

Impact Guidelines – Humanitarian Innovation Fund

Introduction

The aim of these guidelines are to support funded grantees with clear direction on what the HIF and ELRHA expect in relation to impact assessment and the delivery of high level outcomes from HIF funded projects.

‘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. 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. The HIF has adopted other definitions ¹

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.

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.

More generally, ALNAP² (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)’. 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.

Impact assessment is relevant to each and every HIF project funded. This is because there is an obligation for all humanitarian stakeholders to understand the implications of their work; to be accountable to affected populations; and to strive to achieve better results based on evidence and analysis.

Innovation and Impact

Working with innovations entails a degree of uncertainty in project deliverables, including outcomes and impacts. As a project learns and adapts, this may lead to a dynamic evolution in project design and delivery. This would test established project planning and monitoring tools, and some innovation projects will find that traditional methods of defining and measuring outputs, outcomes and impacts do not suit their situation.

¹ 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 3ie when referring to impact assessment: 3ie, 2008, Founding Document for Establishing the International Initiative for Impact Evaluation.

² ALNAP, 2006, Evaluating humanitarian action using the OECD-DAC criteria: An ALNAP guide for humanitarian agencies. Overseas Development Institute, London

Additionally, it can be difficult to causally link a successful innovation to an increase in humanitarian effectiveness or efficiency and overall, it is challenging to measure, demonstrate or ‘attribute’ impact in the field. Therefore, for many HIF projects, the performance of the innovation, project outcomes, or project outputs will be measured instead of the larger impacts. However, as discussed in the first section, it is important to think about the potential impact of an innovation and make sure the outputs and outcomes we do measure fit into a larger humanitarian goal or theory of change.

HIF Framework

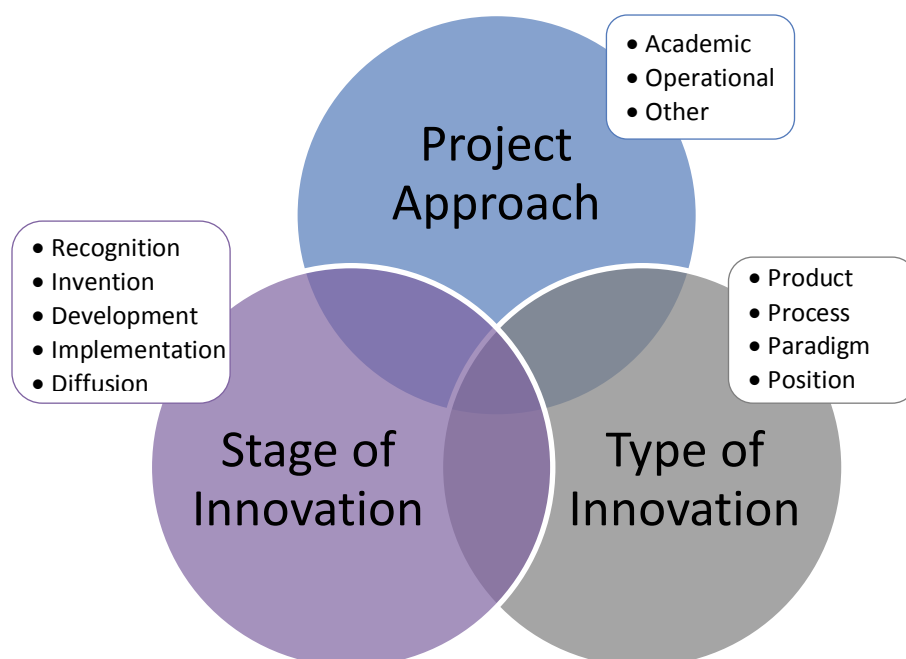
Monitoring and evaluation, impact assessment, and gathering evidence are all inter-related components of how grantees can define and measure the performance of their innovation and the progress of their project. The HIF provide guidance on these topics: in particular, the 2014 guideline *HIF Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning in the Humanitarian Innovation Fund*³(the HIF MEL Guide) should be read alongside this guide. Other helpful documents are available on the HIF website⁴.

Defining impact should become part of a project’s framework, and if more traditional tools are appropriate, an impact statement would be incorporated into a logframe (for an example, see the HIF MEL Guide) or a theory of change (ToC).

In a theory of change, it is possible to define a *ceiling of accountability*. That is, it is possible to describe that outcomes and outputs will be delivered by the project and the project team are answerable to those outcomes; but that impacts are, to an extent, aspirational and outside the immediate responsibility of the project team. This is often the case for two reasons: because impacts are anticipated to be achieved after the project funding has ceased; or that other stakeholders (for example, a government department or a United Nations agency) must act for the impact to be achieved.

How each project defines their outcomes or impacts depends on the parameters of the project. HIF projects can be described by three main parameters, shown in Figure 1. Descriptions of each parameter are shown in Appendix 1.

Figure 1. HIF Project Parameters

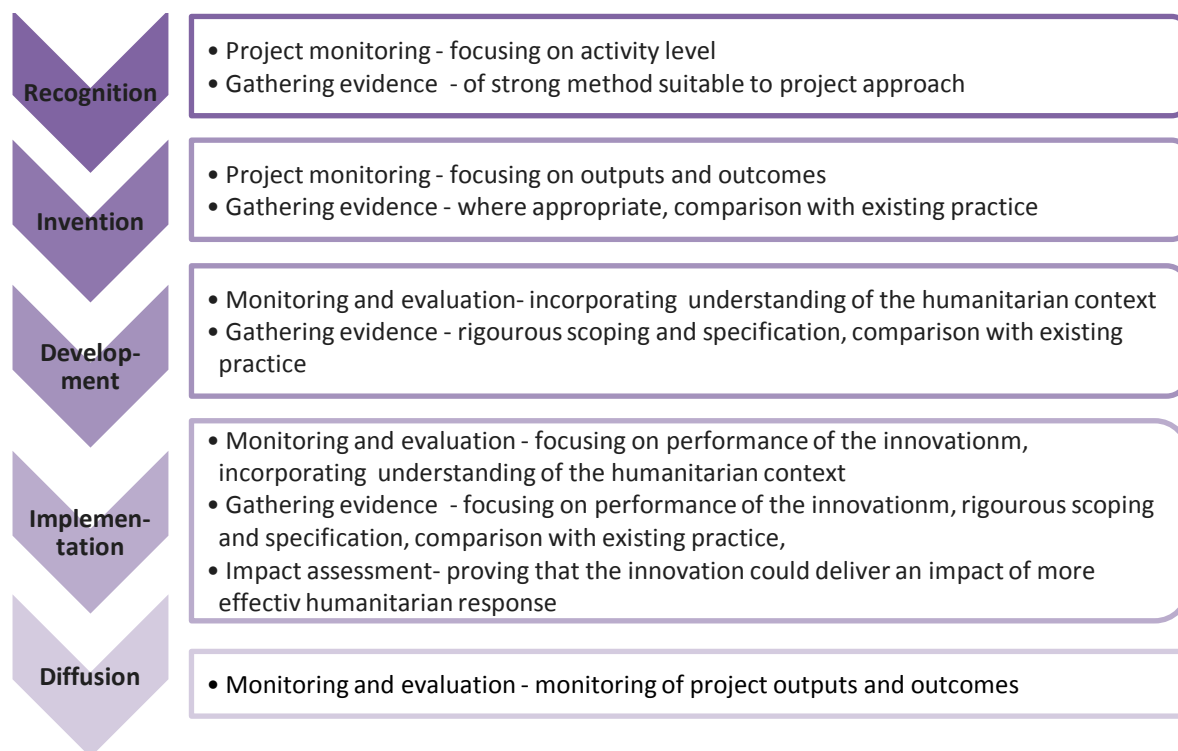


³ www.humanitarianinnovation.org/sites/default/files/hif_mel_note_september_2013.pdf

⁴ www.humanitarianinnovation.org/

A description of the different HIF expectations around impact are most easily related to the *stage* of the innovation. Although innovations at all stages could benefit from working towards a final, humanitarian impact and larger outcomes, the HIF does not require the measurement and reporting of outcomes and impacts at every stage of innovation, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. HIF Innovation stages and impact



Impact and Outcome Statement Examples

A description of possible impact and outcome statements that can guide a HIF project can be best described referring to the stage and type of the innovation and the approach of the project.



Adapted from past HIF project:

Example impact statement

Contribution to improved evidence-based decision making, project planning and learning processes in the humanitarian sector.

Example outcome statement

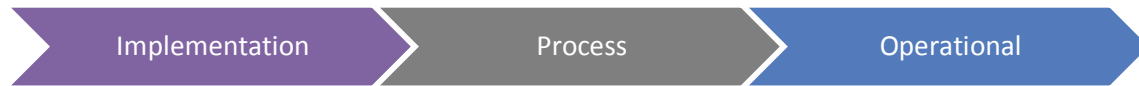
Successfully develop a technically sustainable system

Example output statement

Successfully create a semi-automated tagging system

Example output target

The new tagging system decreases time spent on humanly tagging reports by 30% and the reliability of the tagging is increased by 30%.

**Adapted from past HIF project:****Example impact statement**

Successful Communications with Communities (CwC) programmes undertaken when crisis-response aid workers and affected populations do not speak the same language in East Africa.

Example outcome statement

Key crisis and disaster messages are translated into Swahili and Somali

Example output statement

of words trained on Swahili machine engine

Example output target

300,000 words on Bing Translator

Conclusion

Impact assessment is an obligation. It forces humanitarians to understand the implications of their work; to be more accountable to affected populations; and to strive to achieve better humanitarian results based on evidence and analysis.

Using guidelines and other notes, personal contact and advice, and effective mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and learning, the HIF seek to ensure that all projects can demonstrate the achievement of or progress towards impact targets, and can provide evidence of the performance of the innovation at the end - and sometimes beyond the endpoint - of HIF funding.

Appendix 1

Project Parameter Descriptions

Stage of innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recognition - of a challenge, gap or opportunity• Invention- of an idea or solution• Development - of new plans , guidelines or blueprints• Implementation - of the innovation that produces real instances of change to a challenge, gap or opportunity• Diffusion: - of information and advocacy to ensure the wider adoption of the innovation
Type of innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Product: useable, affordable and fit for purpose object• Process: effective, improved way to create/deliver object/service• Position: context in which products /services are framed/communicated• Paradigm: conceptual model shaping action and thought
Project approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academic: rigorous assessment through a peer review process• Operational: rigorously assessed through trialed deployment