

## HUMANITARIAN INNOVATION FUND

### Early Stage Innovation Final Report

- Please try not to exceed 5 pages (Arial, 12pts) excluding attachments –

Organisation Name	Oxfam
Project Title	Capturing informal feedback in humanitarian situations for more responsive and accountable programming
Partner(s)	N/A
Problem Addressed / Theme	Supporting field staff to capture informal feedback which is received face-to-face by creatively using ICTs
Location	Za'atari Refugee Camp, Jordan
Start Date	1 <sup>st</sup> April
End Date	1 <sup>st</sup> November
Total Funding	£20,000
Total Spent	£20,000
Innovation Stage	Early Stage
Type of Innovation	Product / Process
Project Impact Summary	Project was significantly successful with positive evaluation findings and plans to scale systematised feedback and reporting mechanisms after switching service providers and tool modification in accordance with lessons learned in pilot

### ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT

1. Describe all the activities carried out. Please attach a workplan or log frame, if these were used.

Throughout April and May 2016, tool selection research was conducted including a landscape review for case management tools suitable to last-mile settings. Terms were negotiated with a software subscription provider, and hardware procured. The software was customised to the context and location with users during pilot launch initial training. Troubleshooting and testing were completed in Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan in late June and early July 2016, with a redesigned version of the tool – modified in accordance with user-feedback - released remotely in late August 2016. The evaluation was conducted in October 2016, and findings are to be published in December 2016.

2. If you have made changes or amendments to the planned activities and objectives that have not been detailed in an *Agreement Amendment Form*, please list them here.

### ACHIEVEMENTS

3. Has the project demonstrated the success of the innovation or idea?

*By 'success' we mean that the innovation has achieved the planned positive impact/outcome, or that the idea has proven effective.*

- Completely successful  
 Significantly successful  
 Partially successful

Completely unsuccessful

*Please explain further:*

The evaluation results are positive with recommendations for scale-up after additional trials in different contexts, which are likely to include conflict and hostile environments and rapid onset emergencies due to increased demand to handle feedback in these responses. Overall, collection of feedback increased and results indicated strengthened perceptions of trust between staff and refugees (see Beneficiaries Impacted section below). The pilot encouraged staff to develop the habit of listening and recording feedback from the community. The tool was successfully integrated into existing formal feedback systems in order to provide a more holistic overview of Oxfam's work in Za'atari. Though significantly successful, the project did fall short of maintaining the informal aspect it set out to enhance. The evaluation states the application was quickly appropriated as a formal feedback mechanism, similar to the hotline but with the helpful additional feature of automatic referral. We suspect this is due to the entrenched formal processes already well established within Za'atari Refugee Camp. An example of this was the suggested and successful amalgamation of the hotline by the MEAL team. Further testing in different settings is required to establish how the application can maintain an emphasis on increased mobility of the application to maintain the capture of feedback in informal settings. The ability for the application to capture both formal and informal is evident and proven through the pilot, the formality is determined by the setup of how the feedback is captured. Due mostly to time constraints and tool transfer, we were unable to set up automated reporting standards by the close of the pilot but are currently building this out (see Solutions section below).

4. Please describe how the project achieved the planned objectives, and describe all of the results achieved through the activities indicated in Question 1.

Planned objectives that were achieved included creating a stronger accountability culture by systematising informal feedback records and monitoring response to feedback. For both formal and informal feedback, the app eased the transition from static recording of feedback on paper combined with a manual data entry system to a computerised version. The application's automated referral system achieved the objective to improve response monitoring and increased the ability to report back to the beneficiary upon resolution of the complaint. The referral system was incorporated into other formal feedback mechanisms through a consolidated database of all complaints (hotline, suggestion box, etc).

---

## **METHODOLOGY**

5. Describe how the methodology used was or was not appropriate to carry out the planned activities or achieve the planned objectives.

We successfully employed a user-centred agile methodology to the development, pilot launch, and subsequent iterations of the tool. We also successfully integrated the application with existing formal feedback inputs like the hotline and suggestion box into one feedback database. In fact, evaluation results indicate the application may have been adopted *too* successfully into formal reporting mechanisms and staff detracted from taking advantage of the informal capabilities of the tool. Although informal feedback collection did occur, it was mainly at centrally located community centres and delegated to specific cash for work beneficiaries who typically remained at these centres. One technical feature we initially placed emphasis on, audio recording capacity, was underutilised by staff in part due to technical complications and in part due to culture or lack of perceived necessity. Qualitative notes entered by staff were the primary means of informal and formal data entry.

Limitations of piloting in a protracted crisis setting were revealed including inflexibility of teams pre-established ways of working, limited resources available to manage multiple data streams and technical challenges. It was envisaged that a computerised system would conserve staff time and energy but the evaluation report indicates mixed results depending on different members of the team’s experiences. While collection and aggregation were a success, the pilot period was too short to see benefits of regular reporting mechanisms.

**MAJOR OBSTACLES**

6. Please list the three most significant obstacles faced during the implementation of the project and describe how they affected the planned activities and results.

Obstacle	Impact of Obstacle
1. Systematic Reporting	Reporting mechanisms were unable to be streamlined due to software deficiencies and interoperability issues. Data was reconciled manually and dashboards created by MEAL staff. Trends in the data were unable to be identified or reported up the chain due to the short time frame of pilot. Staff raised concerns about replication of complaint submissions due to multiple points of input- and this was difficult to track (ex. district focal points, email, complaint hotline and HIF). As a result, some teams viewed the HIF mobile application an added burden– even though they remained supportive of its underlying objective.
2. Tool Selection:	Aware of some potential shortcomings, we chose CommCare with the assurance from the provider that certain features & troubleshooting support would be available. Over the course of the pilot, it became evident that the tool was inadequate. Expected features were not fully functional (such as an automated report builder), support response was not sufficient, and due to hosting data in the US, the company cannot comply with EU data security standards. This excluded the input of any sensitive information into the system. In additional discussions about scale-up budgets, CommCare was also determined too costly to expand beyond a single location pilot.
3. Staff Turnover	Staff changes in every major leadership role at senior levels in Za’atari prevented maximum buy in to support staff behaviour change from both the ‘bottom-up’ and the ‘top-down.’ Traction among different teams varied by level of team leaders’ enthusiasm. Systematic managerial oversight of the feedback system is critical in order to create a culture of accountability at all levels of staff.

7. Please indicate what steps were taken to address these obstacles and whether the solutions were effective.

Solution	Effective?
----------	------------

1. Systematic Reporting	Yes
During the pilot we emphasised local context over global standards and relied on reports made manually by MEAL staff. The pilot clearly highlighted the need for a cohesive, interoperable system and culture of accountability enhanced by feedback from the populations we serve. We incorporated these challenges into internal discussions about how to improve Oxfam’s overarching data collection, analysis, and reporting systems so that multiple streams of data can inform one another and our performance throughout the project cycle. An organisation-wide proposal for a DataHub to streamline these mechanisms across the suite of accountability tools currently used at Oxfam is underway (see Next Steps).	
2. Tool Transfer	Yes
We incorporated technical lessons from the pilot with a trusted service provider, SurveyCTO, to build out their case management feature in partnership with Oxfam. This collaboration has built-in customisable reporting features compatible with other software used at OGB including Excel. In Jordan CommCare was closed down on October 31 and SurveyCTO subsequently rolled out in November. This is a positive example about the value of piloting on a small scale and adapting approach based on experience. It is worth mentioning that the SurveyCTO case management is not a bespoke solution nor is it only available to Oxfam: SurveyCTO will make this functionality available via subscription to other clients sector-wide. We intend to continue publishing our learning for the benefits of our partners and colleagues building systems such as this.	
3. Staff champions	Yes
We identified champions amongst staff engaged with the tool, and who disseminated this enthusiasm and commitment to the tool throughout their teams. The champions assisted in designated new senior officers to be the focal point as vacant positions were filled. We realise this ad-hoc method could not be relied upon at-scale (see Next Steps section)	

**OPTIONAL: BENEFICIARIES/HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS IMPACTED**

*If your project was intended to impact upon beneficiaries, please answer question 8.*

**8.** Indicate the affected population as well as the humanitarian interventions that have benefited from the project.

Findings from surveys conducted during the evaluation indicate that tool has increased trust among camp residents who believed issues will be more quickly investigated and resolved than they had before the introduction of the mobile application. The hardware also makes the staff more easily identifiable to the community. As a direct result, the amount of feedback being delivered to camp staff has increased – a huge asset to humanitarian response as we continually ensure we are more iterative and responsive.

**DISSEMINATION**

**11.** Please describe any steps taken to disseminate the outcomes of the project.

*Please include all completed and forthcoming, as well as all planned and unplanned products (for example, research and policy reports, journal articles, video blogs, evaluations).*

The final evaluation will be published on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2016. We have cross-posted multiple blogs written for the Humanitarian Innovation Fund’s project page to Oxfam’s [Policy & Practice](#) and [Real Geek blog](#) which were promoted across official social media channels. We also presented interim findings at the [ELDIS 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Workshop](#), [European Evaluation Conference](#), [MERL Tech in DC](#), [Feedback Labs Summit in London](#), and the [Bond Technology for Development Working group](#).

**NEXT STEPS**

12. Will the project, idea or innovation be replicated, carried forward or scaled up?

Yes

*Please describe further:*

Oxfam hopes to test the project in a rapid response emergency environment in 2017. We will be applying for Humanitarian Innovation Fund’s Development and Implementation Phase funding to roll out the approach and further develop innovation on the back end analysis to ensure we are increasingly genuinely data driven. This project has inspired a proposal for an organisation-wide data hub pulling together multiple data sources into an easy to access, integrated and data handling and analysis portal. (see Suggestion 2, below)

13. If the project, idea or innovation could be carried forward, replicated or scaled up, please list the three most important issues or actions that will need to be considered (where 1 = most important and 3 = least important)

Suggestion/issue	1	2	3
<p>1. Tool Ambassadorship</p> <p>To address chronic staff turnover, moving forward, we envision enhancing the capabilities of Oxfam’s Global Humanitarian Team (GHT) to use this application during their 2-3 month placements. Training will include disaster scenario simulations that prepare GHT members for rapid mobilisation of the application at the outset of an emergency. Procedural documents such as an SOP framework and common Q &amp;A will be available for fast contextualisation to be distributed to field staff. Electronic training materials (audio and video) will be made available for GHT to utilise when training field staff in a response. GHT members will also be able to provide refresher trainings to field staff throughout an acute or protracted crisis, while placing a sophisticated agile methodological focus on refining complaint classification and user-informed technical adjustments the GHT members will have the capacity to incorporate themselves (instead of relying on HQ). Embedding a more refined, explicit, and actionable culture of accountability to affected populations is a strategic organisational goal at Oxfam. The mobile application works in tandem with the firm establishment of this accountability culture. GHT members will serve as nodes in Oxfam’s global staff network, allowing both the tool and culture to permeate more rapidly and widely throughout.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>2. Data Hub</p> <p>The HIF pilot has been the impetus for Oxfam GB to develop a proposal to build an organisation-wide DataHub. The Hub will provide an opportunity for OGB to standardise processes throughout the data life cycle, avoid replicated data collection, allow for reporting at all levels from local to global by ensuring all data tools are interoperable, sustain data protection by design in line with new EU Data Protection legislation (GDPR), build out the ability to report on semi structured data (like that collected by the HIF app), and reduce time and financial resources spent on data analysis.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>3 Vulnerable Populations</p> <p>Data security concerns prevented us from including any protection issues into this pilot. In the future we would like to safely incorporate protection issues when feasible and ensure we are reaching the most vulnerable groups. In the evaluation, respondents reported that relatives submitted complaints at community centres on behalf of vulnerable people. Therefore we would need to address these issues of exclusion by encouraging staff to utilise the mobility of the application more proactively by visiting disabled or marginalised populations at their dwelling.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>