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Humanitarian Education Accelerator Learning Synthesis

2022

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1. Introduction

Launched in 2016, the Humanitarian Education Accelerator (HEA) supports promising humanitarian education innovations to transition from successful pilots to programmes that can operate at scale, while documenting and disseminating learnings for stakeholders worldwide. HEA offers selected innovation teams a package of capacity building, external evaluations, mentorship and financial grants with a view to generating robust evidence about what works effectively when scaling innovative approaches to complex education challenges in humanitarian contexts.

This Learning Synthesis is part of a larger effort to contribute to global discussion and add to learning and knowledge around scaling humanitarian education innovations. Through reviewing and reflecting on the experience of the HEA and connecting it to system level perspectives, the Synthesis seeks to present lessons learnt, good practices and recommendations that can support the scaling of humanitarian education innovations. The recommendations formulated aim to be strategic and add value for education innovators and practitioners, as well as other stakeholders of the humanitarian system - especially donors - so that informed decisions can be made to invest in promising education innovations and accelerator programmes that support those innovations.

1.1 Methodology

Relying on a combination of literature review, document review, and key informant interviews, the Learning Synthesis consolidates and synthesises lessons learnt based on the findings from programme documents and commissioned evidence, as well as perspectives of key stakeholders. It draws primarily from the following data and information sources:

1. A literature review, in which resources from the humanitarian innovation sector were reviewed, primarily focusing on innovations' journey to scale;

2. A review of internal and external documents related to the HEA, including published research and commissioned evaluations, project proposals, project presentations, feedback from innovators and grant reports in order to understand the crucial aspects of the HEA and the supported innovations;

3. Additional consultations and key informant interviews have been conducted with project stakeholders and experts of innovation, scaling and humanitarian education to combine perspectives and insights from different evidence sources and critically analyse and examine the main ideas and findings.

This exercise was not designed to be a robust research project, rather, to document and share learnings related to HEA and humanitarian education innovations. The findings are relevant to stakeholders from across the Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises (EiEPC) and humanitarian innovation ecosystems.

1.2 Background and Context

Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises (EiEPC) is under-prioritised and under-funded in humanitarian action and international development. Even before Covid-19, conflict, violence, disasters and the worsening climate crisis mean that millions of children and youth are being denied their right to safe, inclusive, and quality education.[1] Recognising that business as usual is not working, donors and international actors are looking for innovative approaches to EiEPC in order to do more for less.

But identifying and supporting impactful innovations to reach scale is not straightforward, as there is little evidence on what works, or how to provide the right enabling support. The HEA was therefore set up to address three main things:

1. Identifying impactful EiEPC innovations;

2. Supporting their transition to sustainable scale;

3. Building an evidence base to better understand what works (and does not work) and why.

When setting up the HEA, there were recognised systemic challenges which the HEA would therefore aim to address. They included:

Sectoral and Context Challenges

EiEPC innovations face an upward battle due to the nature of education within the humanitarian sector and the humanitarian sector itself. Firstly, perceptions of risk associated with innovations - even those backed by evidence - can invoke concerns in relation to the "do no harm" imperative of humanitarian action. Secondly, EiEPC sits on the nexus of humanitarian and development work, risking getting caught in a gap between the two systems.

Thirdly, education is a particularly regulated and politically sensitive topic within humanitarian action. Education plays a large role in shaping the minds of children and youth, making it a social, political, religious and cultural cornerstone of 'nation building', and therefore of deep importance to national governments and communities.[2] Therefore the parameters for how EiEPC innovations can operate and be sustainably financed and adopted are often limited to whether and how they align with national government policy, and whether there is government approval and buy-in.

The HEA therefore sought to better understand the system that EiEPC innovations operate in, and explore the potential sustainable models they could adopt.

Limited Funding

Funding for education in the overall aid architecture is limited, and EiEPC funding is often based on short-term emergency driven humanitarian funding cycles. Due to these limitations, and the risk-averse nature of the humanitarian community, tried and tested solutions

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1   Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies (2022), Financing for education in emergencies coming up short in the wake of COVID-19.
2   Gray, I. (2019). What do we know and what have we learned about scaling humanitarian education innovations? HEA Learning Series.

are often prioritised over new innovative approaches. When innovations are supported, preference is given to small-scale pilots as they are relatively cheap and limited in scope.[3] Funding the scale of an innovation requires more funding and commitment, and presents more risks and unknowns.

Therefore the HEA aimed to plug this gap, and finance innovations after their proof-of-concept, and into their journey to scale. Further, the HEA sought to understand the financing ecosystem to help EiEPC innovations navigate the challenge of financing their innovation to scale.

Lack of Evidence and Learning

There are two main purposes for evidence and learning in EiEPC innovations: First, to design and improve the innovation/programme itself, as understanding what works and what doesn't helps guide the innovation to adapt and optimise where necessary. Secondly, it provides reasons for others to join and support, in particular, for donors to fund, and target users and beneficiaries to adopt.

But there are gaps in the understanding of what works in crisis contexts, and a lack of clarity in what the evidence requirements and thresholds are for donors and adopters.

Therefore, the HEA aimed to build out the evidence base - to help innovators shape their programmes, to encourage donor support and user adoption, and to contribute to global public goods so that future innovations are better positioned to scale.

Need for Capacity Building, Knowledge and Skills for Scale

Scaling humanitarian innovations is complex and challenging in the context of EiEPC, and there is little evidence or knowledge of what it takes to sustainably scale. Further, EiEPC innovators are often timepoor, over-stretched, and at times, working across multiple areas on top of working on the innovation. There is little opportunity to step back, explore the ecosystem they are operating in, and build capacity for scaling. While there may be a brilliant idea, it will fail to scale if the team doesn't have the knowledge and skills on how to scale, and opportunities to put those into practice.

The HEA aimed to provide innovators with this opportunity: carving out the time and space to understand what is involved in scaling, and build capacity to support them to do so. Further, to then share this knowledge with the wider community so that future innovators and stakeholders have the foundational knowledge for how to scale. With these barriers and opportunities in mind, the HEA was launched in 2016.

The remainder of this Learning Synthesis is structured as follows:

- **Part 2 - HEA Experiences and Insights: What Has Been Done and What Have We Learnt?:** Details the HEA's work over the past seven years and three cohorts, and captures the lessons learnt through each HEA iteration;

- **Part 3 - Overall Lessons:** Synthesises the overall learnings and evaluates whether the above systemic challenges were addressed and opportunities harnessed;

- **Part 4 - Recommendations:** Concludes with recommendations for how to improve and continue to support impactful EiEPC innovations to sustainably scale.

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[3] McClure, D. Gray, I. (2015). Scaling: Innovation's missing middle.

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2. HEA Experiences and Insights: What Has Been Done and What Have We Learnt?

The HEA was launched in 2016 by the UK Department for International Development (DfID)[4] UNHCR, and UNICEF. It was created to address the evidence gap on what does and does not work in humanitarian education innovations, and how to bring what does work to scale. Since 2016, and until the end of 2022, the HEA have run three cohorts:

- **Phase 1 (2016 - 2019)**
- **Covid-19 Challenge (2020)**
- **Phase 2 (2020 - 2022)**

Many lessons were learnt along the way, and each new phase of the HEA was adapted to reflect these lessons. The support offered to the cohorts and even the structure of the HEA itself were changed throughout the years. The following section describes how the cohorts were run, and importantly, captures the lessons learnt for EiEPC innovations, and the HEA.

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4 DfID has since merged with the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office to become the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO).

Figure 1

HEA Timeline and Evolution

2015

›› UNHCR, UNICEF & IDEO.org partner on project supporting design & piloting of humanitarian EiE innovations.

2016

›› HEA Phase 1 begins - DfiD-funded partnership between UNICEF & UNHCR

2017

›› 5 grantees selected—up to $300,000 in funding, external process and impact evaluations + mentorship & training in scaling & M&E

›› American Institutes for Research (AIR) begins evaluations which are completed in 2019

2019

›› HEA Learning Series created, policy briefs published, research presented at key conferences.

›› ECW approves funding for HEA Phase 2 - HEA Phase 1 & partnership with UNICEF ends

2020

›› Ongoing support to War Child Holland (Can't Wait to Learn) as Phase 1 graduate (2020-21).

›› Covid-19 pivot & no-cost extension approved by ECW, launch of HEA Phase 2 paused until 2021 + Covid-19 Challenge created.

›› Covid-19 Challenge (June - Dec)

2021

›› HEA Phase 2 launch

›› HEA 2 Stage One: Virtual Bootcamp

›› HEA 2 Stage Two: Capacity Building on Theory of Change & stakeholder partnerships

›› HEA 2 Stage Three: Finalists selected

2022

›› HEA 2 Evaluations undertaken (February-September)

›› HEA 2 Stage Three: Bootcamp in Nairobi

›› HEA Community of Practice piloted

›› HEA 2 programme ends

2.1 Phase 1 (2016-2019)

Phase 1 was funded by DfID, and co-led by UNHCR and UNICEF. The Call for Phase 1 attracted 72 applications, and five were selected to participate in the Accelerator. They were:[5]

- Can't Wait to Learn (CWTL) by War Child Holland
- Ideas Box by Libraries Without Borders
- Equity in Education by World University Service of Canada (WUSC)
- Essence of Learning by Caritas
- Kepler Kiziba by Kepler

There were two major components to the HEA in Phase 1:

1. Support and Mentorship

HEA provided a mentorship and training model that paired the innovation teams with subject matter experts to guide them through the scaling process and build up their internal capacity. This involved:

- Mentorship and training in scaling and M&E;[6]
- 3 x scaling bootcamps (Kenya, Lebanon, Hungary).

Innovation teams also received up to $300,000 USD in funding dedicated to developing research and data collection capacity within their teams.

2. Research

HEA facilitated process and/or impact evaluations of the innovations to better understand their effectiveness and potential to scale. This was done through an external evaluation firm, American Institute for Research (AIR), who undertook mixed methods process evaluations of all five of the innovations, as well as impact evaluations of three innovation teams' work. The findings of these evaluations were synthesised and published as a Meta Evaluation of Phase 1.[7]

HEA also published its learnings through its Learning Series,[8] and two policy papers addressing government engagement, and rigorous research in humanitarian contexts.[9]

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5   For more information about these innovations, see Annex 1.

6   Scaling expertise provided through Gray Dot Catalyst, and M&E support through American Institutes for Research (AIR).

7   AIR (2019), Scaling Education Innovations in Complex Emergencies: Evidence From the Humanitarian Education Accelerator.

8   Humanitarian Education Accelerator Learning Series (Medium). In particular, see: What do we know and what have we learnt about scaling humanitarian education innovations? And Six key themes for scaling humanitarian education innovations.

9   Humanitarian Education Accelerator (2019) Policy Brief: Government Engagement for Scaling Humanitarian Education Innovations. And: Humanitarian Education Accelerator (2019) Policy Brief: Conducting Rigorous Research in Humanitarian Contexts.

Lessons Learnt from Phase 1

Lessons were learnt and captured throughout HEA Phase 1 including through the experiences of the innovation teams, the evaluations undertaken, and the running of the accelerator. These lessons were used to contribute to global public goods, and to refine and restructure HEA Phase 2. Note that the lessons captured below were further developed and nuanced in the Covid-19 Challenge and Phase 2, and the cumulative lessons are described in Part 3 of this paper.

Lessons on EiEPC Innovations:

- **Perpetual pilot:** Most innovation teams started multiple pilot projects in different contexts, rather than scaling up in one context. This was driven by a combination of strategic considerations, donor location priorities, uncertainty over future funding, and limited access to longer term, flexible funding to establish programme management systems. Restricted funding - and at times, a lack of capacity and expertise - limited their ability to create business systems, such as documentation of organisational, financial and partnership management, as well as other elements of project management that guide programmes as they scale.[10]

- **Government relationships:** Local and national governments are critical partners, and facilitators for sustainable scale. Education is a politically sensitive issue and highly regulated, so significant time and energy should be spent collaborating and building relationships with government. The five selected innovations differed, however, in when and how to involve government. Two teams found that concerted efforts were required from the outset to maintain relationships with governments, whereas the other teams preferred to resolve organisational and design-related issues to solidify the pilot programme, prior to engaging with governments on the potential to scale. Decisions regarding government engagement strategies depended on the nature of the programme (e.g. whether it was a formal or non-formal education intervention) and the stage of scaling (pilot versus implementation at scale).[11] Postponing close engagement with the government until after a strong pilot programme has been built may limit the implementers' ability to consider how a programme could function in national education systems and the Phase 1 Meta Evaluation recommended that education innovators start engaging with Ministry of Education (MoE) staff prior to and during implementation, to learn about the MoE strategy, structure and priorities, as well as options for sustainability.[12]

- **Partnerships:** The understanding of innovation teams in terms of how to assess, build, maintain and review partnerships at different points in the scaling journey was found to be limited.

- **Programme adaptation**: Innovation teams were flexible and often adapted their programmes based on community demands, and in response to donor priorities. This helped to secure community support and generate demand for their programmes. However, the documentation and strategy for adaptations were not always explicit, highlighting the importance of codification of these and other processes.

- **Evidence and research:** While the research generated from Phase 1 evaluations represents a substantial increase in the evidence base on impact of education innovations in humanitarian contexts, it is uncertain whether the findings apply to other education programmes in different contexts, and therefore further evidence on education in emergencies is needed to examine the external validity of the results. The evaluations brought mixed results of whether the supported innovations had a positive impact on learning outcomes, psychosocial outcomes, and labour market opportunities, with cases where quantitative evidence contradicted the qualitative results. Methodological limitations of quantitative and qualitative research could explain the differences in findings. Of particular significance was the tension created by the short timeframe of the evaluations, and the difficulty in measuring impact (particularly learning outcomes) in humanitarian settings where delays in implementation and data collection are common. It was clear that more time is needed to effectively measure impact, and that due to these time constraints, measuring learning outcomes may be premature, with other impact indicators being preferable at a given stage and more reflective of the situation. However, the results highlighted several opportunities to increase the likelihood of achieving

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10 AIR (2019), Scaling Education Innovations in Complex Emergencies: Evidence From the Humanitarian Education Accelerator.

11 HEA Learning Series (2019) Executive Summary: Meta-Evaluation of the first round of the Humanitarian Education Accelerator (HEA).

12 AIR (2019), Scaling Education Innovations in Complex Emergencies: Evidence From the Humanitarian Education Accelerator.

positive effect – the trends are positive but causal attribution could not be established.

Specific lessons for the three innovations which received impact evaluations includes:

>> CWTL's experience confirms that impact evidence facilitated by HEA helped to build credibility and established its status as an effective education solution;

>> For WUSC, the HEA support was an opportunity for building a strong M&E system by creating an independent or semi-autonomous M&E unit outside of programming to lead the research and evaluation activities. This helped them to have a critical view of their M&E and programming and made them confident enough to influence the thinking of their donors;

>> By having a focus on evidence, Kepler later was able to apply for funding with proposals that were backed up with evidence of the quality of their innovation.

● **Business models:** HEA Phase 1 affirmed that due to the nature of education in emergencies (highly political and regulated by government) there are limited sustainable business models available. Nevertheless, adoption by government is not the only opportunity, and a learning for future iterations of HEA was that they should continue to explore other potential business models.

Lessons for the Accelerator:

● **Stage gated approach to applications:** A key learning from Phase 1 was that future iterations of the accelerator should introduce and strengthen a staged approach to the application processes. These stages allow more time to understand and make assessments of promising innovations, the opportunity to give non-financial support to a greater number of shortlisted innovation teams, to assess which innovation teams could learn from each other as peers, and to ensure that final funding support is given to those grantees who are truly ready. A stage-gated approach should include:

>> More clarity on scope of HEA support and funding;

>> Building in time to properly unpack and assess applicants' readiness to scale in order to assess

whether they are ready for what the accelerator programme has to offer; and

>> Strengthening proof of concept and scaling strategies of shortlisted innovations in order to improve the quality of applications for the next application phase.[13]

● **Needs-based:** For the HEA to be a good partner, it needed to adapt its support to each team based on their needs, rather than provide the same type and level of support to all of the teams. This was partially addressed with implementing the stage-gated approach.

● **Dedicated HEA M&E pillar needed:** HEA Phase 1 showed the need for a dedicated and embedded M&E pillar as part of the HEA approach. As well as bringing in external M&E experts to provide mentorship and training for the HEA innovations, an HEA M&E Officer role would be created in order to embed themselves in Phase 2 innovations to optimise M&E capacity building.

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13 HEA Learning Series (Medium) Launching Round Two of an Accelerator Programme: Supporting Innovations to Scale.

2.2 Covid-19 Challenge (2020)

In 2019, the DfID-funding for HEA Phase 1 ended. At this point, the HEA became solely led by UNHCR. The HEA secured support from Education Cannot Wait (ECW)'s Acceleration Facility to run HEA Phase 2. However, Covid-19 disruptions meant the HEA had to pivot, and a no-cost extension from ECW facilitated the pause of the launch of HEA Phase 2 until 2021 and the opportunity to launch a new challenge: the Covid-19 Challenge.

The Covid-19 Challenge was a short six month programme of support to prototype and pilot digital learning interventions that would allow the most marginalised learners to access learning during Covid-19 closures and beyond. It was in partnership with the EdTech Hub, mEducation Alliance and Global Innovation Exchange, and ran from June 2020 - end of 2020. It differed to Phase 1 as it supported innovations at an earlier stage: to pilot or adapt, and the short timeline meant that the focus was on capacity building, with insufficient time to commission external evaluations.

80 applications were received from across the globe, and 16 teams were invited to give a seven minute pitch on why their solution should be included in the HEA virtual bootcamp. 13 promising solutions were selected for a week-long virtual bootcamp with sessions on: Scaling and business development plans; identifying assumptions; communicating impact; and testing and prototyping within a Covid-19 context.

After the bootcamp, all teams were asked to submit detailed proposals based on the bootcamp feedback and mentorship sessions. Three solutions - Mosaik, M-Shule and a partnership between Amal Alliance and Ustad Mobile (which was incubated within the bootcamp) - were selected for further HEA-led support from October to December.[14]

Support consisted of: $60,000 USD in funding to assist with implementing their programme and extending access to their solutions in refugee-hosting contexts; and mentorship support from HEA mentors and partners, including each participating in tailored 'design sprints' — facilitated by IDEO.org — to refine how they would pilot.

To ensure the lessons learnt across these programmes were shared publicly, 16 blogs were produced and published on the HEA Learning Series website.

Lessons Learnt from the Covid-19 Challenge:

Covid-19 forced the world to operate differently. Innovators had to pivot away from solutions that required in-person interactions, and there was a greater focus on technology and offline remote resources. The HEA had to operate differently too.

Lessons on EiEPC Innovations:

- **Adaptation is required**: When faced with disruptions like Covid-19, programmes have to pivot according to the context they operate in.[15] One of the HEA grantees emphasised the need for co-creation of workable solutions with teachers in low resourced areas, as teachers know best what might work in their context, and the limitations their students face. These solutions could include: an increase in cash transfers to buy books and buy education hardware; reorientation of radio programmes; and training parents on using phones for educational purposes.[16]

  - » When adapting, innovators should take into account the language, local, and contextual situation. This feedback is critical in designing not only the programme itself, but how to measure its efficacy and impact.[17]

  - » Examples of ways to adapt when it comes to assessment of learning during Covid-19 include: Use of SMS or WhatsApp; direct phone calls (teacher to student); online educational games; photos of homework sent to teachers; and parents administering tests and sending results to teachers.[18]

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14 More information on these innovations is found in Annex 1.
15 HEA Learning Series (2020) Design Series: What can we learn from the design sprint process?
16 HEA Learning Series (2020) COVID-19 adaptations: Challenges in assessing learning in marginalised communities.
17 HEA Learning Series (2020) Design Series: Designing with purpose.
18 HEA Learning Series (2020) COVID-19 adaptations: Challenges in assessing learning in marginalised communities.

- **Further barriers caused by Covid-19:** Difficulties that Covid-19 caused to EiEPC included: language barriers, access to phones/tablets/computers, teachers losing salaries due to school closures, and teachers needing training to use new systems.[19]

- **Patience and flexibility is required:** When working with complex behavioural and social changes — like education approaches and systems — patience and flexibility is required. Implementing at a distance requires a higher level of patience than what is needed in person, and communication requires extra planning and coordination.[20]

- **Extra effort needed with partnerships:** Forging relationships with partners overseas over Zoom and WhatsApp is possible, but does require additional effort and more articulate and clear communication.[21]

- **Simplifying and making time for M&E:** While monitoring and evaluation is critical to understanding the success of the programme, it is important to keep it simple. Take time to understand what needs to be measured, plan how to capture the data, and determine the simplest way to do this.[22]

Lessons for the Accelerator:

- **Virtual can be interactive and inclusive**: Attendees from around the world can still meet and work together (albeit some working at odd hours), and a curriculum can be built out and undertaken entirely online.

- **Lack of continuum in support and financing:** There is a gap of support and financing between proof of concept and scale. The Covid-19 Challenge showed that while successful pilots could show plenty of promise, it was nevertheless still difficult to meet the evidentiary requirements to secure further funding and support to move to scale. For example, despite some of the teams showing promising results throughout the Covid-19 Challenge, none were successful in securing a place in HEA Phase 2, as the innovations were deemed to be too early in their journey and lacking the evidence base to be ready for Phase 2 funding and support.

- **Focus on sustainability components:** The Covid-19 Challenge showed there was still a gap in capacity building when it comes to preparing the innovations for scale. Despite the Covid-19 cohort being at an earlier stage than the Phase 1 cohort (and therefore benefiting from the Design Sprint) sustainability components needed to be built in at this stage, for example, exploring multiple business models and creating a scaling strategy. This would have helped to inform the design of the innovations, and prepare the teams to consider next steps, beyond their initial pilot.

- **Partnership opportunities:** The Covid-19 Challenge created partnership opportunities as it was a partnership with other hubs and IDEO.org. It is also where HEA was connected with NYU-TIES (through partnership brokering by Porticus Foundation - an important HEA donor and supporter) who undertook a number of workshops and one-to-one mentoring sessions in the Covid-19 Challenge and were subsequently onboarded as mentors in HEA Phase 2. The Virtual Bootcamp was described by an innovator as creating a community of practice.[23] The Covid-19 Challenge also gave rise to a further partnership between War Child Holland, NYU-TIES and UNHCR, supported by Porticus, to work on the development of a gamified learning measurement tool, called Gobee.[24]

19 HEA Learning Series (2020) COVID-19 adaptations: Challenges in assessing learning in marginalised communities.
20 HEA Learning Series (2020) Implementing at Distance: Top 10 reflections from Amal Alliance's Colors of Kindness team.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 HEA Learning Series (2020) Our Journey Through Reimagining Learning.
24 HEA Learning Series (2021) Creating a Gamified Learning Measurement Tool - the why, the what & the how.

2.3 Phase 2 (2021 - 2022)

HEA Phase 2 was launched in early 2021 and was implemented over a 24-month period. It focused on innovations in five countries: Ethiopia, Lebanon, Uganda, Jordan and Chad,[25] in addition to supporting one team from Phase 1 - War Child Holland's Can't Wait to Learn (CWTL) programme - for one additional year. Drawing on the lessons from HEA Phase 1 and the Covid-19 Challenge, HEA Phase 2 included the following core components:

1. Generating evidence on what works in education in humanitarian contexts through:

   ● External evaluations for final three selected grantees;

   ● Learning Synthesis reflecting on the contributing & hindering factors for scaling education interventions in humanitarian settings.

2. Improving internal capacity and planning for scale through:

   ● Stage-gated selection: Bootcamp (Stage 1), Strategy Development (Stage 2) and Implementation (Stage 3);

   ● Tailored mentorship: In M&E, scaling, business development, stakeholders and partnerships, finance models, and communicating impact;

   ● Networking with experts and peer learning.

3. Linking evidence and practice through:

   ● Production and dissemination of Global Public Goods (tools, learning papers etc);

   ● Building a Community of Practice;

   ● Capturing and sharing learnings and recommendations on the HEA Learning Series.

A major change in how the HEA was run in Phase 2, was the stage-gated approach to selecting new grantees. HEA worked together with the Humanitarian Innovation Fund's (HIF) Journey to Scale programme to learn from their previous cohorts, to codesign a new stage-gated application process.[26]

The stage-gated approach (Figure 2) was introduced to allow more time to understand and make assessments of promising innovations, the opportunity to give non-financial support to a greater number of shortlisted innovation teams, and to ensure that final funding support is given to those grantees who are truly ready. The HEA received 160 applications for Phase 2, highlighting a critical need in the sector for funding for those at that stage of scaling.

● Stage One: Thirteen innovations were selected and brought together for a two-week introductory workshop (Bootcamp) in which teams worked through their scaling models and unpacked at what stage they are in the scaling process to see if the accelerator is the right support model for them. The goal of the call for applications was to capture as many innovators as possible with no restrictions on the type of organisations which can apply: only that the innovation has an existing proof of concept.

● Stage Two: Five teams were selected from the Bootcamp cohort to work with the HEA over three months to further ascertain organisations' capacity and readiness to scale through undergoing a participative scaling assessment, enabling them to understand what would be required for them to scale. This stage also included development of a scaling strategy and planning through workshops, mentorship meetings and other supporting activities to help them identify scaling goals, build business models, map key partners and stakeholders and understand processes linked to codification of their models.

● Stage Three: Three teams received $200,000 USD each for scaling and M&E capacity building, support with research and mentorship to scale effectively, as well as fully-funded external evaluations of their innovations.

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25 These countries were selected as they had existing ECW Multi-Year Response Programmes running. This differs from HEA Phase 1, which was a global call.

26 HEA Learning Series (2020) Launching Round Two of an Accelerator Programme: Supporting Innovations to Scale.

Figure 2

HEA Stage Gated Approach

Stage 1
Capacity building by experts in scaling innovations, M&E and partnerships for 13 innovations during a week-long Scaling Bootcamp

Stage 2
Tailored mentorship and further capacity building support on Stakeholders & Partnerships, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and scaling for 5 innovations.

Stage 3
Funding of up to USD 200,000 for the final 3 selected innovations - to be used towards internal capacity building in M&E and investments in research, project implementation and scaling activities. A fully funded external evaluation for the final 3 selected innovations.

| Mar 2021 | Apr-Aug 2021 | Sep 2021 – Dec 2022 |
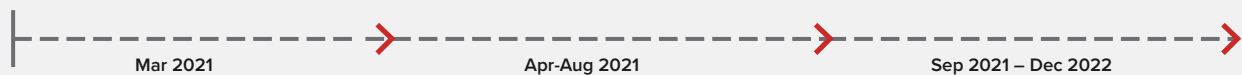
In addition to supporting innovations, HEA Phase 2 had a highlighted focus on contributing to the evidence base of what works in scaling education innovations. Additional support was provided by Porticus to HEA to create a community of practice (CoP) connecting real-world experiences and lessons from the HEA cohorts and external stakeholders, and through the production of learning products. The evidence generated from these aims to inform donors and implementers to make evidence-based decisions to support sustainable scaling of and investment in promising education innovations.

HEA Phase 2 had a two pronged approach:

- Innovations level: Through individual and organisational level capacity improvement. In this pathway the HEA aims to build capacity to be able to scale the education innovations successfully.

- System level: In this pathway the HEA aims to contribute to a system level change that will enable a more conducive environment for humanitarian education innovations, starting with knowledge exchange and evidence building.

The three selected grantees for Phase 2 were:

- Masahati School Clubs (MSC) by Madrasati;
- Community-led Inclusive Quality Education for Refugee Children with Disabilities by Cohere (formerly Xavier Project);
- Little Ripples by iACT[27]

As mentioned above, HEA's partnership with Phase 1 grantee War Child Holland continued into 2021, by providing support to refine the design and usability of their CWTL platform, develop their implementation handbook, a feedback and complaints mechanism and induction training.

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27 More information on these innovations is found in Annex 1 and the HEA Phase 2 Scaling Case Studies

Lessons Learnt from Phase 2:

Lessons on EiEPC Innovations:

- **Overall an improvement was seen in innovation teams from the beginning to the end of the accelerator:** Mentors found there was a clear difference between sessions regarding the innovation teams' understanding of what it takes to scale. From the initial virtual Bootcamp in Stage 1 to the final Bootcamp in Stage 3 (Kenya), innovation teams seemed to have shifted from a 'project' only perspective, to zooming out to consider the other areas required to scale, for example, further exploration and deeper understanding of their business model and targeted communications. Further, teams found that buy-in to this upskilling and capacity building is required from the whole team and organisation.

- **Readiness to scale:** The stage-gated approach allowed HEA to see that the majority of applications considered themselves ready to scale up and scale out. However Stage 1 and 2 showed that most applicants were in fact still between the pilot/proof of concept and transition to scale stage.

- **Inconsistent M&E knowledge and skills, but eagerness and dedication to learn**: Early capacity assessments showed that some of the innovation teams did not have fundamental skills and knowledge relating to M&E (for example knowing how to read a histogram). This can be attributed to the reality of working on EiEPC innovations: with staff overworked, overstretched, and too busy with implementation to have the space and privilege to learn and practise M&E. Cost can also be a factor in embedding dedicated M&E staff within often small teams. However, having M&E fundamentals and an appreciation of the role and value of M&E is crucial for programme design and evidence and learning, and therefore needs to be addressed before trying to adhere to programme and donor evidence requirements. Mentors found that innovation teams were very eager to learn these skills, and often worked late into the evening in order to attend sessions on M&E.

- **Focus on business models, value propositions and partnerships:** Mentoring in HEA Phase 2 found the most relevant coaching focused on these subjects. All of the innovations had a different focus: Madrasati found their end-goal of government adoption and financing was not necessarily a sustainable option and therefore explored closer relationships and potential models with the private sector; Cohere spent

time reviewing their value proposition for different stakeholders, in particular, towards international donors governments; and iACT reviewed their business model, asking fundamental questions about which part of their innovation they were aiming to scale and how the answers to those question would lead them to seek different partners and stakeholders.

- **Relationships with government:** More nuanced lessons were learnt about fostering relationships with government. First, there was a greater appreciation of how to work within the complexity of government, including exploring how to navigate and build support across different departments, individuals, and devolved levels of decision-making (national, regional, local etc). Second, that government "buy-in" can be attached to an individual or a political party - both of which can change quite quickly - risking the new party or person deprioritising or cancelling the initiatives of their predecessors. It was recognised that while government adoption could be an ideal end-goal for some innovations, this can be difficult to achieve in practice, and governments might not be be willing or able to financially adopt or sustain an innovation, due to a focus on basic recurrent costs or the complexity of national systems making it challenging for them to engage with innovations. These are also linked to overall challenges in government ownership or sustainability across the EiEPC response. Further, government ownership could potentially put some important aspects of the innovation at risk (due to political change-over, policy changes etc). Even if the innovation aligns with government policy and programming, for many innovations it is more appropriate to consider government an important partner rather than owner and/or primary funder.

Lessons for the Accelerator:

- **M&E support and mentoring:** The selected grantees were all at very different levels of knowledge and capacity when it came to M&E. Mentors found they needed to meet the innovators where their skills and knowledge were at, and this required a lot of tailoring of support and extra time and resources. Moreover, they stressed the importance for the same mentors to stick with the innovation team throughout the process. Mentors were confident that innovation teams learnt new skills and increased in confidence, but more time is needed to truly embed M&E capabilities. Further, while M&E was taught to innovation teams as a whole,

more effort is needed to target individuals within the teams to ensure they gain knowledge and capability.

- **Building trust between the innovation teams and the mentors:** In order to get the most out of the training and mentoring sessions, the HEA team and mentors recognised that it was important to prioritise building trust with the innovation teams, and creating a "safe space" for them to unpack challenging aspects of their programme and plan to scale. For example, when developing the Theories of Change in Stage 2, the M&E mentors - NYU-TIES - found that one of the hardest parts was getting the innovation teams to talk about the assumptions they had been making in their programme design. This may have been due to the fact the HEA programme team was sitting in the room, and Stage 2 was seen by the innovation teams as effectively a "competition" to secure their funding and support. It was hard for the innovation teams to be vulnerable and honest about their situation in this context. Mentors therefore ran many one-to-one sessions with the innovation teams - without others in the room - in order to build this trust.

  » **Face-to-face time with the teams and mentors is key to building working partnerships:** Due to Covid-19 lockdowns and related travel restrictions, original plans for multiple in-person meetings throughout the HEA programme stages had to be pivoted to move online. Whilst the HEA team and mentors made significant efforts to encourage connection with and between the grantees online, the July 2022 Bootcamp, which was held in-person in Nairobi, highlighted the importance of face-to-face time. The HEA team and mentors observed that being together in person for that week really helped with engagement and created a personal relationship which was essential for ongoing one-to-one virtual support.

- **External evaluation difficulties:** There is a lack of baseline and available data for effective comparison. Further, there was a tension between what information mentors and innovation teams could provide the external evaluators and what the external evaluators deemed necessary to undertake an evaluation.

  » HEA found it very hard to find service providers who understand education in emergencies, humanitarian innovation, scaling and evaluation methodologies. There was also a tension between the traditional audit mindset of evaluators and the more formative, learning based approach that HEA was hoping to take with the evaluations. More time was needed to identify and onboard the right service provider for this piece of work, with HEA recognising that in future iterations, onboarding the evaluation partner from the start of the programme so that they could work with the innovation teams to identify evaluation priorities and co-design the evaluation methodology would be more impactful.

- **Targeted support through the Community of Practice and HEA Learning Papers**: To ensure the innovation teams were getting targeted support on topics that were relevant to them, the HEA team conducted a needs survey with the grantees to identify key themes. The Community of Practice also provided a space for members to identify additional areas of interest that fed into their work with HEA mentors, including evidence generation and use, financing for scale and communicating impact.

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3. Overall Lessons

This Learning Synthesis has so far captured the lessons that were learnt in each cohort of the HEA. This next section presents the cumulative lessons learnt over the seven years and three cohorts of HEA, coupled with the learning products produced and experiences of innovators and the HEA team. The aim is to ensure that all EiEPC stakeholders can share in the learnings, and shape any future work in this space. Lessons were learnt both at a systems level, and also for running the accelerator. The lessons have been divided by theme (following the systemic challenges listed in Part 1) and include:

- Sectoral and Contextual Challenges
- Financing
- Evidence and M&E
- Capacity Building, Knowledge and Skills for Scale
- Running an Accelerator

Sectoral and Contextual Challenges

The HEA was set up with the knowledge that EiEPC Innovations operate in a challenging environment, and aimed to address some of these challenges. Lesson learnt regarding sectoral and contextual issues include:

- **Incentives and structures within the humanitarian sector means that perpetual pilots remain the norm:** Despite donor interest in scaling existing impactful innovations, funding mechanisms and donor priorities still tend to support new pilots rather than scaling up existing innovations. This has been seen through the prevalence of "transition to scale" funding which supports pilots, and the lack of long-term funding opportunities which would support scaling up (rather than just out).[28]

- **Scaling EiEPC innovations is a long term undertaking often happening over many years**: This

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28 See: AIR (2019), Scaling Education Innovations in Complex Emergencies: Evidence From the Humanitarian Education Accelerator. And HEA (2022) Financing Scale in Humanitarian Education Innovation Learning Paper.

means the innovations likely need to access both short-term emergency funds support, and also longer-term development funding. Crossing the chasm isn't straightforward, and both humanitarian and development actors need to provide clarity on when and how EiEPC innovations can access the different streams of funding. The length of time it takes to scale also has repercussions on evidence generation and capacity building, which are addressed in more detail below.

- **Efforts to move away from supporting 'usual suspects' were successful, however genuine localisation requires systemic change, which takes time and more targeted programme design:** The HEA sought to move away from supporting the 'usual suspects' or large INGOs during Phase 2, targeting more local organisations to apply, through sharing the call for applications via UNHCR Country Office networks and country-level education coordination mechanisms. In Phase 2, the HEA was able to bring three local initiatives, including one Refugee-led Organisation (RLO), through to Stage 1. The five teams who were selected for Stage 2 included two local initiatives and out of the three finalists, one was a local initiative. The two other finalists were innovations that take a refugee-led approach. The ambition was to work with these teams to ensure that knowledge and capacity building support within the HEA reached the national and community level. This was particularly successful with Cohere, who brought one of their RLO partners into the capacity building work and used a consortium model through which learnings from the HEA were diffused among additional RLOs who weren't at the sessions. Whilst this is a step in the right direction, more needs to be done to make sure local initiatives, including RLOs, are aware of and included in financing opportunities such as the HEA and that internal systems within donor organisations are able to support partnering with these actors.

- **Sustainable business models for EiEPC innovations are limited**, **and the end-goal of government adoption is often more complex than first realised:** Scaling pathways and end-goals for HEA grantees included:

  » Scaling within an INGO;

  » Separating from the host INGO and operating independently ("Spin out");

  » Shared services business model[29] partnering with other NGOs;

  » Partnerships with government, academia and social enterprise; and

  » A community-led model.

Despite these varied models, most struggled with securing sustainable funding. Phase 1 identified the need for government relationships, and encouraged time and resources dedicated to fostering the relationship. Phase 2 brought more nuance to this lesson, showing the challenges of getting government buy-in, and government ownership not being the silver bullet to sustainability. For example, a Phase 2 innovation which originally had government adoption as its end-goal, ultimately found that being solely adopted by government would be a risk for the sustainability of the innovation, and therefore are considering a pivot to diversify their funding sources, by looking towards additional, complementary partnerships with the private sector.

- **Adapting to demands, local needs and priorities:** Another important reflection from both Phase 1 and 2 is related to relevance and adapting to demands, local needs and priorities – community or donor. It is crucial to understand the problem being solved and situate it within the broader ecosystem, against the three dimensions of education (access, learning and governance).

Financing

Aware of the challenge faced by innovators to secure funding for scale, the HEA published a Learning Paper on Financing Scale in EiEPC innovations which describes the existing financing architecture. Some highlights from that Learning Paper, and how they apply specifically to the HEA include:

- **Financing pipeline gap:** There remains a gap in the financing pipeline when it comes to scaling EiEPC innovations. Scaling is a long and complex process and likely requires several different types and sources of funding to reach sustainable scale. But there remain gaps between these types and sources of funding, and innovations can find themselves stuck in between them and unable to sustain themselves. While in recent years there has been an increase in the amount of "innovation" or "scaling" grants

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29 Find out more about the Shared Services Model developed by HEA's Scaling Consultant, Ian Gray and Phase I grantee, Libraries Without Borders here: Case study: Libraries Without Borders - Navigating the journey into a new context | by Humanitarian Education Accelerator | HEA Learning Series | Medium

available, these often only support EiEPC innovations in the early preparatory days of scaling, and are not designed to support over multiple years into sustainable financing. Further, traditional humanitarian and development funding mechanisms (which could provide multi-year funding) don't tend to incentivise the inclusion of innovations - often preferencing tried and tested programming - and it is unclear when an innovation is considered established enough to be a good candidate for these funding streams.

- **Financing for scaling activities:** It remains a hard sell for donors to support organisational growth and other scale-enabling activities. M&E, network and partnership building, business management, personnel and strengthening organisational capacity need to be funded, but often get overlooked by donors. The HEA funded these activities throughout the HEA programme (Phases 1 and 2), and have published and advocated on them in the hope that future donors include these costs in their funding support.

Evidence and M&E

A major focus of the HEA has been to generate evidence surrounding EiEPC innovations including by supporting teams to strengthen their key skills, and building the requisite systems that allow them to generate evidence. This involves not only data collection, but also developing a sampling plan, selecting and adapting high quality tools, and analysing and interpreting the data to create evidence. The reasons for evidence generation are twofold: first to help innovators design and implement their programmes effectively, and second, to encourage funding, support and adoption of the innovation. The HEA supported innovators to improve evidence in two main ways: M&E capacity building, and external evaluations. Many lessons were learnt through these types of support and are captured below.

Evidence

When HEA started, it was known that evidence in EiEPC innovations was lacking. While donors (rightfully) require evidence in order to support an innovation, it is not clear what type, level or quality of evidence they require, nor how the innovators would fund such evidence generation. The HEA experience has shown that unfortunately, clarity is still lacking on these points. There is a misalignment between what is demanded of innovators and what is possible to do at a given time. External evaluations were hoped to provide a good foundation of evidence, but difficulties in undertaking such evaluations (described below) show that more time and flexibility is needed

within research methodologies to effectively capture the unique context of EiEPIC innovations and produce evidence that is helpful and actionable.

M&E Capacity Building

A lesson from Phase 1 was the need for an M&E role to be created with the HEA team, so they could embed themselves in the innovations, and help build the innovation teams' capacities. While this struggled to take form in practice, the HEA partnership with NYU-TIES who took on the M&E mentoring role in Phase 2 showed just how important M&E capacity building is, and many useful lessons were learnt through their work. These lessons include:

- **Gap in innovation teams' M&E knowledge and capacity:** Teams often didn't have the privilege of having an internal M&E team or individual. This meant some innovation teams did not have M&E knowledge or capacity and therefore had to be taught fundamentals before doing more advanced evidence generation. Teams needed the opportunity to step back and build these fundamental skills. Phase 2 in particular showed an eagerness from the innovation teams to learn these skills and build up their M&E capacity.

- **M&E purpose:** M&E serves a dual purpose for innovation teams on their scaling journey. First of all, it should be used to review the existing programme - to ensure it is operating as planned, and capturing progress, lessons and impact. This helps determine whether the innovation should make any pivots/changes, and lays the foundations for generating impact evidence. Secondly, it should be used to measure against key scaling and implementation criteria, including the conditions in which the innovation is expected to work, the sustainability of the delivery, business and scaling approach, etc. This will help innovators to monitor their scaling progress.

- **M&E support needs to be embedded in the innovation teams from the beginning**: Whether this is through an internal team member or an external one that works closely with the team to understand their needs and build out the support around that.

- **M&E needs to be internally prioritised and budgeted for:** The HEA grant specified that 60% of the funds should be used on M&E and scaling gaps. This was applied flexibly - in order to avoid being overly prescriptive - meaning that not all teams applied the same focus on M&E or had the same internal capacity. For future iterations, the HEA team recognises that it would be beneficial if there was greater focus in the selection process to assess the innovation teams'

M&E capacity and help them to budget accordingly, for example, ensuring there is sufficient funding to cover staff salary for M&E and evidence generation. Timescales for the M&E capacity building (i.e. one year for Phase 2) could also benefit from being extended, in order to fully entrench M&E skills into teams.

External Evaluations

External evaluations were conducted on the five HEA Phase 1 grantees[30] and the three HEA Phase 2 grantees. While most grantees found the evaluations to be helpful and the evaluations add to the existing evidence base of EiEPC innovations, there were a number of lessons learnt along the way which would increase the value of future evaluations. They include:

- **Finding a suitable evaluation firm:** The ideal organisation would have a good understanding of the context of EiEPC, innovations and scaling. This would enable them to work on/with innovative research methodologies and really partner with the grantees to co-create responsive methodologies that meet their needs. Further, local firms would be preferred as they likely have closer access and better understanding of local contexts. Unfortunately, the HEA experience found that it was extremely tricky to find a firm with the relevant experience and ability to move away from an audit mindset to one of co-creation and learning, and procurement systems meant hiring local or preferred organisations was difficult.

- **Innovative research methodologies are needed:** The HEA experience showed that there is a deep gap in knowledge and flexibility when it comes to research and evaluation for EiEPC innovations. For example, Phase 1 impact evaluations found mixed results when it came to showing learning and psychosocial outcomes. But this outcome does not mean the innovations would not be impactful: rather, it suggests that the selected research methodology was not flexible enough or suitable to take into consideration contextual issues such as small sample sizes, short time frames, highly mobile populations, unstable operating environments, security risks, limited data collection capacity, and frequent implementation delays. Therefore work needs to go into exploring how impact can be measured and evaluated effectively in these specific and challenging circumstances. An

important reflection is to consider the maturity level of the innovations and the timeframe – whether they can be reasonably expected to produce rigorous or experimental evidence for impact.

- **Longer and more flexible timelines are needed:** Measuring impact (particularly learning outcomes) of education interventions is difficult as it can require significant time for those impacts to come to fruition. Implementers are often asked to show impact on learning outcomes way too early or in too narrow a timeframe. This was an issue in Phase 2 where due to extensive delays in procurement, the external evaluators (after onboarding) had less than eight months to conduct their work, and the result was that significant compromises had to be made on the final research methodologies for each evaluation. A realistic understanding of how long these things take and longer timeframes (that allow room for potential delays caused by internal systems) need to be dedicated to evaluations, including a lengthy inception phase that provides opportunities for co-design.

Capacity Building, Knowledge and Skills for Scale

- **Developing Theories of Change:** The HEA experience shows that one of the most important questions to consider for successful scaling is where the innovation is heading and that long-term roles need to be defined and re-defined. It is crucial to consider the "end-state" right at the beginning – and how it is going to be delivered. One of the first things HEA supported was to help teams build out their Theories of Changes – many of which did not have one prior to the accelerator. This helped ensure that everybody in the team understood what the vision is, where the programme or product is headed, how success is defined and measured, so the innovation can review whether or not it is on track. These theories of change could then be referred to throughout the scaling journey in order to see progress.

- **Developing Scaling Strategies**: The HEA process included intensive support for teams to develop scaling strategies. This enabled each team to break their scaling journey into its component parts and systematically work through the detail required to identify realistic and practical roadmaps to achieve

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30 Note that impact evaluations were only conducted on 3 of the 5 grantees as AIR found that two of the programmes were implemented at limited scale at the beginning of the HEA, and power calculations indicated that they did not have a sufficient sample size to conduct a highly rigorous impact evaluation. Process evaluations were conducted on all 5.

their goals. This new approach, building on work done by Elrha's Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF), helps to accelerate the teams' transition into the scaling journey, providing a structure to explore complex factors that would influence their pathway.

- **Documenting and codifying knowledge:** Throughout the HEA phases, there were examples where much of the knowledge of the innovation sat with one person. This creates a high degree of dependency and risk, and also makes it difficult to replicate the innovation elsewhere. Tacit knowledge needs to be converted into codified forms that are consistent and available for those that are involved in the implementation and replication.

- **Knowledge and skills for scale needs to sit across the whole team:** There was a tendency for innovation teams to nominate a focal point for HEA activities, and/or only have part of the team attend certain workshops or trainings. While unfortunately this reflects the reality of EiEPC innovators - that they are overstretched and busy - scaling is a cross cutting topic that needs input from all parts of the team. Similarly, an important indicator of a team being ready for the transition to scale is that they have a shared vision across the team, as well as the shared understanding of the changes that they might need to go through on the scaling journey.

- **Readiness for scale differs, despite efforts with stage gating:** Phase 1 brought to light the difficulties in mentoring and coaching a cohort at various levels of readiness to scale. Phase 2's stage-gated application approach attempted to reduce this, and select teams at a similar stage. But even with a stage-gated approach, it is still difficult to measure the full team's knowledge and capacity in various scaling activities, and therefore there were still fairly big differences between the selected innovations. This meant a very tailored and bespoke approach had to be created when mentoring the teams, which whilst doable (and valued by the teams), takes extra time and resources to run. The HEA also experienced exceptional circumstances with one team experiencing the tragic loss of their Founder and Executive Director, resulting in the loss of institutional knowledge that set the team behind in their scaling plans.

How HEA Operated

Overall, grantees found the HEA experience very useful. In particular, the mentoring, focus on business models, opportunities to meet with one another, and ultimately, end up with a better idea of where they were heading. Many of the teams work within emergency operations, and the HEA provided an opportunity to zoom out, and be

given space to think deeply about scale. By running three cohorts (two phases and one extra Covid-19 Challenge), HEA had the opportunity to implement lessons into subsequent iterations of the accelerator. Some overall lessons learnt include:

- **The need for a flexible host:** Initially run by UNICEF and UNHCR in Phase 1, the intention was to reduce administration by running Phase 2 solely within UNHCR. But hosting an innovative programme within a very traditional and complex organisation proved to be difficult. In particular, the fast pace of the accelerator could not easily align itself with UNHCR's extensive procurement and due diligence requirements for new operational partners. This led to critical delays for the HEA finalists to be onboarded on-time. However to mitigate the accelerator's operational delays the HEA adapted its modality to contract a third-party to support with the grant making processes. This pivot meant innovations teams could still deliver their activities within the timelines of the HEA programme.

- **More time and flexibility is needed with onboarding research partners:** As has been discussed above, it was difficult to find research partners with the requisite experience (working with EiEPC programming and innovation/scaling) and eligibility for UNHCR procurement. More time is needed to search for suitable partners, as is more flexibility regarding procuring local firms.

- **The accelerator would benefit from a longer timeframe:** Phase 1 ran for three years, and it was determined that this should be longer in order to really support innovations to get to scale. However, due to Covid-19, Phase 2 could only run for two years. Feedback from the innovators, the mentors, the evaluators, and the HEA team all confirmed that this is too short to really embed scaling skills in innovation teams, implement effectively, and have enough data to collect impact evidence.

- **Phase 2 fostered a more collaborative and collegial feel:** Based on feedback from Phase 1, Phase 2 ensured it was less high-level, and more collaborative and engaging so that innovators felt part of a cohort, which was formalised through the HEA's Community of Practice work.

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4. Recommendations

Through the lessons learnt over the past seven years of the HEA, the following recommendations are made. These recommendations are made to:

- **Donors and funders:** To help them structure how their programmes and money can best support EiEPC innovations;

- **Innovators in EiEPC:** To help guide them on their innovation journey and ensure their hard work is targeted to take their innovation to scale; and

- **Accelerators - current and future:** To help design how support and facilitation can be run through an accelerator working with EiEPC innovations.

4.1 Recommendations for Donors and Funders:

- **Create a pipeline of financial support for scaling EiEPC innovations:** All stakeholders (including institutional donors, fund-managers and accelerators) should work together to create a pipeline of financial support for scaling EiEPC innovations. This could involve:

  » Earlier "transition to scale" funders such as HEA working to build in follow-on funding

opportunities where possible, as well as helping to broker relationships with onward opportunities and funders.

›› Creating a role of "donor coordination" whereby an organisation (potentially a future iteration of HEA) or a consortium of partners facilitate a platform where the various funders and stakeholders come together to ensure there is a financing pipeline for EiEPC innovations.

›› Large donors/funders considering whether they can provide larger and longer grants to cover later scaling stages, and work with other donors to ensure there is a connection and pipeline between them.

● **Enable scaling up:** Donors and funders to review their funding mechanisms to ensure they enable scaling up as well as scaling out.

›› This may require a change to application and selection processes, for example, having less focus on numbers of children or locations reached.

›› It also means funding should include a focus on supporting the work that enables innovators to build in sustainability components such as organisational capacity, M&E, project management, documentation, and bridge funding to keep the innovation afloat.

● **Enable localisation:** Donors such as institutional donors (governments) and funders such as ECW

should build in opportunities for local initiatives to be incorporated into their funding mechanisms, including through flexibility in partnership rules. They should participate in fora where local initiatives such as CLOs and RLOs are present so they can learn about their work, the challenges they face, and the support they need. More meaningful engagement in this space would also require additional resourcing and time to build capacity of local organisations at the outset, and consider developing different or staggered application processes which speak to the needs of smaller, local organisations.

● **Clarify evidentiary requirements:** Donors and funders to be clear and open regarding their evidentiary requirements, and explain to innovators what evidence is being required of them, when, and why. Donors should assess the appropriateness of the type and timing of the evidence they require, for example, whether the innovation is mature enough to be able to collect and compile the required evidence, and whether the timelines are realistic. Further, what will be done with this evidence? Will it lead to further funding, adoption, or advocacy of the innovation? Collecting evidence is financially burdensome and resource heavy, and innovators need clarity on what's required from them, and what it will achieve (from the donor's perspective).

4.2 Recommendations for Innovators

● **Foster relationships with government:** Innovators should engage with government - particularly the Ministry of Education - early on in the innovation journey. This is the case even if you are not seeking government adoption or funding as the government nevertheless remains a crucial stakeholder. Involvement should ideally start at the design and implementation stage, but it will depend on individual circumstances. Other ways to best facilitate government engagement include:

›› Undertaking stakeholder mapping to understand which departments and which individuals should be involved;

›› Acknowledging that government engagement takes time and resources - there should be budget dedicated to this;

›› Recognising that government buy-in may be tied to individuals who can either leave their position, or there could be a government change. Therefore it's important to understand government processes, and embed approaches and relationships where possible.

● **Be aware of and upskill on the following activities to best position your team to scale** (recommended tools and resources included in footnotes):[31]

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31 Three good resources for tools to help with scaling include:
   1. The Humanitarian Innovation Guide (Elrha)
   2. Taylor, A. & Salmon, R. (2022). How to Scale: Tactics to Enable the Adoption of Humanitarian Innovations. Elrha.
   3. Education Scaling Resources (Brookings Institute).

» **Theories of change:** To clarify the vision, where the programme or product is headed, and how success is defined and measured;

» **Partnerships:** How to assess, build, maintain and review partnerships at different points in the scaling journey;[32]

» **Documenting and codifying the innovation and adaptations:** Ensuring that when changes are made, the reasons for them and how they are being conducted are captured and documented. This will help with programme management, evidence collection, and future replication.[33]

» **Value propositions:** Innovators should continually review their value proposition for each different stakeholder to ensure their continued buy-in. Value propositions should then be followed up with targeted communications and stakeholder engagement.[34]

» **Business models:** Innovators should explore potential business models and once pursuing one, revisit it continually to test it and ensure it is working.[35]

● **M&E foundations and evidence generation:** Understand the role and value of M&E, including for programme review, evidence generation and scaling. When considering evidence generation, consider who it is being created for, what they require, and how it should be communicated.[36]

● **Whole team involvement:** Ensure your whole team is participating in the scaling activities as scaling is cross-cutting and involves all parts of the project team.

● **Understand the financing architecture for EiEPC innovations**: Innovators can consult the HEA Financing Scale Learning Paper for this.[37]

● **Consider partnership arrangements to increase eligibility for funding:** Some types of organisational structures such as RLOs and CLOs may be ineligible for certain grants due to their size and/or legal structure. These organisations should consider partnering with other entities (for example local NGOs or INGOs) in the interim to access funding or technical support while core capacities and/or legal structures are being strengthened or changed in order to directly access funding.

4.3 Recommendations for Accelerators and Future Iterations of HEA:

● **Be part of the financing and support pipeline:** See recommendation 1 (Donors and Funders) above.

● **Enable localisation:** Future iterations need to make a concerted effort to enable localisation. This means making sure local initiatives are aware of the accelerator and opportunities and are given suitable assistance to apply for them. Further, the host of the accelerator needs to ensure that the rules and regulations to select partners will not exclude local initiatives such as RLOs and CLOs.

● **Consortium approach:** Future iterations of a programme like the HEA would benefit from a consortium approach. Roles should include:

» **Lead organisation:** With coordination capacity that acts as the central secretariat and is responsible for knowledge management, collating and sharing lessons learned and evidence on scaling EiEPC (for example, through developing global public goods and convening a Community of Practice);

» **Grant manager:** Must have flexibility in grant-making so that grants can be provided quickly and to a variety of different types of organisations (including RLOs, grassroots organisations, potentially private sector etc). This organisation should have appropriate accountability mechanisms but less complex due diligence, partnership and procurement processes than big organisations such as UN agencies.

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32 Useful resources created by HEA mentor Ian Gray include: Education Scaling Alignment Wheel, and Innovation Partnerships Booklet.

33 Various tools in the Humanitarian Innovation Guide (Elrha). In particular, see the Scale Strategy.

34 Useful tools for Value Propositions include the Value Proposition Canvas and the Value Curve.

35 The Business Model Navigator can help to shed light on the many revenue models that can be used and combined to underpin a resilient business model; the Business Model Canvas can help to articulate how you intend to solve problems and create value in a way that is financially sustainable; and the Business Model Testing Cards can help to review and test aspects of your business model. A further reading resource which can help innovators understand business models in humanitarian contexts is: Gray, I, Komuhangi, C, McClure, D and Tanner, L (2019) Business Models for Innovators Working in Crisis Response and Resilience Building. Depp Innovation Labs.

36 See HEA MEL Resources list and Dodgson, K. Crowley, C. (2021) Impact Evidence and Beyond: Using Evidence to Drive Adoption of Humanitarian Innovations. Elrha.

37 HEA (2022) Financing Scale in Humanitarian Education Innovation Learning Paper.

M&E and research partners: It's crucial that these partners have experience in innovation as well as humanitarian and education contexts. There needs to be more flexibility with who these partners can be (e.g. not limited to pre-approved suppliers or global organisations). Further, it is preferable that the partners come from the regions where the innovations are implemented, as this suggests experience within the operational context.

- The research/evaluation partner should be a part of the programme design process. Their buy-in would be helpful to move beyond an audit mindset.

Mentors and coaches: A variety of mentors or coaches who specialise in scaling relevant subjects, for example, business models, project management, and communications. These partners should be engaged with the innovation teams from the beginning of the accelerator and throughout to ensure consistency, foster a relationship of trust, and a deep understanding of the innovations and their teams. Further, as above, it is preferable that mentors and coaches come from or have worked in the regions that the innovations are being implemented in.

Funded by a consortium of donors: As recommended above, a fora where donors can come together and understand one another's opportunities and mechanisms to try to ensure there is a consistent pipeline of support and financing. Donors that are calling for scale and evidence are especially encouraged to be a part of this.

Governments: Should be brought in as partners in this consortium as they are crucial stakeholders in EiEPC innovations and would offer invaluable insight.

● **Longer time frames for the accelerator:**

- The accelerator needs cohorts to run for at least three years.
- More time is needed to find suitable evaluation partners.
- Evaluators need at least a year of planning, and to have seen at least 1-2 years of implementation upon which to base their evaluations, as it's unlikely they'll be able to see the innovations' impact before then.
- Coaches and Mentors need at least 1-2 years of time with the teams before skills can be embedded in the innovation teams.

● **Enhancing grantee selection:**

- Continue to support and enable grantees to partake in subsequent Phases in order to create continuity and a pipeline of support.[38]
- Consider taking a regional approach to the cohorts in order to increase collaboration and likely synergies between contexts, as well as reduce time difference issues with remote activities.
- Build in M&E capacity assessment at the stage-gated selection in order to understand human resource gaps and technical priorities.
- Enable and provide support to consortium-based innovations that encourage partnerships with RLOs/CLOs.

● **Overall support should be needs-based and tailored:** HEA feedback showed that due to the limited timeframe, at some points too much was being crammed into the accelerator. This meant the innovations didn't always have the chance to have the detailed conversations they wanted on topics that were especially relevant to them. Efforts were made through the HEA Community of Practice and Learning Papers to focus on topics identified as relevant and important to the innovation teams, and this focus should continue in future iterations, as well as shaping future curriculums. Further, when considering the evidentiary needs of innovations, a more individual approach would ensure that an organisation can focus on what's most useful for them: for example, learning M&E fundamentals for the whole team over pushing ahead with a rigorous impact evaluation they are not ready for and therefore is unlikely to show results or be useful.

● **Provide financing to innovation teams going through the state-gated application process:** While the stage-gated process was very helpful to get to know the innovations and their suitability for the HEA, it was time and resource consuming for the teams. It's a lot to ask from innovators, therefore bridge funding should be supplied whilst going through this process. This funding can also incentivise wider participation across a team or organisation.

● **Closer follow up with HEA alumni:** This will add to the evidence base of EiEPC innovations as it will show the results of how effective the HEA programme has been, and how innovations progressed with enhanced capacities and skills. It is also an opportunity to bring back alumni to coach and mentor current grantees.

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38 For example, Phase 1 grantee War Child Holland was provided with additional funding into Phase 2.

Annex 1: Overview of Innovations Supported by HEA

HEA Phase 1			
Innovation Team	**Context**	**Focus**	**Solution**
War Child Holland	Uganda	Digital, game-based learning technology	Can't Wait to Learn: This programme aims to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes by providing digital, game-based learning via tablets.
Libraries Without Borders	Jordan	Portable media centre and learning hub in a safe environment	Ideas Box: This programme focuses on improving psychosocial and learning outcomes for refugee children and children from the host population in more than 20 countries by providing a container-sized box that houses a library and a learning space in a safe environment.
World University Service of Canada (WUSC)	Kenya	Weekend and holiday remedial education	WUSC's Equity in Education in Refugee Camps in Kenya (EERCK) programme and Kenya Equity in Education Project (KEEP): These programmes focus on improving non-cognitive skills (such as aspirations and resilience) and educational outcomes amongst seventh- and eighth-grade girls by providing weekend and holiday remedial education.
Caritas	Bangladesh	Social Emotional Learning (SEL)	Essence of Learning: EoL is an innovative, child-centred learning approach that integrates educational and psychosocial support — through structured activities, drawing and play (using recycled materials as learning aids)— to restore and enhance the learning ability of vulnerable children, particularly in conflict or crisis settings.
Kepler	Rwanda	Tertiary education	Kepler Kiziba is a blended learning university programme at Kiziba Refugee Camp in western Rwanda. The programme is a partnership between Kepler and Southern New Hampshire University, and pairs online learning with in-person seminars and specialised support. It allows refugee students the opportunity to earn U.S.-accredited Bachelor degrees and gain work experience while in a refugee camp.

Covid-19 Challenge			
Innovation Team	Context	Focus	Solution
Mosaik	Jordan	Teacher training (Higher Ed)	Open Dogme Toolkit supports English language teachers of refugee youth to sustain interactive remote English Language Training (ELT) during social distancing. The toolkit provides online training for teachers on Dogme methods (learner driven dialogic teaching strategies), alongside digital guides and techniques to use in planning lessons, and a community of practice.
Amal Alliance & Ustad Mobile	Bangladesh	Early Childhood Education (ECD)/ Socio-emotional Learning (SEL)	Colours of Kindness is a programme that bridges the learning gap and provides psychosocial support to children and their families through social-emotional learning centred content that enhances well being.
M-Shule		SMS based learning (primary)	M-Shule is an SMS learning platform that uses text messaging to reach learners who are in need of learning resources but do not have access to smartphones or internet, to ensure continued learning throughout school closures. The platform leverages artificial intelligence to deliver tailored curriculum aligned content to primary school learners based on their specific grade, performance and needs, all through text message.

HEA Phase 2			
Innovation Team	Context	Focus	Solution
Madrasati	Jordan	Social Emotional Learning (SEL)	Masahati Clubs are an after school programme providing a safe and dynamic social emotional learning space for refugee and host populations. Masahati is a Madrasati programme that works with school staff to improve their capacities and motivation in providing SEL activities, engaging parents and monitoring the overall school environment.
Cohere (previously Xavier Project)	Uganda	Children with disabilities (CWD)	In partnership with RLOs, Cohere support refugee CWD to access quality learning opportunities through a community led system of support and growth. The model works with RLOs to co-create and implement activities to support sustainable scale.
iACT	Chad	Early Childhood Education (ECD)	Little Ripples (LR) is an early childhood education programme co-created and led by displaced and refugee community members affected by conflict. LR's adaptable and culturally relevant framework offers quality, play based, and comprehensive pre-primary education that supports the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development of children ages 3 to 6.

Annex 2: HEA Technical Team

Phase 1 Technical Team members - engaged in selection process:

- DfID
- Education Above All
- USAID
- Harvard University
- LEGO Foundation
- UNICEF
- Dubai Cares
- IDEO.org

Phase 2 Technical Team members - engaged in the Phase 2 grantee selection process in 2020/21, and biannual check ins to update on HEA progress:

- Education Cannot Wait
- Porticus
- DfID/FCDO
- Dubai Cares
- LEGO Foundation