

Strategic Consideration: Technology and humanitarian Innovation Management

ii. Technology and Humanitarian Innovation Management

Why is this important?

There are many aspects to innovation, what it practically means for organisations and the risks or opportunities it presents. Innovation and technology can be a positive force, but it can also threaten humanitarian principles through (for example) dehumanising interaction with affected populations. Humanitarian actors need to find ways to embrace innovation to become more flexible and agile organisations, adhering to humanitarian principles and without losing the human, personal and informal character of NGOs interaction with the populations and communities affected.

What is the current situation?

Digital technology and artificial intelligence are changing the nature of humanitarian action, particularly in relation to digital dimensions of protection, trust and privacy-related issues. There is a growing awareness of the risks and potential harm generated by the introduction of new actors, products and technology along with 'innovation' to humanitarian settings.

Stakeholder inclusion in the implementation of technology and humanitarian innovation management is the main and most positive approach and necessary factor for enabling equality. This includes people who suffer from inequalities, people who champion equality and the designers and implementers of the technology.

There is a need for clear parameters for the kind of humanitarian innovation going beyond technological innovation we want to see. There's also an urgency to translate these parameters into practice, to address real-time ethical dilemmas and to support ethical innovation 'on the ground'. Enabling

equality links to the risks and opportunities for humanitarian principles underpinned by the risk for NGOs to operate.

ICVA's potential added value

- Relying on its "ways of working" seek to offer to the ICVA members understanding of the systems in which innovations are emerging, the actors within them, and the nature of the relationships at play. Such 'systems curiosity' is important for ICVA members to navigate the uncertainty, risk inherent to innovation and respond more promptly and effectively to the changing needs of populations.
- Using ICVA's outreach capacity, on basis of existing work, adopt a set of Principles promoting equal global opportunities for the delivery of new technology and humanitarian innovation management. ICVA's broad constituency would contribute to the roll out of the Principles of Innovation.
- Leverage technology to improve the online visibility of ICVA's messaging/content, the communication streams and learning opportunities offering opportunities to ICVA member organisations.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- a) To what degree do ICVA member organisations invest in a practice and culture that enables innovative solutions and approaches; gaining the benefits and mitigating the risks? What are some examples of such strategies?
- b) What role, if any, should ICVA have in the development of, or promoting cross-learning of innovative solutions and approaches in support of principled and effective humanitarian action?