

Impact Framework – Humanitarian Innovation Fund

1 Introduction

- i. This document is intended to be implemented within the *ELRHA Impact Strategy 2014*. The ELRHA strategy frames an overarching vision: to support partnerships between researchers and practitioners to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian action.
- ii. This section and section 2 are extracted from the ELRHA Impact Strategy, and the reader is directed to this document for more detail.
- iii. The aims of this framework are:
 - To describe what impact means to ELRHA and the HIF (see section 2);
 - To describe impacts and outcomes of the HIF at programme-level and describe how these are achieved and measured (see section 4).
 - To describe different project-level HIF outcomes and impacts, and to show how each grantee identifies their outcomes and impacts and works to a monitoring and evaluation framework (see section 3);
- iv. In this sense, the impact which ELRHA as a whole strives to achieve is improved effectiveness of humanitarian action. The HIF supports organisations and individuals to identify, nurture and share innovative and scalable solutions to the challenges facing effective humanitarian assistance.
- v. Despite working in the humanitarian arena, the HIF is not a ‘frontline’ programme and is not operational in the field. Additionally, it does not fund traditional humanitarian response or direct assistance in crises. Instead, to reach beneficiaries, the HIF seeks to impact humanitarian policy, paradigms, processes and practices by providing better evidence of ‘what works’ in humanitarian innovation, and by encouraging the utilisation of successful innovations.

1. Impact and the HIF

- vi. “Impact” has different meanings for different actors in the development and humanitarian fields. It is used widely, but often without a clear definition of its meaning. In this section we will outline what impact and outcomes mean for the HIF and how we address them.

ELRHA and the HIF have adapted the definitions of outcome and impact from the OECD-DAC Glossary (2002) from humanitarian use. They have also adopted the definition of 3ie¹ when referring to impact assessment.

- Outcome
 - *The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects of an intervention’s outputs.*
- Impact
 - *Positive and negative, primary and secondary effects produced by an intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.*

¹ 3ie, 2008, Founding Document for Establishing the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation at http://www.3ieimpact.org/media/filer_public/2012/05/17/3iefoundingdocument30june2008.pdf

- Impact Assessment
 - *Analyses that measure the net change in outcomes for a particular group of people that can be attributed to a specific program using the best methodology available, feasible and appropriate to the question that is being investigated and to the specific context.*
- vii. More generally, ALNAP (2006, p.56) states that impact ‘looks at the wider effects of the project – social, economic, technical, environmental – on individuals, gender- and age-groups, communities and institutions. Impacts can be intended and unintended, positive and negative, macro (sector) and micro (household)’.
 - viii. Essentially, the HIF believes that impact assessment is relevant to all of its core functions and programmes. This is because there is an obligation for all humanitarian actors to understand the implications of their work; to be accountable to affected populations; and to strive to achieve better results based on evidence and analysis².
 - ix. However, as a ‘second tier’, non-operational programme, the HIF cannot measure impact in terms of an *intervention* in the same way that humanitarian agencies usually do. In this sense the HIF measures the impact and outcomes of funded projects, and of the HIF programme as a whole. Linked to this, it is recognised that in general it is not possible to measure the full impacts of a funded innovation within the time frame of that funding; and that the significant effects of research may take years to emerge.
 - x. Working with innovations also entails a degree of uncertainty in project and programme deliverables, including outcomes and impacts. As a project learns and adapts, this may lead to an evolution in project design and delivery, testing the relevance of established project planning and monitoring tools.
 - xi. It is also, inevitably, difficult to causally link successful innovation and an increase in the effectiveness of specific humanitarian actions at a particular location. Overall, for the HIF as a programme and for funded projects, it is challenging to measure, demonstrate or attribute impact in the field. However, these are challenges that the HIF programme team and each grantee do commit to.
 - xii. Therefore, the HIF will commonly refer to projects rather than interventions; and will undertake to report on outcomes, and attribute successful outcomes towards the achievement of larger impacts as appropriate.

3. HIF Programme Level Outcomes and Impacts

- xiii. The HIF operates within several strategic-level ELRHA documents. It is explicitly linked to the *ELRHA Impact Strategy 2014* through Outcome Indicator 10: *ELRHA’s Humanitarian Innovation Fund contributes to increasing the effectiveness of humanitarian action.*
- xiv. The HIF has also committed to a programme level impact statement and impact indicators in the logical framework (logframe) agreed with donors. Please see Table 1 which is an extract of the programme logframe.
- xv. The HIF are also developing a Theory of Change, which is linked to the logframe. This is attached as a draft in Annexe 1.
- xvi. In order to achieve the impact of *Reduce mortality and morbidity, maintain human dignity, enhance protection and sustain livelihoods in humanitarian crises by improvements in humanitarian practice*, the HIF programme staff and ELRHA support staff undertake a range of activities that are not included in the logframe and are difficult to monitor.

² O’Flynn, 2010, Impact Assessment: Understanding and assessing our contributions to change, M&E Paper 7, Intrac - <http://www.intrac.org/data/files/resources/695/Impact-Assessment-Understanding-and-Assessing-our-Contributions-to-Change.pdf>

Table 1: Logical Framework: Impacts, the Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF) Phase two

IMPACT	Impact Indicator 1	Baseline	Milestone 1	Milestone 2	Target (date)	Assumptions
Reduce mortality and morbidity, maintain human dignity, enhance protection and sustain livelihoods in humanitarian crises by improvements in humanitarian practice	Innovations can be seen contributing to improved performance of the humanitarian system at a global level.	Pilot ALNAP State of the Humanitarian System report	HIF annual report in 2013 traces spread of HIF funded innovations within the sector and validates the contribution they have made to improved performance	2014 ALNAP State of the Humanitarian System report clearly documents the contribution of innovations to improved humanitarian performance	Final HIF evaluation documents that innovations are having an ongoing positive impact on the humanitarian system	There is a link between innovation and improved performance; Evidence of successful innovations can influence humanitarian actions, paradigms and systems; Humanitarian staff members, boards and partners are committed to better engagement in innovation processes and are willing to trial new ways of doing things; Effective innovations are not blocked for institutional reasons; Donors are willing to support the rollout of new approaches in operational response on the basis of available evidence; and Funding for trialling of new technologies and processes is available.
	All successful innovations offer evidence of positive change		By 2014, innovations that report success offer evidence of this, whether qualitatively or quantitatively	By 2015, innovations that report success offer evidence of this, whether qualitatively or quantitatively	By 2016, all evidence of success is synthesised and analysed to better support improved humanitarian performance and systems	
	HIF innovations offer insight into how innovations can significantly impact the larger humanitarian system		By 2014, innovations that report success offer clear guidance on how to upscale or replicate this success	By 2015, innovations that report success offer clear guidance on how to upscale or replicate this success	By 2016, all guidance on upscaling or replicating innovation success is synthesised and disseminated	

These include:

- presenting and working as panellists at international conferences relevant to innovation;
- producing media and web-based material promoting innovation in general and diffusing information on HIF projects in particular;
- advising grantees on monitoring, evaluation, reporting, uptake and methodology on an ongoing basis;
- networking with institutions, agencies, collaborations and individuals to promote, advise on and analyse humanitarian innovation;
- ensuring that HIF grants are managed through effective mechanisms and that all evaluators and Grant Panel members are world-class experts in their fields.

4. HIF Project-level Outcomes and Impacts

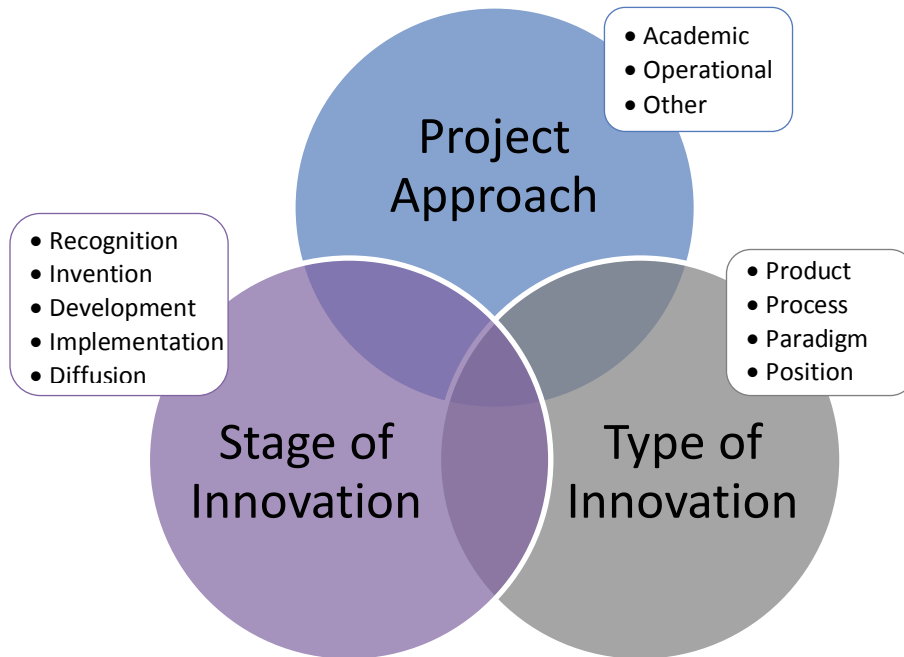
- xvii. There are many different kinds of innovations and project that are funded through the HIF. This diversity is a considerable strength for the programme. However, it also makes it difficult to be definitive about what kind of impacts and outcomes should be monitored and reported against, and how this is done.
- xviii. With this complexity in mind, the HIF have created guides to help grantees to define and to monitor their progress, expressed as outcomes and impacts. As discussed, this document is underpinned by the *HIF Impact Guidelines* (2014). The *HIF Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in the Humanitarian Innovation Fund* (MEL Guide)³ is also related.
- xix. These guides are important because it remains the responsibility of each funded project to rigorously gather evidence of the performance and, in some cases, the higher level impact of their innovation and their project.
- xx. The MEL Guide states that all projects should be able to clearly demonstrate how they will contribute to improving the performance of humanitarian aid, and have clear and practical ways to measure this. In particular, the HIF considers the following *assessment criteria* – which draws on the DAC criteria⁴ – as central to measuring performance:
- **Effectiveness** is concerned with the degree to which the project achieves its stated objectives in a timely manner. It is generally a measure of outcomes.
 - **Efficiency** is a measure of the quality and/or number of outputs compared to the inputs (often money or time) required. The more efficient the project, the more and/or better the outputs created with the same amount of inputs, or the fewer inputs used (OECD 2011).
 - **Coverage** measures the degree to which the project reaches the highest proportion of those who need it, and ensures that priority of access based on needs (so that particular groups are not excluded)
 - **Relevance and appropriateness** are concerned with assessing whether an intervention is in line with the needs and priorities of the intended end-users/beneficiaries.
- xxi. The MEL note emphasises that in concert with these criteria, impact measurements look at whether the project outcomes led to overall goals being achieved, but also look at the effects of the project beyond those that were originally planned for.

³ www.humanitarianinnovation.org/

⁴ The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) established in 1991 several principles of evaluation to guide DAC member states. These principles have subsequently been developed into five specific criteria which are today widely used in development evaluation. See: betterevaluation.org/evaluation-options/dac_criteria

- xxii. The HIF MEL note describes these and other assessment criteria in depth and the reader is referred to this document for more detail.
- xxiii. The HIF Impact Guidelines (2014) describe HIF projects using three main parameters, as shown in Figure 1. The Guidelines then describe how HIF expectations around impact evaluations depends largely on the *stage* of the innovation, and relates each stage to expectations in detail.

Figure 1. HIF Project Parameters



- xxiv. As well as providing guides, the HIF have formal processes to ensure that all grantees have the knowledge to properly apply processes that relate to impact evaluation, including monitoring and evaluation. These processes are revisited and reviewed by HIF and ELRHA support staff as challenges are encountered and mechanisms need updating.
- xxv. In addition, the HIF routinely reinforce these formal processes with related work, including:
 - A number of in-depth case studies have been completed and further are planned. These case studies explore and diffuse 'lessons learned'. They are intended to help the humanitarian system learn about successful and unsuccessful innovation processes, though they will not deliver impact evaluation as such.
 - Periodic surveys of current and past HIF grantees have been done and more are planned, in order to monitor project progress and understand the perspectives and experiences of project staff; and
 - A well-established series of interim and final report templates are being implemented, which ensure comprehensive monitoring and reporting of each HIF project.

5. Conclusion

- xxi. Central to the HIF is that impact assessment is an obligation, in order to understand the implications of HIF work; to be accountable to affected populations; and to strive to achieve better results based on evidence and analysis.

- xxii. Using guidelines, personal contact with grantees, and effective mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and learning, the HIF seek to ensure that projects, when appropriate, can demonstrate their performance at the end of, and sometimes beyond the endpoint of, HIF funding.
- xxiii. As a programme, the HIF are working within a theory of change and have committed to achieving outcomes and impacts agreed with donors and described in an agreed logframe. Additionally, HIF and ELRHA support staff undertake a range of activities and produce a range of outputs that contribute to the ongoing success of the programme.

Annexe 1: Humanitarian Innovation Fund A Draft Theory of Change 2014

