Institution: University of Brighton

Unit of Assessment: C17 Business and Management Studies

Title of case study: Strengthening the humanitarian innovation ecosystem

Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2012 – 2016

Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:

Name(s):	**Role(s) (eg job title):**	**Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:**
Howard Rush	Professor of Innovation Management	1983 – 2019
Nick Marshall	Senior Research Fellow (2006 – to date)	1999 – to date

Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2016 – 2020

Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N

1. Summary of the impact

University of Brighton (UoB) research for the UN's World Humanitarian Summit (2016) has helped embed innovation in the aid sector at systemic and individual organisational levels. The research initially advanced and redefined an international debate concerning innovation within the humanitarian sector. This resulted in the establishment of two major new policy initiatives: i) a new funding stream within The Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF) with a budget of GBP5,000,000 and ii) the Global Alliance on Humanitarian Innovation (GAHI), a two-year international programme (budget USD1,650,000). These initiatives have scaled up innovation management capabilities and supported projects that have had economic and social impacts in conflict and disaster affected locations around the globe.

2. Underpinning research

The Centre for Change, Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management (CENTRIM) at the University of Brighton has been working in the field of innovation management for thirty years and with the humanitarian relief sector for a decade. This includes research that explores the role which crisis conditions play in shaping new innovation trajectories and how this further enables radical innovation. Often taking a case example approach, the research examines user involvement and considers how that shapes the emergent model in such a way as to permit rapid and widespread diffusion [reference 3.1].

The challenges facing international humanitarian action are growing in scale, scope and complexity. According to a report from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) the gap between the amount of money needed to meet the basic needs of disaster affected communities (calculated at USD22,500,000,000 by UNOCHA) and donations received is also increasing. Innovation dedicated to improvements in both the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian relief initiatives and expenditure have, consequently, become an important pillar within the strategic approaches of many UN and international non-governmental agencies.

The inclusion of innovation as one of the principal themes of the UN's 2016 World Humanitarian Summit was testimony to the importance of innovation as a means of bridging the funding gap. CENTRIM research, building on a long track record for research in managing innovation (which has been independently assessed as being in the top ten innovation research groups in the world), was commissioned by the UK's Department for International Development between 2014 and 2016. The research findings formed a major part of the UK's contribution to the UN's 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. A series of recommendations from CENTRIM's research were presented to the UN's innovation thematic expert group and following the group's endorsement incorporated into the Summit's consultation synthesis report.

The CENTRIM work programme, conducted by a multi-disciplinary team of academics, consultants and practitioners (seconded to the CENTRIM team) consisted of three components [3.2]:

- Documenting emerging innovation practices within the humanitarian sector, which identified challenges including funding gaps, and the lack of resources and capabilities at key stages of the innovation process which were also a barrier to scaling innovation;
- Developing insights into how to strengthen the humanitarian innovation ecosystem by engaging with an informed sample of 50 individuals with expert knowledge of the role and nature of innovation and its management in the sector;
- Identifying strengths and weaknesses in the humanitarian innovation ecosystem through in-depth case studies involving over 200 individual interviews in areas such as water, hygiene, sanitation, infectious diseases, health, nutrition, and shelter.

The research identified a number of resource, information and capacity gaps [3.2, 3.3, 3.4] and found that the innovation ecosystem was weakly integrated and in need of active facilitation, networking and brokering of relationships between existing and new actors. Furthermore, innovation processes were found to be idiosyncratic and subject to multiple interests and biases. Of particular concern were the fractures in the ecosystem in the essential scaling stage of the innovation process. Available resources for scaling were insufficient and rarely considered strategically, and effective 'routines', 'relationships' and specified 'roles' were rarely in place [3.2, 3.5]. The research resulted in eighteen recommendations including the need for new mechanisms tailored to the development of innovation scaling capabilities and new, significant funding streams to provide tangible support for scalable innovations that pass specific evidence-based criteria [3.2].

3. References to the research

[3.1] Bessant, J., Rush, H., and Trifilova, A., (2012). "Jumping the Tracks": crisis-driven social innovation and the development of novel trajectories. A Die Unternehmung – Swiss Journal of Business Research and Practice, 66(3) 221-242. ISSN 0042-059X [Quality validation: peer-reviewed article in leading journal].

[3.2] Ramalingam, B, Rush, H, Bessant, J, Marshall, N, Gray, B, Hoffman, K, Bayley, S & Warren, K (2015). Humanitarian Innovation Ecosystem Research. Final Project Report. UK Department for International Development (DFID). 52 pp. Humanitarian Innovation Ecosystem Research Project Final Report - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) [Quality validation: final report from competitive commissioned funding].

[3.3] Marshall, N., and Rush, H., Projects and innovation in humanitarian emergency response: insights from a case study of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). 1-22. Paper presented at 34th EGOS Colloquium, Talinn, Estonia. [Quality validation: acceptance based on competitive peer-review].

[3.4] Bessant, J., Rush, H., and Trifilova, A. (2015). Crisis Driven Innovation: the case of humanitarian innovation. International Journal of Innovation Management, 19(6). https://doi.org/10.1142/S1363919615400149 [Quality validation: peer-reviewed article in leading journal].

[3.5] Rush, H., and Marshall, N., (2015). Case Study: Innovation in Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. Project Report. Humanitarian Innovation Ecosystem Research Project, UK DFID. [Quality validation: output from project with a competitive tender process].

Key research grants

Rush, H., [PI], (2014 – 2015). UK Department of International Development, Mapping the international humanitarian innovation system, GBP198,986.

4. Details of the impact

The policy and resource impacts detailed below were made possible by a concerted series of research and activities to disseminate new ideas on managing innovation within the humanitarian relief sector. The CENTRIM research team used UoB publications, academic papers and policy forum presentations to make major contributions to change the narrative on the role of innovation within the humanitarian relief sector. As a result of their active

participation on the UN's *Thematic Team on Transformation Through Innovation* for the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit preparations, UoB researchers were able to have a direct impact on humanitarian innovation policy, leading to projects that improve lives in disaster affected communities.

4.1 Developing policy initiatives

The recommendations from the DFID sponsored research related to partnership building, investment, and the development of innovation management capabilities. It included the establishment of new funding streams and the creation of global innovation alliances. These recommendations were formally incorporated into the consultation process for the 2016 UN World Summit [Source 5.1]. In addition to CENTRIM's direct participation on the UN's expert thematic team, researchers facilitated the reach, relevance and uptake into professional practice by actively disseminating the results of the research beyond the traditional academic outlets by:

- attending UNOCHA Policy Forums at the UN Headquarters in New York;
- preparing the research recommendations which featured on key websites including DFID, ELRHA (Enhanced Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance), the European Union, Relief Web, and ALNAP/UN Habitat' (Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance);
- disseminating via publications aimed directly at humanitarian managers and practitioners (including articles in *The Conversation* which was downloaded over 10,000 times (with large numbers from India and Africa) and the Huffington Post;
- making presentations at seminars and workshops UNOCHA, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC).

4.2 Impact on the strategic direction of the humanitarian aid sector

The research and dissemination activities had a direct impact on the operation of the 2016 UN Humanitarian Summit resulting in changes to strategic thinking and the content of widely disseminated reports and subsequent actions within the humanitarian aid system as a whole.

CENTRIM's contribution was identified by the Manager of the UN Humanitarian Innovation Fund as being instrumental to the development of the HIF strategic thinking. He wrote that: '*Given the emerging nature of the humanitarian innovation policy community, such a considered and in-depth piece of research has provided important grounding as we seek to build a system that is better able to evolve in response to changing crisis contexts'* [5.2].

The Chief of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) secretariat also wrote: '*I cannot emphasize enough how important your work was for bringing the WHS Synthesis Report to fruition and for ensuring a successful conclusion to the consultation phase of the WHS* […] *Your participation in the WHS consultation process contributed to our collective effort in identifying ways to make humanitarian action more inclusive, effective and fit for the future'* [5.3].

This is reiterated by the UNOHCO Humanitarian Affairs Officer with responsibility for helping implement the Summit recommendations who noted: '*You and your team contributed directly to the work of the WHS Thematic Task Team on Innovation, which set out to explore ways to adapt and improve, create a system open to experimentation, and to implement new products and processes. The six components you identified* […] *have helped us to frame and understand how and why innovation functions as it does in the humanitarian sector'* [5.4].

4.3 Scaling innovation projects within the sector

The CENTRIM research identified major gaps in the availability of innovation funding in the sector and the need to ensure funding mechanisms across the full range of innovation activities from search and discovery through to scaling. CENTRIM researchers and outputs argued for tangible and visible support for scalable innovations. In response to this research

the HIF, supported by GBP5,000,000 from the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, created a new innovation stream 'Accelerating the Journey to Scale' in 2016. This was led by Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance (ELHRA), a global charity that responds to humanitarian challenges [5.2, 5.5]. In so doing, the HIF increased its general large grant offers from GBP150,000 to GBP500,000 solely related to scaling projects [5.2].

Following the recommendations of the CENTRIM report to DFID and the World Humanitarian Summit, the HIF is now supporting the entire lifecycle of innovation and, building on the initial funding for scaling referred to above, has embedded scaling in their programme strategy: '*The HIF will further develop the capability to support humanitarian innovation across the entire lifecycle: from framing the problem, exploring and developing solutions and enabling adoption and scale*' [5.6]:

4.4 Improving aid and changing lives in disaster and conflict affected communities

Three major projects were funded under the HIF programme in 2016. These show how the strategic approach to change via policy and funding recommendations then go on to play a significant role in improving conditions through resulting projects in a variety of settings. Guided by the research findings these projects have taken innovation to scale through extending deployment across several countries. This has created a range of social and economic impacts in disaster and conflict affected locations. For example:

- *Words of Relief* enabled local communities to communicate better with relief workers and scaled up ways to facilitate two-way communication between first responders and crisis-affected populations by translating key crisis and disaster messages, building a 'spider network' of translators, and creating an on-line application (WoRDE). The project surpassed original targets and included the translation of over 420,000 words into Swahili and 50,000 into Somali; developing a code of practice; training the Swahili machine engine (Microsoft Translator) with 428,000 words; and training dozens of volunteers as translators for rapid response crisis situations with Ebola, the Nigerian elections, and the Burundi crisis [5.7].
- *Making Humanitarian Supplies* (by Field Ready) provides manufacturing (3D printing) in the field where rapid, low cost supplies are needed most. The project scaled up 3D printing facilities at field level in 20 countries (double the number initially intended), created over 200 new product designs, 6 new manufacturing techniques, and trained over 1,400 people in digital manufacturing [5.8].
- *Healing in Harmony* by Make Music Matter & the Panzi Foundation scaled their innovative approach to reducing levels of anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder in survivors of sexual violence through its unique approach to music therapy. Working with psychologists and music producers, vulnerable community members write, record and produce songs based upon their experiences. Starting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo the programme has been scaled to six countries worldwide with over 3,500 participants helped via this programme [5.9].

HIF has announced that as part of the implementation of its 2018 – 2020 strategic plan there will be a continuation of its scaling initiative through 2023. Funding for the initiative has been increased and ten new proposals will be funded up to GBP580,000 each. In addition, grantees will be provided with one-to-one mentorship, workshops provided to strengthen scaling capability, and peer learning facilitated through a network of the grantee cohort, previous grantees and HIF's humanitarian partners. Rush is on the ELHRA advisory group, which is assessing the impact of the HIF scaling initiative.

4.5 New global alliance for humanitarian innovation (GAHI) initiative

Another of the principal recommendations of the CENTRIM research - the need to build a global alliance for humanitarian innovation (included under '7.6.3 Build inclusive partnerships for innovation' of the synthesis report) was accepted by the World Humanitarian Summit [5.1]. CENTRIM provided an outline model of the functions of such an alliance, which was discussed with the ELHRA who were given responsibility for setting it up. The GAHI was established as a two-year pilot programme in 2017 with 40 humanitarian and academic partnerships (including CENTRIM) and initial funding of USD1,650,000 from the ministries of

foreign affairs and development from Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, and the UK [5.10, 5.11]. The work programme included the development of a practical toolkit to facilitate the scaling of innovation introduced to humanitarian organisations via workshops held with GAHI partners at the UNOCHA Humanitarian Networks and Partnership Week in Geneva 2019 [5.12]. The GAHI pilot has now finished, and an independent evaluation is being conducted to determine the results. CENTRIM's input into policy development in the humanitarian relief field has been translated into a tangible programme of action on the ground. Real commitments to continue this work by organisations such as the HIF will sustain delivery of further economic and social benefits for those most in need for years to come.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[5.1] World Humanitarian Summit secretariat, Restoring Humanity: Synthesis of the Consultation Process for the World Humanitarian Summit (New York, United Nations, 2015). [Accessed 18th January 2021]. UoB research is cited and the recommendations incorporated pp. 115 – 122.

[5.2] Testimonial from the Head of the Humanitarian Innovation Fund on the significant role UoB played in grounding the new systems and establishing the innovation stream.

[5.3] Testimonial from the Chief of the World Humanitarian Summit confirming how the research had a significant effect on the strategic thinking and delivery of the Summit.

[5.4] Testimonial from the Humanitarian Affairs Officer UNOCHA that confirms how UoB research contributed to the WHS thematic task team.

[5.5] The ELHRA website on the HIF that confirms the creation of the new innovation stream, 'Journey to Scale'.

[5.6] Humanitarian Innovation Fund Strategic Approach 2018-2020: A responsible Ambition. This strategy embeds scaling activities in its forward looking capabilities.

[5.7] Tanner, L. and Obrecht, A. (2015) Words of Relief: Translators without Borders' local language translation for emergencies'. HIF/ALNAP case study. London: ODI/ALNAP. This confirms the aims and outcomes of this project.

[5.8] Field Ready: Making Humanitarian Supplies in the Field. https://www.elrha.org/project/fieldready-scale/ [Accessed on 10th January 2021]. This website confirms the latest outcomes of this project.

[5.9] Make Music Matter: https://www.elrha.org/organisation/make-music-matter/ [Accessed on 10th January 2021]. This website confirms the latest outcomes of this project and is supported by a report on the development of the initial model.

[5.10] A selection of websites and reports on the GAHI that confirm its establishment.

[5.11] Testimonial from the Executive Director of the Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation that confirms the role of the research in establishing the global alliance.

[5.12] Bourns, L., McClure, D., Obrecht, A., (2018) Humanitarian Innovation: Untangling the many paths to scale. A report on the practical toolkit delivered through the GAHI.