Most pertinent to our analysis of the outcomes was that the evaluation period was limited to 2019-22. It can take time for innovations to be developed, tested and adopted. We adapted the approach to include some grantee interviews and outcome data from before this period, but the financial analysis and the majority of outcome data covered 2019-22 which limited the extent to which outcomes emerged.

Key findings from the evaluation were:

Activities, risk and learning

- Elrha's 4Ds strategy (Define, Develop, Distil, Drive) provided a useful framework of activities that responded to the barriers to learning from innovation and to scaling in the humanitarian sector; the approach starts with "defining" key problems, "develops" solutions, "distils" what works and ends with "driving" adoption of the solutions.

- The HIF invested considerably in gap analyses in its three technical focus areas: disability and old age inclusion (DOAI), gender-based violence (GBV) and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). These provided a rigorous foundation for its work and a process through which to bring together Technical Working Groups (TWGs) to develop priorities and share learning. There were efforts to consult widely and to incorporate the views of frontline humanitarians and people affected by crisis, although they had less input into how problems were subsequently prioritised. The gap analyses didn't always reveal new problems, but provided a consolidated set of issues and focuses for future work. 87% of 30 surveyed grantees and 60% of 27 stakeholders[1] agreed or strongly agreed that the HIF had raised awareness of key gaps that would benefit from innovation. The latest WASH Gap Analysis was very wide reaching, which made it hard for the TWG to

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[1] 7% of grantees and 33% of stakeholders said they didn't know or left the question blank.

identify specific problems for innovation; the HIF commissioned subsequent Problem Exploration reports to address this.

- The HIF moved from open funding calls towards a challenge fund approach for its three technical focus areas, where grants were awarded to innovators to address specific problems. This approach helped the HIF to develop an understanding of specific problems, identify solutions to those problems and facilitate peer-learning. However, there was more evidence of grantee progression among earlier grantee cohorts that received multiple awards over 4-6 years through the open calls. Similar evidence of progress may be seen among more recent challenge fund grants in coming years.

- The HIF provided 67 grants in the evaluation period and 219 grants (across a total 164 projects) since its launch in 2011. It collected **data on its grant applications, grantees and on grantee outputs**. However, this was sometimes incomplete and did not include disability or age data (although interviews indicate HIF does look for diversity in its grantees). The HIF received a large proportion of applicants from lower and middle income countries (LMICs), although a high proportion of these grantees were unsuccessful.

- Non-financial support was important for many grantees. In a survey of 30 grantees, 12 (40%) said the HIF's non-financial support helped their innovation thrive to a great extent, and a further 10 (33%) said it helped to some extent. The support was particularly important to smaller organisations and those innovating from outside the sector (such as start-ups and small NGOs), helping them to 'get them off the ground'. The HIF's **support in partnership brokering and forming connections** also made important contributions to grantee outcomes (see below). Interviewees highlighted how the HIF had facilitated relationships between humanitarian actors, academics, and the private sector.

- Learning and adaptation at the HIF was facilitated by the **HIF's working culture,** participatory management approach, and by the innovative nature of the work itself. The HIF also commissioned research that responded to the learning needs of grantees and the wider sector. The HIF **adapted quickly to the Covid-19 pandemic** by using existing learning both to launch responsive Covid-19 grants, and to adapt their support for grantees. The close relationships already established between the HIF team and grantees meant that the team were well positioned to understand and adapt to the changing needs of grantees during the Covid-19 pandemic in a supportive way.

- Decision-making **adaptation was often reactive to or constrained by donor funding decisions**. The HIF was able to respond to Covid-19 and the Pakistan floods (2022) because funding was made available.

- The FCDO funding cuts in 2022 were also a critical turning point for the HIF. The HIF sought to incorporate their own learning and priorities into the process; creating space for internal reflection about how the HIF made decisions and adapted during this time will be important for future strategy setting.

- The HIF demonstrated **commitment to the principles of localisation and of decolonising aid**. However, this hasn't yet translated into meaningful changes either in terms of who they fund, who they are, or who is included in the HIF's governance.

- The HIF identified four types of **risk** for this evaluation: **financial, failure, irresponsibility, and project management** with established processes for managing each. Both the HIF and grantees

felt particularly constrained by financial risk (and due diligence processes), which made it harder to fund smaller organisations and those based outside of Europe. The HIF recognises the tensions between ensuring ethical, responsible due diligence processes and the challenges and limitations these processes bring, particularly for small, locally-led organisations.

- The HIF was seen as a flexible funder by its humanitarian grantees, especially in terms of allowing grantees to make significant changes to milestones and budgets. But this still required grantees to submit detailed budget updates ahead of time. Grantees from outside the sector (such as start-up organisations) were more likely to note this as a significant time burden.

Outcomes

- The HIF's research, publications and funding have **influenced innovation support and practice** in the wider sector, including through its gap analyses and publications such as the Humanitarian Innovation Guide and 'Too Tough to Scale: Challenges to scaling innovation in the humanitarian sector'.

- Innovators were funded at different stages of the innovation journey from Recognition to Scaling. At all stages, grantees were supported to **generate learning, achieve key milestones and progress along the innovation pathway.**

- **All grantees articulated what they had learned and how they had used that learning in their understanding of the problem or solution.** There were examples of learning being disseminated and used more widely, but most of these examples were from grants made before or at the start of the evaluation period. Learning was shared through the TWGs, through conferences, publications and other research outputs. The HIF Innovation Managers encouraged dissemination of learning, including through blogs, publications, conferences and other channels. The HIF didn't have processes for tracking how the research or learning was used by others.

- Several grantees identified the academic rigour of the HIF's approach to learning, and noted that they had published a peer-reviewed article in an academic journal for the first time as a result of encouragement from the HIF. For some grantees with a practitioner background, the HIF provided a bridge into the academic world as well as helping grantees adopt more rigorous processes in documenting and sharing learning from their innovation.

- The HIF supported **innovations to scale,** primarily within their own organisations but also into other partners and collaborators**.** The importance of driving adoption through partnerships and other relationships reflects how scaling happens in the humanitarian system as a whole. During 2019-22 ten innovation teams were supported to deliver scaling strategies and five of these selected to implement their strategies. The innovations were tested in new contexts and new partnerships were formed. However, scaling took time and there was evidence of stronger growth among the three grantees that received Scale funding in 2016-18.

- **15 projects achieved impact at some scale**. Of these, ten had collectively reached over 900,000 people[2]. This portfolio of 15 scaled projects is a good result, especially given that the HIF has only awarded 15[3] scale grants since 2011. It also illustrates the importance of longer-term funding

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[2] The remaining five had not recorded people reached.

[3] 9 grants under the Scale focus area, and 4 WASH grants and 2 GBV grants at the Scale innovation stage.

and support; ten of the 15 projects had received multiple HIF grants (with a total of 28 grants awarded between 2011 and 2020).

- **There were different levels of investment and maturity across the HIF's six focus areas.** WASH and Scale represented the largest proportion of funding and were the most mature. There were examples of innovations in both portfolios being widely adopted. The DOAI and GBV portfolios were relatively less mature, with most projects at the Recognition, Adoption or Pilot phases. Under Locally-led Innovation, the HIF invested in a regional partnership with Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network (2017 onwards) and the Community-led Innovation Partnership (2020-23) which has led to five local grant making hubs funding over 70 projects. The Skills Building focus area was less developed due to significant funding cuts.

- **The TWGs were a valuable mechanism for the HIF delivering change in the sector.** In DOAI, for example, mainstreaming of inclusion "*is* the innovation". The research grants, the existence of a TWG that combined specialist and mainstream humanitarian actors, and the efforts to disseminate grant findings through the TWG were seen as important contributions to changing how organisations in the sector work.

Value for money

- In 2019-22 the HIF invested £6,669,547 directly in grants ("Develop"), as well as £4,220,242 in programme costs (staff, overheads, commissioned research and non-grant based activities). 51% of the HIF's grant spend was invested in grants at the scaling stage, with the remaining 49% distributed approximately evenly across the other innovation stages.

- The HIF defined four types of value that it aimed to generate; **scaling, learning, relevance and responsibility**. The value of each portfolio (see diagram) was calculated using a scale that assessed the extent to which learning was generated and disseminated and the extent to which

VALUE

INVESTMENT

PRE-2016 SCALE £1.2M

SCALE £3.4M

PILOT £1.0M

INVENTION AND PILOT £0.8M

ADAPTATION £0.6M

RECOGNITION £0.7M

the innovation was adopted. There was relatively little *outcome* data that reflected how the HIF contributed to more responsible innovation.

- There were relatively short grant cycles for Adaptation, Invention and Pilot. This reflected practice in the wider innovation sector, but exacerbated the challenges of tracking grantees and raised questions about the investment required to identify and support each grant.

- The **early-stage grants delivered less value for money (VfM)** in terms of disseminated learning or scaled innovations. This was due to shorter periods of funding and support. Generating results from innovation takes time and the **greatest value was seen in projects that secured multiple grants over many years through which they were supported to scale.**

Challenges and recommendations

Challenges	Summary recommendations
Strategic priorities	
The **HIF strategy ended in 2020** and the HIF now relies only on the Elrha strategy to provide its overall direction. The Elrha strategy provides an overview of focus areas (4Ds) but it doesn't clearly state how those apply to innovation.	● R1: Decide whether the HIF will have a standalone strategy; develop a strategy or a strategy implementation plan that focuses on how the 4Ds apply to innovation.
The HIF's small number of donors means that it is reactive to or constrained by donor funding decisions. Decision-making **adaptation was often reactive to or constrained by donor input**.	● R2: Use the strategy processes to reflect on the financing constraints of innovation and to develop an agenda and plan for how the HIF will research/advocate for more innovative financing in the future - including from both Government donors and non-traditional donors.
Approach to fostering innovation	
There is a tension between the challenge fund approach and the HIF's historical role in providing end-to-end funding. The challenge fund approach allowed the HIF to identify a range of solutions to priority problems. However, the data indicated that the HIF's greatest contributions in terms of learning and scaling occurred when it engaged in longer-term commitments with grantees.	● R3: Focus more deliberately on end-to-end funding, even where that means moving away from a challenge fund approach for later-stage innovations.
The value and role of early-stage research grants has not been well defined.	● R4: Articulate how Recognition grants are intended to feed into future opportunities (for example, through informing the HIF's work, others work, or leading to innovations themselves). Use this definition to assess whether Recognition grants were worth the investment and begin capturing data on the impact of these grants
The HIF staff have focused on learning about what works, distilling that evidence, and convening the TWGs. However, overall, there was limited investment in Driving adoption and while some of the activities have been	● R8: Develop a proactive strategy for Drive that would support innovations to be adopted within the sector, clarifying the roles of the HIF and its grantees.

very influential, they have also been relatively ad-hoc. There is a need to invest in driving adoption, including staff/grantee capability.	● R9: Review the resource allocation across the 4Ds to enable more significant value to be generated in Distil and Drive.
Operations and implementation	
Beyond the CLIP project, which was outside of the scope of this evaluation, Locally-led Innovation receives a very small proportion of funding, with few grantees and very few examples of end-to-end funding.	● R5: Define the HIF's role, investment approach, and Drive approach for Locally-led Innovation and clarify how the CLIP fits within this. ● R6: Work with partners to explore barriers to inclusion for those in LMICs and explore how to seek out and/or pre-screen potential applicants to reduce the number of failed applications.
The HIF played an important role as a convener for innovation actors until 2020, but this was paused during Covid-19 and following budget cuts. The HIF retained good relationships with individual innovation funders, but there was still a need for a convener for the sector (see GAHI evaluation).	● R7: Decide whether the HIF will play a future role as a convener for the innovation sector and how this aligns with other strategic activities.
The HIF did not invest enough in strong MEL processes for collating grantee outcomes and (like other humanitarian funders) has no systematic approach to tracking grantees beyond the end of funding.	● R10: Invest in MEL expertise within the HIF team and set up systems to systematically collect outcomes data.
There was a lack of representation of communities affected by crises on the HIF's decision-making committees. There is opportunity for more cross-area approaches to decision-making and learning.	● R11: Include frontline responders and members of crisis-affected populations in all governance bodies of the HIF. ● R12: Explore the synergies between different work areas to ensure a cohesive approach to learning and decision making. ● R13: Commission guidance on how to become an anti-racist organisation and decolonise the work of the HIF.
The HIF had a clear approach to managing the risk of failure but interviewees felt it tended to make cautious decisions. The HIF could be bolder in funding more novel and unproven ideas.	● R15: Continue to work with TWGs to identify more novel solutions for funding. Document how the ethics work allows the HIF to responsibly take more risk and tolerate more failure and share this learning with other funders.

Acronyms

ACF	Action Contre la Faim (Action Against Hunger)
ADRRN	Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
CBO	Community based organisation
CDP	Centre for Disaster Preparedness
CLIP	Community-led Innovation Programme
COVID	Coronavirus Disease
DOAI	Disability and Old Age Inclusion
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DRRM	Disaster risk reduction and management
EOI	Expression of Interest
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
GAHI	Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation
GBV	Gender based violence
GBVIMS+	GBV Information Management System Plus
GWI	Global Women's Institute
HIC	High income country
HIF	Humanitarian Innovation Fund
HiH	Healing in Harmony
HRI	HealthRight International
IM	Innovation Manager
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPV	Intimate partner violence
IRC	International Rescue Committee
J2S	Journey to Scale
LMIC	Low or middle income country

MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MMM	Make Music Matter
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
OPA	Older People's Association
OPD	Organisations of Persons with Disabilities
PDF	Portable Document Format
PM+	Problem Management Plus
PSE	Paris School of Economic
R2HC	Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SEEDS	Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society
SEMA	Syrian Expatriate Medical Association
SH+	Self Help Plus
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
ToC	Theory of change
TWB	Translators Without Borders
TWG	Technical Working Group
UCCE	User-Centred Community Engagement
UCD	User-Centred Design
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VFM	Value for money
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
YEU	Yakkum Emergency Unit

1. Introduction

Elrha is a global charity that finds solutions to complex humanitarian programmes through research and innovation. It was established in 2009 with a mandate to bridge the gap between academic research and humanitarian response. It has developed two core programmes: the Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF), launched in 2011, and Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises (R2HC), launched in 2013.

The HIF is a grant-making programme that was established to improve outcomes for people affected by humanitarian crises by identifying, nurturing and sharing more effective, scalable solutions. It funds, manages and supports grantees at different stages of innovation, from problem recognition to scale. Since 2011 the HIF has invested over £20m in over 200 grants and has contributed to building an enabling innovation ecosystem through its funding, research, convening, policy engagement and resource development.

During the evaluation period, the HIF was governed by Elrha's 2019-23 Strategy, which outlines the need for humanitarian research and evidence to improve humanitarian response. Elrha aims to catalyse change across the humanitarian sector, including by influencing funding decisions, building knowledge and skills, and creating a supportive environment for research and innovation.

The strategy defines four interconnected areas of work (the 4Ds) to achieve these aims:

- **Define:** Identify and prioritise the most pressing problems within humanitarian response and plan the research and innovation approaches needed to tackle them.
- **Develop:** Invest in the right people to research, explore, develop and test the solutions to these problems. This 'D' includes all of the HIF's grant-making activities.
- **Distil:** Create and share practical tools and guidance based on evidence of what works.
- **Drive:** Empower the humanitarian community to adopt what works.

These work areas are designed to maximise the impact of the initiatives that Elrha supports. They require its programmes to "engage early and regularly" with key influencers and decision makers at a global and national levels to ensure their involvement and commitment. The HIF implements this strategy across six focus areas of work:

- Disability and Older Age Inclusion (DOAI)
- Gender Based Violence (GBV)
- Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)
- Scale
- Locally-led Innovation
- Skills Building

In addition to Elrha's strategy, the HIF also had a programme strategy for 2018-2020 that guided its investments and work. The strategy, entitled 'A **Responsible** Ambition,' emphasised the importance of responsible (i.e. ethical) innovation, collaboration with others, and accountability. Six main elements of work were identified and although the strategy has expired it was important in decisions that were made over the evaluation period. The areas of work were: end-to-end solutions, new partnerships, local engagement, bigger problems, ecosystem change and creating tools.

1.1. Objectives of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the performance and impact of the HIF programme from January 2019 to September 2022. The evaluation sought to respond to the following seven questions, which were developed and refined in collaboration with the Evaluation Steering Committee:

1. How do activities implemented within the 4Ds contribute to the outcomes identified?
2. What impact and outcomes is the HIF generating?
3. What is the value for money generated by the HIF?
4. How effective is the HIF at learning and adapting?
5. How does the HIF support its partners and grantees to learn and adapt?
6. How does the HIF navigate risk?
7. What is the HIF's contribution to the sector?

The primary audiences for the evaluation are the HIF team, the HIF advisory group and funding committee, the Elrha board of trustees and senior leadership team, and the HIF donors. It is also anticipated to have relevant findings for other audiences, including HIF grantees and others in the sector.

1.2. Outline of the report

The report starts by describing the methodology, including an overview of the approach, evaluation framework and limitations. Chapters 3-7 detail the evaluation findings, structured against the evaluation sub-questions (see Figure 1.1). The final chapter explores the recommendations.

Figure 1.1 Evaluation questions by chapter

3 — THE 4DS MODEL

Define: How does the HIF use problem-definition to guide its work and who is involved?

Develop: How does the HIF use grant-making, particularly the challenge approach, to guide its work?

Who are the HIF's partners and who receives funding?

What non-financial support is most valuable and why?

Distil: What is the uptake of the HIF's resources? Who uses them and how?

Drive: How does HIF co-ordinate, share learning with, and influence the humanitarian sector?

4 — VALUE GENERATED

What outcomes has the HIF generated across its focus areas?

What unintended or unexpected outcomes has the HIF generated?

To what extent have funded innovations continued to operate, been adopted, and scaled?

To what extent does the HIF's strategy support the HIF in achieving the identified outcomes?

5 — VALUE FOR MONEY

What value is being generated by the HIF?

How is the HIF investing its financial resources?

Which areas are worth the investment?

What does the HIF need to do differently in the future?

6 — RISK, LEARNING & ADAPTATION

How does the HIF make decisions about its strategy, funding, support and research and who is included?

How does learning inform decisions and adaptation?

How has the HIF responded to external funding trends and contextual events?

How are partners and grantees learning and adapting?

What are the main risks that the HIF is managing?

What risks do grantees face and how does the HIF support this?

7 — CONTRIBUTION TO THE SECTOR

How does the HIF differ from other humanitarian innovation funders?

What are the unique contributions the HIF makes to the sector?

2. Methodology

2.1. Overview of the approach

The evaluation aimed to assess the HIF programme as a whole, including its grant-making, enabling support and sector-wide engagement. The evaluation does not cover the HIF's Community-led Innovation Partnership (CLIP), which was established in 2020 and will be evaluated separately. The evaluation was conducted from December 2019 to October 2022 and involved three stages:

- **Inception, January 2021:** An evaluation framework was developed on the basis of a document review and workshops with HIF staff and Steering Committee. It included evaluation questions, sub-questions and methodology design (see Annex 1).
- **Midline data collection and report, April-July 2021:** Initial research and analysis was carried out, including a document review, interviews with 25 stakeholders and a capturing change exercise for 35 grants. A midline report explored emerging findings and made recommendations for the endline phase. Feedback was provided by the Evaluation Steering Committee.
- **Endline data collection and report, October 2022:** The midline findings, feedback and evaluation framework were reviewed, and minor updates were made to the evaluation questions and capturing change exercise. Endline data collection included further document reviews, two surveys, interviews with 39 stakeholders, capturing change exercises for 33 grants, the programme and partners, and the development of six illustrative highlights. Data from the midline and endline was analysed and triangulated.

2.2. Methodology

The evaluation collected a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data to respond to the evaluation questions. Data was gathered using the methods described below and was systematically analysed and triangulated to develop the findings.

Document review

A review of key documents was carried out at midline and updated at endline. It included Elrha documents, such as strategy documents and the HIF's Theory of Change (ToC), internal and external HIF research, publications and reports, grant reports, and internal HIF data, including financial data and grant management data, as well as wider literature (see Annex 4).

Nested theories of change

Six nested ToCs were developed to describe how change happens at different levels (project, portfolio and sector), and these were then used as frameworks to assess the HIF's contribution to change.

The initial change maps were drafted based on Elrha's 4Ds, the HIF's overarching ToC, and key documents. We updated the maps through workshops with HIF team members that explored the changes the HIF wanted to see. Short 'if, then' narratives were developed to describe the areas where the HIF aimed to catalyse change. The nested ToCs are not linear change maps showing cause and effect, but instead attempt to demonstrate how the HIF perceives change to happen across complex areas of work. The change statements from the nested ToCs are provided in Annex 2.

Capturing change

The process for capturing change was adapted from an Outcome Harvesting methodology. A total of 68 grants were included (31% of HIF's total portfolio of 219 grants). The grants selected were funded between 2016[4] and 2021 and were selected by the HIF team to ensure representation of different years of funding, different funding calls and focus areas, as well as factoring in the reporting data available. Changes were identified (a) by the research team and HIF staff through a review of grantee reporting and (b) by grantees through capturing change workshops facilitated by the evaluation team or HIF staff.

The task was not to evaluate the work of each grantee, but rather to explore the changes that have occurred at different levels and how the HIF contributed to the changes. The outcome harvesting methodology asks open questions about change to enable participants to identify changes that are valuable to them, and to give insight into unanticipated changes. This approach is particularly valuable in complex environments, where change is unpredictable and multiple actors contribute to outcomes.

Due to different perspectives, the type, range and depth of data captured was not always consistent. In addition, the approach drew on a sample of grants; it did not seek to provide full coverage across all HIF-funded projects. The data therefore provided *examples* of changes, which were analysed and mapped to programme milestones to understand where changes were concentrated, and how change tends to come about. As a result of these considerations, and based on feedback at midline, a qualitative analysis was prioritised over a quantitative approach. An adapted coding approach was applied at the endline to all changes captured from the 68 grants, to support grouping and qualitative analysis. The approach was based on the HIF's definition of 'value' which incorporated (a) learning and (b) progress towards and achievement of scale (uptake and adoption).

To map progress towards (b) scale, we used the Innovation Milestones Matrix developed by the HIF and ALNAP.[5] The Matrix includes 34 components across six milestones on the innovation pathway, mapped to five innovation stages, which broadly map to the HIF's innovation pathway stages (see Annex 9). By coding and mapping the changes to these components, we were able to identify the progress of grants against their expected innovation stage, group and analyse changes at each milestone, and identify 'high value' changes that were expected to generate momentum and make positive contributions to uptake and adoption.

In addition to applying the outcome harvesting methodology at the grant level, capturing change workshops were conducted (a) with HIF staff to capture changes at the programme level (across all four Ds) and (b) with national partners (ADRRN, CDP and SEEDS) to capture changes that support the locally-led innovation focus area. These were coded to the focus areas and 4Ds where relevant and analysed qualitatively. All grant outcomes were coded under Develop.

Interviews

Key informant interviews were conducted with HIF stakeholders, including Elrha and HIF staff and governance representatives, Technical Working Group members, grant holders and wider sector peers, including other innovation funders. A total of 64 informants were interviewed; 25 at midline and 39 at endline. A semi-structured interview approach was used to gather data from informants across a range

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[4] A sample of grants from before the evaluation period (2019-22) were included to enable the identification of longer term outcomes, which are expected to be realised at or beyond the end of the grant period.

[5] Warner, A. T. (2017) Working paper: Monitoring humanitarian innovation. HIF/ALNAP Working Paper. *London: ODI/ALNAP.*

of evaluation questions, including the HIF's contributions to sector, programme and project level changes, how learning and adaptation happens, perspectives on the HIF's approach, the HIF's unique value add to the sector and the enablers and barriers associated with impact.

Surveys

A grant holder survey was distributed to a grantee mailing list[6] of current and former grant holders and 30 responses were received. The survey gathered grantee perspectives on the HIF's approach, resources and non-financial support and value add to the sector, using a combination of multiple choice, Likert scale and open text response questions. The survey was anonymous to facilitate open responses.

A stakeholder survey was distributed through regular Elrha and HIF email newsletters, and 27 responses were received. There were no limits placed on participation, barring current or former grant holders, who were redirected to the grant holder survey. The survey gathered stakeholder perspectives on the HIF's approach, resources and value add to the sector, using similar types of questions and was also anonymous.

Illustrative highlights

The methods above provided holistic and high-level data, and were complemented by six illustrative highlights developed to add in-depth insight to specific areas of work. The highlights were developed using additional document and literature reviews and interviews (included in overall interview numbers above).

Figure 2.1 Data sources by chapter

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[6] The survey was shared with a contact list of 215 emails. The response rate was 14%.

2.3. Ethics and inclusion

All data collection for this evaluation was conducted in accordance with our ethical data collection policies, including thorough informed consent procedures and data protection processes. Survey responses were collected anonymously, without identifying information. Interview findings were reported anonymously. All data was stored in accordance with our data protection policy. Our policies and processes are informed by best practices in research and humanitarian fieldwork and cover safeguarding, data protection and privacy, ethical data collection in the field, and fraud.

We sought to apply inclusive and participatory methods throughout the evaluation. The capturing change methodology was based on a participatory approach, facilitated by workshops to co-develop stories of changes and contributions with stakeholders involved. Of grantees interviewed, 27% were based in crisis-affected countries. A significant limitation to a more inclusive approach was the lack of perspectives and voices of people affected by crisis (see Section 2.4).

2.4. Limitations

This section describes the challenges and limitations experienced during the evaluation period, and how they were responded to.

- **Selection bias:** We planned to use stratified random sampling to include a diverse range of respondents, ensuring representation across the HIF's focus areas, different contexts including crisis-affected countries, and different types, stages and scales of innovation. This approach was limited by the extent to which the HIF had a continued relationship with grantees and was able to request their participation. Wider stakeholders were also included on the basis of existing relationships with the HIF. This means much of the data collected for this evaluation was from individuals with close and positive relationships with the HIF, which may have contributed to biases in the findings.

- **Frontline perspectives:** The voices and perspectives heard in this evaluation are the innovators and practitioners the HIF has worked with directly. The evaluation did not gain a thorough understanding of the impact the HIF had among people affected by crisis. Instead, the analysis focused on the extent to which the HIF was able to equip innovators to support people affected by crisis. Efforts were made to engage innovators in crisis-affected countries; of the 30 grantees interviewed, 8 were based in crisis-affected countries.

- **Funding cuts:** During the evaluation period, the HIF's largest donor (the UK Government's FCDO) significantly cut its budget for the 2021-2022 financial year, as part of an overall reduction in UK aid funding. This led to a reduction in staff and programming for the HIF and to stress and uncertainty for all Elrha staff. In response, we took a flexible approach, including extending the midline timeline and moving the financial data review and value for money analysis to the endline period.

- **Staff turnover:** High staff turnover during the evaluation period resulted in loss of several staff with close relationships with grantees and in-depth knowledge of their innovations. We interviewed staff before they left where possible. However, the capturing change method was implemented in collaboration with Innovation Managers (IMs) and the loss of institutional knowledge limited the depth of data. Where possible we drew on HIF documents and grantee reports to fill gaps, as well as additional data collection with longer term staff.

- **Limited uptake of surveys:** We received 30 responses to the grantee survey and 27 responses to the stakeholder survey. While this number was as expected, neither sample size provided enough data to disaggregate the findings and draw conclusions about the perspectives and experiences of different stakeholder groups.

- **Evaluation timeframe:** It takes time for innovations to be developed, tested and adopted. For this reason, the evaluation includes the perspectives and achievements of grantees awarded before 2019. However, the value for money analysis was only carried out using financial data for the evaluation period (2019-22) as per the original scope. The implications of this are explored within the value for money analysis in Chapter 5. To evaluate scale outcomes of innovation projects in future, we would recommend at least a 5-year timeframe.

- **Testing the theory of change and assumptions:** The evaluation took a theory-based approach by describing how the HIF aimed to contribute to change through its strategic areas of work (the 4Ds) and across its six focus areas (see Section 1.1). However, it did not test specific assumptions as these were not comprehensive, and not aligned to the nested Theories of Change or the evaluation questions. During the evaluation period, HIF staff moved away from using the nested Theories of Change developed in the inception phase, as they were seen as siloed.

3. The 4Ds model

Summary

This chapter explores the HIF's approach, process and activities under each of the 4Ds (see Figure 3.1). It is based on the document review, data from 64 interviews with HIF staff and stakeholders, and applicant and grantee monitoring data.

- The 4Ds provided a framework of activities that responded to the barriers to scaling in the humanitarian sector.
- There was notable investment in problem definition research. Gap analyses provided a thorough understanding of work areas and helped convene TWGs. There were efforts to incorporate frontline perspectives into top-level gap analysis research.
- There were some tensions between the challenge fund approach and the HIF's historical role in providing end-to-end funding.
- Challenge calls received a large number of expressions of interest. The applicants included a high proportion of organisations from LMICs (76%) but this number dropped to 24% at award. HIF funded grantees from disability and age organisations but did not collect data on this.
- The HIF generated a range of resources that were downloaded and used. There is limited data on how these resources are used beyond the HIF and grantees.
- The HIF made concentrated advocacy efforts to help raise-awareness of its WASH innovations, its most mature portfolio. This resulted in several adoption outcomes. However, in general driving adoption was under-resourced in comparison to other areas.

Figure 3.1 HIF investment in the 4Ds, 2019-22

HIF total spend 2019-22

£12.9M — 84%

£10.9M — **Included in the evaluation:** Core programme spending (including direct grant investment, programme activities and staff costs) – see breakdown by 4Ds below

£2.1M — **Excluded from the evaluation:** CLIP programme spending (including payments to partners, programme activities and staff costs)

£1.4M — Gap analysis and problem exploration research / Convening TWGs / Challenge fund design → **DEFINE** — Identify and prioritise the most pressing humanitarian problems and plan the research and innovation approaches needed to tackle them.

£8.4M — Direct grant investment / Grant management / Grantee support → **DEVELOP** — Invest in the right people to research, explore, develop and test the solutions to these problems.

£0.7M — Research and publications / Events → **DISTIL** — Create and share practical tools and guidance based on evidence of what works.

£0.4M — Events / Policy engagement → **DRIVE** — Empower the humanitarian community to adopt what works.

3.1. Define: Problem-driven innovation

Under 'Define', the HIF sought to 'identify and prioritise the most pressing problems within humanitarian response and plan the research and innovation approaches needed to tackle them'. This work included gap analysis research, engagement with HIF management and the TWGs, and challenge fund design and development. The HIF **dedicated considerable resources to 'Define' in 2019-22** (£1,352,909).

How does the HIF use problem-definition to guide its work?

Being 'problem-led' was fundamental to the HIF's approach to funding. HIF IMs, HIF management, and TWGs **used the gap analysis research to determine and design funding calls**. For example, the HIF's 2016 GBV Gap Analysis[7] identified a gap in monitoring and evaluation in GBV programming, which resulted in three rounds of funding in 2017, 2018 and 2019 to better understand the problem and develop solutions. This provided a solid and coherent approach to problem definition and learning informed decision making for the GBV portfolio.

For WASH, the TWG had greater input into how the gap analysis was interpreted and which gaps were prioritised. The 2013 WASH Gap Analysis[8] identified a longlist of 58 gaps. With advice from the TWG, the HIF shortlisted seven gaps[9] and commissioned further research in five areas[10]. However, shortlisting did not follow the gap analysis order of prioritisation, and not all funding calls aligned to the shortlisted gaps (see Annex 6); the WASH TWG exercised additional judgement in determining priorities, in order to prioritise gaps where opportunities for innovation were the greatest (which weren't always in the top gaps). The decisions made were therefore informed by the make-up of the group as well as the research (see following section and Figure 3.2). In 2022, the HIF published a practical six-step methodology for exploring problems to identify innovation opportunities[11], which is likely to be useful for WASH and other thematic areas to further unpack problems identified in gap analyses.

As well as guiding the HIF's own work, the HIF's published gap analyses were **intended to contribute to the sector's understanding of key challenges and innovation gaps**. Interviewees reported that the identified gaps were not necessarily new, but broadly agreed that it was helpful to have them documented in one place. 87% of 30 surveyed grantees and 60% of 27 stakeholders[12] said they agree or strongly agree that the HIF had raised awareness of key gaps that would benefit from innovation. Section 3.3 explores uptake of the HIF's research.

Who is involved in problem definition? To what extent are problems defined by crisis affected people?

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[7] Small Arms Survey (2016). 'Gender Based Violence Interventions: Opportunities for Innovation'. Humanitarian Innovation Fund Gap Analysis. Elrha: Cardiff.

[8] Bastable and Russell (2013). 'Gap Analysis in Emergency Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion'. Oxfam and Elrha.

[9] WASH priority areas for innovation (2015): 1. Hand washing solutions and promotion; 2. Water treatment; 3. Community-level excreta management; 4. Solid waste management; 5. Surface water drainage; 6. Latrine lighting and safety; 7. Urban sanitation alternatives

[10] 2016 Problem Explorations Reports: Handwashing; Solid Waste Disposal; Surface Water Drainage; Water Treatment; and Faecal Sludge Management.

[11] Wong, A. et al. (2022). 'Exploring problems to find innovation opportunities: A methodology for humanitarian innovators and funders developed for WASH and other sectors'. Elrha.

[12] 7% of grantees and 33% of stakeholders said they didn't know or left the question blank.

The HIF's problem definition research is typically **authored by commissioned specialists from high income country (HIC)-based organisations** (see Figure 3.2). During the evaluation period, the HIF made a significant effort to shift towards incorporating the views of people from affected populations into gap analyses. This proved harder for some thematic areas than others, for example it was harder to consult affected populations on GBV issues due to the related stigma, and data collection for both the recent GBV and DOAI gap analyses was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The **2021 WASH Gap Analysis was explicitly designed to enable crisis affected people to define gaps**, a notable shift compared to the 2013 WASH Gap Analysis. The methodology included over 150 FGDs with crisis affected people and the report described their perspectives and priorities independent of the views of other participants. However, this extensive consultation resulted in broader and less specific findings compared to the 2013 report. Affected people were less included in the problem exploration reports.

Figure 3.2 Participants in gap analysis research

	RESEARCHERS AND AUTHORS		CONSULTATIONS		
	INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS	**NATIONAL / LOCAL ORGS**	**INTERNATIONAL ACTORS**	**NATIONAL / LOCAL ACTORS**	**CRISIS-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES**
WASH 2021	Global WASH Cluster, Elrha, Oxfam, Tufts University		256	700	1,700
GBV 2021	Global Women's Institute (GWI)		~30 to 50	~50 to 70	
DOAI 2020	Nossal Institute	ASB Indonesia	11	9	14
TOO TOUGH TO SCALE 2018	Spring Impact, Science Practice, Elrha		23		

The TWGs that worked with the HIF to define and prioritise the problems were made up of a range of sector experts (see Figure 3.2). The majority (78%) were staff of large international humanitarian organisations or independent technical experts. Several members of each TWG (22% overall) were based in or from crisis-affected countries. However, there was **limited representation of people with lived-experience of humanitarian crisis in the HIF's wider governance structures**, including its funding committee or advisory group. Although affected people fed into the more recent gap analyses, the way they fed into how the data was used was more limited.

Figure 3.3 Composition of Technical Working Groups (October 2022)

	INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION	HIC CONSULTANT	LMIC-BASED INGO STAFF	NATIONAL ORGANISATION	LMIC CONSULTANT
WASH	15	3	2		
GBV	7	2		2	1
DOAI	11		2	3	1

3.2. Develop: Funding and supporting solutions

Under 'Develop', the HIF sought to 'invest in the right people to research, explore, develop and test the solutions to these problems'. 'Develop' encompassed all of the HIF's grant-making activities, including its direct grant investments (£6.7million in 2019-22, 61% of its total spend) and its support to grantees, including staff time, workshops and training (£1,748,001 in 2019-22, 16% of its total spend)[13].

How does the HIF use grant-making, particularly the challenge approach, to guide its work?

Grant-making is the core tenet of the HIF's approach. The HIF successfully used grant-making to support a range of innovation projects that enabled organisations to carry out novel research, innovate and do things differently. In surveys, 62% of stakeholders and 77% of grantees agreed or strongly agreed that HIF-funded projects would not otherwise have been funded.

The HIF originally awarded funding through open calls but shifted to a challenge fund approach. The challenge funds **helped the HIF focus its resources on priority problems and helped both the HIF and grantees understand the underlying causes of the problems they were addressing**. In several cases, they also enabled greater knowledge sharing between funded projects; one grantee commented that the challenge fund approach provided "*an incentive, a network and the resources needed to take different ideas and develop them further*". Other research also shows that challenge funds help innovators to thrive by combining cash and capacity building and by developing a cohort of diverse innovations around a problem[14].

However, several interviewees felt that **the lack of open calls limited experimentation**. One interviewee commented that system-change innovations are often difficult to identify and that "*a totally different approach to the delivery of aid wouldn't get funded, because there is no open call anymore, and I think that was what was really valuable.*" Similarly, interviewees noted that some applications were of low

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[13] It is noted that there was less spending on grants than anticipated in 2021, due to funding cuts. Similarly, staff costs have been proportionately higher because teams were built in 2020 to do work that was then cut.

[14] Sellick V., Solder A., & Roberts, I. (2018). Funding innovation: A practice guide. Nesta. London.

quality, or unaware of what innovations had been tried in the past. Again, these findings are supported by other research[15].

The challenge fund approach did not necessarily support end-to-end funding. With the challenge fund approach, grantees must repeatedly apply for funding and their work may not align to the specific challenge call at the time. Respondents commented that **built in reviews and follow-on funding to enable projects to continue their innovation journey would have been valuable.** Without a clear plan on how to scale innovations, challenge funds risk supporting pilots that are not sustainable[16].

The HIF **recognised these limitations and used other funding approaches for its non-technical focus areas.** In 2020 its Journey to Scale call funded 5 projects that demonstrated readiness to take their innovation to scale. The Locally-led Innovation calls took a place-based approach, funding innovations in the Philippines, Indonesia and India. The HIF also provided Covid-19 specific funding to several former WASH grantees.

Who are the HIF's partners and how are they engaged in delivering outcomes? To what extent are partnerships inclusive and how does the HIF manage power dynamics?

In 2017 the HIF formalised a partnership with ADRRN. The relationship was initially formed through the HIF's participation at ADRRN's Annual General Assembly. It was driven by ADRRN recognising that they needed to 'do disaster management differently' and their interest in embedding innovation. The HIF was also interested in localisation and in expanding its funding beyond its 'usual suspects' (international, HIC-based organisations).

During the evaluation period, the HIF provided ADRRN with innovation management expertise and support, and ADRRN provided an established network of local and national organisations and access to the humanitarian ecosystem in Asia. The partnership focused on three countries. In each country an ADRRN member organisations acted as the national focal point:

- **India:** Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS) works in India and Nepal to build the resilience of people exposed to disasters and climate change impacts.
- **Philippines:** Centre for Disaster Preparedness (CDP) is a regional resource centre focused on capacity-building for community-based DRRM and climate change adaptation.
- **Indonesia:** Yakkum Emergency Unit (YEU) works with a network of 350 CBOs across Indonesia on inclusion and community participation in emergency response.

National focal points operated as "an extended arm for the [HIF] team" for its Locally-led Innovation focus area, including funding call outreach, supporting grantees through the application process and building national actors' capacity and knowledge of humanitarian innovation and innovation management. The national focal points were able to facilitate the HIF's *"trust in the system, where local innovators, for very practical reasons, may be very difficult to engage with to be trusted by an organisation that is sitting in London. We could attest to their credibility, accountability, commitment to the idea."* One partner commented that as a result of the pandemic there was a shift from ADRRN and HIF IMs having the primary relationship with funded innovators, towards national focal points having a closer relationship with them.

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[15] Ballantyne, P. & The Centre for Challenge Prizes (n.d.). Challenge Prizes, a practice guide. Nesta London.

[16] Sellick V., Solder A., & Roberts, I. (2018). Funding innovation: A practice guide. Nesta London.

Decisions regarding the partnership involved consultations with partners. Partners commented that the **HIF works in a way that allows organisations to maintain their autonomy and align objectives with national and regional priorities**. The partnership centred on a foundation of knowledge-sharing and mutually beneficial collaboration[17]; there was an established "level of trust" between the partners that facilitated constructive and honest conversations and ad-hoc problem solving. This was enabled by the HIF resourcing the development of informal relationships with partner staff through in-person visits. One partner commented that restricted travel due to Covid-19 did not negatively affect the relationship, because it had already been built.

Who receives funding? To what extent is funding accessible to grantees from countries affected by humanitarian crisis?

The HIF recorded data on the organisation, location, and gender of the project lead for applicants and grant holders[18]. This data is explored below. The HIF did not collect data on the race and ethnicity, age or disability of its applicants or grant holders. For grant partners, some limited information was collected on type of organisation and location, but no data was recorded on gender, race and ethnicity, age or disability. Collecting this data would provide a more comprehensive understanding of who the HIF funds and enable the HIF to better understand barriers to inclusion in its funding processes. Recording organisational characteristics would also aid this analysis (e.g. women-led, youth-led, refugee led).

Between 2019 and 2022 **the majority of the HIF's grants were awarded to international NGOs** (48% of grants) and research organisations (22%). The proportion of grants received by national NGOs increased in recent years, from 8% of grants awarded in 2016-18 to 15% of grants awarded since 2019 (not including the CLIP[19]).

LMIC-led grants

During the evaluation period, **the HIF increased the proportion of its grants to organisations based in the Global South** and communities affected by crisis. This was largely through its Locally-led Innovation focus area (12 grants since 2019). Beyond these grants, the HIF awarded 7 other LMIC-led grants between 2019-22. 11% (£985,000) of its awarded funding was directed to LMIC-based organisations[20]. This was not a substantial difference to the proportion awarded to LMIC-based organisations in previous years (9%, 2015-18). This does not include the CLIP.

There was **a significant drop-off in LMIC-led organisations at the Expression of Interest stage**. In a sample of 8 recent funding calls[21] (that had an EOI stage and awarded funding), 76% of 1,081 applicants

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[17] See Illustrative highlight 2 for an overview of the partner-level outcomes enabled by the partnership.

[18] In the past (pre-2019) this data was not consistently collected and recorded, which limited our ability to explore trends over time.

[19] The Community-Led Innovation Partnership (CLIP) is a recent initiative from Elrha and the Start Network to support locally-led innovation labs in selected countries, with financial and non-financial support provided entirely via in-country partners. It is being evaluated separately and was not included in the scope of this report.

[20] This excludes funding awarded through the CLIP. In 2020-22 the HIF spent £2,060,078 on the CLIP, including £1,235,565 to local partners in Guatemala, the Philippines and Indonesia.

[21] Driving the adoption of GBV M&E approaches; Exploring the barriers faced by those living with incontinence in humanitarian emergencies; Inclusive Preparedness Challenge; Innovative Responses to Intimate Partner Violence in Humanitarian Settings; Meaningful Participation Challenge - Increasing the meaningful participation of people with disabilities and older people in humanitarian action; Safe, dignified and inclusive menstrual hygiene management

that submitted an EOI were based in LMICs. However, of the 171 organisations that were invited and went on to submit a full proposal, the proportion fell to 37%[22]. Of the organisations that submitted a full proposal, 25 were successfully awarded funding, of which 24% were based in LMICs. Proposals were scored according to scalability, novelty and quality criteria; we did not have data on how LMIC-led organisations scored relative to others but limited resources may be a factor.

For national and local organisations, the HIF's EOI processes can be time consuming. One national organisation that was successful commented that they dedicated a month to the EOI, *"to consider how relevant the challenge was for us, find suitable partners, discuss the EOI draft with them … [and] think through the approach"*. Interviewees also commented that the HIF's application and onboarding processes can be challenging for local organisations. The application process, information about the HIF and resources they produced were in English. The timeframe for the proposal can also be difficult, as organisations need to develop a partnership within this timeframe, which is easier for organisations with existing networks and reputation to do quickly.

> *"Often it's the big INGOs that bubble up, you know, out of 50-60 applications from a range of actors, … because they're the strong proposal writers, they're the ones that have the resources to develop the ideas and match funds if need be and so forth."* **HIF Governance**

This data demonstrates that many LMIC actors see the HIF as a viable funding source and dedicate time and resources to funding applications, but various barriers mean funding is not as accessible to them[23].

Gender

Between 2019-22, **60% of the HIF's grants were led by women.** This figure has remained similar since the HIF started awarding funding, demonstrating good and consistent representation of women at the project lead level.

However, there were differences in gender by focus area. Since 2019 all but one of the 11 Locally-Led Innovation grants with gender data were led by men. This finding reflects the difference in gender according to where the grantee is based: 28% of the 18 LMIC-led grants funded since 2019 (with gender data) were led by women, whereas 71% of HIC-led grants were led by women. Though the HIF does not have targets for the inclusion of women in its grant funding, inclusion is part of its strategy as a responsible funder. The HIF should look to increase the representation of female-led organisations in LMICs in the future.

What non-financial support is most valuable to grantees and partners and why?

Non-financial support was an important component of the HIF's innovation support. Grantees accessed and made use of a variety of **non-financial support** from the HIF, including innovation management support, technical advice, resources and convening. Of a sample of 30 grantees surveyed,

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(MHM) programming; Understanding the barriers to inclusion faced by people with disabilities and older people in humanitarian programming; and WASH Evidence Challenge.

[22] Within this sample, 42% of HIC-led organisations that submitted an EOI were invited to and went on to submit a full proposal, compared to 8% of LMIC-led organisations.

[23] The HIF reported efforts to encourage LMIC applicants to partner with larger organisations where proposals were complementary. It was not possible for us to identify where this resulted in partnerships using the data available.

12 (40%) said the HIF's non-financial support helped their innovation thrive to a great extent, and a further 10 (33%) said it helped to some extent[24].

The HIF supported grantees throughout the grant period through **a dedicated IM, responsible for reporting, risk management and ad-hoc project support.** This was provided through regular calls, and was valued by grantees for offering advice and collaborative problem solving. 14 (46%) of surveyed grantees said the IM was among the most valuable non-financial support received from the HIF.

> *"The Innovation Manager's support and interest in the project has been fantastic. They are experts in the field and have enthusiasm for the project and really want to work with us for the project to succeed. We have really appreciated the close involvement of the IM."* **Grantee, Survey**

Access to workshops, events and conferences was considered highly valuable by 14 (46%) of surveyed grantees. Workshops at the outset of grant funding introduced grantees to innovation practice and themes such as ethics and participation practice. The HIF also resourced expert mentoring and coaching for grantees to build innovation capacity. For example, Journey to Scale grantees received intensive support to develop scaling strategies.

> *"[The HIF's] workshops [are] an enormously useful approach to bring people together. And they bring out themes like ethics, participation, all of those issues. The meeting that we had in The Hague in 2019 … their ability to bring key people together, and bringing grantees or candidates to create forums that don't otherwise exist."* **Grantee, Interview**

> *"One of the things that we learned fairly early on in one of those workshops is a scaling strategy around scaling up or scaling out and I still use that language."* **Grantee, Interview**

The value of **sector-specific knowledge and introductions** varied depending on the position of the innovator. It was especially useful for non-traditional innovators, smaller organisations and those new to the humanitarian sector. However, large organisations with their own processes, networks and experience in innovation saw less value in the HIF's non-financial support.

3.3. Distil: Developing evidence, tools and learning

Within its 'Distil' workstream, the HIF sought to 'create and share practical tools and guidance based on evidence of what works'. This included research and publications, including the Humanitarian Innovation Guide, case studies and evidence reports, and research uptake and outreach activities. The HIF spent a total £677,110 on 'Distil' in 2019-22 (6% of its total spending).

What is the uptake of the HIF's resources? Who uses them and how?

Resources were used to support innovators, including the HIF's own grantees, as well as the wider humanitarian sector. Overall, the publications helped increase knowledge and understanding of humanitarian innovation and equipped IMs and grantees with tools to improve innovation management and think more strategically about scale.

The HIF's publications were accessed and downloaded by grantees and stakeholders. Website analytics indicated that **several reports received upwards of 1,000 annual views.** For example, the 2021 WASH Gap Analysis was viewed 2,220 times between October 2021 and September 2022, and the report Innovation for Sexual and Reproductive Health in Humanitarian Crises received 1,681 views in the same period. Anecdotal evidence suggested that some resources were used, including the Humanitarian

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[24] One grantee (3%) said it did not help their innovation thrive, and others (23%) said they didn't know.

Innovation Guide and Too Tough to Scale paper. An analysis of citations indicated that the 2013 WASH Gap Analysis remained one the HIF's most cited outputs (see Annex 13).

The HIF's published work **bolstered its reputation within the humanitarian sector** and respondents considered the HIF website and published reports as useful resources for the latest learning on humanitarian innovation. Half of 27 stakeholders surveyed said they used HIF resources and one commented *"the resources are a university to us"*.

Of 30 surveyed grantees, 10% said they regularly used HIF resources and 60% said they sometimes used HIF resources. A further 23% said they rarely used the resources and 7% said never. The resources most engaged with were the gap analyses (67% of grantees), research reports and evaluations (67%) and the Humanitarian Innovation Guide (37%). **A high proportion of grantees felt the resources had improved their knowledge and understanding** (63%). Some grantees felt this had transferred to their project; 7 grantees (23%) reported that their engagement with the resources had improved the way they work and/or had improved the results or impact of their project.

As well as directly commissioning and delivering its own evidence, tools and learning, the HIF contributed to a wealth of evidence and learning produced and distilled by its funded grantees, including learning reports, tools and guidance, and journal papers. These contributed to, and were disseminated in, the HIF's own resources, feeding into case studies and blog posts.

3.4. Drive: Advocacy and sharing 'what works'

Within its 'Drive' workstream, the HIF sought to 'empower the humanitarian community to adopt what works'. The HIF spent **a small proportion of its total spend (4%) on Drive** (£442,221 in 2019-22). This primarily consisted of events and policy engagement activities with high-level, global humanitarian actors based in HICs.

How does HIF co-ordinate, share learning with, and influence the humanitarian sector?

HIF staff undertook several Drive engagements per year in most focus areas. For GBV and DOAI, HIF staff **participated in panels and roundtable discussions** at international forums and events, primarily focused on sharing research and learning. For WASH and Scale its engagements were mostly **direct advocacy efforts** to promote the adoption of HIF-funded innovations (which resulted in several procurement outcomes, see Chapter 4). The HIF's influence and the success of these engagements was partly enabled by the maturity of the HIF's WASH portfolio[25]. The HIF had not undertaken Drive activities for Locally-led Innovation.

In addition to focus area specific engagements, the HIF is known for its **cross-cutting humanitarian innovation expertise and networks** and stakeholders valued the HIF's convening role. The most notable example of this was the Humanitarian Innovation Exchange, which Elrha co-hosted in the Hague in June 2019. The event, attended by approximately 100 people in the humanitarian innovation space, was hosted in collaboration with the Dutch Coalition for Humanitarian Innovation. A variety of respondents highlighted this event as an important and impactful opportunity for shared learning and relationship

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[25] The WASH Innovation Catalogue for example showcases 28 proven innovations. See: Elrha. (2020) Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Innovation Catalogue: A Collection of Innovations for the Humanitarian Sector. Second edition. Elrha: London

building, and *"a hub for humanitarian innovation"*. Since the Humanitarian Innovation Exchange, however, in person events and engagements were limited by Covid-19 as well as funding reductions.

Finally, the HIF supported its grantees to engage with the sector and share learning themselves. Grantees undertook engagement, advocacy and dissemination activities independently and as part of their grants, sharing learning and evidence produced by problem recognition research, piloting and scaling journeys. Alongside external channels, the TWGs were important forums for this.

Illustrative highlight 1: Incorporating user-centred design into WASH programming

This illustrative highlight explores how the HIF's focus on user-centred design (UCD) in WASH programming has evolved through work across the four D's, and how HIF and grantee activities have contributed in different ways.

Problem recognition by the HIF (Define)

The 2013 Gap Analysis in Emergency WASH identified the lack of safe, appropriate and well-lit latrines as a challenge for the sector. It also identified a lack of community participation in WASH programmes[26].

Problem recognition by grantees (Develop)

In 2014, the HIF funded **Save the Children** to conduct a study on 'Emergency WASH for Children'. During the grant, Save the Children identified that children are rarely consulted on the design of latrines during emergencies[27].

In 2016, the HIF awarded a grant to **Oxfam** to carry out research on lighting which identified a link between poor lighting of latrines and gender-based violence (GBV). The research found that up to 40% of women in refugee camps did not use the latrines and that lighting, quality and location of latrines had an impact on feelings of safety[28]. Staff at Oxfam believed the research facilitated a mindset shift among WASH professionals, challenging them to consider new designs and requirements for latrines.

The research influenced the way Oxfam designed some of its subsequent programmes. For example, Oxfam's Women's Social Architecture project in Bangladesh worked with women and adolescent girls in Cox's Bazar and with female architects with a background in feminist design to develop new designs for the location and building of WASH facilities for Rohingya refugees.

Funding new methodologies (Develop)

In 2017, the HIF decided to invest more in UCD for WASH and launched a UCD challenge call.

Save the Children received funding in partnership with Eclipse to develop methodologies for engaging children in designing and building sanitation facilities. The project aimed to increase children's participation and build trust between implementers and communities. The HIF funded pilots in Bangladesh, Iraq, and later, through an additional Diffusion grant, Ethiopia. Oxfam were appointed as

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[26] Bastable and Russell (2013). 'Gap Analysis in Emergency Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion'. Oxfam and Elrha.

[27] Ferron, S. & Lloyd, A. (2014). Emergency WASH for Children: Scoping study. Humanitarian Innovation Fund.

[28] Oxfam & Loughborough University (2018). 'Shining a Lights: How lighting in or around sanitation facilities affects the risk of gender-based violence in camps'. Humanitarian Innovation Fund. Available here.

the Research and Evaluation partner. The pilots showed an increase in satisfaction with latrines among children and caregivers as a result of the UCD process. Participation also increased trust between displaced people and Save the Children[29].

As a result of the 2016 lighting research and evaluation of the UCD methodologies, **Oxfam** developed the Sani Tweaks approach. Sani Tweaks adopted a UCD methodology to involve communities and field staff in project design through a 'consult communities, modify intervention, consult communities' approach during first phase emergencies[30]. In 2019, the HIF provided a Diffusion grant to Oxfam to support the adoption of Sani Tweaks. Oxfam staff had noticed acceptance for UCD at head office level, but found adoption was slow among response teams. Oxfam used the funding to roll out an interactive training workshop on Sani Tweaks with 172 WASH practitioners across three emergency contexts (Ethiopia, Uganda and Mozambique).

Interviewees described the HIF as a partner in their projects. The HIF convened stakeholders and provided technical support. One of the main challenges to piloting the UCCE projects was encouraging people to focus on UCD as a *methodology*, not just a *technology*. The HIF helped grantees develop communications that emphasised the value of the methodology in its own right.

The HIF also played an important role in brokering a partnership between Save the Children and Eclipse, helping the organisations to develop a joint approach and resolve conflicts. The HIF provided Eclipse, who had limited experience in the humanitarian sector or WASH, with resources to increase their sectoral understanding.

> *"The facilitation from the HIF was very important. It helped the partnership to evolve in a positive way and helped us to be on the same page."* **Save the Children**

Save the Children, Oxfam and Eclipse developed a scaling strategy in 2020 (funded by the HIF) and in 2021 were actively seeking alternative sources of funding in order to scale up UCCE. Oxfam has not yet piloted UCCE within their programmes, but hope to be able to do this with additional funding.

Advocacy (Distil and Drive)

The HIF disseminated information about the two projects through their website. It also showcased evidence from UCD interventions at the Global WASH Cluster annual meeting, the 8th Emergency Environmental Health Forum in 2018 and the UNHCR Annual Consultations with NGOs in 2018. The HIF profiled both methodologies in its WASH Innovation Catalogue[31]. ALNAP profiled Save the Children's UCCE and Oxfam's Sani Tweaks in its research study on different forms of UCD in 2019[32].

> *"The HIF has done well in pushing UCD in every WASH forum."* **Oxfam**

Wider impact on the HIF

As a result of this work, user-centred design became a core methodology for the HIF. It has encouraged applicants across its DOAI and GBV portfolios to apply UCD methods to their innovation processes.

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[29] Elrha. (2020) Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Innovation Catalogue: A Collection of Innovations for the Humanitarian Sector. Second edition. Elrha: London

[30] *Ibid*

[31] *Ibid*

[32] Bourne, S. (2019) 'User-Centred Design and Humanitarian Adaptiveness'. London: ODI/ALNAP.

Conclusion

This chapter explored how Elrha's 4Ds have shaped the HIF's approach, processes and activities both as a grant maker and in its activities to support a more enabling innovation ecosystem.

Chapter 8 provides several recommendations that include: reflecting on how the 4Ds applies to innovation and the Locally-led innovation portfolio (Recommendation 1); more clearly defining HIF's role and ambition for Locally-led innovation and the inclusion of people in LMICs outside the CLIP (Recommendation 5 and 6); defining HIF's role and ambition as a convener for the innovation sector and how this aligns with other strategic activities (Recommendation 7); and reallocating resources to invest more in Distil and Drive (Recommendation 8 and 9).

In the next chapter we look at the outcomes of this work during the evaluation period.

4. Value generated by the HIF

Summary

This chapter describes the outcomes generated by the HIF and its funded projects. The primary data source was the capturing change data, which included changes at the programme level, for national partners, and for grantees. We also drew on grant reports, the HIF Grants Tracker and a high-level desk review on the continued existence and expansion of projects.

- The HIF's gap analyses, publications and funding influenced innovation support and practice.
- Innovators were funded at different stages. At all stages, grantees were supported to achieve key milestones and progress along the innovation pathway.
- There were different levels of investment and maturity across the six focus areas. WASH and Scale were most mature and there were examples of innovations being adopted and scaling in both portfolios.
- Fifteen projects have achieved some level of scale, collectively reaching over 900,000 beneficiaries (where numbers were recorded).
- The examples highlighted the importance of local partnership and collaboration at multiple stages of innovation. Local actors made important contributions to research and ideation, and national partners enabled access to affected communities at pilot stage. The examples also highlighted the importance of driving adoption through partnerships and other relationships, which reflects how scaling happens in the humanitarian system as a whole. The HIF's support in partnership brokering and forming connections was important.
- For non-product/service innovations in particular, the TWGs contribute to disseminating learning and promoting adoption of innovations.

4.1. Overview of grant portfolio

The HIF has awarded 219 grants since 2011 and 67 grants during the evaluation period. The grants were awarded at (a) different innovation stages and (b) under different focus areas (see Figure 4.1). The 219 grants were awarded across 164 individual innovation projects: 125 projects (76%) received a single grant; 34 projects (21%) received more than one grant at different innovation stages and over a number of years, with a total of 81 grants awarded to these projects[33].

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[33] For example: Field Ready received an Invention grant in 2014, Development grant in 2015, and Scale grant in 2016 for its onsite rapid manufacturing innovation; Help Age International received a Development, Invention and Pilot grant in 2013 and Diffusion grant in 2018 for its Rapid Assessment Method for Older People (RAM-OP) innovation; Philippine Geographical Society received an Adaptation grant in 2019 and Pilot grant in 2021 for its Maps and Cards innovation for disaster risk reduction.

Figure 4.1 Grant portfolio overview

Number of grants by award year

All grants 2011 – 2021, 219 grants

2011	2013		2015			2017		2019		2021
7	14	16	20	12	42	25	16	25	35	7

Evaluation period
2019 – 2021, 67 grants

Number of grants by innovation stage

All grants 2011 – 2021, 219 grants

25	20	9	70	23	72
Recognition	Invention	Adaptation	Pilot (including development and diffusion)	Scale	No stage specified

Number of grants by focus area

All grants 2011 – 2021, 219 grants

Focus area grants 2014 – 2021, 108 grants

48	45	18	10	19	45	19	15
Early stage innovation (2011-18)	Development, Invention and Pilot (2011-17)	Diffusion (2011-17)	DOAI (2019-20)	GBV (2016-21)	WASH (2014-20)	Scale (2016-21)	Locally led innovation (2017-21)

Innovation stage

Innovation is a process that starts off with identifying a problem and ends when the solution(s) to that problem has been applied everywhere that the problem exists. Researchers and organisations use a variety of terms and categories to break-down the process into stages. We follow the terminology used by the HIF, which broadly aligns with most other innovation funders and supporters in the sector.

The types of results that are expected differ at different stages:

1. **Recognition** involves identifying a specific problem or opportunity. During this stage innovators should be collating knowledge on the issue, diagnosing root causes and developing a clear definition for the problem.

2. **Search** - This stage involves looking for existing solutions to the problem, which might exist in the sector or in other sectors or industries. The HIF didn't fund any specific grants for this stage though it is often an implicit part of Recognition stage grants.

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3. **Adaption/invention** depends on whether Search yielded any workable solutions. A solution may be significantly adapted from elsewhere to meet the new demands of the problem or a new solution may be needed. In either case, the innovators will need to generate proof of concept.

4. **Pilot** involves testing a solution in a real-world environment to learn whether and how it works. It requires implementing the innovation, proving the logistics, and developing evidence and learning for the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the innovation.

5. **Scale** involves developing logistics, organisational, partnership, and financial models for the innovation to be implemented sustainably. The appropriate ultimate scale will depend on the size of the problem and the extent to which the solution was tailored to a specific population. It requires evidence of relevance, effectiveness and impact.

Focus areas

From 2020, the HIF allocated all of its funding through six different areas. These focus areas were launched at different times. The length of time the HIF has invested in the focus area, combined with the maturity of the sectors themselves, mean they target innovations at different stages of the process.

Table 4.1: Focus area launch and maturity

Area	Launch	Maturity of the portfolio
DOAI	2019	**Early stage** There are few research or innovation initiatives targeted at DOAI in the sector. 80% of the 10 grants awarded during 2019-22 were for Recognition (57% of funds) and 20% of grants were for Adaptation (43% of funds).
GBV	2015	**Mid stage** The HIF supported innovations at a range of stages in this area. 50% of the 6 grants were for adaptation or invention (54% of funds); 17% for pilots (16% of funds); and 33% for scale (30% of funds).
WASH	2013	**Mid stage** The HIF supported innovations at a range of stages. 20% of grants were Recognition, 5% were Adaptation, 46% were Pilots, and 25% were Scale (three grants covered 2+ stages).
Scale	2016	**Scaling stage** The HIF funded ten innovations to develop scaling strategies (4% of funds) and selected five to implement their plans (96% of funds).
Locally led innovation	2016	**Early stage** This was the most recent of HIF's focus area portfolios and accounted for only 3% of funding. The HIF funded 11 grants, all at the invention/adaptation stage.
Skills	2020	**N/A** The HIF did not fund innovation grants in this area.

4.2. Programme and project outcomes

What outcomes has the HIF generated across its focus areas?

Project changes were captured for a sample of 68 grants. Changes were captured at multiple levels, including the individual, project, organisational and sector level. The key changes identified were:

1. Progression through milestones on the innovation pathway (using ALNAP's innovation matrix[34])
2. Grantee learning about innovation practice
3. Impacts on research participants, pilot participants and end users
4. Uptake and adoption of research or innovations

Overall, projects met the expected innovation milestones at each stage on the innovation pathway. Figure 4.2 illustrates the most common changes identified at each stage. It shows that a similar proportion of changes were identified at the Recognition, Invention and Pilot stages, and a higher number of changes related to driving research and innovation uptake and adoption.

Figure 4.2

CHANGES ACROSS THE INNOVATION PATHWAY

*size indicates proportion of outcomes identified, of a sample of 68 grants

RECOGNITION — ADAPTATION — INVENTION — DEVELOPMENT AND PILOT — IMPLEMENTATION — FACILITATION OF UPTAKE AND ADOPTION

MOST COMMON CHANGES

Developed further understanding of the problem

Carried out research to evidence the problem

Developed possible solutions and selected solution(s) to pursue

Established and formalised partnerships

Carried out data collection and captured learning

Adapted solution(s) based on learning

Consolidated evidence to build the case for the solution

Fostered relationships and promoted to potential early adopters

Created means of facilitating take-up, such as resources and training

The following section explores the most common and important changes identified for each focus area. Figure 4.3 provides a summary of the HIF's financial and non-financial support to each area, and the key changes. This is followed by a narrative summary in each area.

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[34] Warner, A. T. (2017) Working paper: Monitoring humanitarian innovation. HIF/ALNAP Working Paper.

Figure 4.3 Summary of inputs and key changes by focus area, 2019-2022

2019-22 SPEND

	DOAI (17%)	GBV (15%)	WASH (29%)	SCALE (27%)	LOCALLY LED INNOVATION (8%)
SPEND	£1.8M — £90K per grant	£1.6M — £160K per grant	£3.2M — £160K per grant	£2.9M — £420K per grant**	£0.9M — £15K per grant
ACTIVITIES	4 challenges 10 grants 28 events 10 publications	3 challenges 6 grants 27 events 4 publications	5 challenges 15 grants 13 events 4 publications	2 challenges 15 grants 1 event 2 publications	2 challenges 15 grants 22 events 0 publications
KEY CHANGES	Sector coordination Appetite for systems change innovation Inclusive research Increased inclusion (through research and pilot participation)	Appetite for systems change innovation Grantee learning Solution co-design Research uptake	Sector coordination Grantee learning Relationship building Research uptake Innovation adoption	Sector shift to scaling Grantee learning Relationship building Research uptake Innovation adoption	Grantee learning Innovation development

● **GRANT FUNDING**
● **STAFF COSTS**
● **'OTHER' ACTIVITIES** (GRANT SUPPORT, EVENTS*, PUBLICATIONS)

SKILLS (5%) — £0.5M — 1 event, 5 publications — Grantee learning

*Events include TWG meetings, conferences, panel events and policy engagements, where information was available.

** Average across five full J2S Scale grants, excluding J2S Phase 1 grants (small £10k grants for strategy development). Including these, 2019-22 spend on Scale grants was £150k per grant.

Disability and old age inclusion

The HIF awarded its first DOAI-focused funding in 2019, when it awarded four Recognition grants to carry out research on the barriers to DOAI in WASH and GBV programming. In 2020 it launched an Inclusive Preparedness challenge call, funding four further Recognition grants investigating the preparedness

needs of older people and people with disabilities. In 2020, it also funded two Adaptation grants through a Meaningful Participation challenge call to enable grantees to adapt existing participatory approaches.

The DOAI focus area was HIF's newest technical focus area. Its most significant contributions included engagement of a new TWG, sharing research and learning with the TWG and beyond, and enabling Associations to play a greater role in humanitarian response.

The TWG brought together specialist and mainstream humanitarian organisations to identify problems to inclusion ('Define'), which generated shared momentum around key issues. Respondents felt that the HIF's DOAI problem definition and challenge calls demonstrated the potential role of innovation to transform programming and contributed to increased appetite among TWG members for 'systems change' innovation to address complex problems. This shows that the process of bringing together experts and mainstream actors in the TWG, to collaborate and share learning, generated value beyond its initial remit (to provide technical expertise and decision-making support to the HIF).

HIF funding enabled **Recognition grantees to undertake research using inclusive methods and to document their learning and findings.** A number of DOAI grantees self-published research reports. There were several examples of dissemination activities that were carried out by grantees. For example, Butterfly Works generated disseminated learning about the experiences of disaster preparedness information systems for older people and people with disabilities through an online launch session. Several grantees also **disseminated the research to participants and local communities.** Though the impact of these activities was not documented, it indicates that grantees considered and applied inclusive approaches in different elements of the project cycle.

Learning was shared with members of the TWG, who included both specialist and mainstream humanitarian agencies. This was especially valuable for learning on older age inclusion, where there are few other established networks or movements. TWG members felt that sharing learning through these groups would drive greater inclusion in member's programmes and organisations.

There was some evidence **that participation in research projects had positive benefits for participants.** For example, Leonard Cheshire identified an increased sense of inclusion among community members and increased confidence in having their voices heard. The rigour of these findings, however, and the sustainability of the benefits, is not known.

The HIF's two Meaningful Participation grants **generated changes in the behaviour of Older Persons' Associations (OPAs) and Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs),** who took on more pro-active roles in local humanitarian systems, and in the awareness of OPAs and OPDs among local humanitarian responders. If sustained, these outcomes could have a potentially significant impact on the role and inclusion of these groups in local humanitarian response.

Gender-based violence

The HIF has funded GBV grants since 2016, with an initial seed funding round, three annual rounds focused on GBV monitoring and evaluation in 2017-19, and a round on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) in 2020. In 2020, two Round 1 M&E grantees received follow-on awards to Scale their innovations (Advancing Innovation call).

Overall, as with DOAI, the GBV problem definition exercise and challenge calls demonstrated to other organisations the potential role of innovation to address complex problems. This focus area also provided a good example of user-focussed and flexible funding concentrated on a specific problem; monitoring and evaluation (see Illustrative Highlight 5).

HIF funding enabled M&E grantees to refine their knowledge of challenges and existing practices and co-design and test solutions. Notably, the funding, together with the HIF's partnership brokering support, enabled communication and collaboration between GBV responders at different levels, which made important contributions to successful problem identification and solution development. For example, GWI and Trocaire facilitated workshops with local psychosocial facilitators and GBV response staff in South Sudan and Myanmar, which resulted in co-designed prototype tools.

In one case, a Recognition grantee moved beyond problem recognition into the early stages of solution development. IRC (M&E 2 grant) ran workshops with a multi-disciplinary team of women's protection, health and M&E experts from Burundi, DRC and Tanzania employed the SPRINT methodology to identify challenges but also ideate ways to address them, which resulted in two potential solutions.

Early evidence from the HIF's two IPV grants indicated that HIF funding enabled **adaptation and piloting to successfully take place.** For example, Women's Refugee Commission, a Pilot grantee, undertook a pilot study to test the safe integration of Cash and Voucher Assistance referrals into IPV Case Management, and made resulting learning and evidence available to humanitarian responders.

There were several examples of uptake and adoption resulting from GBV grants. IRC (M&E 1 grant) adapted, piloted and validated GBV Case Management tools and developed a GBV Case Management Outcome Monitoring Toolkit with accompanying guidance. IRC has since adopted the toolkit across its GBV programming. SEMA (M&E 2) collaborated closely with the GBV Sub-Cluster (SC) Turkey Hub during its Recognition grant, a community of practice representing regional GBV actors, which provided SEMA with the access needed to carry out the research. SEMA's findings and recommendations were adopted into the SC's work plan in 2019, contributing to the standardisation of M&E tools for GBV programmes across northwest Syria.

The Advancing Innovation Scale grant enabled Queen's University to further test the SenseMaker tool (first tested in Lebanon) in Venezuela in collaboration with IOM. The HIF's partnership brokering support enabled Queen's University to establish stronger relationships in the region, including identifying 'champions' to facilitate its uptake. The project resulted in consolidated learning and a proof of concept for the digital SenseMaker technique to work at scale in acute crises. Application of the tool fed the needs of women and girls directly into Regional Needs Analysis and Humanitarian Programme Cycle planning, reaching a range of regional actors.

It is notable that of these three examples, adoption and uptake **occurred either by the grant organisation or project partners and collaborators**. This reflects similar findings in other focus areas, and is aligned to sector-wide practice, where adoption is facilitated by strong relationships, aligned objectives, early buy-in and dedicated time and capacity.

Water, sanitation and hygiene

The HIF has funded WASH innovations since its inception. In 2014 it launched a WASH-specific call, which was its first shift towards more focused, thematic funding calls. More recently, the HIF has diversified its WASH funding, adding awards on community engagement (2017), incontinence problem recognition research (2019) and menstrual hygiene management (2019) to its portfolio. This has resulted in a range of product, process and technology innovations alongside a number of research and guidance outputs. Its investment in user-centred design and research is valued and seen by some to set the HIF apart from purely product and technology focused innovation funding. In 2020, the HIF launched a rapid WASH Covid-19 funding call, which awarded grants to Oxfam to test its Handwashing Station at scale and to Stanford Junior University to further test Supertowel (both previously funded by the HIF).

WASH was the HIF's most mature technical focus area. HIF funding and non-financial support enabled the development of a range of innovations that responded to problems identified in its 2013 Gap Analysis. The maturity of its WASH portfolio drove more active and strategic sector engagements by the HIF to drive adoption, which resulted in new partnerships and procurement.

Engagement with the WASH TWG around the HIF's problem definition enabled increased sector coordination and shared momentum around key issues. The 2013 Gap Analysis was one of the HIF's most cited outputs (see Annex 13). The 2021 WASH Gap Analysis was used to inform UNHCR's WASH strategy[35], and Oxfam matched funding to the problems identified.

Of the technical focus areas, WASH was the furthest ahead in terms of realising adoption and scaling outcomes. There were examples of adoption at different scales and levels, including research recommendations being adopted into sector-wide guidance (Dahdaleh Institute), products tested at scale in multiple countries (Oxfam) and additional products supplied to communities involved in piloting (Reemi). For example, Oxfam Handwashing Stations were tested at scale during its Covid-19 grant, which enabled it to produce and install over 2,000 stations in DRC, Ethiopia and Bangladesh. Oxfam secured funding from other sources to distribute a further 4,000 stations to 8 additional contexts. International Livestock Research Institute also purchased 20 stations for use in a research study in Ethiopia.

Several WASH grantees benefited from HIF's follow-on funding. They built long term relationships with the HIF which increased their knowledge and capacity in innovation and enabled their growth. The grantees emphasised the HIF's flexible approach to funding and support to adapt, which enabled projects to be responsive to challenges and learning. For example, WaterScope, who received an initial £20,000 investment from the HIF in 2016 and a further WASH grant in 2020, attributed the HIF to 'nurturing' their growth by connecting them to different networks, improving their understanding of the ecosystem and guiding them on the right language to use.

Grantees built valuable relationships with partner organisations and WASH TWG members, which contributed to adoption. The HIF made marked contributions to brokering these partnerships for several WASH grantees (both during and after the grant period), which facilitated knowledge sharing, testing and development, and made contributions to adoption outcomes. For example, the HIF connected Real Relief to Stanford Junior University, who had the expertise and facilities to test Real Relief's innovation, Supertowel, for efficacy against viruses such as SARS COVID-2. The emphasis on partnership and collaboration from the application stage, and the HIF's knowledge of different actors were both important.

The HIF's advocacy (under its Drive workstream) also contributed to the adoption of several HIF-funded innovations. It targeted engagement with UNICEF, UNHCR and other stakeholders, including with UNICEF's supply division. This led to UNHCR and UNICEF jointly assessing new WASH technologies and contributed towards their procurement of HIF-funded innovations, such as Faircap. Recently (October 2022) the HIF also played a role in connecting WASH innovations to responders in Pakistan as part of the Pakistan flooding response, which resulted in a potential partnership with Faircap.

Scale

Since 2016 the HIF has provided funding to innovations to prepare for and accelerate scaling. In 2016, the HIF awarded additional funding to three previous grantees to scale up[36]. In 2020, it launched a Journey

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[35] 2022 HIF Annual Review to FCDO.

[36] Panzi (Healing in Harmony), Translators Without Borders (Words of Relief) and Field Ready, with an additional grant to Make Music Matter (Healing in Harmony) in 2018. See Illustrative highlight 3.

to Scale (J2S) call. The first J2S round awarded 10 small grants of up to £10,000 to develop a scaling strategy. The second J2S round awarded 5 selected Phase 1 grantees large grants of up to £600,000 to scale their innovation.

In 2016, the HIF's Scale call was part of an increased recognition in the sector of the need to invest specifically in the knowledge, skills and activities required to scale up. The HIF's Scale funding enabled grantees to learn, test innovations in new contexts and form new partnerships. However, scaling took time; the strongest growth was seen in the three projects that received Scale funding in 2016.

The HIF's focus on scale made contributions (alongside other actors and external activities) to the sector's shift towards scale. In 2016 the HIF attended the World Humanitarian Summit and engaged with sector learning on barriers to scale. This was influential on the HIF and led to further research and the publication of its Too Tough to Scale paper, and its Scale call, one of the first scaling specific funds in the sector. Anecdotal evidence from interviewees suggests that Too Tough to Scale has been used by other funders and it was perceived to be influential in the sector, contributing to people's appreciation of the barriers to scale.

The HIF's 2016 Scale grants were able to achieve adoption and scale. Illustrative Highlight 3, at the end of this chapter, details the three projects supported by the HIF's 2016 Scale call, and the innovation journey that led to these outcomes. As described in the Illustrative Highlight, the HIF's long-term financial and non-financial support to all three projects over multiple funding rounds made important contributions to their success.

Journey to Scale grantees developed knowledge, skills and partnerships, enabling them to progress towards scale. Grantees learnt about the scaling process, business models, evidence needs and barriers to scaling in certain contexts, which they applied during the project. Several grantees developed relationships to facilitate adoption. For example, HRI SH+360 implemented training for UNHCR to integrate SH+ in their peacebuilding programme in Uganda and signed a teaming agreement with a large INGO to integrate SH+ in the non-health sector. They also worked with a government partner to tailor the SH+ target group to their needs when confronted with the Covid-19 pandemic. The HIF contributed to these outcomes through its partnership strengthening support and facilitation. In another example, Physicians for Human Rights engaged with a range of government and non-government actors to identify pathways to uptake, resulting in wider interest in and support for MediCapt.

There were examples of adoption of innovations supported by Journey to Scale grants. For example, 2,000 cases of sexual violence have been documented using MediCapt. Gravit'eau have set up 40 hand washing systems in Mali and Burkina Faso, benefitting approximately 12,000 people. It also delivered 5 prototypes of its handwashing system to MSF for trial in health facilities in Kenya and another to the Lebanese Red Cross.

As well as the significant financial support to J2S grantees, the HIF contributed to these outcomes through intensive non-financial support, based on learning from its 2016 Scale grants and the type of support needed. Support included weekly cohort workshops, scaling strategy mentoring (with external experts) and coaching (by the internal HIF team), partnership support and contingency planning support and advice when faced with challenges.

Through its funding, the HIF has continuously learnt about the enablers of adoption, and has made efforts to document this knowledge for grantees and the sector. In 2021 it produced the report Impact,

Evidence and Beyond: Using Evidence to Drive Adoption of Humanitarian Innovations[37], which provided guidance to innovators on the best types of evidence at different stages of innovating and how it can be best packaged and used. It also carried out a study on Humanitarian Procurement, exploring the specific barriers to adoption of WASH innovations at global, country and local level. The HIF learnt that as well as robust evidence, practical considerations, such as established pricing, manufacturing and business models, and the 'soft-side' of relationships and strategic buy-in at different levels, play critical roles. This learning led to the HIF developing its support to grantees through research uptake workshops. The impact of this additional support is not yet known but there are early examples of grantees, such as Faircap, putting it into practice.

Locally-led Innovation

The HIF supported 15 grants under its Locally-led Innovation focus area (excluding the CLIP). The area was introduced in 2017 with the Jakarta Seed Funding call, which awarded small £10,000 grants to three organisations in Indonesia. In 2019 the HIF launched similar calls in the Philippines and India. In 2021, a second round in India awarded four organisations with slightly larger grants of approximately £20,000, and further funding of up to £50,000 was also awarded to one Philippines grantee and one Round 1 India grantee, to enable continued development and piloting. Funding took a place-based approach rather than problem focused. Grantees explored innovations in areas including disaster risk reduction (6), communications (3) and food security (2).

Locally-led Innovation received the lowest grant investment of the focus areas, representing 3% of 2019-22 grant spending (excluding the CLIP). However, the HIF was recognised for its efforts to redirect funding to the local level. It contributed to local innovation knowledge, capabilities and partnerships, among both its grantees and its national partners (see Illustrative Highlight 2).

There is evidence that the small grants enabled local organisations to increase their knowledge relevant to their potential solution. For example, the Philippines Geographical Society increased their understanding and ability to use 3D mapping and card games to increase the inclusion of people living with disabilities in disaster risk reduction planning. Makati Educators for Humanitarian Innovation learnt through consultations that municipalities and cities beyond where the region of their project did not have student-parent reunification plans in place and there was therefore scope to scale the plans in the future to other provinces of the Philippines.

Grantees were able to develop their innovation and carry out early testing at a local level. For example, Makati Educators for Humanitarian Innovation worked with Pitogo High School to develop tailored family preparedness and reunification plans, and 987 families now have plans in place. This was the first time school-based preparedness plans were created in these districts. NASSA/Caritas Philippines developed and started using a digital solution to map existing Participatory Disaster Risk Assessment (PDRA) data. They completed the first community based digital map, serving as a prototype for the innovation. The HIF's innovation management workshops contributed to these outcomes, as well as support from national focal points through the HIF's partners (CDP and SEEDS). The HIF worked closely with partners to upskill national focal points to enable intensive grantee support.

One project was able to expand its research to other contexts. Host International expanded its research on legal and legitimate labour market opportunities for refugees to Bangladesh, India and Philippines through their partnership and access to pro-bono work with Nokia and TrustLaw. John Holland and Nokia

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[37] Elrha (2021). 'Impact, Evidence and Beyond: Using Evidence to Drive Adoption of Humanitarian Innovations'. Elrha: Scaling Series.

became private sector 'champions' that supported the pilot stage of the project. Outside of this example, the outcomes realised so far in this area are mostly limited to the local level.

Skills building

The HIF did not fund innovation grants in this area. During the inception phase for this evaluation, the HIF team articulated clear pathways for how they thought change would happen through skills building (see Annex 2 for nested theories of change). Funding cuts in 2019 meant that very few of these activities were implemented.

Under this workstream, much of the innovation practice guidance and resources, such as the Humanitarian Innovation Guide, used in grantee workshops are published online and open for wider use in the sector. As described in Section 3.3, these have been downloaded and used by wider sector actors. However, the outcomes and impact of this engagement are not well evidenced.

Illustrative highlight 2: Outcomes of the HIF's partnership with national actors

The HIF established a regional partnership with ADRRN in 2017, and together they identified and formed country-level partnerships with SEEDS in India and with the CDP in the Philippines. The HIF provided training and support in innovation management and in responsible innovation.[38] Together, the HIF and ADRRN provided support to facilitate innovation management workshops, and to provide funding and mentoring to local innovation teams.

ADRRN, SEEDS and CDP described the changes that took place as a result of the partnerships, which fell into three categories: understanding of innovation; capabilities in innovation grant management; and new partnerships.

Understanding and focus on innovation

The partners said they have a better understanding of innovation, its value, and how to support it. ADRRN emphasised how their attitude towards innovation has changed. CDP said they have more understanding of what innovation is and of the role it can play in localisation. SEEDS reported an increased knowledge and capacity in innovation management. This knowledge was built through their partnership with the HIF but also through the linkages they formed with each other. For example:

> *"Learning with SEEDS provided increased understanding of what humanitarian innovation is and as a result we have been able to engage with more partners with the community and to support their work"* **CDP**

Both SEEDS and CDP added innovation as a pillar in their organisational strategies and programmes. SEEDS said their profile and resourcing for innovation had increased, allowing them to think more meaningfully about how to invest in innovation in the future. CDP noted that:

> *"Innovation is innate to the organisation but through the partnership, it became more actualised and explicit in the organisational strategy through the creation of a framework that enables implementation of innovation."* **CDP**

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[38] Elrha. Elrha's Strategic Approach to Partnerships. Available [here](#).

Innovation grant management

The partners said they had gained experience in innovation grant management processes. They reported better programme delivery, developing tools, implementing due diligence processes, writing proposals in ways that reflected the needs of donors, and building organisational networks.

ADRRN said that they had implemented new systems and processes for grant management, and that they had new processes for encouraging innovation activities among their members. SEEDS and CDP both reported improved capacity to deliver innovation workshops, to conduct due diligence activities, and to manage grants.

New partnerships

Finally, all three partners had built new partnerships, which they saw as foundational to fostering the innovation ecosystems in their countries and regions. Since 2019, ADRRN has been involved in research and consultancy projects, increasing its financial stability and its profile. For example:

> *"Through their partnership with the HIF, we have created more profiles and accessed more opportunities within the ecosystem. For example, we have been asked to be on the advisory group for the ALNAP State of the Humanitarian System report on innovation, we have also consulted on the USAID funded Making Displacement Safer innovation."* **ADRRN**

Staff at SEEDS and CDP felt they had tailored proposals to meet the needs of funders which had helped them to win and deliver new projects. CDP had built international partnerships with GNDR, START Network and ADPC and nationally with the Office of Civil Defence, Private Sector organisations as well as the Philippine Disaster Resilience Foundation which staff believed would allow them to continue their work on innovation even after the close of the programme. CDP had contributed to a proposal for a new innovation academy to institutionalise and streamline innovation in the Philippines.

SEEDS staff said they had become an 'innovation enabler' as well as an implementing organisation and said the partnership has led to them building a network of local innovators in DRR. In 2022, SEEDS was selected as the innovation focal point for the Start Network's new Humanitarian Hub in India[39].

What unintended or unexpected outcomes has the HIF generated?

Several grantees faced unforeseen challenges that limited the extent to which piloting could be carried out. Ethics, security and logistical challenges meant some grantees had to adapt testing approaches. For example, due to ethics constraints, Queen's University was only able to conduct data collection through service providers, which meant women and girls not accessing services were not included. Due to logistical challenges GOAL and Sanergy were not able to trial their waste transfer system in refugee camps, and were limited to urban refugee environments. Though piloting was more limited than anticipated in these cases, challenges facilitated grantee learning about the limitations and feasibility of their innovation in certain contexts. They also, in the case of Queen's University for example, demonstrate the application and prioritisation of responsible, ethical innovation.

Some projects 'failed' but this has generated learning about what doesn't work. For example, ACF Spain and LSHTM found that although previous studies had indicated that Moringa oleifera might have potential as a soap alternative useful in humanitarian emergencies, it was unfit for this purpose and should not be considered as a potential solution. An open access academic article was published to disseminate

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[39] More information on the Start Network's India Humanitarian Hub is available here.

this finding. In 2019 the HIF released its WASH Innovation Catalogue showcasing its funded innovations and research outputs. Alongside the 38 'successful' projects, it included the Moringa oleifera project to indicate its unsuitability for humanitarian contexts. A peer reviewed journal article was also published by the research team[40]. The innovation catalogue also reflects on several other projects that faced challenges and were not 'successful'. Beyond these examples, however, other 'failed' projects were less able to disseminate learning.

A number of projects established partnerships and relationships during their grant that were not initially planned, which enabled new learning and opportunities. For example, IFRC's 'Making emergency WASH facilities accessible and inclusive' project created a relationship between IFRC and UNICEF to collaborate and share information on specifications and different types of incontinence materials. Save the Children created a partnership with Oxfam to increase the learning and reach of User-Centred Sanitation Design globally.

The Covid-19 pandemic meant a number of grantees had to adapt quickly to restricted travel and safety concerns. This resulted in a shift towards online and virtual approaches. For example, Oxfam created tools, workshops and training materials that could be delivered virtually and tested them with health practitioners and facilitators in the target countries. For some grantees this challenge limited the extent to which they were able to fully carry out their project and testing, while others were able to successfully adapt. Grantee learning and adaptation during Covid-19 is further explored in Chapter 6.

To what extent have funded innovations continued to operate, been adopted, and scaled?

Of the 68 grants included in the capturing change data, **19 (28%) had evidence of adoption or uptake.** This included 9 grants that expanded to new users or into new contexts, 6 grants where the innovation or research had been adopted by the grant organisation (i.e. into an INGO's programming in other contexts) and 9 grants where the innovation or research had been adopted by wider organisations. Of these 19 grants, 15 (74%) had received multiple grants, indicating the value of sustained support from the HIF.

Published research outputs were recorded for 46 projects (see Annex 12) that have received funding since 2016. This included 37 journal articles and 28 self-published reports (learning reports, guidance and toolkits). Peer-reviewed journal articles were published by GBV, WASH and Scale grantees and DOAI grants self-published recognition research. No publications were identified for Locally-led Innovation grants. Together, the 37 journal articles had 197 citations, indicating use of the findings. Though it was not possible to identify the extent to which these outputs contributed to innovation uptake and scale, evidence is known to be an important factor in enabling scaling, as evidenced by the HIF[41] and others[42].

Evidence of scale was documented for 15 projects that have received funding since 2016. The number of people impacted by scaled innovations (outside pilot studies) was recorded for 10 projects (see Annex 11). These innovations have directly reached over 900,000 people. In several cases the HIF's advocacy and engagement activities contributed to the scaling of WASH innovations; engagement with UNICEF

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[40] Clark (2018) Evaluation of Key Antimicrobial Properties of Moringa oleifera in Relation to Its Use as a Hand-Washing Product, Water.

[41] Elrha (2021). 'Impact, Evidence and Beyond: Using Evidence to Drive Adoption of Humanitarian Innovations'. Elrha: Scaling Series.

[42] Tanner, L. and Mwenda, F. (2020). 'Building Evidence for Scaling'. Response Innovation Lab.

contributed to procurement of Faircap's water filter. 10 of the 15 projects with evidence of scale had received multiple HIF grants; a total of 28 grants were awarded to the 10 projects between 2011 and 2020, indicating the value of long term HIF funding and support across different stages of the innovation pathways.

Illustrative highlight 3: Three journeys to scale enabled by the HIF

The following highlight explores how the HIF supported three innovations to successfully scale. The three innovations all work alongside local partners and infrastructure to meet a need in the humanitarian sector.

Field Ready is a systems change innovation that enables local manufacturing of emergency supplies - including using 3D printing to produce expensive or hard-to-get spares and replacements - during rapid onset disasters and protracted emergencies.

Make Music Matter (MMM) developed Healing in Harmony, an innovative music therapy programme for survivors of sexual violence in post-conflict settings. Working with a trained psychologist and music producer, participants heal together by writing, recording, and producing songs about their experiences.

Translators without Borders (TWB), now CLEAR Global, provide real-time linguistic support for humanitarian and development agencies to improve two-way communication with populations affected by crises.

HIF support and funding

The HIF's support to these three innovations demonstrates foresight and ambition. The HIF provided seed and pilot funding to Field Ready and Translators without Borders[43] and Journey to Scale funding to all three innovations between 2016 and 2019. The HIF also provided grantees with mentorship, training and networking opportunities in addition to financial support.

The HIF provided three grants to **Field Ready** between 2014 and 2018. During this period, Field Ready responded in 20 countries, tested 350 designs, produced 200 new products and added over 100 products to their catalogue for open source use. Items in Field Ready's catalogue included search and rescue equipment, medical supplies (such as umbilical cord clamps, forceps and foetal stethoscopes) and essential WASH equipment.

In addition to grant funding, Field Ready received access to HIF training, workshops and mentoring. This provided Field Ready with opportunities for guidance and networking - relationships which Field Ready still drew on after the end of the grant.

"I still use what I learned on some of the training sessions that the HIF ran as part of the Journey to Scale programme and I still use some of the contacts from those - I'm doing a funding bid this afternoon with … a contact that … the HIF introduced me to." **Grantee**

Field Ready explained that the workshops and training they received helped them to strategise and articulate their plans for scaling. The mentoring complemented the implementation of these strategies with face-to-face meetings and guiding Field Ready through a process of 'adaptive programme management'. This approach, led by the mentor, allowed Field Ready to pivot and adjust their project plans as they learned more about the feasibility of different scaling approaches throughout the grant period. Thirdly, Field Ready explained that they appreciated the relationships built with the HIF during its field visit to the programme. The visit allowed Field Ready to build a relationship of accountability with their IM and develop a common understanding of what Field Ready was trying to achieve. From this foundation,

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[43] HIF also provided a diffusion grant to TWB for their "Words of Relief Service Package". Total grant funding provided by HIF between 2013-2018 was £641,305.

Field Ready had the confidence to experiment and bring the HIF into discussions around risk and problem solving.

MMM consider the 2014 HIF grant to the Panzi Foundation[44] (their DRC partner) to be the "breakthrough" which launched the Healing in Harmony (HiH) programme. The programme aimed to support psychosocial healing for survivors of sexual violence, vulnerable community members, children, and staff at Panzi Hospital's Maison Dorcas aftercare facility in DRC. This "development and information" grant spurred MMM on to develop their monitoring and evaluation processes and begin gathering 'evidence' for the HiH intervention.

The HIF-funded Journey to Scale grant (2016-19) allowed the incubation of new ideas under the MMM banner, such as the Artists 4 Artists record label and publishing model[45]. At the end of the funding period, the HiH methodology had also been tested by partners in several different country contexts, including Guinea, South Africa, Uganda and Turkey, with plans for more expansion. During this period more than 700 survivors of sexual violence participated in the programme. Independent, clinical evaluations demonstrated that the therapy accelerates physical recovery and reduces post-traumatic stress disorder and anxiety, improving psychosocial wellbeing[46].

The HIF supported **TWB** with multiple grants over a five-year period (2013-2018) as they developed, iterated, piloted and scaled their innovation. During the HIF Journey to Scale funded project (2016-2018), TWB established partnerships with 168 organisations and increased its pool of volunteer translators.

The Journey to Scale grant covered staff and core expenditure, as well as start-up costs for responding to the Rohingya crisis. Recruitment played an important role in building TWB's capacity over this funding period, during which TWB delivered over 25 million words per year to 310 humanitarian, development and human rights organisations. During the grant period, TWB found that the interpretation needs in the humanitarian sector were greater than their capacity. The HIF allowed them to pivot and reallocate resources to training non-professional interpreters based in humanitarian settings, and adapt their training for low-literacy environments. This pivot represented an important evolution of TWB's support mode. The funding helped TWB to set up new operations in Bangladesh and DRC as well as develop a more sustainable income stream by building paying partnerships for remote translation services generating over $266,000 in 2017 and over $590,000 in 2018. This income stream offered a healthy counterbalance to restricted funding provided by donors.

In addition to the main grant, the HIF offered TWB expert mentoring, team building and pitch building workshops, and a top-up grant of £10,000 to fund foundational research into language in the Ebola response in eastern DRC. TWB valued the genuine partnership they built with the HIF and noted the impact of this commitment.

"The HIF team at Elrha positioned themselves as allies and champions, while providing constructive criticism. That has been helpful when we have faced obstacles and when preparing to present our innovation to other potential donors." **Grantee**

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[44] Grant to partner Panzi Foundation in 2014 (CGA ref 12921), this led to the 2016 HiH grant to Panzi (27270_1)

[45] This model ensures that royalties are paid to all songwriters living in conflict zones and extreme poverty, whether or not they have legal identification by typical western standards.

[46] Cikuru, J., A. Bitenga, J. B. M. Balegamire, P. M. Salama, M. M. Hood, B. Mukherjee, A. Mukwege, and S. D. Harlow, 'Impact of the Healing in Harmony program on women's mental health in a rural area in South Kivu province, Democratic Republic of Congo', *Global Mental Health*, 8 (2021)

Strengths of the HIF approach

The projects received grants from the HIF over **multiple stages,** allowing innovations to be tested and improved through piloting and research. The HIF Journey to Scale grant provided the flexibility needed for each of these innovations to build more sustainable foundations, gather evidence, improve internal processes and access future funding streams. The HIF's approach also helped the grantees to respond to changes in the humanitarian landscape, allowing agencies to offer surge support during rapid-onset crises.

Each innovation highlights the importance of the **mentoring and networking opportunities** the HIF provided them. Grantee feedback depicts an equal and supportive relationship with the HIF, and a sense that the HIF fills a gap in humanitarian innovation that other more risk-averse donors overlook. Their focus on understanding their grantees' potential and building relationships of trust gave innovators the confidence to experiment and seize opportunities. However, at times the HIF's emphasis on learning in partnership with grantees was considered a burden for innovators.

After the Journey to Scale grant

Field Ready's scaling model is focused on broadening their geographical reach and partner network to systematically localise manufacturing. For example, working with the Internet of Production (IoP) Alliance, Field Ready are pursuing decentralised manufacturing and supply chains that are based on shared knowledge. This partnership helps to achieve Field Ready's aims to deliver products faster and more sustainably, made from locally sourced materials with less ecological impact. Supported by Innovation Norway, Field Ready have created the Waste for Warmth partnership alongside Polyfloss Factory and Engineers without Borders. This initiative creates insulation materials from plastic waste to improve shelters and reduce reliance on costly and short-term winterisation aid.

The MMM Healing in Harmony project led to the creation of a record label called 'Artists 4 Artists' (A4A) in January 2018. A4A partnered with Warner Music Canada to represent HiH artists and promote their work. In November 2019 A4A Publishing (a sister company of A4A Records) finalised an innovative publishing model in partnership with the Society of Composers, Authors and Music Publishers of Canada. This model ensures that royalties are paid to all songwriters living in conflict zones and extreme poverty, whether or not they have legal identification by typical western standards. In the future, this new publishing model has the potential to benefit artists in developing countries around the world, not just those who participate in HiH.

In August 2021 HiH launched a mobile studio in the DRC in partnership with Panzi Hospital and Foundations, funded by Grand Challenges Canada. The aim of the HiH mobile studio (HIHM) is to reach young people in remote locations who would otherwise not have access to mental health services. It is currently running in two rural communities of eastern DRC near Bukavu. The participants are young people who have experienced sexual violence and other trauma.

Due to their growth and expansion over the past five years, TWB has now become CLEAR Global, which is made up of three divisions, of which Translation without Borders remains the largest component. A research division called CLEAR Insights is responsible for investigating people's language preferences, what they speak and understand as well as what sources of information they trust. The third component, CLEAR Tech, builds scalable language technology for marginalised languages.

Conclusions

To what extent does the HIF's strategy support the HIF in achieving the identified outcomes?

This section outlined the outcomes delivered across the HIF's six focus areas. Annex 9 provides a summary of how these align with the 4Ds and with the areas identified in the HIF's 2018-20 strategy.

Overall, the HIF played a significant 'enabling' role for its grantees beyond direct financial support (**develop**), including grantee kick-off workshops, mentoring and training, and grant management. The outcomes of this workstream were closely associated with the achievements of the innovations funded by the HIF that this work directly contributes to.

There was significant overlap between the other three areas, and some of the outcomes described represent changes that span multiple 4Ds. In particular, the TWGs enabled increased sector coordination and shared momentum around key issues and learning (**define** and **drive**). Similarly, key publications such as the Humanitarian Innovation Guide and Too Tough to Scale (**develop** and **distil**) have been read and cited and are used by other organisations to inform their work. Though respondents reported being aware of and reading reports, and felt they were important, they were generally not able to describe how this had changed their work.

The HIF's activities to **drive** adoption are less developed, but there are strong examples in this chapter (Section 4.2, WASH) of how its specific engagement activities have resulted in increased uptake of innovations.

Chapter 8 outlines several recommendations to improve project and programme outcomes in the future. We recommend that the HIF focuses more deliberately on end-to-end funding, based on the relationship identified between longer term outcomes and long-term HIF funding across multiple stages of the innovation pathway (Recommendation 3). We also recommend more strategic investment in Distil and Drive to increase the uptake of HIF learning and drive the adoption of funded innovations, including clarifying the role of grantees in the latter (Recommendation 8 and 9). In addition, we recommend that Elrha invests in MEL expertise to define and set up systems to systematically collect outcomes data in the future (Recommendation 10).

The following chapter provides a value for money analysis, comparing an overall assessment of outcomes to the financial investment.

5. Value for money

Summary

Innovation projects are considered valuable if they generate better solutions, achieve adoption, or generate learning.[47] This chapter provides an analysis of how the investments align with the changes that have been identified. The analysis is based on investment data for 2019-2022, capturing change data from 35 grantees (funded 2019-22), and additional data collection on three pre-2019 Scale grantees.

- VfM varied according to the stage of the grant and the amount of time that had elapsed since funding began.
- For early stage grants (Recognition and Invention) learning was generated but there were limited results in terms of wider sector uptake of learning.
- Invention and Pilot grant cycles were relatively short. This reflects practice in the wider sector but makes it harder to deliver and to track outcomes, and therefore to determine VfM.
- Scale projects generated learning, developed scaling strategies, and launched processes to promote adoption. The evidence of wider sector uptake was limited for the 2019-22 period, as would be expected. The highest value grants are the Scale grants funded pre-2019.
- At the programme level, the work on Define and Develop have a better VfM performance than that on Distil and Drive. This is due to both the different levels of investment and the limited evidence of how the latter activities have promoted learning and adoption.
- There is little systematic evidence so far of the value-add of the HIF's ethics work and activities contributing to its 'responsibility'.

5.1. The value: What value is being generated by the HIF?

The value of the investment in grantees

As described in Chapter 4, HIF funded grants at different stages of the innovation cycle. Grants were expected to achieve different outcomes depending on the stage they were at. Grant outcomes were assessed using the criteria described in Table 5.1:

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[47] Obrecht, Alice, A. Warner, and N. Dillon (2017) Evaluating Humanitarian Innovation. *London: ALNAP*

Table 5.1: Value of investment

Stage	Learning rating criteria	Scaling rating criteria
Recognition	**High** - components of the problem were identified and the learning was used by others in the sector **Medium** - some but not all components of the problem were identified. Dissemination was limited. Learning was used internally **Low** - the problem was not identified thoroughly	**High** - the problem was seen as a strategic opportunity by senior humanitarians **Medium** - the problem was shared with senior humanitarians **Low** - the problem was not shared with senior humanitarians
Adaptation	**High** - learning about existing practices was used by others in the sector **Medium** - learning about existing practices was mostly used internally **Low** - the project did not generate learning	**High** - the project established partnerships that may enable it to adapt and disseminate the solution **Medium** - the project started connecting with partners able to adapt and disseminate the solution **Low** - the project started to identify potential partners
Pilot	**High** - the project generated learning about the innovation which used by others in the sector **Medium** - the project generated learning about the innovation which is being used internally **Low** - the project did not generate learning	**High** - the innovation was promoted to potential early adopters **Medium** - the project started to disseminate the innovation **Low** - the project did not start any dissemination activities
Scale	**High** - the project generated learning about the innovation which used by others in the sector **Medium** - the project generated learning about the innovation which is being used internally **Low** - the project did not generate learning	**High** - the project started implementing a scaling strategy and there was evidence of adoption **Medium** - the project developed a scaling strategy **Low** - the project did not define how scaling is expected to take place

Recognition

Recognition grants intend to identify a specific problem or opportunity by collating knowledge on the issue and defining the problem and its root causes. High value projects funded at this stage were expected to (i) generate learning on the problem and the disseminated evidence used by the sector; (ii) ensure that the problem was seen as a strategic opportunity by senior humanitarians. The outcomes of seven projects were analysed to assess the value of these grants.

Learning: The seven grants in this sample generated value through a **better and more thorough understanding of the issue**. For instance, the project "*Improving the lives of older people*" gave Oxfam more knowledge of the main difficulties faced by people with incontinence in Malawi and Ethiopia, and of

the resources they need. The research found that providing additional WASH NFIs (Non-Food Items) was one of the most effective ways to support people with incontinence.

The grants **generated learning that was used internally by the research teams.** For example Butterfly Works learned that the community members, who had never participated in research sessions, faced barriers in suggesting ideas and potential solutions. This learning helped shape the following co-creation session activities so that people with disabilities and older people could be better included in the research process.

Several grants led to **research tools that could be used again either within the organisation or by others.** For instance, the University of Leeds created new research tools (including an innovative storybook methodology) for collecting data from children with incontinence without adding to the stigma that they face or putting them in an uncomfortable position.

Scaling: In several cases, the **research was used for influencing and advocacy activities and to inform planning efforts.** Some projects also channelled resources to disseminate the findings, either through events, publications, or tailored dissemination material. For instance, the Research Institute of Ghana produced a dissemination manuscript that provided information on their study, with more reader-friendly graphics and statistics than those provided in the peer-reviewed article that they published. The manuscript was intended to provide information to women affected by Obstetric-Fistula Induced Incontinence as well as to WASH and health professionals in Ghana[48].

Overall value: Overall, the Recognition grants were assessed to have generated **low value** since they had generated learning but there was limited evidence of how the learning had been used either internally or externally. There were some efforts to disseminate findings and several of the grants had produced self-published papers (see Annex 12). However, on average, it took 1.8 years after the award year to publish and therefore we would expect that there will be future outputs from the Recognition grants in the evaluation period. So far it is unclear to what extent the issues researched were acknowledged or viewed as strategic by senior humanitarians, or how the research was being used.

Adaptation

Adaptation grants aim to tailor and adapt solutions found elsewhere to respond to a humanitarian problem. This often entails developing a proof of concept that shows that there is demand for the solution and that it is appropriate to the context. A high value adaptation grant would be expected to ensure that the learning generated about the solution is used across the sector and that partnerships were established to enable the potential dissemination and adaptation of the solution. The outcomes of five grants were analysed to assess the contributions of these grants. Four of the five grants focused on DOAI.

Learning: The grants **generated learning that was mostly used internally**. For instance, in 2020, the Philippine Geographical Society (PGS) learnt to use 3D mapping and card games to improve the inclusion of people with disabilities in disaster risk reduction planning. This was expected to promote dialogue among PWDs on their needs and concerns in disaster risk reduction planning (DRRP) at the local level (there was not yet evidence of this).

Some grants also generated learning on the potential to replicate the innovation. For example, the Makati Educators for Humanitarian Innovation's (MEHIN) project "*Addressing a Key Gap in Post-Earthquake Contingency Plan: Student-Parents Reunification Plan*" learnt that other municipalities and cities did not

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[48] Analysis of citations has not been conducted.

have student-parent reunification plans in place and that there was scope to scale the plans to other provinces in the Philippines.

Scaling: The majority of **grants formed partnerships or gained commitments from local organisation**s operating in the project locations. For instance, local governments in the communities that the Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund (ASB) project "Partners for inclusion: Localising Inclusive Humanitarian Response (PIONEER)" is operating in have committed to using a more inclusive lens for data collection, including gender, disability and age. They will also aim to collect data from at risk groups.

Similarly, Tearfund's project "Nothing about us without us" emphasised that local community organisations have become much more aware of the local Older Persons Associations (OPAs) and Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and their capacity to affect change and engage their members in humanitarian responses. Local community associations and traditional leaders have promised to work with the OPDs and OPAs as have local church leaders, improving the visibility and influence that the OPAs and OPDs have in their communities.

Overall value: Overall, the value generated was **moderate**. Learning was generated and was generally used internally; some had been disseminated among other organisations but there were no examples of it then being used. There was no evidence that partnerships were established to promote the solutions that had been identified and/or adapted.

Invention and Pilot

The HIF funded grantees that invented new solutions and piloted them in real-world settings. High value grants in this category were expected to ensure that the learning generated on the innovation is used by other actors and to foster relationships that would promote early adoption. The outcomes identified by six grantees were analysed for this category.

Learning: Grantees **generated learning that they used to develop and adapt their innovations**. For instance, the GWI & Trócaire project found that in order to localise M&E of the GBV Minimum Standards (MS) and meet the needs of programmes, indicators and tools needed to go beyond those just measuring the MS and consider participant safety as well as other outcomes. Similarly, PSE used feedback from users to refine their work on addressing gender biases in GBV programming.

Other projects generated learning with the communities they worked with; a Ylabs' project observed greater engagement between men and women around menstruation, with 47% of menstruators reporting having more discussion about MHM with men and boys.

Some grantees used the opportunity to **establish partnerships aimed at knowledge sharing.** For instance, an IFRC project on inclusive WASH facilities established a partnership with UNICEF to share information around specifications and different types of incontinence materials.

Scaling: Several projects worked on **enabling local ownership of the innovation** or the issues the innovations aimed to tackle. For instance, PSE delivered a 3-day co-design workshop with focal points from 12 humanitarian organisations in Ethiopia which led to dialogue and increased awareness about gender bias, the key issue the innovation was aiming to impact.

Overall value: Overall, the value of grants at this stage was associated with the learning generated. This was mainly used internally to improve the innovation, but grantees also started to engage in partnerships that will ultimately support dissemination. Value also lay in the results that were achieved by testing the innovation. The value was therefore considered **moderate**.

Pilot

Pilot grants involve testing a solution in a real-world environment. High value grants at this stage are able to gather and disseminate further information on the problem and solution, to consolidate evidence, enabling other actors to use it, and to foster relationships with potential early adopters. A sample of 4 projects was used to analyse outcomes of these type of grants.

Learning: Most of the value from these grants was associated with the **learning that was generated for the implementing organisations.** For instance, Women and Health Alliance International's (WAHA) project on intimate partner violence (IPV) deepened its knowledge and understanding of IPV prevalence rates and the underlying factors and norms related to IPV with Somali refugees in Ethiopia.

The learning was used by grantees to improve their approaches and methods. WaterScope, for example, used the pilot to improve its training methods for testing bacterial contamination of drinking water - which will be crucial to ensuring the system is used correctly and will therefore affect potential uptake.

Scaling: Pilot grantees started the scaling process by **generating buy-in and interest from potential users** and, in some cases, by developing dissemination strategies to work towards the innovation uptake. For instance, WaterScope's system gained significant interest among potential users in Uganda, Bangladesh and Kenya (although there is not yet evidence of uptake).

LSHTM's 'Surprise Soaps' project was rolled out in Iraq and was introduced in Kenya by Field Ready and other partners. In total, Field Ready estimated that 25,000 children have benefited from Surprise Soap.

Overall value: Overall, Pilot grants generated **moderate value**, with a few examples of high value grants (see scale in Table 5.1). The learning that they generated, in many cases quite substantial, tended to be used to improve the innovation (rather than being disseminated, as we would expect at the pilot stage). Many of the grants initiated a scaling process by gaining interest and an initial commitment from potential partners.

Scale

Scale grants were funded to support the development of logistical, organisational, partnership and financial models that would allow the innovation to be implemented sustainably. This type of grant is expected to generate learning on the results of the innovation itself and to facilitate uptake by consolidating evidence that demonstrates the case for the proposed solution. The outcomes of nine projects were used to analyse the value of the scale grants.

Learning: **The grants were able to generate value in a variety of spheres.** Firstly, they enabled implementers to acquire new learning that was used to improve their approaches and strengthen the impact of their innovations. For instance, Pesitho, the partner delivering the Ecoca project, learnt that there was no financial benefit from insourcing photovoltaic panels and wiring to Uganda, but that there was potential in insourcing the metal cabinet to lower the price of the product.

Grantees fine tuned and improved their innovations, capturing users' feedback or undertaking laboratory testing. FHNW's gathered feedback from different household water-filter manufacturers which led to significant improvements in the design of the filters produced.

Grantees also adapted the innovations to be more relevant to different contexts and/or users. Physicians for Human Rights developed its approach to implementing "MediCapt" in new settings (different clinics and different countries), which allowed it to roll-out the application more efficiently in multiple locations, while maintaining quality assurance and safety. Similarly, Gravit'eau adapted its chlorinated water system

(with a new membrane and a chlorine dosing system) to combat the Covid-19 virus in healthcare facilities where chlorinated water is required.

Scaling: The funded projects **achieved sector-wide results;** they partnered with organisations willing to use the innovation in other sectors, worked on the innovation roll-out, tested different adoption strategies, and developed scaling strategies often with technical support from Elrha.

The Dahdaleh Institute for Global Health Research, for example, used machine learning to develop a safe water optimisation tool. Their Scale grant led to the Sphere Handbook being updated to include household water quality monitoring as a recommended action in humanitarian field settings, focusing more attention on the public health impact of safe water. The SWOT was used to guide safe water supply in Tanzania, Nigeria and Bangladesh, benefiting over 300,000 people.

Seven out of the nine projects assessed were able to demonstrate different stages of uptake. For instance, Pesitho were able to achieve that 8,241 people used the 1,230 installed cookstoves in Uganda, Kenya and Malawi and Graviteau/Terres des Homme were able to set up 40 handwashing systems in Mali and Burkina Faso (300 users per system) reaching 12,000 users.

Overall value: Overall, the Scale grants delivered **high value**. They were able to generate learning that was used to adapt the innovations to different contexts and to build an evidence base. The grantees moved forward in their Journey to Scale, implementing scaling strategies and achieving results that will ultimately benefit the whole sector and will have a multiplier effect. However, within the grant period only a few projects were able to fully implement their scaling strategies.

The value of programme level investments

To support the grants portfolio, the HIF used a small portion of its resources to deliver the 4Ds; for example, by commissioning research and publications and by providing support to grantees. This section analyses the value of the 4Ds in generating learning and/or scaling innovation.

Table 5.2: Value ranking for the 4Ds.

Learning	Scaling
High - Learning generated, disseminated and used by the HIF and others **Moderate** - Learning generated and used by the HIF **Low** - No evidence of learning	**High** - Engagements promoted widespread adoption of innovations from across the scale portfolio **Moderate** - Partnerships formed and examples of adoption **Low** - No stakeholders identified to support adoption

Define

Elrha's strategy describes the Define workstream as a strategic approach to identifying gaps in research innovation with the aim of engaging stakeholders and prioritising problems (see Section 3.1).

The HIF delivered a series of gap analyses that informed their funding calls and generated learning among the TWG members. For instance, the situational analysis on *Innovation for Sexual and Reproductive Health in Humanitarian Crises* led to a deeper understanding of how to effectively support local women-led organisations, which was used to inform the design of the GBV funding calls.

The overall value of this workstream was assessed as **moderate**. The research and gap analyses undertaken under the Define workstream generated a better understanding of key issues, synthesised learning, and contributed to the HIF's reputation in the sector. While interviewees said they found the gap analysis helpful, there was limited evidence of how they had been *used*; one exception was the WASH gap analysis which was used by UNHCR to inform its WASH strategy.

Develop

The Develop workstream includes all the support provided to grantees to ensure that projects were delivered responsibly and reflect the needs of end users (see Section 3.2). Activities included grantee kick-off workshops, grantee trainings, grant management and compliance.

Ultimately, the value of this workstream is linked to **the achievements of the innovations it funded.** Grantees described a total of 328 outcomes achieved as a result of their projects, 29 of which were considered as high significance and achieved as a result of the HIF's non-financial support (see Section 3.2). The overall value of this workstream was assessed as **moderate-high**.

Distil

The third workstream entails distilling what works by systematically collecting and synthesising evidence from the innovation projects and acting as a repository of information, tools, guides and resources in user-friendly formats (see Section 3.3).

Under Distil, the HIF **published a range of outputs synthesising learning** from the grants, including for instance its portfolio learning papers,[49] its ethics toolkit and two learning papers on Scaling and Adoption). The HIF also engaged in discussions with other humanitarian innovation funds, engaged with university lectures and syllabuses at relevant courses (University College London and Massachusetts Institute of Technology), contributed to H2H's grant selection, and published blogs on different humanitarian platforms.

The overall value of this workstream was considered **moderate**. The HIF was able to capture, package and disseminate learning. This learning was used by IMs in the support and workshops they provided to grantees. Website analytics indicated that **several reports received upwards of 1,000 annual views** and Illustrative Highlight 1 shows how the HIF raised awareness of UCD in WASH. However, it is difficult to evidence how these reports was used by humanitarian actors to improve the performance of other initiatives and innovations in the sector.

Drive

In its Drive workstream, the HIF advocates for adoption of what works by engaging early and regularly with key influencers and decision makers to ensure their commitment to its innovations (see Section 3.4).

The HIF's most important channels to drive adoption were **the TWGs which played a valuable convening role, bringing together different actors active in the same thematic area to share learning.** The TWGs for GBV and DOAI were particularly valuable because of the limited opportunities for sharing learning between specialist and mainstream actors in these sectors.

The HIF also had **up to 4 policy engagements per year per focus area** throughout the evaluation period. One of the initiatives taken in this area was launching a study to explore the barriers to adoption of WASH

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[49] Such as Florescu. A, Francis. A, Salmon. R, (2020) 'Innovation to improve monitoring & evaluation (M&E) for humanitarian GBV programming: An overview of findings from the Humanitarian Innovation Fund's portfolio'. Elrha: London

innovations, analysing procurement at global, country and local level. The HIF convened key agencies to look at promising WASH innovations at the 2019 Wash Showcase event and through reaching out to several individual agencies. Similarly, for GBV, the team convened events to showcase the MEL tools that had been developed (see illustrative highlight 5). In late 2022, HIF re-launched an Adoption Challenge and published a paper on Adoption.
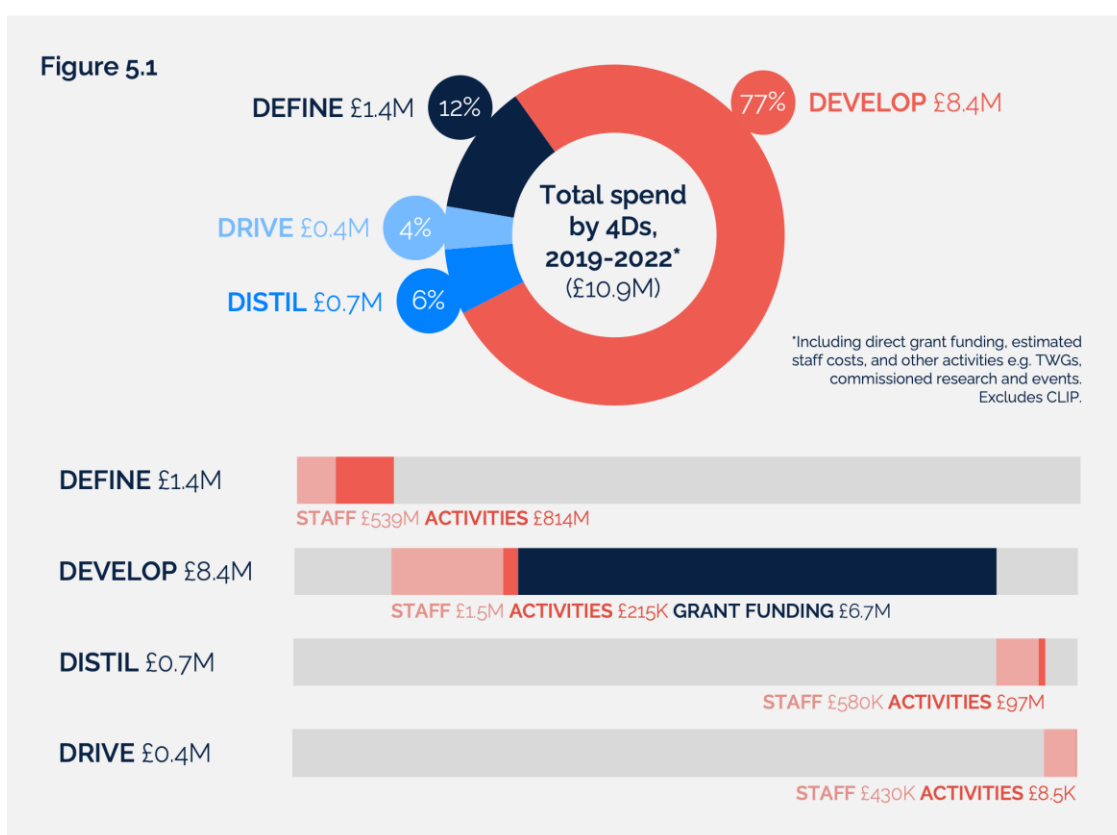
Overall, the activities conducted under Drive were limited and ad-hoc and the data values this workstream as **low** but interviews with grantees and others suggest it was **moderate**. The HIF showcased and promoted innovations in several forums and generated learning on adoption strategies. However, there could be more investment in activities focused on supporting adoption.

5.2. The investment: How is the HIF investing its financial resources?

This section provides an overview of how resources were allocated across the HIF's different areas of work. The overall distribution of resources across the 4Ds is shown in Figure 5.1, which illustrates that over 77% of funding is dedicated to funding innovators ("Develop").

For the purposes of the VfM analysis, the HIF investment was divided into two parts.

1. The first, is Grant funding (Develop) provided directly to innovation projects, which was £6,669,547 over the period 2019-22. We will refer to this as the grant investment.
2. The second includes staff time and additional activities the HIF undertook (in all 4Ds), including research, grant management, capacity development and policy engagement, which was £4,220,242. We will refer to this as the programme level investment.

Figure 5.1

DEFINE £1.4M — 12%
DEVELOP £8.4M — 77%
DRIVE £0.4M — 4%
DISTIL £0.7M — 6%

Total spend by 4Ds, 2019-2022* (£10.9M)

*Including direct grant funding, estimated staff costs, and other activities e.g. TWGs, commissioned research and events. Excludes CLIP.

DEFINE £1.4M
STAFF £539M **ACTIVITIES** £814M

DEVELOP £8.4M
STAFF £1.5M **ACTIVITIES** £215K **GRANT FUNDING** £6.7M

DISTIL £0.7M
STAFF £580K **ACTIVITIES** £97M

DRIVE £0.4M
STAFF £430K **ACTIVITIES** £8.5K
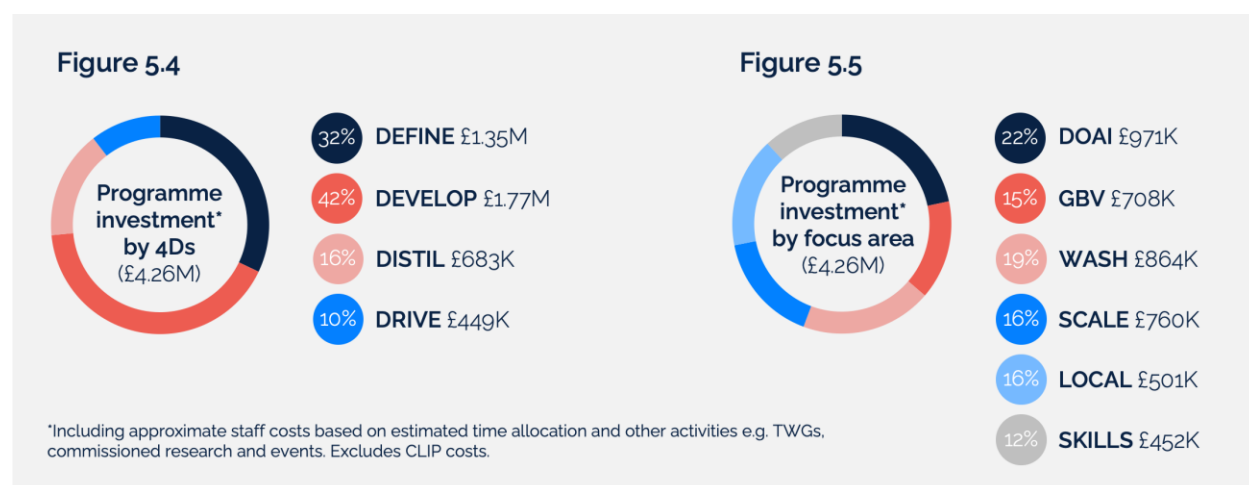
Develop: the investment in grantees

The HIF funded 57 projects over the period 2019-22, across five innovation stages and five different areas. As shown in Figure 6.2, 51% of the grant portfolio was invested in Scaling projects. The remaining 49% was distributed approximately evenly across the other innovation stages, with 9% dedicated to projects focusing on adaptation, 10% on Recognition, 16% on Pilots, 13% on Invention and Pilot grants.

Almost 70% of the investment was dedicated to projects in the WASH or Scale focus areas (Figure 6.3). The smallest investment, equivalent to 3% of the total grant portfolio, was to Locally-led innovation projects (note that this excludes spending on the HIF's CLIP).

Figure 5.2

Grant investment by innovation stage (£6.7M)

- 10% RECOGNITION £0.7M
- 9% ADAPTATION £0.6M
- 13% INVENT. & PILOT £0.8M
- 16% PILOT £1.0M
- 51% SCALE £3.4M
- 1% UNCATEGORISED £0.1M

Figure 5.3

Grant investment by focus area (£6.7M)

- 14% DOAI £0.9M
- 15% GBV £1.0M
- 36% WASH £2.4M
- 33% SCALE £2.2M
- 3% LOCAL £0.2M

The programme-level investment

The programme level investment was greatest for Develop, accounting for 50% of the staff investment and 19% of the activity costs. This was followed by Define, accounting for 17% of the staff investment and 72% of activity costs. Overall, the HIF invested almost three–quarters (73%) of its non-grant spending in the first two Ds. Figure 6.4 illustrates total spending at the programme-level (staff and activity costs combined). The staff investment in each D was estimated by the HIF team based on the time dedicated to each D by each staff member and was calculated using payroll costs.

Figure 5.4

Programme investment* by 4Ds (£4.26M)

- 32% DEFINE £1.35M
- 42% DEVELOP £1.77M
- 16% DISTIL £683K
- 10% DRIVE £449K

*Including approximate staff costs based on estimated time allocation and other activities e.g. TWGs, commissioned research and events. Excludes CLIP costs.

Figure 5.5

Programme investment* by focus area (£4.26M)

- 22% DOAI £971K
- 15% GBV £708K
- 19% WASH £864K
- 16% SCALE £760K
- 16% LOCAL £501K
- 12% SKILLS £452K

Table 5.3: Programme-level investment in the 4Ds.

Area of work	Activities Investment	Staff Investment[50]	Total Investment excl. grants	Total Investment incl. grants
Define	£ 813,535	£ 539,375	£ 1,352,909	£ 1,352,909
Develop	£ 215,384	£ 1,532,616	£ 1,748,001	£ 8,417,548
Distil	£ 96,699	£ 580,411	£ 677,110	£ 677,110
Drive	£ 8,473	£ 433,748	£ 442,221	£ 442,221
Total	**£ 1,134,091**	**£ 3,086,150**	**£ 4,220,242**	**£ 10,889,788[51]**

Programme resources were also split across the six areas (see Figure 6.5). Approximately a third of the activity resources were used to support DOAI (33%), 26% to support WASH and between 8 and 12% to support the three remaining focus areas. Staff investment was similar across the focus areas.

5.3. Value vs investment: Which areas were worth the investment?

VfM is understood as a process of continuous improvement.[52] This section explores the value of the HIF in relation to the resources invested to identify which areas were most worthwhile and which may require further attention in the future.

We represent the VfM analysis visually showing the relationship between the value and the investment. The analysis is based on the assessment of value and investment included in the two previous sections (based on the HIF's definition of VfM which focuses on **learning** and **scaling** and the criteria for each grant stage).

Key areas of work were placed in four quadrants. Ideally, if all work areas were placed in the top two quadrants, the programme would be considered to have delivered VfM as these are the ones showing that the value generated was high. The bottom left quadrant indicates that both the investment and the value generated were low. Work areas placed in this quadrant can be considered 'neutral' in terms of VfM, which can lead to reflections about whether working on these programmatic aspects is worthwhile or if it may be more effective to reallocate resources to other areas. Finally, the bottom right quadrant indicates that the investment was high but that the value is relatively moderate or low. In this quadrant, we can see the areas of work that do not represent VfM.

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[50] Staff costs were calculated using an approximate percentage breakdown of time against the 4Ds. As staff financial data was not provided on an individual basis the percentage breakdown was averaged per team. These costs are therefore approximate estimates.

[51] This does not include spending on the CLIP as this was not included in the scope of the evaluation. From 2020-22 the HIF spent a total of £2,060,078 on the CLIP.

[52] DFID's Approach to Value for Money, 2011

The investment areas were divided into two parts: the funding allocated to partners to develop and implement innovations and the programme level funding used by the HIF to support the key elements of its strategy.
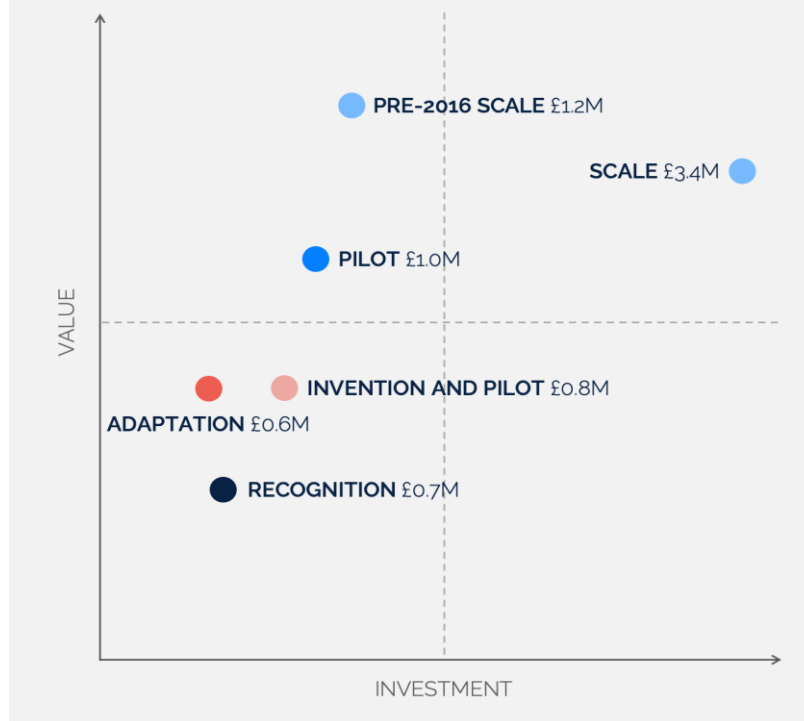
Develop: the investment in grantees

Unsurprisingly the VfM varied significantly between the different grant stages. The table below outlines the narrative assessment and overall rating at each stage. Figure 6.6 provides a mapping of the stages by investment and value.

Table 6.4: Grant investment VFM assessment and rating

Stage	% of 2019-22 portfolio	Assessment	VFM rating
Recognition	10%	Based on the recorded outcomes, recognition projects were the lowest performing grants. These grants generated learning, some of which was published, but there was limited evidence about how the research was disseminated and used.	Neutral
Adaptation	9%	As would be expected, the learning these grants generated was mostly used internally by the team itself. Steps towards adoption of the innovations (such as establishing partnerships and disseminating information) were still in their infancy.	Neutral
Invention and Pilot	13%		
Pilot	16%	These projects were able to generate useful learning, but the evidence collected so far shows that this was mostly used internally by the innovators themselves, and had not yet reached other organisations or users. While many of the grants initiated a scaling process, they were mostly in the initial stages and tended to focus on generating interest or an initial commitment.	Moderate
Scaling	51%	Learning was generated and sometimes published, but the evidence suggested it was mostly used internally. Scaling strategies were developed by all the grantees during 2020 and are now being implemented. There was evidence of the early successes of these strategies so far. Higher value outcomes (for both learning and scaling) were documented and assessed for the pre-2016 Scale grantees (see Illustrative highlight 4, below).	High

Figure 5.6 Grant investment VFM rating

The programme-level investment

We provided an analysis of the value of the 4Ds above but did not produce a final VFM mapping (our initial draft is available in Annex 16). While we can estimate the spend for each area of investment, we cannot give a numerical value to the outcomes. This is because the outcomes identified through the capturing change exercises were not exhaustive, and because the distinctions between the 4Ds were not always clear. We therefore had to draw on interviews and other data to produce a more general assessment of value.

5.4. Reflections on the HIF's VfM definition

A learning approach to VfM assumes that in any programme there are aspects that deliver against the desired values and those that do not. VfM allows the HIF staff and governance as well as the other key stakeholders to interrogate the investment and optimise the relationship between costs and results, either by changing and reviewing strategies, or reallocating resources where they are likely to generate more value or a combination of the two.

The following reflections build on the analysis and feed into the evaluation's recommendations:

1. **The HIF's definition of VfM** included generating learning and contributing to scaling innovations. However, the team also suggested testing whether VfM might be associated with its relevance and responsibility. While the HIF's VfM is likely to be linked to these values, none of the changes from the 35 grantees focused on these areas.

2. VfM is tightly connected to the value generated by each component of a programme's investment. The value is usually understood as the difference made by the activities implemented. The

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analysis shows that there was **limited clarity about what value looks like in practice for the investments beyond those in the partners** (for instance, specifically what outcomes are considered "high" value for the HIF's work on Define) and data is not usually collected to track the effect that these investments had on other actors.

3. Significant resources were allocated to the Define and Develop workstreams, while Distil and Drive were less resourced. Interviews suggest that HIF has played an important but ad-hoc role in Driving innovations. This means VfM performance may be enhanced by **investing more in reaching out to and enabling humanitarian actors to use the innovations** and/or build on the learning that was generated. If the HIF plans to increase its investment in Drive it should also look at the organisational capacities it needs to build or bring in to make the most of this investment.

4. **The recognition grants** were VfM 'neutral'. The lower value rating may be because not enough time has elapsed to generate learning outcomes. However, decisions also need to be made as to how these kinds of grants contribute to the HIF's value, and how to structure follow-on opportunities for successful projects.

5. Related to this, the greatest value was seen in projects that secured multiple grants over many years through which they were supported to scale. **The challenge fund approach involves investments** being segmented into stages and funding inventions or pilot projects without necessarily supporting the dissemination efforts, which may affect the overall VfM performance.

6. The **VfM of innovation projects tends to be observable in the long term**. In fact, the projects analysed in this evaluation which preceded the period covered (2019-2022) demonstrated clearer evidence of scaling uptake (see Illustrative highlight 4). However, if the HIF intends to continue funding short-term projects it may find it useful to identify clear VfM milestones and criteria that can indicate whether the grants have been worth investing in, considering the stage where they are at.

Illustrative highlight 4: Value for money of three 2016 Scale grants

For this evaluation, we developed a definition of VfM based on the two dimensions of learning and scale. In this illustrative example we looked at the VfM contributions of three individual grants from the 2016 scaling cohort (see Illustrative highlight 3 to read about their Journeys to Scale).

Outcomes

The chapter methodology used two dimensions of value - learning and scaling. All three grantees demonstrated moderate-high value in both areas by the end of the grant, and high value against these criteria in the four years since funding ended (see Illustrative highlight 3 for more detail). On learning, all had conducted research or learning activities during their grants; TWB and MMM ultimately published their learning and used it to advocate for changes in the sector. On scaling, TWB and Field Ready launched new partnerships and deployments while MMM ultimately expanded its work into other settings.

Learning	Scale

- TWB researched and documented the language gap between humanitarians and crisis-affected people in three contexts. Research from TWB has now been published and used by other organisations in the sector.
- Field Ready reported significant learning in 11 new techniques and digital fabrication technologies and also pivoted their operational model away from kits.
- MMM conducted a step-wedge design research study on the outcomes of music therapy for victims of sexual violence. Research from MMM has now been published in peer reviewed journals and used by other organisations in the sector.

- TWB formed 168 partnerships with humanitarian organisations and translated 22 million words in 277 language pairs; today this figure has increased to 80m words.
- Field Ready launched ten new deployments in partnership with humanitarian organisations; and an additional ten temporary deployments. It added 109 products to its catalogue and tested another 350. By 2020, it reported that 103k people had been directly impacted by its products and 1M people assisted indirectly.
- MMM delivered music therapy to 763 women. Today it delivers music therapy in 11 countries globally.

Measuring people reached

While all three organisations increased their partnerships and reach during the grant period, only MMM reported on the number of crisis affected people they ultimately impacted. This is similar for the HIF's other Scale grantees; only 15 tracked and reported on end users (see Annex 11). The outcomes and pathways for achieving them differ by grant, and the ability to gather and track numbers of people reached or benefited in a meaningful and comparable way also varies greatly. Rather than requiring this data, the HIF end-of-grant reports historically focused on the grantee's own definitions of meaningful scale and on qualitative descriptions of learning and organisational capacity and growth.

Investments

Grantees completed detailed spending reports. These costs were described in categories such as project costs, staffing costs and travel costs. The costs illustrate spending priorities but can't be matched against activities that directly contribute to grant outcomes (for example, we don't know how many staff were working on building partnerships, or for what proportion of their time). It was nevertheless instructive to look at the types of funding that grantees prioritised and how they felt these contributed to their successes.

The three grantees received 3-4 grants and funds were used in different ways as grantees moved through the innovation pathway. For example, spending on the early pilot grants focused on product costs (26-51%), which included supplies and equipment, as well as travel and project staff. Spending on diffusion grants focused on research, staff costs and travel.

The 2016 Scale grants were £350k-400k per grantee. Two of the three grantees reported matched funding. The HIF funding was used similarly by all grantees including:

- **70-91% on staff costs**. This included costs for building up organisational capacity, delivery of the innovation, forming partnerships etc.
- **8-13% on research, M&E or learning**. This included dedicated staff time.
- **6-12% on communications and/or advocacy.**
- **7-10% on travel,** generally used for new deployments.

The spending therefore didn't necessarily directly contribute to the costs of the innovation itself (which were often covered through other financing). However, it allowed the grantees to build their organisational capacity to deliver the innovation and to respond to crises in new locations. Hiring staff with senior humanitarian experience and networks proved vital for driving adoption in several cases. Advocacy work was especially important for TWB in explaining the language problem to humanitarians.

Overall, the investment in research and advocacy was relatively small given the focus of learning within the innovation process.

Measuring value

The data that is available allows us to identify outcomes and spending, but does not allow a VfM assessment for individual grantees. To do so in future, the HIF needs to consider the following challenges:

- **Lack of detailed information on the adoption of learning outputs or the innovations themselves.** The grants were relatively short and grantees were not contracted to provide any reporting beyond the end of the grant period. Data on the longer-term outcomes of grantees is patchy. The HIF collated updated data from grantees for the Wash Catalogue, but found it extremely time consuming and sometimes difficult to trace appropriate staff members.
- **Investment data cannot be correlated with outcomes.** The HIF could consider identifying activities that contribute to learning and scale and asking Scale grantees to report spending against these activities; however it will need to be clear on how to use that data so that it doesn't add an unhelpful layer of bureaucracy.
- **Lack of data on reach.** The HIF does not currently ask grantees to report collatable data on overall reach, either within the grant period or afterwards. It has collected reach data where possible and relevant, and plans to collate this data more systematically in the future, including beyond the end of the granting period.

Conclusions

This section described the findings of the value for money analysis carried out for the period 2019-22. Based on these findings, we recommend that the HIF takes a more strategic approach to its Recognition grants, articulating how they are intended to feed into future opportunities (Recommendation 4). In addition, based on findings from this chapter and Chapters 3 and 4, we recommend more strategic investment in Distil and Drive (Recommendation 8 and 9). Recommendations are described in more detail in Chapter 8.

The following chapter explores risk, learning and adaptation, looking at how the HIF responds to external events and trends, learns from its own work and portfolio, and how it supports its grantees to learn and adapt.

6. Risk, learning and adaptation

Summary

This chapter looks at how Elrha's HIF model and approach is updated as it learns - and how it helps its grantees learn too. It was developed based on analysis of the Key Informant Interview transcripts with grantees, partners, HIF governance bodies, and Elrha and HIF staff members from both the midline and endline of this evaluation.

- There were high levels of learning and adapting, facilitated by the HIF working culture, participatory management style and the innovative nature of the work. The HIF also placed a high priority on research and actively supported grantees to do the same.
- Decision-making and adaptation around new work areas was often catalysed and constrained by its donors; the HIF tried to incorporate its own learning into the process.
- The HIF's approach to localisation was compartmentalised within certain programmes and there was a lack of meaningful adaptation in response to the increased awareness of systemic racism and colonialism across the humanitarian sector.
- The HIF took steps towards promoting uptake of innovations in rapid responses, most recently in response to the Pakistan floods.
- The HIF was a key source of learning, adaptation and support for grantees, including through grant processes and requirements, connections with people: other grantees, contacts within the sector and the HIF team, and HIF resources.

6.1. Decision making

How does the HIF make decisions about its strategy, funding, support and research? Who is included in decision making?

The HIF drew on a **variety of different processes and stakeholders to make decisions.** Overall strategic direction was determined by an Elrha strategy process that took place in 2018 and by Elrha's resulting 2019-2023 strategy. At the time of the endline evaluation (2022), Elrha was engaged in another strategy process to develop a new strategy, to take effect from 2023. Day-to-day decisions about the way the HIF works, and what it prioritises, were made by the HIF team through internal discussion. Key actors involved in different decision making forums and processes included: the HIF team, Elrha Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Board, TWGs, the HIF advisory group and funding committee, and donors (see the table below).

Some grantees had an indirect influence on decision making as a result of close working relationships with HIF IMs. As a result of regular catch up calls, and the flexible, supportive approach of the HIF team towards grantees, the relationship with grantees was sometimes closer than a traditional funder-grantee relationship. Interviews highlighted that some grantees enjoyed a high level of openness and exploratory discussion in their interactions with the HIF. This led to those grantees feeling that their projects were understood and well supported. These close and open connections also enabled the HIF team to identify trends in the challenges and perspectives of grantees, and factor these into decision-making around strategy, funding and research.

Partners and frontline responders had a limited influence on decision making. This was exacerbated by Covid-19 and a reduction in in-person interaction with partners and frontline responders in recent

years. Increased focus on the inclusion of these groups in governance bodies would help ensure the HIF learns from these stakeholders and that their voices are represented in all aspects of decision-making.

Table 6.1: Description of decision-making processes and actors.

Area	Decision-making processes and actors	Examples of types of decisions made
Strategy	Overall strategic direction was determined and documented through a consultative, organisation-wide Elrha strategy process. The HIF also engaged in an additional consultative HIF strategy process and strategy (2018-2020) development including the HIF team, Elrha SLT, TWGs, HIF advisory group and external evaluators from the previous HIF evaluation. Day-to-day strategic decisions about the way the HIF worked and what it prioritised, were made by the HIF team through internal discussions. They then engaged with the Elrha SLT to check how decisions aligned to Elrha's strategic direction. They also used TWGs and the HIF advisory group to test and tweak day-to-day strategic decisions. Strategic decisions were also sometimes catalysed by donor interest.	**Direction:** ● Priority areas for Elrha/the HIF, to achieve Elrha's mission, in line with their core values ● How to respond to contextual events or changes in the humanitarian system **Approach:** ● How to provide funding and support to innovators ● How the work areas of the HIF interact and evolve ● How to use research and learning to inform funding and support ● How the HIF interacts with other stakeholders
Funding	Funding calls were determined by HIF IMs and HIF management, in consultation with TWGs, based on gap analyses, past areas of funding, and contextual events such as Covid-19. Gap analyses consulted a range of stakeholder groups including affected populations and practitioners.	**What areas to fund:** ● Which funding calls to launch (topic, stage of innovation, etc.) ● Assessment criteria ● When to use other approaches (e.g. adoption challenges)
Support	The HIF funding committee decided which innovations to fund in response to each call for proposals. Three technical reviewers reviewed all applications and the funding committee then reviewed, scored, discussed and awarded funding.	**Who to fund:** ● Which applicants to award funding to ● What level of risk is acceptable
Research	Gap analyses (WASH, GBV and DOAI) were conducted by external researchers	**Where further learning is needed:** ● What research to commission

	who sought to consult with affected people, humanitarian practitioners, and donors. With advice from the TWGs and HIF advisory group, HIF IMs commissioned research to explore and unpack the gaps identified in gap analyses. The HIF team also considered the learning needs of grantees and the wider humanitarian innovation sector, and commissioned research and practical tools to support these areas.	and what can be conducted in-house ● How to prioritise gaps identified in the gap analyses, for funding ● What format research should take ● The learning needs of grantees and the wider sector

VfM was carefully considered by the HIF team at a senior level. For example, each funding call was resource heavy (an average cost of £27,000 per challenge call and £8,000 per grantee, 2019-22, not including staff costs or direct grant funding). To ensure optimum impact the team sought to maximise the number of grants that came out of each call, while also factoring in other considerations such as how much money was available for that area and what the associated risks were. In the area of research, the team discussed each piece carefully with advisory and governance groups to ensure it would create value for grantees and was going to be worth the time and money put into it. The HIF tried to track how people had accessed each publication and then sought to maximise its use further. For example, scale papers were translated into a 'support module' for grantees.

6.2. HIF learning and adaptation

How does internal and external learning inform decisions and adaptation?

The HIF's working culture facilitated high levels of learning and adapting. The team worked closely together enabled by a participatory management style and held regular internal discussions on issues relevant to their work. There were high levels of learning on the job, due to the innovative nature of the work itself.

The HIF team were supported to learn and adapt, both as a whole, and within individual focus areas. They had flexibility to explore different options, learn, and decide to do things differently based on their own learning. An example of a significant adaptation based on learning was the team codifying broader and more flexible innovation stages (Recognition, Search, Adaptation, Invention, Pilot, and Scale). The team incorporated problem recognition which is often overlooked by funders, and allowed grants to overlap in the stages, acknowledging that innovations are constantly adapting, develop in different ways and may not traverse through set stages in a predefined order. Another example was the shift away from open funding calls to the thematic focus areas, which was also a collaborative decision made by the HIF team based on their learning about the challenges and pitfalls of open funding calls.

The HIF used learning from established work areas to inform the development of newer work areas. For example, established in 2014, WASH was the most mature thematic focus area and has generated a large amount of learning, including on how to support individual grantees, design funding calls, and develop and utilise TWGs. Approaches from the WASH focus area were carried into other focus areas. When a focus area or challenge call was launched, the team used the latest knowledge from the other areas to fine tune it.

However, once a new focus area was established, the team structure tended to reduce cross-area learning, as each area funds and supports grantees separately. Interviewees felt that different work areas were sometimes siloed. Better cross-area learning could include:

- Creating space for partners and grantees to interact with other people on the HIF team beyond their thematic focus area
- Placing a greater emphasis on facilitating introductions to other HIF staff when someone is leaving the team
- Including staff from other HIF focus areas in field visits.

The HIF commissioned research frequently, but it was not always clear how they used it. The HIF team had relative freedom to determine research priorities. They considered the learning needs of grantees and the wider humanitarian innovation sector, and commissioned research and practical tool development to support these areas. However, since Covid-19, this was reduced in response to funding cuts. The HIF team also encouraged grantees to commission or conduct research as part of their funding. This was a valuable attribute but it was not always clear how the team used the research it commissioned, or adapted in response to it. Additionally, little evidence was found of how the HIF was learning from local initiatives to inform its broader work.

Since the midline of this evaluation, **the HIF has sought to reinforce internal and external learning and document it more intentionally.** This included the introduction of more formal learning circle meetings with the whole team, documenting additional practices for funding innovation, exploring learning around different funding models for innovation, and a horizon scan of how other organisations across different sectors engage with innovation funding models, with the intention of this leading to informing the HIF's adaptations over time.

Decision-making and adaptation around new work areas was often catalysed by donors; the HIF tried to incorporate their own learning into the process. In many instances, new funding opportunities for the HIF were initiated at donor level. For example, the DOAI work area and the collaboration with the Start Network on the CLIP (FCDO), the GBV work area (SIDA), and scale work area (MFA Netherlands) were all initiated by respective funders. The HIF maintained close, transparent relationships with donors to benefit from these opportunities when they arose, but only wanted to adapt into areas in which they were already interested, and wanted to have their own influence on the shape of those decisions based on their own learning and existing portfolio. For example, in recognition of the value one of the HIF's existing partners (ADRRN) could add to the CLIP agreement, ADRRN were incorporated into the agreement.

Recent changes in the HIF team did not significantly alter the HIF's strategic decision-making. As highlighted in the limitations section, the HIF team experienced significant staff turnover during the evaluation period. However, staff felt that the combination of tangible, positive changes being suggested by staff as they were leaving the organisation, and the diverse experiences and fresh ideas and questions of new staff catalysed planning and implementation of new ideas at a faster rate.

How has the HIF responded to external funding trends and contextual events such as Covid-19?

Covid-19

The close relationships already established between the HIF team and grantees meant that the team was **well positioned to understand and adapt to the changing needs of grantees during the Covid-19 pandemic in a supportive way.** The initial response to grantees during Covid-19 was fast and flexible. It

included no-cost extensions, quick responses to budget amendments, and support for grantees to adapt and deliver projects online. Later in the Covid-19 response, however, the HIF faced significant budget cuts and were less able to extend flexibility to grantee timelines.

> *"[HIF staff member] got in touch with us last year when the pandemic kicked off, and very kindly offered to volunteer some time if it would be helpful for us in thinking about how we were going to adapt to Covid-19 and how we might best structure our support in the pandemic."* **Grantee**

Catalysed by the Covid-19 pandemic, **the HIF used its learning to take meaningful steps towards the uptake of innovations in rapid responses.** The HIF identified two innovations that had the potential to contribute to the Covid-19 response in humanitarian settings and commissioned research into the effectiveness of both innovations. One was found to be ineffective (Supertowel), but the other (Oxfam's Handwashing stations) was successfully tested at scale and, in combination with additional funding from other sources, reached at least 425,000 people.

> *"This is not the first time that we've ever thought about, oh, could our innovations be useful in responses, these are conversations that we have every time there's a response. However, I think in the last couple of years, we've really seen, just a few, a handful of innovations emerge from our portfolio that have the evidence in place that are ready and able to scale up production or delivery, so that it's actually realistic that they could be adopted in an ethical and effective way into response. So now it becomes a little bit more tangible."* **HIF staff**

In 2022, based on the learning from these experiences, and with a more mature portfolio, the HIF identified an opportunity to support the uptake of their WASH innovations in the Pakistan flood response and produced a briefing note highlighting the most appropriate innovations for the response, which was shared widely through their networks. The HIF used this as a learning experience. For example, it observed the types of organisations that responded and what their initial questions were about. The HIF identified a feasible partnership between Faircap and implementers which they hope to take forward. Based on this, they have also begun a similar process for the Ukraine response. The HIF have started to compile their learning around rapid responses and planned to feed this into their strategic plans moving forward.

Localisation

Over five years have passed since the Grand Bargain was launched at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, where humanitarian organisations and donors made wide-ranging commitments to localise their funding and work. Since then, humanitarian organisations have continued to grapple with the outworking of these commitments, seeking ways to advance more equitable sharing of power and resources in aid with people affected by crisis. In line with this shift within the humanitarian sector, the HIF demonstrated some commitment to the principles of localisation. For example it worked with in-country partners on its Locally-led Innovation stream, and channelled funding for localisation through the CLIP programme, which supported locally-led innovation labs in collaboration with the Start Network and existing partner ADRRN. However, **the HIF's approach to Locally-led Innovation remained compartmentalised within these programmes, and did not clearly inform the rest of the HIF's work.**

Despite the CLIP and the Locally-led Innovation focus area, Elrha, the HIF, its governance bodies, and the majority of grantees[53] were based in Western countries. This limited the HIF's engagement with people from LMICs and capped diversity within the HIF. It reduced the inclusion of people from LMICs (including

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[53] As highlighted in Section 3.2 of this report, during the evaluation period 89% of HIF funded projects were based in Western countries.

people directly affected by crisis) in decision making processes. It also confined the HIF's learning, for example by minimising interaction with people from other regions of the world who may have different experiences, perspectives or access to other sources of learning, or learning in other languages. The HIF's Locally-led Innovation focus area represented an important step, but **there is space for the HIF to consider a deeper response to localisation to ensure a diversity of global perspectives are incorporated within the HIF's structures, personnel, learning, and decision making.**

> *"I sensed very much a commitment to advance work in that direction but I couldn't point to specific changes in how the work is done."* **HIF Governance**

> *"They may think of localisation in terms of who do we fund. Do they think about it in who we employ, and who we contract with and who governs us? I think that's a gap."* **Peer funder**

Anti-racism

The murder of George Floyd in May 2020 and resulting global outcry highlighted systemic racism within society and organisations across the world and led to calls for change. In response, organisations within the humanitarian sector acknowledged the need to address racism and the sector's inherent colonial foundation, structure, and approach.

In response to this contextual shift towards anti-racism and the decolonisation of aid, **the HIF showed some commitment to anti-racism - for example, Elrha set up an anti-racist working group - but there was a lack of meaningful adaptation**. Interviews with HIF and Elrha staff highlighted a tendency to rely on responding externally, for example by diversifying programmes and increasing the focus on inclusion. While the HIF team have reflected internally on anti-racism and decolonisation of aid, these reflections have not led to meaningful internal change or to the organisation becoming actively anti-racist. For example, interviewees highlighted that with an almost exclusively white board, the HIF needs to attract leaders of colour, and hold onto them. Staff need to be given the agency and resources to advance the organisation's work on anti-racism, instead of being expected to incorporate it into their existing roles. The HIF should also ensure that they don't marginalise staff and employees of colour by expecting them to do the work of educating people.

> *"It is an almost exclusively white board - which is an insult to people of colour. It is the same on the boards of many other large humanitarian organisations, these are the decision-makers and leaders within the sector."* **HIF Governance**

FCDO funding cuts

As outlined in the Limitations section of this report, during the evaluation period, the HIF's largest donor (the UK Government's FCDO) significantly cut the HIF budget for 2021-22 financial year, as part of an overall reduction in UK aid funding. The HIF and Elrha's decision-making through 2021 was described as 'a maintenance approach' aimed at keeping the fund afloat through both Covid-19 and the funding cuts. Some interviewees highlighted this as a missed opportunity to adapt (for example in diversifying funding avenues), and reiterated the importance of a forward-looking standalone strategy for the HIF to ensure it protects its own innovative, adaptive nature and stays relevant. It is important for the HIF to set time aside to **reflect on its own decision-making during that period, and glean learning from the experience.**

6.3. Grantee learning and adaptation

How are grantees learning and adapting, and how does the HIF support this?

Beyond individual project learning, key informant interviews with grantees, partners and HIF staff identified three core sources of HIF grantee learning that led to adaptation:

- HIF grant processes and requirements
- Connections with people: other grantees, contacts within the sector and the HIF team
- HIF resources

Learning and adapting began at application for some grantees. A number of grantees began learning from the HIF and adapting in response, at the time of writing their initial funding proposal for HIF funds. The inclusion of specific questions within the Call For Proposals and application forms prompted applicants to consider areas of priority for the HIF, this included questions around ethical considerations, the involvement of affected populations, and research production and dissemination, and incorporate them into project proposals.

Grantee learning was captured through regular reporting, follow-up calls and feedback from HIF IMs. HIF grantees were required to complete and submit reporting templates at set milestones throughout the funding period to document the process and progress of their project. HIF IMs also held monthly follow-up calls with grantees during which they discussed the content of reports in further detail. Grantees noted that (together with the reporting forms) follow-up calls and feedback after the reports had a significant impact on learning and support for teams in thinking through next steps for their innovations, and adapting accordingly.

> *"What was helpful was having the HIF team, so every time we would create a report, we would speak with them, and then having them really push our ideas or push us on points of tension, to get us to think outside of the ways that we have been thinking."* **Grantee**

> *"[we recently received] a list of reflections on our last narrative report [...] These were really helpful in thinking about next steps... it was two pages of reflection, that were really food for thought. I've not worked with another funder that would take the time and the energy and have the investment to do that, to be honest."* **Grantee**

Grant reports incorporated an emphasis on **measuring effectiveness that was a source of learning and adaptation for some grantees.** Some grantees identified learning around reporting and metrics through the HIF grant process. Reports introduced a level of rigour to measure project outcomes. Grantees said this helped them capture learning and strengthen the evidence for innovations as they scaled.

> *"It [the HIF] was the first major grant. So it did educate me on proper reporting, and especially metrics, like we had to really refine, bake into our model, by our own M&E. And that was pretty key because of them, which I'm very grateful for, because now it's probably the most important part of the programme, we score literally every person that goes in and out [pre and post monitoring of participants]. And yeah, that's definitely because of them."* **Grantee**

Grantees learnt and adapted in response to the HIF's strong research agenda. A number of grantees identified the academic rigour of the HIF's approach to learning, and noted that they had published a peer-reviewed article in an academic journal for the first time as a result of encouragement from the HIF and inclusion of this as an area of focus for the HIF. For some grantees with a practitioner background, the HIF provided a bridge into the academic world as well as helping grantees adopt more rigorous processes in documenting and sharing learning from their innovation. Grantees also received direct support for research dissemination from the HIF, in the form of workshops to help develop relevant communication

plans to reach intended audiences, another form of learning and adaptation that grantees reported finding helpful and influential on their practices.

The HIF's thematic approach to funding innovation leant itself to **a joined-up portfolio and fostered close connections and shared learning between grantees that extended beyond the funding period.** The HIF ensured grantees connected with other grantees from the beginning of the funding period through face-to-face kick off meetings (these were held online during the Covid pandemic). Beyond this, HIF Innovation Managers also connected grantees from different cohorts who they thought may benefit from each others' learning or expertise. Grantees learnt from other grantees working on similar issues, in some cases projects adapted in response to learning from other projects, in others grantees went on to partner with other grantees for future piloting or adoption (for example, Reemi and World Vision Vanuatu). Almost half of the grantees we interviewed for this evaluation spontaneously identified connecting with, and learning from, other grantees as a valuable aspect of their HIF funding and support. A number of grantees we interviewed reported maintaining connections with other grantees from their cohort and working together on joint projects, sometimes years later.

> *"I'm doing a funding bid this afternoon with UNICEF supply division, with a contact that [HIF staff member] introduced me to when I went to an event for the WASH cluster. They said you two need to talk to each other, so we did and we're still working together three years later."* **Grantee**

Mentoring from dedicated innovation experts for the HIF's initial journey to scale grantees was a key source of learning and adaptation for J2S grantees during that period and beyond. The approach of providing mentorship for grantees by external mentors relies on the level of expertise of the mentors, but was a helpful tool to consider in order to maximise learning and adapting by grantees, in turn maximising the funding.

The HIF team were **active partners in supporting grantees to learn and adapt.** The HIF's support for grantees went beyond a box-ticking exercise for funding. Grantees noted in interviews that in their monthly check-in meetings, the HIF genuinely wanted to help them succeed with their innovations, really understood the projects and challenged grantees in a positive way. Grantees who received a site visit identified these as very instrumental in strengthening the HIF's support for the project.

> *"[HIF staff member] kicked off at the beginning and was like 'what do you actually want to learn?' and that was an amazing thing that donors don't ask. You have outputs you report against but there's not normally an open space to really figure out what you want to learn from this."* **Grantee**

The flexibility of the HIF's approach enabled **different grantees to take what they needed from the process and learn as they went.** Some of the HIF grantees had no experience in the humanitarian sector. Others had no research experience or background. Others had no monitoring or reporting experience. The HIF's approach to support was flexible to the needs of each grantee team and they tailored support depending on what each team needed.

Grantees identified HIF resources as **a useful source of learning and adaptation, including gap analyses, workshops and HIF research papers and toolkits.** Workshops and training sessions on different innovation management issues were identified by current and past grantees unanimously, as extremely helpful learning forums.

Illustrative highlight 5: Facilitating learning and better GBV programming

In 2015, the HIF established GBV as one of its focus areas and commissioned a Gap Analysis to identify the most pressing problems. It found that GBV was rarely prioritised in humanitarian responses, and identified four areas where innovation could help, including through improving M&E. Believing that innovation offered the 'potential to find new ways to tackle problems'[54] HIF launched a series of three GBV Innovation Challenges during 2017-19[55].

The Innovation Challenge Series

IRC was one of three grantees funded in the **first GBV Innovation Challenge**. It further developed, tested and validated a GBV Case Management Outcome Monitoring Toolkit[56] that included analytical tools for assessing wellbeing and felt-stigma[57] of women and girls that had experienced GBV in two contexts: Syrian refugees in Jordan and Somali/South Sudanese refugees in Kenya. IRC learned that survivors preferred to answer questions during their regular GBV case management meetings and with a known and trusted case worker. IRC integrated the tool and supported case workers to identify progress or set-backs in the healing process in real-time.

> *"It has turned out to be super valuable. Five to ten years ago, we were all just measuring outputs all the time. The GBV Case Management Outcome Monitoring Toolkit enables us to go a step further."*
> **IRC**

The **second GBV Innovation Challenge** sought to build a better understanding of localised M&E practices in GBV across different humanitarian contexts. The funding came at an opportune moment for IRC; internally, there was a strong organisational push to move from output to outcome indicators. IRC's leadership in the Great Lakes region reached out for help to develop an M&E system that could improve their programming and advocacy. IRC used the funding to bring together its Health, Protection, and M&E teams from across Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Burundi as well as other East African humanitarian organisations. With the HIF's support, they delivered 'Sprint' workshops[58] to help practitioners learn how to improve GBV programming through better outcome measurements. Participants spent time unpacking the problem and then developing prototype solutions, which generated "rich learning." As one participant put it, "the process was really amazing for us."

The ideas from the workshop were ambitious, such as adapting the inter-agency GBV Information Management System (GBVIMS+)[59] to include all health data for GBV survivors in one database. The

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[54] Humanitarian Innovation Fund (2016) *Gender-Based Violence Interventions: Opportunities For Innovation Gap Analysis – Executive Summary*.

[55] A synthesis of the GBV M&E work funded through these calls is available here.

[56] Available here.

[57] The toolkit included two scales for assessing the impact of case management on the psychosocial well-being of women and older adolescent girls (15+) who had experienced GBV: a Psychosocial Functionality Scale which measures the ability to carry out important daily tasks, and a Felt Stigma Scale which measures internalised and perceived stigma.

[58] A Sprint workshop involves building and testing a prototype in five days. See here.

[59] GBVIMS+ is open source software to collect, store, manage and share data on GBV case management and incident monitoring. It is used by organisations including IMC, UNFPA, UNICEF AND UNHCR. See here.

workshops were foundational for IRC's future vision for the GBVIMS+. Even now, three years later, they are using solutions discussed at the workshop in new projects to drive forward change.

In 2020, HIF launched an **invitation-only call for previous GBV grantees** to develop their innovations. IRC was funded again to adapt and scale the GBV Case Management Outcome Monitoring Toolkit it had developed during the first call. The Toolkit's scales were updated and digitised to make them easier to use. The tools were then integrated into the GBVIMS+ with the aim of increasing use of the tools to inform programme design and delivery.

Why funding mattered

These grants provide a good example of an iterative, long-term, user-led and problem-driven process. HIF should continue to experiment with, document and expand this type of approach to funding. According to IRC the funding for M&E work in GBV was unique in four ways:

- It impacted a specific problem by identifying a niche an underfunded area (M&E for GBV)
- Repeat funding allowed IRC to develop and learn from complementary initiatives
- Flexible funding allowed the project to adapt, for example to form a new partnership with UNHCR who had a complementary initiative and to use the funding saved on other activities
- It gave grantees permission to do something that wasn't guaranteed to succeed, which they believe accelerated their learning

"HIF's role is to facilitate and spark innovation. They create the space to develop new ideas that people would not have time or resources to do …Working with the HIF encouraged us to think about innovation in our daily practices." **IRC**

Influencing the GBV sector

The GBV Case Management Outcome Monitoring Toolkit is now used across all IRC's GBV programmes. It provides global data for IRC's programmes and is integrated into IRC's implementation of the GBVIMS+.

GBVIMS+ now includes the Toolkit indicators and is being rolled out in Tanzania, South Sudan, Somalia. Further roll outs in Ethiopia and Yemen are planned.

IRC also shared the findings of its research and made the Toolkit publicly available on its website. It hosted dissemination events in Kenya and Jordan as well as presenting the Toolkit at various conferences and global working groups. The team believes others are using it, but do not monitor downloads or usage. IRC hopes to begin training staff and external stakeholders on data use and interpretation in order to improve how data from the Toolkit is analysed and used in programmatic decisions.

The HIF shared lessons learned from the portfolio in a report: 'Innovation to Improve M&E for Humanitarian GBV programming'. It hopes to continue funding M&E for GBV and to update its synthesis of findings.

6.4.Types of risk and how they are navigated

What are the main risks that the HIF is managing? How does the HIF manage these risks in an ethical way? What risks do grantees face and how does the HIF reduce or support grantees to mitigate these?

Innovation is an inherently unpredictable process that relies on innovators having the finance, capacity and flexibility to learn and adapt. Innovators working in the humanitarian sector must manage the risks associated with unpredictable processes, as well as the risks associated with working in crisis contexts - and sometimes while managing small and relatively young organisations.

VfM and risk are linked: engaging in high risk initiatives may undermine the HIF's VfM but at the same time, there is no innovation without a degree of risk. This is why VfM is associated with both the innovations' Journeys to Scale but also with the learning that is generated when embracing risk and uncertainty.

As a funder, the HIF responded to and supported innovation teams in predicting, managing and responding to these risks. It did this through four processes:

- Financial risk
- Impact risk
- Ethical risk
- Project management risk

Financial risk and due diligence

Financial risks incorporate misuse of funds, including through fraud and mismanagement.

The HIF had a rigorous due diligence process based on the requirements of its funding from its government donors and Elrha's own policies. The HIF undertook policy checks on all grantees, including Anti-Fraud, Anti-Bribery & Anti-Terrorism Policy checks; Safeguarding policy checks; and Security policy checks. Small organisations (under £10m per year) receiving large grants as well as organisations registered outside of the large Western economies had an enhanced due diligence process that included checking finance manuals, procurement manuals, and the organogram (see Annex 17).

The grants covered a range of costs including project costs, staff costs, materials and project implementation. However, constraints on how donor funds are used mean that grantees could not use funds for some capital investments. This was a limitation for grantees who were prototyping and piloting some innovations that involved manufacturing.

The HIF aimed to be flexible in its approach to budgets, and allowed grantees to submit multiple budget amendments per year as they learned about adaptations that were needed and as their priorities changed. However, costs could not be covered retrospectively and so detailed budget amendments had to be submitted regularly.

Research has shown that **flexible funding is needed to allow innovation teams to adapt their ideas and respond to opportunity.** In the humanitarian sector, this might mean having flexible funding for being part of new emergency responses or to adapt innovations in light of feedback from the affected population. Overall, the HIF was seen as a flexible funder, especially among INGO grantees, and especially in terms of allowing grantees to make significant changes to milestones and budgets. For example, after the onset of Covid-19 World Vision significantly updated its plans to pilot inclusive menstrual hygiene approaches

with people with intellectual disabilities in just one (rather than two) contexts. Similarly, evaluations of the early J2S grants illustrated how grantees used flexible travel budgets to facilitate deployments into crises. However, grantees with less experience of the sector (such as start-ups) were more likely to note the significant time burden of the budgeting processes.

Both staff and grantees described **constraints of the due diligence and budgeting processes,** including:

1. The due diligence process took at least 6-8 weeks, which prevented the HIF reacting quickly to new opportunities in humanitarian crisis contexts
2. There was a significant administrative overhead for smaller organisations, those based outside of Europe, and for social enterprises and businesses that had less experience in due diligence processes and fewer policies and processes already in place. These organisations had to develop the manuals and policies during the contracting period. This work is not covered by funding and also led to delays to the start of some grants. The relative overhead of this work was greatest for small organisations, which tend to be awarded smaller grants.
3. Administrative burden around regular budgeting, especially for smaller organisations.

Clearly misuse of funds represent poor VfM outcomes. However, bureaucratic due diligence and budgeting processes are a significant time and resource burden to smaller organisations. While some elements of the due diligence process were seen as vital (such as a safeguarding policy) some of the documents required for financial management and procurement **took grantees significant time and effort to develop.** While one grantee felt that this process had built their capacity, overall it represented a lot of unpaid work for grantees, sometimes delayed the start of funding, and was a significant bureaucratic overhead on smaller grants. Several people commented that the format of forms had been quite laborious. The HIF should continue to look for ways to minimise the burden of its due diligence processes, including through reviewing templates, providing funding for organisations that need to make significant time investments in the process, and by continuing to learn from other organisation's approaches.

Impact risk

The impact risk is the risk that a project has limited positive impact. The HIF staff described the "trade off between the novelty of an idea and the likelihood of impact". There is less certainty about the impact of more novel ideas.

The HIF **manages this trade off at the funding application stage.** The application included questions to establish the novelty of the innovation and the amount of evidence that exists to support the likely impact of the project. The guidance given to technical reviewers also asked them to review the likelihood of impact. For example, for the Journey to Scale grants, reviewers assessed on a scale of one to five:

- The extent to which the problem being solved presents an opportunity for innovation;
- The novelty of the idea from an incremental change in practice to a radical approach;
- The quality of learning and evidence that has been collected in previous stages to demonstrate the effectiveness of the innovation.

Overall, interviewees reported that the HIF took some risk to fund early stage innovations with unproven impact. **However, overall it was not seen to take many risks, and stakeholders felt it could have funded more unproven solutions.** For example, one interviewee commented, "Does the HIF do it enough? I don't think so." Staff reported some recent conversations with TWGs and funding committees on identifying and funding more novel solutions in addition to incremental improvements.

From a VfM perspective, impact risks are important but not crucial: even if an innovation has not been able to achieve its desired positive impact, it may still have been a worthwhile investment if it was able to generate learning that the sector uses.

Ethical risks

This is the risk of innovating irresponsibly and causing harm to crisis affected communities. It includes the risks to people affected by crisis and to frontline staff and partners. Research has identified a wide range of risks, including:

- Unfairly raising expectations of the community
- Local partners holding risk around community expectations
- Excluding certain groups that are more vulnerable
- Exacerbating vulnerabilities or local tensions
- Projects being implemented poorly or not working, especially in emergency situations
- Data privacy

The HIF placed a particular emphasis on these risks, and Innovation Managers worked closely with project staff to identify and manage them, including through application questions, training and project reporting. The HIF Technical Reviewers were asked to assess whether potential risks for users had been considered and whether the innovation had been developed with "meaningful participation and considerations of inclusivity and intersectionality." The HIF also developed several resources to help innovators identify these risks including the Innovation Management Guide, Ethics Toolkit and the forthcoming Participation Tool. Grantee interviews provided examples of how the HIF influenced their mindsets and plans, particularly in relation to partnership and inclusion.

The HIF resources covered a wide range of considerations designed to promote responsibility. There was less emphasis on data/technological risks than for other funders (and no specific approach to managing these risks), which is largely because technologies were not a major part of the portfolio. Nevertheless, some of the HIF's innovators collect or use highly sensitive data and the HIF should ensure it has the know-how and access to technical experts to help innovations identify and manage technology risks in future.

Project management risks

This is the risk that a project fails because of bad management. Managing innovation projects is hard. Many of the projects were being implemented for the first time and/or in an unknown context and project teams tended to go through steep learning curves.

HIF staff noted a handful of examples of projects floundering or failing because of poor management. Staff looked out for 'red flags' and said they became 'very hands on' if they sensed project management risks. When they occur, these types of failure represent poor VfM.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined how the HIF has fostered a culture of learning in its own team and among grantees and the ways it has adapted in response to grantee learning, a changing environment, Covid-19 and to humanitarian crises. It also highlighted ways it had struggled to adapt and the ways it managed risks.

Chapter 8 provides several recommendations based on these findings including: create space to reflect on decisions and learning during FCDO funding cuts in 2020 (Recommendation 2); include frontline responders and affected populations in governance bodies (Recommendation 11); prioritise cross portfolio

learning (Recommendation 12); and commission guidance on how to become an anti-racist organisation (Recommendation 13). We also recommend that the HIF could be bolder in taking responsible risks and document and share how its ethics work allows it to do this (Recommendation 14).

The next chapter looks at how the HIF compares to other innovation funders and its unique contributions to the sector.

7. Contributions to the sector

Summary

This chapter explores how the HIF compares to other innovation funds and its overall contributions to the sector. It draws on a desk review of other funders, and findings from evaluations and other key learning documents. This chapter also draws on interviews with HIF staff, peer organisations, and grantees.

- The HIF had similar processes for grantee selection and support and similar challenges in due diligence processes and in building evidence of long-term impact.
- The HIF's scaling grants were small relative to those provided by philanthropy organisations and by funders such as the Gates Foundation and Pears Israel.
- The HIF contributed to the sector through its gap analyses, its focus on end-to-end funding, and its toolkits and frameworks. It has facilitated learning in its focus areas, provided flexible funding, and showcased the innovations that it funded. It is working towards establishing pathways to scale.

7.1. Comparison to other funders

How does the HIF differ from other humanitarian innovation funders and how is it perceived?

A comparison of seven peer funds provided a starting point to understand the HIF's position in the humanitarian innovation landscape.

Strategy and focus

The scope of funds included in this review was broad. Three had a focus on innovative technologies for use in humanitarian settings, while three focused on a broad range of innovative solutions but looked for grantees from particular countries or regions. Two were designed for partnerships between private sector and humanitarian actors and one supported commercially-viable innovations. One was both global in scope and unrestricted in the types of solution that would be considered. Like the HIF, four had defined particular challenge areas or focuses.

Within this funding landscape, **the HIF was positioned as an end-to-end innovation funder,** focused on five specific areas (plus skills building). It invested in a wide variety of innovations across 'the 4Ps' from new research methodologies (such as Heartland Alliance International) to product rollouts (such as Super Towel and Surprise Soaps) to changing ways that humanitarians communicate with communities (Translators Without Borders) or manage their supply chains (Field Ready). The focus on problems related to protection (through GBV) and inclusion (through DOAI) were unusual.
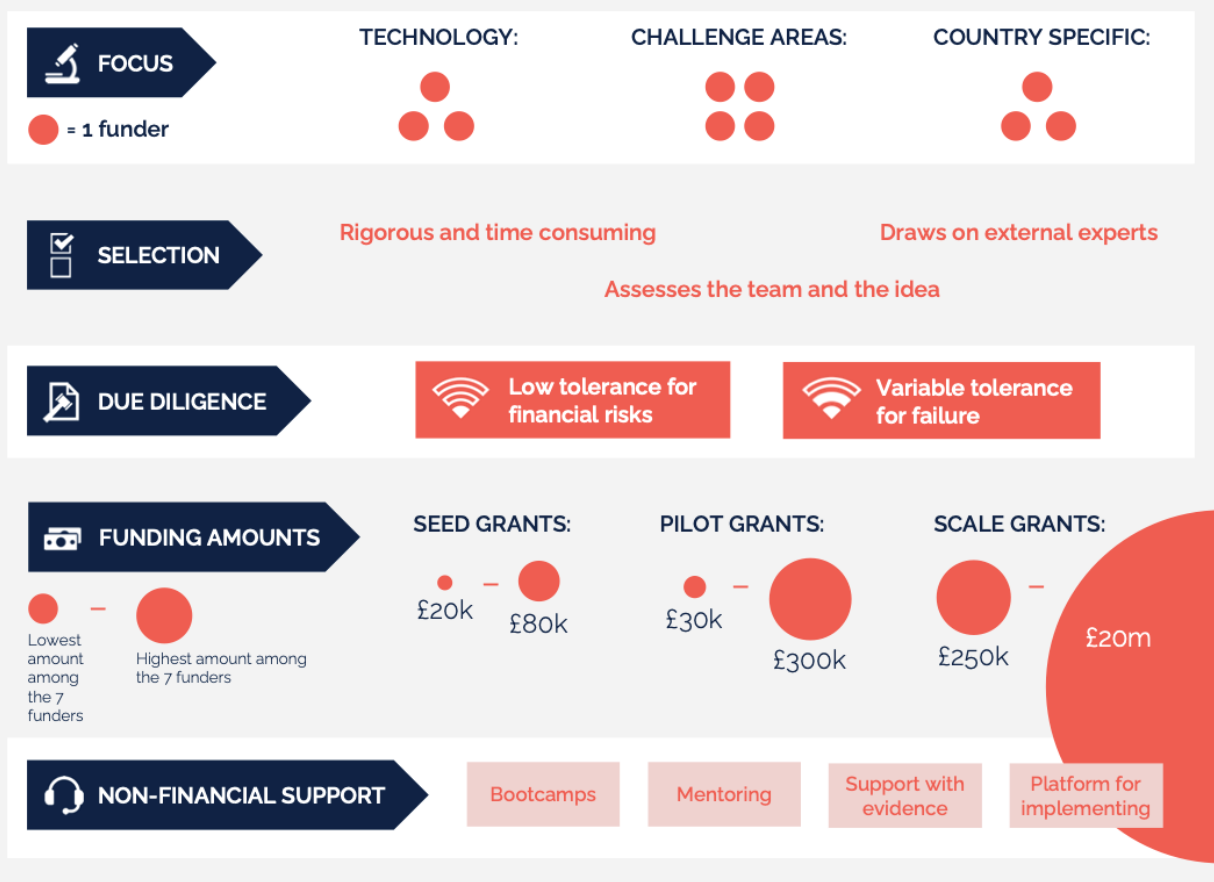
Selection

Across the funds, grantees were identified through either open calls for innovations meeting their requirements (four funds), or through sector/theme specific calls (four funds, including the HIF). Funders suggested that this latter approach can facilitate learning, allow funders to identify synergies that lead to improved solutions, and allow grantees to build supportive peer networks. Figure 7.1 shows the different characteristics across the 7 funds in five areas.

Figure 7.1 Characteristics of 7 comparative funders

FUNDERS COMPARED: GSMA's M4H Fund, Gates Foundation's Innovative Technology Solutions, Pears Israel, the Global Innovation Fund, Innovation Norway's Humanitarian Innovation Programme, the Dutch Relief Alliance's Innovation Fund and Grand Challenges Canada's Humanitarian Grand Challenges.

CHARACTERISTICS:

FOCUS

= 1 funder

| TECHNOLOGY: | CHALLENGE AREAS: | COUNTRY SPECIFIC: |

SELECTION

Rigorous and time consuming   Draws on external experts

Assesses the team and the idea

DUE DILIGENCE

Low tolerance for financial risks   Variable tolerance for failure

FUNDING AMOUNTS

Lowest amount among the 7 funders — Highest amount among the 7 funders

SEED GRANTS: £20k – £80k

PILOT GRANTS: £30k – £300k

SCALE GRANTS: £250k – £20m

NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Bootcamps   Mentoring   Support with evidence   Platform for implementing

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There were strong similarities among the funders' approaches to selecting innovations. The majority of funds:

1. had a rigorous and time consuming application process;
2. included an interview stage;
3. drew upon external experts or technical advisory groups to assess and grade applicants to ensure innovations are relevant to sector priorities; and
4. assessed the quality of both the team and the idea.

Application processes represent a significant investment in time and money from both the funds and grantees (and therefore, ultimately also for donors). Several funders argued that the application processes are valuable for grantees, because they spend time developing their strategy and approach. However, given the relatively small number of awards in comparison to the vast number of applicants (for the HIF as well as others), this is a significant investment. The introduction of an Expression of Interest phase by

at least four of the funds (including the HIF) helped reduce this, but can still require considerable effort and time.

The HIF's recent Journey to Scale grant-making process represents an interesting way of balancing the need for rigorous applications with the time investment required. Initial data suggests that the ten grantees who participated in the strategy development process found it valuable and that it contributed to both their personal learning and to the strategic direction of their innovation ideas. At least one other funder (not included in this study) has adopted a similar approach.

Due diligence

The Government-funded comparator funds all had rigorous approaches to due diligence and a low tolerance for financial risks. As we saw in Chapter 6, this limits the opportunities for smaller organisations as well as social enterprises and businesses that have less experience in due diligence processes and fewer policies and processes already in place.[60] The HIF is currently attempting to address some of these challenges through its CLIP project in partnership with the Start Network.

Funding amounts

Across the comparators, funds of approximately £20k-80k were awarded for seed funding, and of £30-300k for pilot funding. The most significant differences were in the quantity of scale funding: £250k-£20m+. The Global Innovation Fund, for example, awarded up to $2.3m to grantees in its Test and Transition portfolio, and up to $15m for grantees in its Scale portfolio. Non-traditional funders (not included in this study) have provided even larger scaling grants; for example, MacArthur Foundation's 100&Change Challenge grant awarded $100m to IRC and Sesame Street Works for their Early Childhood Development innovation.[61]

Like other Government-funded humanitarian innovation funds, the HIF's Scale funding is small in comparison to these philanthropic initiatives. The HIF's Journey to Scale grants are approximately £580k, and so shouldn't be expected to generate the same performance or results.

One funder required 1-1 matched private funding. Another two required matched funding of 25-50%.

Funding flexibility

Research has shown that flexible funding is needed to allow innovation teams to adapt their ideas and respond to opportunities. In the humanitarian sector, this might mean having flexible funding to respond to a new emergency or adapt the innovation in light of feedback from crisis-affected communities. This was a challenge for at least four other Government-funded initiatives.

HIF tried to circumvent these limitations by allowing grantees to make multiple changes to their budgets each year. However while this allowed a relatively high level of flexibility compared to traditional humanitarian funding and to some other funds, it still required a bureaucratic formal approval process.

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[60] The HIF portfolio illustrates that humanitarian innovations come from a variety of organisations of different sizes and types. Several of the innovations that scaled most significantly started in small start-ups or NGOs with limited organisational capacity at the time. The desire to support more local place-based innovation will also necessitate due diligence processes that are adapted to these types of organisations.

[61] Behavioural Insights Team (2017) BIT Partners Win $100 Million Grant from MacArthur Foundation. Available here.

Non-financial support

Comparator funds all mentioned the importance of non-financial support to help innovations overcome political, social, economic and cultural barriers. It was not possible to ascertain the quality of non-financial support provided by other innovation funds through the methodology used. However, the approaches appear to vary widely, depending on the innovation stage and whether innovators are largely humanitarian organisations or other actors. For example, Pears Israel runs a week-long innovation bootcamp that helps technology organisations to learn how to work in humanitarian settings, including how to conduct market research in an ethical and sensitive manner. It also enables its grantees to deploy their technology for field testing in one of IsraAID's humanitarian missions around the world. The Gates Foundation's Innovative Technology Solutions assembles teams of experts to help provide a proof of concept for innovations at the pilot stage.

As we saw in Chapters 3 and 4, the HIF placed a strong emphasis on non-financial support. Innovators that had received funding from more than one humanitarian innovation fund described HIF as a hands-on funder, with Innovation Managers taking an active interest in day-to-day challenges and decisions, and a can-do attitude to helping grantees overcome hurdles. Grantees also highlighted the value of workshops, access to conferences and partnership brokering support.

Evidencing impact

All the funds provided support for research and evaluation. The Global Innovation Fund, for example, emphasises research as central to many of its projects and requires innovators to collect evidence of impact or cost-effectiveness. GSMA's M4H Innovation Fund provides tailored research and evaluation funding and mentoring. Nevertheless, articulating value for money was a challenge for several comparator initiatives.

The HIF supports research and evidence-building for its grantees, including through its 'evidence calls' which provide grantees with funding for research. It also routinely supports research or M&E costs, but does not prescribe particular methodologies or measures of value. Like some other humanitarian funders it does not yet routinely track the outcomes of innovations beyond the grant lifecycle - this is an important next step in establishing its longer-term impact.

7.2. Contributions to the sector

What are the unique contributions the HIF makes to the sector?

HIF's investments, activities and contributions differ significantly across its six focus areas.

There were overlaps between the HIF's work in the **WASH sector** and two of the comparator funds. **Five of the funds also included a specific thematic focus on Scaling.** These areas of overlap aren't necessarily a problem: the HIF WASH Gap Analysis illustrates that there are significant gaps in the WASH sector with plenty of difficult problems for multiple funders.[62] Similarly, research has identified multiple barriers to scaling in the sector. HIF has demonstrated significant outcomes in both areas of work over many years. However, these overlaps show that as the innovation ecosystem becomes more crowded, the HIF will need to continue to have a voice and create specialisations in these areas.

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[62] One of the comparator funds had mapped its WASH portfolio against the 2013 HIF WASH Gap Analysis.

HIF's work to support humanitarian innovation in **DOAI** and in **GBV** was relatively unique. Although other innovation funds had supported individual grants in these areas, none looked at the issues systematically. As a result, HIF's research and learning activities are seen as unique.

One of the comparator funds aimed to support **more local innovation** and **local problem solving.** HIF's most important contribution to this so far has been to build the innovation management capacity of its three strategic national partners. However, it has lacked a clear theory of change for this area: What types of problems should it be funding? What types of innovators? And how do its processes need adapting to foster these and to drive adoption? The CLIP programme (beyond the scope of this evaluation) is likely to help address these challenges but HIF needs to consider how it integrates what it learns with other parts of its work.

Table 7.1 illustrates the key contributions in each area during the evaluation period, which were discussed in Chapter 4. These illustrate HIF's role as a convener, as a research funder, as a learning facilitator, and as a grant manager. These topics are explored below.

Table 7.1: Key contributions during the evaluation period

Area	Key contributions to focus areas during the evaluation period
DOAI	• Funded inclusive research and learning • Brought specialist and mainstream humanitarian actors together in the TWG
GBV	• Spotlighted GBV as an area for innovation • Provided a unique funding source for novel M&E approaches • Funded research and tools that have been adopted, strengthening regional (Queens/IOM, SEMA/GBV Sub Cluster) and global (IRC) GBV M&E
WASH	• Brought together 956 stakeholders and 1,700 people affected by crisis to feed into the Gap Analysis • Funded the development of a range of WASH solutions, several of which have been adopted • Facilitating learning through the TWG • Engaged with WASH sector supply and procurement teams to streamline adoption processes and promote HIF funded solutions
Scale	• Supported eight innovations to scale, several of which (2016 grants) have successfully scaled • Supported a further five to develop strategies for scaling • Articulated the key barriers to scaling in the widely cited "Too Tough to Scale" report (this report was funded before the evaluation period but much of the dissemination has happened since)
Locally-led innovation	• Supported three regional organisations/networks to develop innovation capacities • Provided small grants to local organisations to develop innovation ideas and carry out early testing at a local level

Skills	- Developed additional tools and resources to improve the use of the Humanitarian Innovation Guide, including translation into training modules - Developed the first ever guide on ethics for humanitarian innovation

Against the landscape of other humanitarian innovation funds the evaluation identified eight ways that the HIF is making a unique contribution to the sector:

1. **Commissioning gap analyses.** Elrha's background as a research funder means that it values rigour and evidence. Its three **Gap Analysis documents** (since 2019) provided a high-level evidence base for the problems that need to be addressed in each space. These studies represented a significant financial investment. They have built credibility, provided the TWGs with a shared sense of priorities, and in several cases given the TWGs a framework against which to evaluate the novelty of innovations.

2. **Facilitating learning across DOAI, GBV and WASH.** Elrha aims to be a learning organisation, "skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights".[63] HIF staff fostered a culture of learning within the organisation and with its grantees. They worked to generate an in-depth understanding of problems and solutions through funding or commissioning research and by bringing together academics and implementing partners. In interviews, grantees emphasised that they valued engaging with a peer group to discuss and solve common problems. The HIF also encouraged and supported the dissemination of learning across the sector.

3. **Providing end-to-end funding.** The HIF provided funding at multiple stages, from identifying a problem through to scaling a solution. The HIF's investment in early-stage research and ideation grants was particularly unusual - no other examples of this type of investment were identified among its comparators. Similarly, by awarding multiple grants to 39 projects since 2011[64], the HIF helped to ensure that these ideas received the funding and support needed to continue progressing. Without the end-to-end support of the HIF several of the innovations would not have progressed in the ways they did.

4. **Being a flexible, learning-oriented funder.** Grantees described the HIF's approach to grant management as approachable, collaborative and flexible. This approach encouraged honest discussions, based on 'really thoughtful questions' from the IMs, who were 'interested in learning more', acting as a 'sounding-board' for ideas and 'have a two-way conversation'. HIF grantees and strategic partners talked about how the HIF encouraged them to think about the innovation itself, the innovation journey, and the implications that had for management. This meant that grantees felt the HIF was open to addressing problems together and considering different options. It also helped grantees to pivot funds based on the realities on the ground.

5. **Showcasing innovations.** Elrha invested in showcasing grantee innovations, including through funding grantees to attend **conferences and to publish research,** collating innovations into **marketplaces and innovation catalogues,** and on **Elrha's website,** where each grantee has a dedicated page to describe why the innovation is useful, and contribute blogs that celebrate

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[63] Using the definition from Harvard Business Review Building a Learning Organisation.
[64] Of these, 26 were awarded two grants, 10 were awarded three grants, and 3 was awarded four grants. 5 of those awarded two grants were part of the most recent journey to scale round.

successes, reflect on progress and challenges, and present key research or evaluation findings. These spaces allowed grantees to profile work, and connect with potential partners.

6. **Demonstrating processes for 'responsible' innovation.** Ethical investment is vital for humanitarian innovation and three of the funds stated they have recently or are currently designing new frameworks for ethical innovation practices. The HIF has made responsible and ethical innovation core to its programming and has been vocal on the need for more rigorous thinking. It invested in developing an ethics toolkit (see Illustrative highlight 6) which gives grantees a holistic way of identifying and mitigating the risks associated with their innovations. Ethics were considered throughout the application process, workshops, and ongoing discussions with IMs. Grantees who had applied to multiple funds noted that the HIF application process required them to think more deeply about their commitment to inclusivity and how it would work in practice. The HIF provided support to several of the comparator initiatives in developing their own ethical approaches and processes, it should continue to explore how to do this in a more intentional way.

7. **Interlocutor, networker, convenor.** The HIF successfully used its focus areas to build momentum, networks, and reputation around specific problem spaces, particularly by bringing together influential and well-connected senior humanitarians in the TWGs. For grantees not embedded in the humanitarian sector, the HIF played a valuable role as an interlocutor, supporting them to 'speak the right language' and to 'understand the systems' and how the grantee's innovation could be embedded within it. They provided platforms and connections for organisations across the academic, private, and INGO/UN sectors.

8. **Supporting a more capable innovation ecosystem.** Since at least 2014, the HIF has recognised that innovation success is not just based on the effectiveness of the innovation. Strategic partners valued the HIF's support and guidance in innovation management, stating this was one of their areas of value-add. Its Humanitarian Innovation Guide, its research publication 'Too Tough to Scale', and the launch of the skills building area in 2020 demonstrate its understanding and efforts to support and foster good innovation management practice across the sector. The HIF should consider relaunching its work as a convener for those working in the area.

9. **(Working towards) establishing pathways for scaling.** The HIF began funding Scale grants earlier than many other funders (in 2016). It has supported eight innovations to implement scaling strategies and a further five to develop strategies. It has documented learning on the barriers to scale and pathways to adoption and its Drive work has sought to connect innovators with potential funders and partners. As we discuss in the recommendations the HIF now needs to build on this work by increasing its investment in Drive and by developing a strategic approach that includes investing in people with the networks and know-how to drive change through the global humanitarian system and/or through in-country networks (either at the HIF or within grants).

Illustrative highlight 6: The HIF's Ethical Toolkit

Among its peers, the HIF was considered a leading voice on ethics in humanitarian innovation. In 2019 the HIF published the Humanitarian Innovation Guide, detailing ethical guidelines for humanitarian innovators. The Ethical Toolkit, commissioned and co-developed by the HIF, was launched in 2020 to

provide practical resources for innovators. This highlight draws on interviews with 3 peer funders, 2 academics and 3 grantees to explore the contributions of the Toolkit to the sector.

Background

The Ethical Toolkit consists of three parts; a background paper, a Toolkit consisting of five tools and a document of four case studies that link directly to the Toolkit. The Toolkit was developed to be used by organisations of all sizes, as well as teams and individuals responsible for managing humanitarian innovation projects. Each tool in the Toolkit has a specific focus, including: culture and decision making; anticipating ethical challenges; developing consistent language around values; and creating systems of accountability and guidance for reactive decision making.

How was the toolkit developed?

The ethical toolkit was developed by a team of academic consultants. They worked closely with the HIF to understand the intended role of the Toolkit in the humanitarian innovation sector. A rapid literature review and qualitative research was conducted, consulting humanitarian innovation practitioners and experts[65]. The Toolkit was trialled at in-person workshops in Amsterdam, London, Manila, Munich and The Hague, and during two online webinars with HIF Journey to Scale grantees. The Toolkit was refined based on feedback from workshop participants. Overall, the research engaged with over 50 innovation teams and 100 individuals. Despite the reach of the qualitative research, and the relative diversity represented among those consulted, the team admitted it was difficult to engage actors situated in the Global South.

The gap the Toolkit sought to address

The Ethical Toolkit background paper found that current resources tend to be high-level, guiding values for individuals engaged in the humanitarian innovation processes. They did not find resources that helped innovators translate values into "actionable ethical decision-making structures"[66]. The authors sought to create an actionable resource for frontline innovators across the sector, from large INGOs with dispersed teams, to private sector start-up innovations. The five part Toolkit was designed to integrate ethics into all aspects of innovation design, testing and implementation. The authors recognised that there were specific risks associated with the confluence of business and humanitarian sectors that needed addressing.

Facilitating discussions

The Toolkit was seen by grantees and peers as an important resource that filled a gap in the sector. The authors of the Toolkit trialled it at a series of grantee and practitioner workshops alongside the HIF, Grand Challenges Canada and WFP. The authors observed the value participants gained from discussing their values as a team. For example, a participating team realised that the language they used was understood differently between in-country and international team members. They realised that it was important to spend time discussing their values in advance of a project to avoid misunderstandings and mistakes. Another stakeholder noted that the Toolkit added an interactive element to sessions on ethics that were more valuable than a presentation on its own, by allowing participants to put principles to practice.

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[65] The qualitative research aspect of the toolkit development involved interviewing 40 individuals from 36 unique organisations in the sector.

[66] Krishnaraj G., et al (2021). *Ethics for Humanitarian Innovation: Background Paper.* Elrha. London.

Format and languages

Peer funders and academics involved in the development of the Toolkit endorse its quality and relevance, but suggest that what was developed should be seen as the first iteration. They suggested that, in its second iteration, the Toolkit should be translated into different languages. Additionally, it should consist of a product that is easier to navigate and more accessible to field-based users, with the potential for a digital online interface or a physical product that could be given to innovation teams. There was consensus that PDF resources are often overlooked in busy humanitarian settings

> *"[the toolkit] will have to look different and be something that people could pull apart and use, one piece [at a time]... We're part way along; if we stopped now it would be a missed opportunity, I think."* **Toolkit stakeholder**

Integrating ethics into the grant process

In discussions with grantees, it seemed that none used the Toolkit independent of an organised external workshop implemented by the HIF or others. One grantee explained that restrictions on meeting in person during the Covid-19 pandemic meant that there had not yet been an appropriate setting for them to explore the Toolkit as a team. However, they described using parts of it as a prompt when writing fundraising bids and they valued engaging with ethics at the HIF workshops in the early days of project development. This shows the potential for the Ethical Toolkit to be integrated into funding processes, and for this to become mainstreamed across other funders.

> *"I was so glad to be part of those conversations about humanitarian innovation ethics, because there are certain times when you're doing something thinking, what gives us the right to do this? And actually, The HIF has provided not only a forum, but also outputs that you can point to around humanitarian innovation and ethics, which are very useful."* **Grantee**

One stakeholder stated that grantees rarely ask for input on ethics, explaining that they often perceive more pressing priorities. This, and the limited use of the Toolkit cited by other interviewees, suggests that the Toolkit, in its current format, is best used in formal workshop settings with an external facilitator who is familiar with the tools. It seems that teams are unlikely to pick up and use the Toolkit without any prior introduction to it. For the next iteration of the Toolkit, the HIF should plan a more targeted launch of the Toolkit, with a clearer sense of audience and use-case.

The HIF as a responsible funder

The Ethical Toolkit, building on the Humanitarian Innovation Guide, helps to position the HIF as a responsible funder in the sector. The Toolkit was developed with wide consultation and positioned to fill a gap in the market. However, less thought was given to the launch and dissemination of the toolkit. As such, uptake of the tool remains low. This presents an opportunity for the second iteration of the Toolkit to have greater reach and impact. Further work on the Toolkit would benefit from considering how to make the resource more accessible for humanitarian innovators in the Global South.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined how the HIF compares to other innovation funds in terms of its strategy, selection approach, funding, due diligence, and support. It also outlined nine contributions that the HIF has made to the sector through investing in research, supporting grantees, sharing learning, and demonstrating approaches to responsible innovation.

Based on these findings, together with analysis from Chapter 3, we recommend that the HIF reflect on its future role and ambition in being a convenor for the innovation sector (Recommendation 7). In addition, together with analysis from Chapter 6, we recommend that the HIF documents and shares its application of its ethics work to provide leadership in the sector on how this enables it to take ethical risks (Recommendation 14).

The next chapter outlines recommendations for the future.

8. Recommendations

This section outlines recommendations arising from the main findings.

The highest priority recommendations are identified in red. Recommendations are categorised as short (<3 months), medium (3-9 months), and long-term (9+ months).

Strategy

The HIF strategy ended in 2020 and the HIF since relied only on the Elrha strategy to provide its overall direction. The Elrha strategy provided a helpful overview of focus areas and priorities (such as supporting grantees, distilling learning and driving adoption of new approaches) but it did not clearly state how those apply to innovation. The HIF did not have its own theory of change that was actively used in decision-making or evidence collection.

- **Recommendation 1:** Elrha and HIF management, Medium term, High priority.

  Decide whether the HIF will have a standalone strategy; develop a strategy or a strategy implementation plan that focuses on how the 4Ds apply to innovation. In particular, it should:

  - Review and update the HIF theory of change and consider use of nested theories of change for the focus areas. Ensure that the theory of change outlines clear assumptions that can be reviewed and tested in future evaluations.

  - Address how resources should be distributed between activities, how the HIF drives uptake of innovation, and how the 4Ds apply to the different focus areas. In particular, what is the HIF's role in driving locally-led innovation and skills building and does this differ to other focus areas?

  - Articulate how the HIF drives systems-change innovations (such as greater inclusion in humanitarian responses) and how this might be different to product or process innovations.

- **Recommendation 2:** HIF management, Medium term.

  Create space to reflect internally on how decisions were made during the FCDO funding cuts in 2020 and identify learnings. Use the strategy processes to reflect on the financing constraints of innovation and to develop an agenda and plan for how the HIF will research/advocate for more innovative financing in the future - including from both Government donors and non-traditional donors. This will be necessary for ensuring that the HIF stays relevant in the longer term.

End-to-end funding

The evaluation explored the tension between challenge funds and end-to-end funding. The challenge fund approach allowed the HIF to identify a range of solutions to priority problems. However, the data indicated that the HIF's greatest contributions in terms of learning and scaling occurred when it engaged in longer-term commitments with grantees.

- **Recommendation 3**: HIF management, Medium term, High priority.

Focus more deliberately on end-to-end funding (from early stage innovations to scaling). Where challenge funds are still appropriate, consider how to ensure that successful innovations can continue to progress through the innovation cycle at the end of the challenge.

Recognition grants

There was not a clear pathway between the HIF's Recognition grants and its Invention/Pilot grants. In addition, the HIF did not capture the outcomes of its Recognition grants in a way that allowed it to demonstrate the value of funding research.

- **Recommendation 4:** HIF management and IMs, Medium term.

  Articulate how Recognition grants are intended to feed into future opportunities (for example, through informing the HIF's work, others work, or leading to innovations themselves). Use this definition to assess whether Recognition grants were worth the investment and begin capturing data on the impact of these grants (for example, through identifying the outcomes of dissemination activities). This will help inform whether the strategic approach needs to be changed to generate more value that can justify the investment.

Locally-led innovation

Locally-led innovation became a focus area in 2016 and was a feature of HIF's 2018 strategy. However, beyond the CLIP project (outside of the scope of this evaluation) it made up a very small proportion of funding, with few grantees and very few examples of end-to-end funding. In other focus areas, LMIC-led projects had a low success rate; in a sample of funding calls, 1% of LMIC organisations that submitted an Expression of Interest went on to receive funding (6 of 824).

- **Recommendation 5**: HIF management and IMs, Medium term.

  Define the HIF's role, investment approach, and Drive approach for locally-led innovation. Clarify how the CLIP should feed into and inform other aspects of the HIF's work. For example, does the HIF perceive locally-led innovation as having a separate methodology and outcomes to other workstreams; or does the HIF intend to draw on more localised approaches for other aspects of its work.

- **Recommendation 6**: HIF management and IMs, Medium term.

  Work with partners to explore barriers to inclusion for those in LMICs and to explore how to seek out and/or pre-screen potential applicants to reduce the number of failed applications from national and local organisations (and thus the time wasted in developing unsuccessful proposals).

Convening

There is a perception among some of the interviewees that the HIF's profile has lessened in the last two years, likely due to pandemic and its funding cuts. The HIF has historically played a valuable role in convening those working on humanitarian innovation, such as through the Humanitarian Innovation Exchange. There haven't been any of these types of activities since 2019 and there are no specific plans in place to resume.

- **Recommendation 7:** Elrha and HIF management, Medium term.

  Decide whether the HIF will play a future role as a convener for the innovation sector and how this aligns with other strategic activities. Consider how this role applies to locally-led innovation and build the expertise and networks needed.

Lack of investment in Drive

The HIF staff have focused on learning about what works, distilling that evidence, and convening the TWGs. However, overall, there is limited investment in Driving adoption and while some of the activities have been very influential, they have also been relatively ad-hoc. There is a need to invest in its staff or grantees attending forums where they can influence uptake of innovations, including through donors, UN agencies, NGO networks, and the contractors that provide backbone service to many humanitarian operations.

- **Recommendation 8:** Elrha and HIF management, Medium term, High Priority.

  Develop a proactive strategy for Drive for each focus area, clarifying the roles of the HIF and its grantees in pursuing adoption within the humanitarian system. The approach and roles for disseminating non-product/service innovations may need special attention. Continue to do additional activities to drive research uptake, such as the Research Impact workshops in 2021.

- **Recommendation 9:** Elrha and HIF management, Medium term.

  Review the resource allocation across the 4Ds to enable more significant value to be generated in Distil and Drive.

Research outcomes and grantee outcomes

The HIF invested in evidence-based innovation, including funding for research. It has a detailed end of grant report that includes evidence of learning, adaption, and outcomes. However, the HIF did **not invest in strong MEL processes for collating grantee outcomes** and (like other humanitarian funders) has no systematic **approach to tracking grantees beyond the end of funding**. Similarly, the HIF had evidence of its publications being accessed and some individual stories of how they have been used, but use was not well documented, for either research produced by the HIF or research produced by grantees. It is noted that Elrha's most senior MEL role was cut as a result of the funding cuts in 2020 and until 2022 the MEL role was budgeted at 0.5 FTE, which impacted the HIF's ability to build stronger MEL systems.

- **Recommendation 10:** Elrha, HIF management and IMs, Short term, High priority.

  Invest in MEL expertise within the Elrha team and set up systems to systematically collect outcomes data. This will require greater time investment from IMs and other staff to comply with these processes. However, it could also support their decisions on resource allocation and scaling. Elrha should invest in the capacities to:

  - monitor research uptake and use for research outputs produced by both the HIF and its grantees (this may require additional data collection post-grants);
  - monitor scaling outcomes of pilot and scale grants 18-24 months after funding ends (this will require longer contractual agreements and specific resourcing for HIF and from grantees);
  - collate and categorise grantee outcomes data (for example by types of value) from end-of-grant reports;
  - support synthesis and analysis of learning and outcomes; and,
  - work towards better VfM analysis by monitoring outcomes linked to learning and scaling (the HIF's value areas) and by tracking investments per activity area.

Learning and decision-making

While the HIF had a strong culture of learning, there is still room for improvement. The HIF made steps towards more systematically documenting and sharing learning. It should now focus on reducing silos, updating important outputs, and incorporating more diverse perspectives.

- **Recommendation 11:** Board, Elrha management and HIF management, Medium term.

  Include frontline responders and members of crisis-affected populations in all governance bodies of the HIF (TWGs, HIF funding committee, and advisory group). This could include representatives of CBOs or relevant associations; identify the most appropriate approach and adjust recruitment processes accordingly.

- **Recommendation 12:** HIF management and IMs, Medium term.

  Prioritise cross-area learning and explore the synergies between different work areas to ensure a continued cohesive approach. For example, create space for partners and grantees to interact with other people on the HIF team beyond their thematic focus area; include staff from different HIF focus areas in key events, field visits, or monitoring activities. Place a stronger focus on ongoing learning in key areas where the HIF has published standout contributions to the sector, for example scale and the Humanitarian Innovation Guide, to ensure that the HIF remains current and continues to be a thought-leader in these areas.

- **Recommendation 13:** Board, Elrha management and HIF management, Long term.

  Commission guidance on how to become an anti-racist organisation and decolonise the work of the HIF.

Responsible innovation and risks

The HIF had a clear approach to managing the risk of failure but interviewees felt it tended to make cautious decisions and could be bolder in funding more novel and unproven ideas. The HIF's ethics work was a valuable contribution to the sector, but approaches to disseminating the Ethics Toolkit have been ad-hoc and there are few specific examples of how it was used beyond the testing period.

- **Recommendation 14:** HIF management and IMs, Long term.

  Continue to work with TWGs to identify novel solutions for funding, taking more risk on unproven solutions. Document how the ethics work allows the HIF to responsibly take more risk and tolerate more failure and share this learning with other funders.