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challenges launched since 2013

1,155
ideas added to the platform

9
ideas implemented in UNHCR operations

9,659
comments on ideas

144
countries represented on the platform

20,790
unique users

CREATING AN INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM FOR REFUGEES IN UGANDA

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Louise Bloom,
Research Officer,
Humanitarian Innovation Project
at University of Oxford

Innovation in Africa is increasingly in the international limelight. The iHub in Kenya is a technology hub that has launched a plethora of new start-up projects that benefit the country, and initiatives such as M-Pesa are commonly cited as shaping the face of innovation in the continent as its mobile access increases at a faster rate than anywhere else in the world. In Uganda, there is an increase in innovation hubs, co-working spaces, and entrepreneurial activity that is also contributing to Africa's innovation scene.

So what does this innovation movement mean for refugees and other populations of concern to UNHCR, who make up 15.1 million of the continents' population?

In Uganda, the Humanitarian Innovation Project (HIP) spent time researching this question in 2013. Interviews with the managers and members of new innovation hubs, as well as focus groups and interviews with refugees helped to inform new insights into how inclusive or exclusive this innovation ecosystem is for refugees.

In Kampala, the country's capital, over 10 innovation hubs and businesses support organisations were mapped, including for example the Hive Colab, Outbox and the Mara Launchpad. These hubs and organisations provide support to new entrepreneurs to help them launch new businesses, or find funding. Each supported its members through the process of innovation in a variety of ways.

The innovation process may be thought of as a four-stage journey of problem definition, solution identification, testing and adapting the solution and finally scaling it up. Many of the hubs offered networking events, where individuals could engage with new people and share expertise to help further define opportunities and problems they were considering as entrepreneurs. Most new innovation hubs also offered different levels of membership which offered office space, internet access, and mentorship. Access to venture capitalists and funders through the hubs networks were also on offer as initiatives were scaled up.

This specific movement of innovation hubs, however, remained exclusive to those who could afford time at the hub developing new ideas. Many of the members were recent IT graduates from the city's universities and already had some connection to the networks that the hubs were catalysing. In this regard, refugees were relatively excluded from this supporting environment. We met one university student who was volunteering at one hub, but no others who engaged as members, volunteers, or staff. In a focus group with seven refugees in Kampala, only one had heard of any of the innovation hubs on offer in the city, but none had used them.

Beyond the new innovation hubs, older business support services, funding initiatives, and institutional training institutes were also prevalent – and contributing to new skills, networks and seeding entrepreneurial activity for those living in Uganda. These also contribute to the network and environment of innovation support that makes up the ecosystem there. Again these initiatives were not commonly accessed by the refugee community.

So what was stopping refugees from accessing these innovation services?

Several key issues were raised by the refugees we worked with and spoke to on the topic. These included:

Limited information available for the types of services available and how to access them – information usually spreads by word of mouth within refugee communities so new information is hard to find.

Expensive membership fees to gain access to the hubs and associations, or for specific training courses available, are restrictive. Many private innovation initiatives are not targeted at refugees, so there is no allowance or discount to them.

Lack of time available for refugees to travel and attend activities – due to having several jobs or having to seek income.

No support is provided after trainings, so it is hard for refugees to find funding to enter the market or implement their innovations using their new skills gained from any training.

Our research at HIP has focused on refugee's own initiatives to innovate – of which many were identified in Uganda. This indicates that refugees do engage in some way to certain innovation networks in the city and the rural settlements where they reside. In a recent report we published on Refugee Innovation, we identified that refugees' own social innovations were supporting other refugees. Organisations such as YARID in Kampala, and CIYOTA in Kyangwali refugee settlement, are refugee-led community-based organisations which are a formidable source of support and encouragement within their immediate refugee communities. YARID offers language, tailoring, social media, and business training – providing its members with a springboard to enter the Ugandan economy and engage in entrepreneurial activity of their own. And CIYOTA has a focus on providing educational opportunities in the remote rural settlement, and has created its own leadership curriculum to encourage its members to become future leaders within the continent. Even in the early stages of a crisis, refugees' social initiatives are supporting the community. In Rwamwanja settlement where new arrivals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo reside, a youth group has started a music and theatre group to mobilise the community and earn a small income from performances.

In the rural areas more could be done by the international community to support these refugee-led social innovation initiatives, and provide assistance that works alongside them. In the urban setting of Kampala, despite the innovation system for refugees being relatively separated from common innovation hubs and services, most refugees we spoke to argued that any services for refugee innovation simply must include services to Ugandans too. In this regard, more work is needed to bring refugees into the folds of the city. This will be vital for innovation to be successful – since some of the challenges refugee innovators face in funding new initiatives or learning language skills could be overcome with better connection and access to local innovation networks.

CASE STUDY: HOW UNHCR ZAMBIA IS EMBRACING INNOVATION TO CREATE LIVELIHOODS OPPORTUNITIES

If war had not come to Johnny D.'s Angolan village, maybe he would still be selling books with his wife and ten children. But war did come, in 2006, and there was no time to grab any possessions. They just ran.

Johnny says had he stayed, he would be dead. Armed men came after him, beating him and nearly breaking his legs. They killed several of his family members. Johnny and his family fled on foot and embarked on a four-month journey. Hunger and exhaustion plagued them constantly.

Almost ten years later, Johnny is grateful to have a safe place to live in a Zambian settlement called Mayukwayukwa for a simple reason; "There is no war, or killing each other," he says. Even though nearly a decade has passed, he says that he cannot go back. Nor does he want to: Zambia has become home.

UNHCR and the Zambian government know that. They're working along with implementing partners to integrate refugees like Johnny into the local community, and create a permanent solution. And as part of the effort, organizations such as Caritas Czech Republic and Engineers Without Borders Australia (EWB) are offering training in livelihoods selected by the community as especially promising, and speedy to start.

"Creating livelihoods opportunities allows people to become self-reliant and to be able to provide for their families," says Jenny Turner, EWB's Director of Education and Research. "It is essential for refugees in the local integration program to be able to establish themselves in Zambia apart from the protection of UNHCR in the refugee settlements."

> " "Learning to identify, develop, design, and test their own solutions goes a long way to developing a strong self-sustainable community."

The promise of integration

Mayukwayukwa has been a haven for refugees since 1966. Nearly indistinguishable from the Zambian villages that surround it, the settlement is now home to Angolans, Congolese, Rwandese, and Burundese, many of whom were born there and have lived in Mayukwayukwa their whole lives.

The Government of Zambia is willing to settle refugees here permanently; In fact, it approved a local integration bill in June 2015 that, once enacted, will integrate up to 10,000 Angolans. More than 5,400 have already applied and been screened.

To help both refugees and locals integrate and prosper, the Zambian government are gifting five hectares (about 12 and a half acres) of land apiece to a group of refugees and native Zambians who'll be starting a new community in Mayukwayukwa together.

The plan is idealistic but not idyllic. A lack of basic infrastructure like plumbing and electricity means the group of new landowners will be starting from scratch. For integration to work, the group must be able to produce enough food for their families, and earn enough money to stay afloat.

Picking and drying the low-hanging fruit

To help them begin, UNHCR, Caritas, and EWB are training interested community members in income-generating "Quick Impact Projects" they identified themselves.

"It assists in removing the dependence on aid organizations, as they no longer need to wait for a solution—which may or may not be appropriate to their context—to be provided for them."

Instead, says Turner, quick impact projects coupled with some training allow refugees to create tailor-made solutions on their own.

To ensure both refugees and Zambians benefited from the projects, workshop participants were first introduced to the idea of human-centered design—a concept that helped them keep each other in mind as they came up with prototypes.

"Participants in the workshops learned the human-centered design process and how this could be applied to new ventures such as solar fruit drying," says Turner. "There was a lot of excitement when they realized that they were the ones generating their own ideas for their future."

One such project is showing residents how to make use of the area's literal low-hanging fruit to turn a profit. Community members like Benny Mweemba are making plans to dry slices of the area's prolific mangoes for sale in local markets or Lusaka, Zambia's capital.

Mweemba came with his mother and grandmother to Mayukwayukwa two years ago, when deforestation and a lack of rain finally made his farmland too unproductive to earn a living.

Mweemba is ambitious—an ideas man. It's obvious from the various plans he has for raising the start-up capital he'll need to go into business as a plumber and sheet metal construction worker. He has the training but not enough money to go out on his own, something he is working hard to rectify by farming chili peppers for sale in the Zambian capital, Lusaka.

After attending the EWB workshop on human-centered design, he's realizing another opportunity literally underfoot.

"People from Mayukwayyukwa, they have a lot of mango trees here but they are just wasting here," Mweemba says.

In fact, the majority of Mayukwayukwa's large mango harvest is lost without a way to process or preserve it. Drying them using a simple, do-it-yourself style solar fruit dryer could provide a food source for times of scarcity.

Mweemba says hopefully by next year he'll not just be in dried mango production, but will know enough to teach others here and back home.

Grace Mukatimui Lubinda also learned how to

UNHCR INNOVATION FELLOW BUILDS CREATIVE CONFIDENCE OF YOUTH IN UGANDA

process and dehydrate mangoes. She says the three-day workshop gave her a practical way to help her earn a better living for her family of five, and something to contribute to the community.

"These three days I have learned how you can manage to do something that you can achieve, knowing everything that you do can give you something," she says. "I can even teach others what I have learned."

Through other training courses, industrious hopefuls like Mweemba and Lubinda may soon venture into new roles as beekeepers and tailors—two other professional skill sets community members expressed interest in learning.

And their enthusiasm to learn has continued after the workshops ended. According to Turner, the participants have worked with Caritas to prototype the solar fruit dryer and other ideas. "They will begin testing soon and I'm sure it is only a matter of time before they will be selling dried mango and other fruits," she says.

In fact, the new solar dryers being prototyped are now up and running. And beehives refugees have constructed using both traditional and modern techniques and materials are starting to hum with the promises of profit.

Rising to the challenge
Residents of Mayukwayukwa will reap the benefits of their own projects over the next years. But they're not the only ones working on coming up with good ideas.

UNHCR and EWB are pitting 10,000 university students from Australia and New Zealand against each other in the EWB Challenge, a competition to develop and prototype solutions to refugee problems from waste management to climate change in Mayukwayukwa.

The good practices learned in Mayukwayukwa and the innovative technologies helping the new integrated community may also be transplanted in Zambia's other refugee settlement area of Meheba.

In a few years, people in both settlements could be up-cycling car parts and old bottles into useful household goods, or employing conservation agriculture techniques that will make unpredictable rains less of a roller coaster. Maybe they'll be turning those mangoes into jars of preserves.

The only limit is the creativity of challenge participants, refugees and Zambians hoping to contribute to a new start for everyone.

"

"Creating livelihoods opportunities allows people to become self-reliant and to be able to provide for their families."

Months into her first placement with UNHCR in Uganda, Keiko Odashiro was hit by a crisis of conscience. After years spent at the helm of her own organization – an NGO working around human trafficking and gender-based violence – she had made the switch to the UN Refugee Agency in 2014, hoping to make a difference in the lives of displaced populations.

But during the training seminar provided by the Innovation unit and GLC, Odashiro learned that the way she was used to managing new projects was not the best way to achieve success. "I realized how risky it is to develop projects without involving the very people we are trying to support, without prototyping, and without selecting the best idea that we know will work," Odashiro recalls. She now understood that innovation was the result of a long iteration process that placed beneficiaries at the center of each project and required to make sure all stakeholders were actively engaged – something she had failed to do until then.

With this in mind, she set out to look for an opportunity to develop a project that would be more inclusive and collaborative. She knew she wanted to work with refugee youth, because their needs were often unaddressed by humanitarian programs.

In Uganda, adolescents and young adults are under huge pressure to provide for themselves and their families. Many of them have to drop out of school to find work, and as a result must find precarious jobs that place them at risk of abuse from unscrupulous employers. Some girls turn to prostitution as a last resort to provide for their basic needs, Odashiro says.

At the same time, the refugee youth she spoke to were eager to take matters into their own hands. Some of them had taken to launching micro-enterprises through which they would design and sell crafts in the streets. But with no education, they lacked the skills to grow their businesses. "A lot of young people have great ideas, but don't know where to start," she says.

"Every time I went out in a community, I'd hear the youth say that we were not paying attention to them, that nothing was done for them," she remembers. "

At another training provided by the design and innovation consulting firm Ideo a few months later, she met with young refugee leaders who were eager to find solutions for their communities. Together, they started brainstorming on how to meet the needs of refugee youths. The discussions carried on in the following weeks, and a new initiative eventually emerged.

One Youth One Heart, as the project would be called, was designed to support young leaders in

their projects while bridging the gap between refugees and host communities. The project was created around a non-hierarchical structure to ensure that all participating voices were equal. Odashiro and the team chose to avoid using certain words that are traditionally used in humanitarian circles, such as "service," "provide" and "assistance," preferring to use terms like "co-create."

"They'll learn from their mistakes, and develop new ideas. As long as they know they have this creative confidence, no matter how much they fail, they can just rise up and start anew."

Earlier in 2015, One Youth One Heart launched U-Spark Hub, an online platform where young social innovators can connect with potential mentors and donors. The project is currently in its piloting phase, with plans to launch a network of "innovation hubs," or physical spaces where users who may not have access to the Internet at home can access the platform throughout the country.

Odashiro also helped develop a training curriculum called HANDS, which aims at fostering what she calls "creative confidence," or the ability

for people to develop homegrown solutions for local issues. "Often when we work with refugees, we have the tendency to protect them, but we fail to look at them as partners who have capabilities, who have strengths, and who could tremendously contribute to the development and design of projects," she explains. "This kind of top-down approach really diminishes their potential to come up with their own solutions for their challenges, whether these are private or community challenges." HANDS has been taught to One Youth One Heart team members, who will now be able to pass it on to other youths.

Odashiro was recently transferred to South Sudan, and although she keeps close contact with her former teammates, One Youth One Heart and the U-Spark Hub has taken off on its own, with support from the local UNHCR operation. That's because every team member was actively involved in every step of the project, and developed a sense of ownership that will allow the project to go on with or without her. "The online platform may not be successful, or maybe they'll come up with something else. But whatever they create, it will be theirs," Odashiro says.

**To learn more about
One Youth One Heart go to:**
www.oneyouthoneheart.org

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"We're building young people's capacity to lead," Odashiro says of the initiative. "You can't learn how to be a leader from a book, you have to practice. We're just providing an opportunity and space where they can practice leadership."

10 DEFINING PRINCIPLES OF RADICALLY OPEN PARTNERSHIPS

At the World Humanitarian Summit in May, Google, Mercy Corps, UNHCR Innovation and Thoughtworks were lucky enough to win an award for having one of the Top 5 Innovations of the World Humanitarian Summit for their collaborative project Translation Cards. While Translation Cards was a factor in winning the prize, Fabio Sergio - VP of Design at Frog Design - noted that really it was the nature of the partnership itself that helped win the team the award. For us, this means radical openness.

John Warnes,
Emergency Lab Technology Specialist at UNHCR Innovation and
Jeff Wishnie,
Senior Director of Platforms and Services at the Digital Impact Alliance

Radical Openness is a concept that has been around for some time, kicking off through TED with a book from Don Tapscott and Anthony D Williams, but as of yet was not something that had really been explored and adopted in a humanitarian setting. With little knowledge of what came before, the Translation Cards project team found themselves square and centre in putting radical openness into practice. And for us, has now become our default way of working.

Though we presented on this recently at both the World Humanitarian Summit and the ICT4D conference, the team has never unpacked, outside of our presentations on the topic, what Radical Openness really means, and how you can bring it into your organisation. This article aims to change that by providing our 10 defining principles of radical openness, some of the tools we use to achieve this and why we should be doing it in the first place.

Why 'Radical Openness'?
Radical Openness really came as a reaction to the ever apparent 'siloism' beginning to exist in humanitarian aid and development. The tendency to think about your own organisation before thinking about not only what everybody else is doing and secondly, really what the outcomes are for the people affected by crisis. Through being radically open, we can tackle obstacles and bottlenecks more effectively:

- Do you feel like you lack the expertise in your organisation to achieve your goals?
- Are you lacking in funding to make what needs to happen, happen?
- Are you constrained by access to the field?
- Do you feel like you lack the buy-in or space to move an idea forward?

> "Radical Openness really came as a reaction to the ever apparent 'siloism' beginning to exist in humanitarian aid and development."

If the answer is yes to any of these, then it might be worthwhile thinking about how being radically open might be able to help you. By opening up to all your partners, it helps you bring in and leverage their expertise. Tasks can be shared, ideas can be honed and it will help you innovate. The checks and balances the community provide to your project will keep you on the right course, and in turn, focussed on the real needs of people themselves. Through being radically open it is possible to pool resources, have mutual contributions to each other's projects to move them forward outside of bureaucracy and red tape. Due to the open dialogue that is facilitated, there is an unspoken pressure - a positive sort of pressure - for all organisations involved to be motivated to react to the real challenges. The quick flow of information sharing helps ensure that everybody involved was constantly learning from the others about what was having an impact, and what was required to move the project forward.

So now you're saying 'The concept sounds great but how does this actually work?'. There are two ways to address this—first with our 10 defining principles that you can take to your organisation to see whether they can be applied to your business processes, an overview of some tools to help you enact these, and subsequently some examples of how we have done it to give you an idea of how it can work in practice.

Radical Openness: defining principles

1. Share a vision—or part of one. Above all, the motivation to move a project forward comes from a shared vision. This foundation of an open collaboration is that you and collaborators care first and only about achieving a shared goal—not about who does the work, who pays, or who gets the credit.

2. Work in the open so your collaborators are always in the know and can help you along the way. As a bonus, this transparency will keep everyone honest about delays and shifting priorities. Default all work to public and editable!

3. Talk to everyone, all the time. Even to the people and organisations who aren't (yet) particularly helpful or collaborative. If you share goals, stay in touch. That opportunity to collaborate will come. All contributors welcome.

4. Kill your ego (and your employer's). Do we really need to plaster our logos over everything? Sometimes our desire for visibility gets in the way of equity amongst partners. This can extend to the individual level. Nobody likes a show-off and it's important to take people's skills and expertise for what they are, rather than base anything on seniority or the hubris of others.

5. Give praise and credit to all. No, this doesn't contradict #4. Everyone who contributes deserves credit. And one way to kill your ego is to credit all equally and not worry about who is more equal than others.
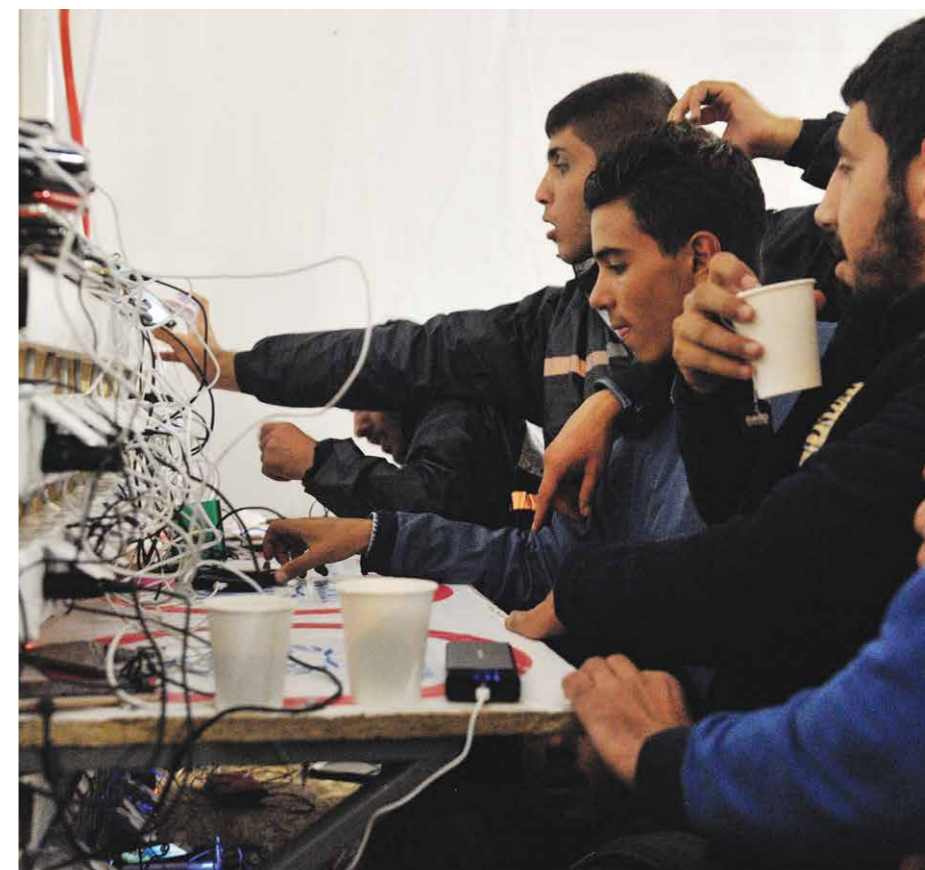
6. Crack open your partners/funders. When embracing a new vision, one of the first things some of the more pessimistic would bring up might be along the lines of 'we don't have the funding'. Don't let money get in the way. If you have a vision shared amongst others, and can bring value, they will support you rather than compete against you. For numerous organisations, when they think about partnership it is usually with a subtext of "what can I get for free". This isn't helpful. It is important to open this information up.

7. Get concrete. No over-politeness. Understand your strengths and weaknesses; it's important to be realistic about what you can and can't do well. While everybody may want a bigger chunk of the pie, if you spend too much time fussing over your share it holds everything up. For UNHCR Innovation, we came to an ongoing process and realised we didn't have a leadership role in the product development. Our thinking was that this was absolutely fine, because what we could contribute was an avenue for testing—valuable in its own right, rather than 'why aren't we playing a more central role?'.

8. Fill gaps & avoid overlap. Everybody hates reinventing the wheel. The only reason we do it is usually because one small aspect of something doesn't fit. If a team is transparently communicating what it's doing at each stage of the process it will allow others to springboard off your work, without recreating it. Being honest about what you haven't done also allows others to fill gaps that you may not have gotten round to.

9. Be courageous and helpful. Some items on this list are frightening. Working in the open means people see your early, messy, draft work. While this can be genuinely embarrassing and scary, the pay off in speed-of-action and collaborative input is worth it. And often we learn that what we fear isn't so bad after all.

10. Lead by example. Want others to pitch in? Work in the open? Kill their egos? The best way to create a comfortable space for others is to show that you are doing these things yourself—and flourishing for it.

Tools
There are some tools that can be used to make this process a lot easier. Here are a couple of examples but in the age of the internet there are plenty of interesting tools :

Slack. One nifty tool that can be used to make Slack even more open is Slackin which allows a widget to be added to a webpage that can sign people up to a Slack team themselves.

Google Drive. Or any similarly open shared storage facility such as Dropbox, Box or Onedrive. It is vital that there is openness so that it can be shared to any individuals or organisations who need access.

Google Docs / Sheets. The reason to state Google Drive predominantly comes down to its integration with Google Docs / Sheets. This tool really allows us to default to open and editable - any document that somebody is working on is visible to the whole team for edits, suggestions and remarks. There are again other tools such as Office online that allow for this degree of collaboration but Google have a little more flexibility with their permissions allowing any sort of sharing the owner deems fit.

There are also some specific tools for different work areas that can also help move things forward such as Jira, Github or Zeplin. The critical difference between simply using emails and using these systems is that everything has a public record, so nothing gets lost in somebody's inbox.

Radical Openness in practice
So with principles in mind and tools in hand, how does this apply to the realities including all of the everyday challenges we face in responding to emergencies?

As previously mentioned, one of the projects where we started doing this was the Translation Cards project. As an open-source web development project, I guess it was easier to be 'open': we had all of the development work openly accessible through Github, a code repository store. There were some elements that did require some decision making, for instance it was decided that rather than try to co-brand or fit the design alongside any organisation's branding guidelines, we would just have it completely neutral - no logos. We also used a variety of the tools mentioned above to make our workflows as quick and transparent as possible. Through Slack the UNHCR team was able to bring the field feedback straight to the developers in real-time.

Of course one of the afterthoughts we had about this was that we didn't have a complex agreement between the parties on this project. And, while the collaborators commit significant staff time to the project, the cash outlay has been tiny. A total of $335 was spent on some translations and publishing the app, which Mercy Corps took on themselves.

A second project was around Video Displays. UNHCR Innovation had the idea to implement this in response to fast-moving populations in transit through South East Europe. UNHCR had approached Xibo —an open source solution— to support with setting up these digital displays. Through discussions with Mercy Corps we realised that there was a lot we could gain by joining up. Why would we need to have two relationships with different organisations, perhaps different solutions and spend valuable resources managing this?

This in mind, all the research on the software and hardware solutions was shared from each party and then it was agreed collectively to move forward with Xibo. Due to the relatively low licence cost, UNHCR simply provided these for free to any organisation who wanted to set up a screen. Mercy Corps offered to simply buy devices for anybody needing to run the software on a display. Following this, the admin role on the platform was shared so that we could support across timezones more promptly and Slack was used to provide updates on activating screens.

Radical Openness: the way forward
While the above examples are essentially related to our use of humanitarian technology in emergency response, the principles can be taken forward in any sort of programming. It's possible to be open with your communication using tools like Slack. Write your non-confidential documents online and open them up for all to see. Honest and frank discussions can lead to better progress. Those who aren't in a position to contribute get found out quickly, so invite everybody to be part of the vision. These are some of first steps towards becoming radically open. Doing this will make your life easier, help you realise your vision quicker, build new relationships that all importantly make us more effective at responding to humanitarian emergencies.

5 CHALLENGES TO ACCESSING EDUCATION FOR SYRIAN REFUGEE CHILDREN

Lessons learned from the Refugee Education workshop at Stanford University

More than half of the 4.8 million refugees who have poured out of Syria are children. The world sees their faces as they cling to parents, bob in over-burdened boats, cry in the arms of volunteers on beachheads. The public rarely sees them in school.

Syrian refugee children are going to school, of course. In fact, Deputy U.S. Secretary of State Anthony J. Blinken points out that today there are more Syrian children in Lebanese public schools than there are Lebanese.

But as Blinken said at a January 2016 Refugee Education workshop that UNHCR's Learn Lab attended at Stanford University; "Across the world, the most severe consequences of all this suffering and displacement have fallen most heavily on the smallest shoulders."

Despite the best efforts of the governments in the region, most school-aged refugees living in host countries remain without access to education. Some 921,370 school-age children are out of school (UNICEF 2016. Syria Education Fact Sheet.

March). The majority of them want very much to return to the classroom, but current efforts to get them there have come up short. Those who do enroll often face challenges of their own, as do the school systems that try to integrate them.

"What we found out over the past year is that, despite a massive effort, our existing resources and responses are simply not enough," Blinken said at Stanford. "The magnitude of the problem is greater than the solutions that we bring to bear at the moment."

Why is providing Syrian refugee children with access to quality education while they await a durable solution so sticky? Here are five of the most notable reasons.

1. The language of displacement

Refugee children living in Lebanon are eligible to enroll in public school, and hundreds of thousands have. Challenges posed by space limitations and resource constraints are obvious but these students face a more fundamental problem when it comes to learning: they don't speak the language.

Syrian refugee children struggle to make sense of lessons taught in English or French, which are official languages of instruction in Lebanese schools. Children have to speak Arabic and English or Arabic and French from as early as Kindergarten. As much as Arabic may not be a problem, English or French is an issue for Syrian refugees. A 2012 assessment by UNICEF and Save the Children showed as a result, children were being placed in lower grades than the

ones they attended in Syria.

The language barrier is one reason that 66 percent of the 80 children in Lebanon whom UNHCR asked about education said they were not attending school. Another 2013 assessment found that 80 per cent of Syrian refugee children in Lebanon were not in school. The problem plagues refugee children in Turkey too, and even other Arabic-speaking countries where the dialect is different.

"I have been in too many classrooms where refugee teenagers cram themselves into tiny benches or sit on the floor in early primary classrooms because that is where

"Engaging the right actors—including refugee communities themselves— is an ever-present challenge, but one that is essential for the humanitarian community to get a good grasp of what's really going on."

language learning happens," writes Sarah Dryden-Peterson, a professor at Harvard's Graduate School of Education. "This is one quick pathway to drop-out and disillusionment."

2. School itself is scary

Bullying is a problem the world over, and refugees do not expect their children to be spared. But for many Syrian refugee children, it's not only the other children causing a problem. In some cases, it's the teachers, too.

Peterson writes that Syrian refugee children face "ongoing physical and emotional bullying."

Teachers likely do not want to cause harm, but don't realize the deep psychosocial burden of what their young charges have seen and experienced. Moreover, they haven't been trained to address protection issues such as bullying by other students and create inclusive classroom environments.

Peterson writes that the number one request she hears globally from teachers of refugee children is to have training and ongoing support they can draw on to help their students understand each other and get along.

"This training may seem a luxury, especially in national systems where teachers are trained," Peterson writes. "It is not. Children who do not feel safe in school cannot learn and quickly become marginalized from their peers and communities."

UNHCR includes awareness

raising and campaigns against bullying as a vital activity, which is also echoed as a key finding in UNICEF's March 2015 report, Access to Education for Syrian Refugee Children and Youth in Jordan Host Communities, which suggested creating or expanding safe spaces for youth in an effort to make school environments more welcoming.

Initiatives like these will address part of the problem. But Syrian refugee children also report being harassed or abused on their way to and from school—one of the major reasons that 78 percent of children between 6 and 17 in

Jordan's Za'atari refugee camp said they were not in school, according to a 2013 education needs assessment.

3. Resource gaps
It comes as no surprise to those in the humanitarian community that education for Syrian refugee children is facing a major resource shortfall that makes it impossible to tackle all the obstacles in the way of access and quality.

As Peterson writes in another blog post, education is notoriously underfunded, and as Rania Succar of Google and Jusoor noted, "money

is clearly the biggest barrier to 'solving' this challenge."

Peterson points out that in 2015, UNHCR's Regional Refugee Response Plan for Syrian refugees was less than half funded, and worse, the education portion of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' Syria Humanitarian Response Plan was funded at just 23 percent.

Children whose families cannot afford the materials or transportation fees to distant schools end up missing out. Lack of money for supplies or a need to supplement family income was in the top three

reasons cited by survey respondents in Jordan as to why their children were not attending school. Several countries hosting Syrian refugees do not permit refugees to work, which has a direct impact on their ability to send children to school.

But it's about a lot more than dollars: this crisis demands more technical expertise and knowledge to bolster funding that has already been allocated. Although quite a bit of money has been contributed to this already, we need to look at how it's being spent.

With restrictions on work permits and limited employment

> "We need to ensure the interest meets the communities where they live, and understand in a more nuanced way what the real challenges are within these environments. After all, they are the innovators and also the implementers."
> "

opportunities for adults in some places, children face even more pressure to contribute to their household's income instead of going to school. Schools themselves are having trouble accommodating so many more children—resorting in places to double-shift class days and extra-stuffed classrooms. There are huge numbers of students all sharing the same resources, the same buildings- conditions that would lead to strain in any education system.

4. A kitchen full of cooks
It is heartening to see how many organizations and agencies want to help Syrian refugee children access quality education while they wait—for what might be the rest of their

school-age years—in countries not their own. Despite the Humanitarian Response Plans for Syria and Iraq (coordinated by OCHA) and the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP), a coordinated region-wide response framework of more than 200 partners, including governments, UN Agencies, and NGOs to address the refugee crisis, some level of duplication, redundancy and top-down solutions is possible.

Engaging the right actors—including refugee communities themselves—is an ever-present challenge, but one that is essential for the humanitarian community to get a good grasp of what's really going on: what is already in place, what's working, and what isn't.

To avoid designing duplicate programs with little on-the-ground understanding and input, organizations that often compete are going to have to work together.

We need to look across these different initiatives, build consortiums and momentum, looking at how we build on good practices at the level where they can scale. There has to be broader knowledge-sharing and a way of actually harnessing interest in order to avoid duplicating efforts and building things from scratch.

As the workshop at Stanford revealed, there is a lot of enthusiasm and interest from nontraditional actors—companies like Facebook, LinkedIn, Air BnB and Vodafone, and universities ready to jump in with tertiary education and blended learning offerings. They bring different expertise and resources they can leverage to move things along at a faster pace and greater scale.

But even they need to do

their homework before rapidly creating programs that don't understand the nuances and complexities of the education challenges at hand. This starts with strong mapping and research but ultimately, refugees should be the ones both innovating and implementing their own solutions.

5. A patchwork of problems means no one solution
The quality of education for Syrian refugee children looks different in Lebanon than it does in Egypt, Turkey, or Jordan. Actually, it looks different for children in Amman than it does for those less than two hours away in Zarqa and even for those in a well-resourced school in the same neighborhood as another school that is struggling.

Some schools have wonderful teacher training programs, sometimes supported by the UN and NGOs, while others have no initiatives to help them better integrate refugee students.

These variegated contexts make solving problems at scale particularly challenging. Despite separate appeals, strategy documents, and different strategic objectives, programming of the response to crisis in Syria and the five hosting countries is generally aligned and there is scope to streamline activities and indicators across countries through HRP and 3RP processes.

A silver bullet will never work in environments where the contexts are so different— radically different, even — between cities. Instead, broader knowledge-sharing will help, as will engaging communities in creating localized solutions.

We need to ensure the interest meets the communities where they live, and understand in a more nuanced way what the real challenges are within these environments. After all, they are the innovators and also the implementers.

6 QUOTES THAT WILL SPARK YOUR DESIGN THINKING

Design thinking can be described as a user-centered discipline that uses one's sensibility and methods to match people's needs with what is technologically feasible and valued within the community. Design thinking is a methodology that offers a structured framework for understanding and pursuing innovation as a means to solve complex problems.

In an article titled "Design is more than perfume, aesthetics and trends," Richard van der Laken, founder of What Design Can Do, highlights the increasing role of regular citizens who are improving the dignity of refugees in their host countries.

These people may not have a typical "design for good background" but they're making a difference. Van der Laken refers to this as the "Do It Yourself or Do It Together approach." And if you follow IDEO's methodology (which you should),

they champion the idea that anyone can be a "designer" or "creative" with the right type of thinking.

Looking at the article as a whole, one passage is particularly striking. In light of the Syria crisis, van der Laken explains, "words like "social", "humanity" and "engagement" no longer concern just a few international relief agencies. They concern all of us. The refugee crisis is "too large and too urgent to leave to just a few."

How have you used 'design thinking' in your work at UNHCR? Write to us – innovation@unhcr.org

①

"Every self-respecting designer should do something. Come up with new ideas, dust down old ideas and place them in a new context. Silence the cynics...Prove that actions speak louder than words. Demonstrate the power of design. Designers can do more than make things pretty. Design is more than perfume, aesthetics and trends."

– Richard van der Laken, founder of What Design Can Do

②

"The people who need design ingenuity the most, the poorest 90% of the global population, have historically been deprived of it."

– Alice Rawsthorn, Design critic

③

"It's not 'us versus them' or even 'us on behalf of them.' For a design thinker it has to be 'us with them'"

– Tim Brown, CEO and President of IDEO

④

"We spend a lot time designing the bridge, but not enough time thinking about the people who are crossing it."

– Dr. Prabhjot Singh, Director of Systems Design at the Earth Institute

⑤

"Human-centered design is a philosophy, not a precise set of methods, but one that assumes that innovation should start by getting close to users and observing their activities."

– Donald A. Norman, Co – founder of Nielsen Norman Group

⑥

"The main tenet of design thinking is empathy for the people you're trying to design for. Leadership is exactly the same thing – building empathy for the people that you're entrusted to help.

– David Kelley, Founder of IDEO

EMERGENCY HANDBOOK

A UNHCR guide to agile, effective and community based humanitarian emergency responses.

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In July 2015, UNHCR launched the 4th Edition of the Emergency Handbook (EHB). First published in 1982, the EHB is widely known among humanitarian workers at UNHCR, UN agencies, NGOs, partners and other stakeholders.

In an increasingly complex humanitarian environment and coordination landscape, UNHCR policies procedures have evolved to ensure timely and effective response in emergency situations. Using technological developments, the EHB provides quick access to guidelines, policies, good practices, as well as management and administrative procedures.

Response in urban and rural settings, new approaches to ensure access to basic needs and services including through cash-based

interventions, community-based protection and Age, Gender and Diversity are an integral part of emergency response. It is essential that emergency responders have easy, mobile access to relevant and up-to-date guidance.

The 4th Edition of the EHB is digitalised for the first time and is accessible via a website (https://emergency.unhcr.org). Users can create an account on the website and access it by browsing the menu, or by using the search engine. An interactive "ideas forum" permits users to collaborate and share information. Those who wish to correspond or inquire about the EHB, may contact the Emergency Services:

hqemhand@unhcr.org, or through the "feedback" button on the website.

The EHB is available as a mobile App (for phones and tablets) and can be downloaded from the App Store and Google Play. The mobile App and USB stick versions can be accessed offline. Its contents are automatically updated when "synchronized" online. The EHB will also be available in French and Arabic in the near future.

The EHB was made possible with the contribution of many UNHCR colleagues on their expertise; the outstanding technical support of emergency.lu and the invaluable support of Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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We're always looking for great stories, ideas, and opinions on innovations that are led by or create impact for refugees. If you have one to share with us send us an email at **innovation@unhcr.org**

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ABOUT UNHCR INNOVATION

UNHCR Innovation partners with people inside and outside of UNHCR to innovate with and for refugees.

We work collaboratively with refugees, academia, and the private sector to creatively address challenges faced by uprooted or stateless people worldwide. Whether it's co-developing mobile tracking technology for distributing supplies with UPS, or applying IKEA's flat-pack principles to designing shelter, if there's a more efficient, more sustainable way to meet refugees' needs, we will find it, learn from it, and promote it.