

Leveraging the private sector in the field of protection

A mapping of how humanitarian actors can enhance protection efforts through innovation partnerships

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The venn-diagram is a stylistic representation of Oxford Research efforts to combine competence in research, strategy and communication, in providing knowledge for a better society.

Foreword

This report is a mapping conducted by Oxford Research and KF Consulting over the course of July and August, 2020. The overarching question posed is how humanitarian actors' protection efforts can be enhanced through working with the private sector.

Our findings in this study are primarily presented with Innovation Norway, as a donor and administrator of the Humanitarian Innovation Programme (HIP-Norway), in mind. The report suggests an overarching protection approach in the context of innovation, and provides examples from within the Global Protection Cluster on partnerships and collaboration with the private sector.

We thank Innovation Norway for their cooperation and the opportunity to undertake this assignment. We hope that the report will be an interesting read and prove useful in the further development of HIP-Norway.

Kristiansand, 11 September 2020

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Executive summary

Innovation Norway administers the Humanitarian Innovation Programme, which grants funding and support to develop, test, and scale new solutions that can contribute to better and more efficient humanitarian action. The purpose of this report is to inform Innovation Norway’s work on humanitarian-private innovation in the protection space. This necessitates a discussion of how protection can be understood in the context of innovation as well as perspectives on the humanitarian system in general.

Needless to say, there are countless ways of addressing these vast topics. Within the scope of this limited mapping exercise, however, the report first and foremost sketches out an overarching protection approach, offers analytical perspectives, and gives selected examples from within the Global Protection Cluster on partnerships and collaboration with the private sector.

Protection is a standalone line of humanitarian intervention. At the same time, it forms the basis of all humanitarian action and, therefore, must be incorporated in the design of programmes in all lines of intervention. It is also a key consideration regardless of an intervention’s focus on prevention, response, or recovery. The overarching question in this study is how humanitarian actors’ protection efforts can be enhanced through working with the private sector – specifically, how humanitarian actors can leverage the private sector through innovation partnerships. The report engages with this question throughout the following main chapters:

- *Chapter 2: Approaching protection in the context of innovation*, where we suggest a way of understanding protection in the context of innovation, and discuss some analytical perspectives on partnerships, markets, and the humanitarian and private sectors.
- *Chapter 3: Innovation in the Global Protection Cluster (GPC)*, where we look at the GPC’s four areas of responsibility (AoRs), with a particular focus on Mine Action and Gender-based Violence. Within each AoR, we look at the experiences and involvement with the private sector, outline examples, and provide concluding remarks.
- *Chapter 4: Conclusions and recommendations*, where we discuss some of the overarching findings and present recommendations for Innovation Norway’s consideration.

In this report we suggest seeing *results-based protection* as a *problem-solving approach*. In essence, this gives us important leads on how innovation processes can contribute to the types of problem-solving needed in the protection sector – but crucially, that this must be approached from the perspective of the affected population.

There is an opportunity to draw on the private sector to leverage their strategic advantages as part of problem-solving; this could involve technology, being one of many methods or tools that can support these efforts. There are parallels with the private sector actors’ attention to end users and results-based protection. What humanitarians could take from the private sector in the field of protection is the attention to and function of end users in innovation processes, and the understanding of the supporting ecosystem that ultimately makes the scaling and diffusion of innovative solutions possible.

Humanitarian actors should adjust their approach by being open to and strategically pursuing transformative partnerships, in addition to the more traditional, transactional relations with the private sector. It is important for humanitarian actors to appreciate what they bring to the table when engaging with private sector actors: Their access to end-users and their understanding of deeply contextualized problems in the field, are important factors that can be leveraged with a view to demonstrating a wider value of an innovative solution or product – even beyond the humanitarian sector. Leveraging these factors can, in turn, contribute to a private sector partner being willing to invest more in the partnership, as opposed to purely transactional partnerships where the humanitarian actor merely procures tech or purchases a service.

The Global Protection Cluster’s AoRs display an interesting variety of experiences with the private sector, both in terms of approaches to private sector partnerships and from the perspective of innovation. This limited mapping study of each AoR has provided insights that are relevant for the protection sector specifically and humanitarian response more broadly. In particular, we find that the gender-based violence (GBV) principles outlined in this AoR address the main risks in private-sector partnership and offer frameworks for engagement and mitigating measures. This includes information on the collection and use of GBV survivor data that provides detailed guidance on how to understand and mitigate data and information-sharing risks in GBV programming. This can be a useful way of clearly setting out the standards to actors unfamiliar with the humanitarian sector.

1. Introduction

The background for examining a partnership angle to innovating in the field of protection is related to Innovation Norway's administration of the Humanitarian Innovation Programme (HIP). This programme grants funding and support to develop, test, and scale new solutions that can contribute to better and more efficient humanitarian action. The programme supports both early-stage innovation and scaling and diffusion of solutions that have proven to be successful at the pilot stage.

HIP is a part of following up on the commitment to the Grand Bargain – the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, which Norway reports on to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. As such, the programme is a relatively recent addition to Innovation Norway's portfolio, having had its first call for proposals in 2018. Underpinning the programme are four focus areas: protection, green response, cash-based assistance, and health and sanitation. These focus areas consist of a combination of modalities, themes, values, and sectors. The programme's focus areas can – and do – overlap: protection is the basis of all humanitarian action in any sector; green response includes both targeted programmes/projects as well as projects in other areas that have an environmental focus; cash is a modality for implementation; and health and sanitation is an area of humanitarian intervention that contributes to protection.

Protection is a standalone line of humanitarian intervention. At the same time, it forms the basis of all humanitarian action and, therefore, must be incorporated in the design of programmes in all lines of intervention. It is also a key consideration regardless of an intervention's focus on prevention, response, or recovery. The overarching question in this study is how humanitarian actors' protection efforts can be enhanced through working with the private sector. The report engages with this question throughout the following main chapters:

- *Chapter 2: Approaching protection in the context of innovation*
- *Chapter 3: Innovation in the Global Protection Cluster*
- *Chapter 4: Conclusions and recommendations*

The findings of this study are primarily presented with Innovation Norway, as a donor and administrator of the HIP, in mind. Naturally, there are many other ways of addressing protection, the innovation *process*, and, more importantly, ways of addressing harm and the potential risks and threats associated with technology. Within the scope of this short mapping, however, the task is to first and foremost offer analytical perspectives, suggest an overarching protection approach, and give selected examples from within the GPC on partnerships and collaboration with the private sector.

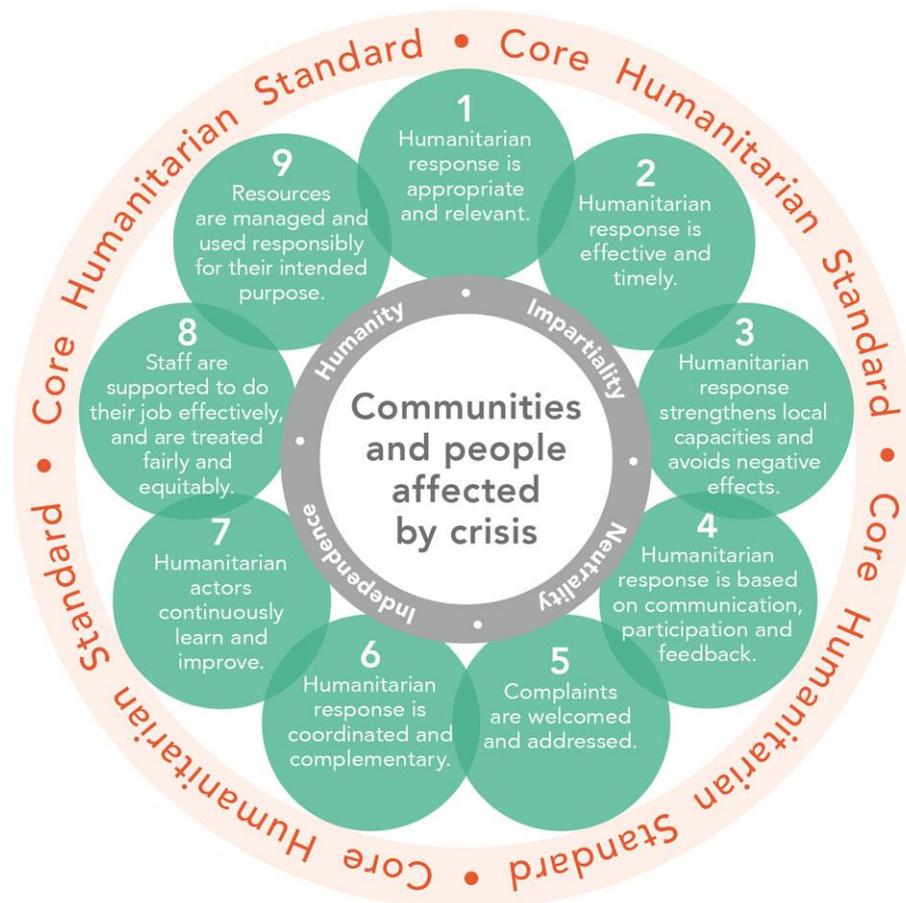
1.1 Methodology

This report was researched and written in the period July–August, 2020. It draws on the following main insights and resources:

- Prior knowledge of the HIP-Norway, based on earlier evaluations.
- A desk-based literature review.
- Semi-structured interviews with a dozen experts from across the humanitarian and private sectors, including senior protection experts and well-placed sources within or close to the GPC-AoRs.
- Oxford Research and KF Consulting's own knowledge and practical experience through extensive use of our networks.

2. A protection approach to innovation

Developing a protection approach to innovation partnerships is challenging because of the many different elements that must be tied together. One of the starting points for the push for innovation partnerships is the sector-wide acknowledgement that the humanitarian enterprise is not achieving the protection outcomes that are expected, even when taking into account the complexity of the environments in which humanitarians operate. In this context, there is a need to consider how innovation through private-sector partnerships can support and ultimately improve humanitarian protection of people affected by conflict and disasters. We take, as a starting point, the view that innovation can facilitate achieving the Core Humanitarian Standard:¹



In a sector overrun with standards, guidance, and definitions – perhaps to a greater extent than any other sector – it is important to start with a clear understanding of how humanitarian protection has

¹ Cobb, R. (2020). Available at <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard>

been approached for this study. The basic standards for humanitarian response are set out in the Sphere Standards,² which outline four protection principles to apply to all humanitarian action and all humanitarian actors:

1. Enhance the safety, dignity, and rights of people, and avoid exposing them to harm.
2. Ensure people’s access to assistance according to need and without discrimination.
3. Assist people to recover from the physical and psychological effects of threatened or actual violence, coercion, or deliberate deprivation.
4. Help people claim their rights.

It is important to note here the full range of activities that protection can encompass and, in particular, the incorporation of the ‘do no harm’ principle. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Professional Standards for Protection Work are another cornerstone for understanding protection in humanitarian action. The ICRC defines protection as:

A reduction of the risk, including through improved fulfilment of rights and restitution, for victims. It includes reducing the threats people face, reducing people’s vulnerabilities to these threats, and enhancing their capacities.³

The emphasis here is on the longer-term intention to reduce people’s vulnerability and enhance their capacity. InterAction⁴ takes us one step further toward understanding how innovation through private-sector partnerships can be useful for protection responses, by defining results-based protection as follows:

Results-based protection is a problem-solving approach used to address complexity and the ever-changing environment that surrounds protection issues in humanitarian action. It’s an approach which aims for results – results which are a reduction in actual risks that people face. It underscores the importance of starting from the perspective of those experiencing violence, coercion, and deliberate deprivation, and embraces aspects of systems-practice, design-thinking, and other comparable methods that emphasise iteration, adaptability, relationships, interconnectedness, and strategic collaboration to achieve protection outcomes.⁵

This is a useful approach to protection because it defines the contribution that innovation can make to the types of problem-solving that are needed in the protection sector – but, crucially, it explains that this must be from the perspective of those affected by violence. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to draw on the private sector to leverage their strategic advantages as part of that problem-solving, which

² McCann, M. & Knudsen, C. (2018). Available at https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere/#ch004_002

³ International Committee of the Red Cross. (2020). Available at <https://www.icrc.org/en>

⁴ InterAction is the largest alliance of international NGOs and partners in the United States.

⁵ Interaction. (2019). Available at <https://www.interaction.org/blog/what-is-results-based-protection/>

could involve technology, being one of many methods or tools that can support such efforts. One of the criticisms that came across consistently in interviews and in the literature was the focus on technology or on the ‘products’ of innovation as a goal in themselves. This critique is linked to the oft-repeated dictum that technology is a means, not an end – an enabler, not an intervention in and of itself. A protection approach leads us to instead consider the outcome or result for the affected population as the objective, rather than an app or an information-management platform.

Overall, the research for this study found that, in the area of protection response, private-sector partnerships are approached with a level of suspicion that is thought to be greater than in other areas of humanitarian response. There is a basic assumption that working with private-sector partners would involve compromise on some humanitarian principles, or significantly increase risks for affected populations and for humanitarians. Often, these assumptions have not been sufficiently unpacked or considered in a detailed way that would entail an examination of the type of actor, objective, or activity planned and the particular operational context.

Senior protection experts and sectoral experts also noted that the humanitarian sector has a long-standing engagement with a vast array of private-sector actors and that the reluctance to engage in discussions on this issue is itself to the detriment of protection work. In practical terms, private-sector actors are engaged throughout humanitarian response, including in protection work, and have been for decades. The reticence to acknowledge this at global policy levels ignores the vast operational learning opportunities and strategic advantages for problem-solving. It is significant that the Global Protection Cluster Strategy 2020–2024 fails to mention private-sector partnerships.

There is a rich body of literature on this issue, and many protection experts emphasise the potential overarching theoretical dangers of working with the private sector. These views will not be repeated in this study. Rather, this study presents a more operational perspective, seeking to gain a greater understanding of the risks and how to mitigate them in practice. In their study, *Do No Harm: A taxonomy of the challenges of humanitarian experimentation*, Sandvik, Jacobsen and McDonald point out that, although the adoption of humanitarian innovation processes necessitates an articulation of the harms that emanate from their misuse, these harms are in fact deeply contextual and difficult to predict. Overall, we believe this point aligns well with our approach as outlined in this mapping.

Data Protection

The issue of data protection is worth addressing up front as it is the primary concern raised in conjunction with private sector actors. Whilst this is an increasing challenge across the humanitarian sector in general, there have been some clear examples of potential harm.¹ In general it is important to note that data protection should be approached as a key component in any humanitarian programme or partnership, including for example between UN organisations or in the field-level protection clusters themselves. Clear guidance exists to be able to understand the risks and mitigate against them as set out in the ICRC Professional Standards for Protection Work chapter on data protection. This is also echoed in the GBV guidance considered in Chapter 3.2.

2.1 Humanitarian innovation

The impulse to innovate in the humanitarian sector is by no means a novelty, having been on the agenda for at least a decade. The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit provided a forceful push for humanitarian private partnerships to innovate, also with a view to further ‘blended finance’ and to address the shortfall of unmet needs in humanitarian assistance. Before the summit, a number of reports were published documenting how the humanitarian sector was lagging behind other sectors in research and development.⁶ This resulted in new ventures, but within the first few years a number of these collapsed. Routes to scale innovations proved elusive and some donors shifted priorities and even discontinued funding.⁷ A prominent example of this was the closure of GAHI, the Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation, which was announced at the aforementioned summit but faced funding shortfalls and closed down in May, 2019.⁸ GAHI was, together with the Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF),⁹ a prominent facilitator of technological innovation in humanitarian assistance.

Some corners of the humanitarian innovation community hold that there has been a recent shift away from preoccupation with the latest tech products in the direction of broader and more complex problems.¹⁰ The notion that innovation was inextricably linked to technology had taken hold in many organisations, where some would assert that it effectively displaced original ideas developed in “prosaic spaces like administration and finance”.¹¹ This approach also ignored innovative approaches that sought greater inclusion of discriminated groups in humanitarian response, and failed to acknowledge the gender divide in access to and use of technology, in some cases perpetuating the exclusion of women and girls.

There is a sense that innovation has the potential to alter the humanitarian system itself, and that the current system has features, incentive structures, and other characteristics that do not benefit the innovation process and ultimately the scaling of successful pilots. Questions concerning the underlying structure of the humanitarian system have been pondered in numerous reports and were often raised in our interviews as hard barriers that stifle innovation. Systemic change is often wanted, but with technological advancement it may well solve some problems but create new ones – and possibly amplify some old ones. There will be disagreement on risk-taking, and how disruptive innovation should be in the humanitarian setting. As one senior global protection expert commented, the humanitarian system is imperfect yet “*so established that imagining something different, is frightening – but look at what the current system is doing, that’s frightening too.*”

As has been mentioned already, the protection sector within the humanitarian system is also fraught with challenges when it comes to making sense of the risks and opportunities that come with increased use of technology. One protection expert held that the protection sector is not sufficiently attuned to the evolving technology and lacks a vision for innovation and technology. This point is similar to

⁶ Deloitte. (2015). Available at https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/About-Deloitte/dttl_cr_humanitarian_r&d_imperative.pdf and Gray & Hoffman. (2015)

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a0896ce5274a27b2000097/Finance_Case-study-MIHIS-project-FINAL.pdf

⁷ Parker, B. (2019). Available at <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2019/03/20/humanitarian-innovation-faces-rethink-innovators-take-stock>

⁸ Elrha. (October 24, 2019). Available at <https://www.elrha.org/career/gahi-lessons-learned-exercise/>

⁹ The HIF is a globally-recognised programme leading on the development and testing of innovation in the humanitarian system. Established in 2011, it was the first of its kind: an independent, grant-making programme open to the entire humanitarian community.

¹⁰ Parker, B. (2019). Available at <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2019/03/20/humanitarian-innovation-faces-rethink-innovators-take-stock>

¹¹ Ibid.

findings in other reports that, for example, suggest that tech literacy is lacking in many parts of the humanitarian community.

2.1.1 Partnerships

Whilst much has been written on the innovation *process*, we find that less has been written on the actual nature and practicalities of private humanitarian innovation partnerships, let alone those in the protection sector. Sources have a great deal to say about tech areas and the possible application and usage of technology, but less on what characterises collaboration between what has been traditionally thought of as two very different set of actors, guided by different values and principles.

The idea of partnering and collaborating with for-profit actors has often been baulked at by humanitarian actors, although progressively less so in recent years. The conversation has shifted from “should we collaborate?” to “how can we collaborate?”¹² For the humanitarian organisation, partnership refers to a collaborative relationship that achieves better outcomes for the people served by the humanitarian actor. This naturally brings concerns about objectives, principles, and standards. The for-profit sector is often perceived as having radically different motivations, and humanitarians have typically understood their role and function as something higher or outside the realm of profit, market dynamics, licensing, and intellectual property.

World Food Programme (WFP) is an agency that has advanced far in its strategic thinking around partnerships in general. The evaluation of their 2014–2017 Corporate Partnership Strategy identified the following factors as enabling partnerships: “*i) a global consensus on the importance of partnerships in humanitarian and development contexts; ii) the commitment to partnering of individual WFP staff members and managers; and iii) WFP’s recognised organisational strengths.*” Internal limiting factors included “*insufficient recognition of the time required for partnering work, and legal frameworks that are not conducive to long-term relationships based on trust.*”¹³ The long-term aspect of partnerships is a noteworthy analytical perspective.

As with any collaborative partnership, mutuality in terms of understanding and trusting each other as partners is key. There are many typologies of partnership, but it is common to distinguish between, on the one end of the spectrum, what is perceived as *transactional* partnerships and, on the other, *transformational* partnerships.¹⁴ Transactional partnerships are characterised by either a one-way transfer or reciprocal exchange of skills, knowledge, or products; the transferable value is well understood by the parties, being clearly defined and negotiated before the exchange. Transformational partnerships are characterised by co-generation and creative dialogue; shared value is created, occasionally in unanticipated ways.

As one humanitarian organisation’s recent position paper discussed, even innovation partnerships can be transactional in nature – “*for example, paying a software developer to create a programme*”. As this paper argued, “*when we are willing to engage in an open and fully collaborative way with a*

¹² European Parliament. (May 2019). Available at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/634411/EPRS_STU\(2019\)6344_11_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/634411/EPRS_STU(2019)6344_11_EN.pdf)

¹³ Cook, A. (2017). Available at https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/eb/wfp291655.pdf?_ga=2.197357804.2131872114.1599655454-1019344033.1596445182

¹⁴ Stibbe, D., Reid, S. & Gilbert, J. and UN DESA (2018). Available at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2564Maximising_the_impact_of_partnerships_for_the_SDGs.pdf p. 9

*company that understands there is a profit incentive for them to work with us, there is a real opportunity for a wider benefit to arise.*¹⁵ This might occur, for example, if the external private-sector partner sees that developing a new product can have value in a wider market, including beyond the humanitarian sector, which might then justify investing more in the development and collaboration with the partner. Humanitarian actors may benefit from actively adopting this approach, one that can lead to longer-term partnerships and scalable innovations and collaborations where parties better understand each other's needs.

One cannot discuss humanitarian private partnerships without taking note of central insights on the differences between markets. There are useful perspectives on markets in the academic literature, some of which has focused on the differences between humanitarian actors and private-sector actors. Oftentimes, these highlight a clash of rationales between profit-seeking companies and rights-based humanitarian actors.¹⁶ Indeed, much has been written on the differences between a regular market economy and the humanitarian quasi-market, in which the affected population – as the ‘consumers’ – neither pay for the products and services they receive, nor have much say, in practice, in judging their utility. This contributes to asymmetrical and dysfunctional markets in the sense that they become overly supply-driven (on the part of humanitarian actors), due to a deficit in ‘consumer power’ (people in need can hardly choose to ‘punish’ suppliers). This point has been brought up many times, albeit in different contexts. In one of the aforementioned follow-up reports to the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, it was named “*The Principal-Agent Feedback Loop Challenge*”, which dealt with “*deficiencies of the supply led, intermediated humanitarian system,*” - then highlighted as one of a dozen challenges that impede greater investment in and support for innovation.¹⁷

The central similarity (and difference) between the for-profit sector and the humanitarian sector lies in that the former depends on end users for its existence and survival in a competitive market of selling services and products, whereas humanitarian actors, though they also serve end users, being those in need, they arguably do not rely on their consumption or feedback in the same way. One might say a related criticism is the more familiar complaint of humanitarian actors being ‘donor-driven’, catering to the priorities of donors in a given context in order to obtain funding, rather than focusing solely on the needs of people affected by conflict and disasters.

These features of the humanitarian sector described above also have implications for how for-profit and humanitarian enterprises relate to innovation and risk-taking: “*The not-for-profit sector is fundamentally different to the for-profit sector when it comes to the way organisations embed innovations into their operations*”, a 2018 report from ELRHA states.¹⁸ In the for-profit sector, small, nimble, and innovative businesses are often better at the ideation and development stage of an innovation cycle than larger actors. They are frequently bought by the latter, who have the financial muscle and expertise to scale the innovations. Larger organisations are better at scaling innovations because “*they generally have stronger management systems, specialist resources, and the operational infrastructure needed.*” Conversely, such financial incentives arising from acquisitions of startups and small innovative actors rarely take place in the not-for-profit sector; however:

¹⁵ Medicins sans frontières lakare utan granser (2018, 27. november). Available at <https://innovation.lakareutangranser.se/blog/2018/11/27/does-msf-need-a-more-intelligent-empathetic-approach-to-partnerships>

¹⁶ See for example Sandvik KB. (2017) *Now is the time to deliver: looking for humanitarian innovation's theory of change*, Journal of International Humanitarian Action (2017) 2:8

¹⁷ Gray & Hoffman. (2015). Available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a0896ce5274a27b2000097/Finance_Case-study-MIHIS-project-FINAL.pdf

¹⁸ Elrha. (2018). Available at <https://www.elrha.org/researchdatabase/too-tough-to-scale-challenges-to-scaling-innovation-in-the-humanitarian-sector/>

What does exist in the humanitarian sector is a strong moral pull to be as effective as possible and to help as many people who are suffering as we can. This pull goes some way to cutting through competitive pressures, but the two are often in tension.¹⁹

As the same report cited above concludes, a functioning ecosystem for humanitarian innovation is lacking. This in itself gives clues as to where donors and stakeholders can make a difference, and also indicates areas where humanitarian actors can learn from the for-profit sector.

¹⁹ Ibid.

3. The Global Protection Cluster: Areas of Responsibility

This chapter presents the Global Protection Cluster (GPC) perspective on innovation in engagement with the private sector, reviewing how private-sector partnerships have been leveraged to achieve protection outcomes in the different areas of humanitarian protection: Gender-based Violence; Housing, Land and Property; Mine Action; and Child Protection. Examples have been chosen to illustrate the InterAction results-based approach to protection for the reduction of vulnerability and enhancement of the capacity of people affected by conflict and disasters. This is in line with the humanitarian nexus and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

The GPC, led by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), is the main interagency forum at the global level for standard and policy setting as well as collaboration and overall coordination of activities supporting the protection response in complex and natural disaster humanitarian emergencies. Within the broad scope of humanitarian protection activities under the Global Protection Cluster, there are four areas of technical expertise – referred to as Areas of Responsibility (AoRs):

- Mine Action (MA), led by United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) and Humanity Inclusion (HI)
- Gender-based Violence (GBV), led by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- Child Protection (CP), led by United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF)
- Housing, Land, and Property (HLP), led by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)

In this study, we examine these AoRs with a strong emphasis on MA and GBV. We look for the experiences of and maturity in thinking about innovation and partnerships across sectors, give examples, and analyse where private sector has the potential to contribute. Each section sets out considerations and specific constraints that are contextual to the particular AoR. We draw on a broad array of reviews and reports, as well as interviews with a number of well-placed sources within the AoRs.

3.1 Mine Action

This section highlights examples of interventions carried out by humanitarian MA actors in mine risk education and technical clearance. It begins with an analysis of innovation in the sector and how this has translated to engagement with the private sector.

3.1.1 Innovation in Mine Action

The nature of humanitarian MA and the challenges faced have led to the practise of innovation as part of the day-to-day operations in this area. The changing profile of mine clearance over the past 20–30 years has seen enormous changes in the types of ordnance encountered in conflict-affected countries. After decades of responding to conventional mine fields in countries such as Angola, Bosnia and

Hercegovina, and Afghanistan, from 2014 onwards there has been a rise in the use of ‘booby traps’ targeted at civilian infrastructure and homes, as well as a huge diversity in improvised explosive devices (IEDs). These are not always detectible using conventional methods. Recent conflicts have also been characterised by large-scale urban conflict involving civilian infrastructure, as seen in Mosul in Iraq, for example, areas which have presented some of the greatest challenges for humanitarian MA sector to date. The nature of demining work in active conflicts means exposure to evolving threats and tactics. As one private sector source with military experience from Afghanistan explained, “*your opponent can change his techniques in days or seconds – even if you had a limitless budget for R&D, you’d still come in second.*” Innovation in the field is of course focused on the hard equipment, but equally on new ways to train, tactical methods, and procedures

The approach to innovation in MA is reflective of the overall humanitarian enterprise in that there are some significant initiatives that have been developed at the field level in response to specific problems encountered in all areas of MA activities, however, these are not systematically shared and nor are there specific mechanisms for intentional scale-up. The UN Mine Action Strategy 2019–2023 (reflecting the collective engagement of the United Nations Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Mine Action) sets out intentions to forge stronger partnerships with the private sector to reach their core objectives and in conjunction with the need for sustained funding.

Ideally, there would be an innovation/ private partnership strategy for the MA-AoR which would bring in the key senior leadership commitment that is needed. Instead, each organisation has developed its own approach to small-scale innovation and thus the money is diluted. Preferably, a coordinated strategy for innovation and learning for the AoR would identify innovation at the field level and share it for adaptation and scale-up. An interviewee gave an example of the development of a solar-powered device for mine risk education in South Sudan; whilst it was a successful initiative, it took a further four years for another operation to discover and replicate it.

Innovative practices and partnerships are shared at the annual International Meeting of National Mine Action Actors²⁰ and made available on the website. A senior UN official interviewed for this study also pointed out that, whilst technology is often seen as necessary for innovation, sometimes the real innovation is in transformative programming, for example, by training Afghan women as deminers in Afghanistan, which has wider effects on their role in the community.

3.1.2 Barriers to innovation

Overall, there are some significant constraints affecting the ability to innovate in a more structured and systematic way. Whilst some of these are specific to the MA area, others reflect the challenges have been explained above, which are common to the protection sector and humanitarian response.

- o The overarching financial model has an impact on the ability to innovate. The UN Peacekeeping budget, which funds the majority of MA, is channelled directly to the field. This

²⁰ Mine action (2018). Available at <https://www.mineaction.org/en/ndm-un23-presentations-plenary-sessions>

is important to support local initiatives but does not provide an incentive for collaboration and scale-up.

- o Financing for humanitarian MA is very limited and there is huge competition among organisations competing for contracts. This discourages organisations from proposing more innovative solutions that do not have a clear route to scale – either donors are less likely to fund the solution, or if it fails to deliver the expected results, it can affect chances of future funding.
- o Innovation requires programmes to fail fast and early but humanitarian organisations and donors are not necessarily attuned to this type of risk-taking, nor are there monitoring, evaluation and learning systems in place to capture, analyse, and use learning in the innovation cycle.
- o MA, more so than other protection areas, is aligned closely with the national authorities in each country, who are ultimately responsible for mine clearance. One of the main objectives of UNMAS is capacity building, which in and of itself is not an approach where innovation is a natural fit. MA actors are expected to focus on physical protection and share their existing knowledge rather than on further learning. Moreover, in terms of the institutional elements necessary for protection, working with governments on projects means that consistent leadership of those projects is not guaranteed.

3.1.3 Private-sector partnerships in Mine Action

Like other humanitarian sectors, MA actors have a long history of working with a range of actors, including military/private security and the private sector, in a range of capacities. Indeed, overall, a lot of MA is delivered by the private sector.

In many ways, MA actors seem to be further advanced in terms of understanding how to engage with a range of private-sector actors from an operational perspective that is adapted to the specifics of each context, and are well-versed in understanding and managing the risks that are particular to humanitarian mine clearance. One MA interviewee attributed this to the pressing humanitarian imperative of mine clearance to support return of displaced persons, and the enormous risk to civilian life if this is not achieved – something that incentivises pragmatic partnerships and division of labour to get the work done. Another private-sector actor considered that, because of their proximity to high tech enterprises that largely deliver to companies, humanitarian demining organisations seem to have learned a lot from their for-profit counterparts. There are also natural alliances between staff spanning private and humanitarian organisations, which help to promote connections and a shared understanding of how to approach problems, especially since a large proportion of the staff, particularly in the technical clearance activities, are from military backgrounds.

This does not, however, mean that MA partnerships with the private sector are straightforward. Examples were given of particular risks – for example when the commercial sector is involved in demining operations for the purposes of natural resource exploitation, such as for oil and gas or land development, or when there is active conflict and one actor is associated with a party to the conflict.

A division of roles can have a strategic advantage when private actors are willing to operate in areas that some humanitarian actors cannot access, or to undertake tasks that NGOs do not want to be involved in. For example in Iraq, where former military (private companies) were employed for IED

deactivation in places where NGOs did not want to be involved because the regions were too connected to the ongoing conflict, meaning the NGOs may have strategically assisted one side. It is also important to note that NGOs and the private sector both compete for clearance contracts from UNMAS, which does not distinguish between non- or for-profit organisations, though there is a criteria that they must respect humanitarian principles (with the caveat that this is difficult to enforce).

In order to explore them at a more operational level, the main areas of MA activities and some examples of partnerships within each are examined below.

3.1.4 Examples in mine risk education

In the end of 2020, the MA Advisory Group on Mine Risk Education (MRE) will release a report on tech and innovation for MRE, which will provide a comprehensive overview. In mine risk education the main issue to address through innovation is how to deliver MRE to a broader audience in an accessible format, beyond the standard community training activities currently being implemented. In Iraq, for example, MAG, a humanitarian demining NGO, established a partnership with Facebook to deliver a suite of MRE adverts to a wide audience, offered at a discounted rate. Other partnerships with this objective have involved working with commercial phone networks (using SMS) and public radio. Aside from some of the data protection issues which have to be negotiated, it was considered that MA actors are more open to these types of partnership given that they mirror models used in public health crises or disaster response.

Some recent examples are:

- o A smartphone app that delivers MRE, developed in collaboration with UNICEF Child Protection.²¹
- o A smartphone app that delivers a warning to users when they are approaching a minefield and allows them to report a suspected mine or IED.²²
- o A platform for humanitarian data exchange/mapping for safety to share information on minefields with other humanitarian organisations.²³

3.1.5 Examples in technical mine clearance

The area of technical mine clearance involves a high degree of collaboration with the private sector in regard to technology to support the main areas of mine clearance: survey, detection, mechanical assistance, manual tools, personnel protection, and neutralisation. There has been an increase in commercial organisations dealing with mine contamination immediately after or during hostilities – for example, in Iraq, Syria, Libya, and Yemen. As stated above, this is often avoided by humanitarian organisations because of the risks of being associated with, or providing a military advantage to, a party

²¹ Mine action. (2018). Available at https://mineaction.org/sites/default/files/5_eore_application_myanmar.pdf

²² Mine action. Available at https://mineaction.org/sites/default/files/ivan_martinic_minefields.info_app.pdf

²³ Mine action. (2020). Available at https://mineaction.org/sites/default/files/olivier_cottray_gichd.pdf

to the conflict. In this sense, commercial organisations are playing an important role in protecting civilians and filling a gap that humanitarian actors are unwilling to step into.

The experience of technical innovation provides some useful learning on innovation, both in regard to the constraints and in some of the ways of overcoming these. Overall, there are challenges in that:

- o Both donors and demining organisations tend to be naturally conservative – especially regarding safety, which affects the risk-taking or failure element of innovation;
- o Many donors do not insist on new or more efficient technologies, and because of this deminers do not change successful clearance methods (even if not efficient) provided donors accept them;
- o There is a market asymmetry between commercial/military companies who have the resources for innovation to scale and small, niche humanitarian demining. Humanitarian MA actors represent a relatively small subset of the supplier base, for example, of companies that make metal detectors, which can mean that they are not in a position to meaningfully influence the design from an innovation perspective. Instead, they are reliant on private sector or defence contractors to develop the specification of tools that are used in humanitarian clearance operations.

Because of this, many innovations happen at the field level, with technicians within a humanitarian organisation adapting and building existing equipment to suit their own needs. This is where the role of a donor sponsor can be meaningful, in terms of promoting dialogue and deeper engagement to influence the design of goods specifically for mine clearance.

An example given by MAG is that they are currently developing a different model of detector that can cover a wider area and has the potential to significantly increase clearance output. Technical staff in MAG are in direct engagement with the manufacturer but finance is needed to support the design and testing of the new model, without knowing the results. Significant testing is needed to understand if the model can detect all forms of munition at the right depth and to make sure that it can be worked in a way that is safe for the staff operating the detector.

A private sector representative, when commenting on a recent partnership with a humanitarian organisation, expressed that the humanitarian organisation does not represent “*good business*” merely as a customer. It is rather their first-hand experience with real-world problems and their capacity to test equipment that is valuable: “*we can learn from their experience, we can see their problem and develop something together with them.*” Moreover, the value was seen from a wider view – “*the specific problem is similar many places in the world – and it is, of course, not only about humanitarian actors, but other government, military, and law enforcement actors who would be interested.*” Embracing failure as learning was also a prominent perspective in this regard: “*If [the project] is not successful then we learn something about our limitations with the current equipment.*”

When addressing partnerships with humanitarian organisations, a private sector business unit manager held that, “*they can pay with experience and knowledge of the problem, the field, where we can use our equipment – that’s a way of paying as well.*” Describing the hallmarks of a good humanitarian partnership, the interviewee emphasised the importance of establishing “*a good link between us, the RnD people and the end user, so I’m not working with an HQ, but working with end users directly, ideally. In that way, we can get the most out of the understanding of the problem so it’s not filtered*

through a lot of desk holders and reports.” The source highlighted that end users will spot things that might escape an engineer’s eye when far removed from the context.

3.1.6 The role of donors

An example of the role of donors with the private sector for innovation is the Humanitarian Disarmament Research and Development Initiative of the US Department of Defense (DD).²⁴ Their role has been to identify technologies that are available within the DD or from commercial partners and then work with MA NGOs to test in the field to determine how well the technologies are working with contamination profiles. The NGOs suggest changes and improvements that the DD is able to feed back to the private sector so that the next technical iteration is more effective.

This highlights the key role of donors in supporting the fielding of new technologies in order to optimise their funding in the long term. It facilitates the proactive role of end users and enables them to bring their understanding of the working environment to technologists. Interviewees considered this as something that it is possible to replicate in other technical development areas – ideally, humanitarian MA actors would like to purchase, test, and influence the adaptation of new devices but they need both financial support and a bridge with the commercial or military developers to do this.

3.1.7 Conclusions

Some of the concluding remarks and recommendations from interviewees and humanitarian evaluations included:

- o The advantages of the MA-AoR: Developing a joint approach to private-sector partnerships would save a lot of time and resources in initiating and maintaining these types of relationships, and in navigating the different ways of operating.
- o Overall, a gap was identified in the area of due diligence, specifically the need for a more systematic vetting process. This would identify which private sector actors are suitable to develop closer working relationships with.
- o A recognition that data protection remains a risk in some of the partnerships; for example, in the use of commercial Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) for surveying, which could be used to extract certain types of data. However, it was also emphasised that a lot of the collaboration with private sector does not necessarily involve personal data of the affected population.

In terms of the protection approach taken in this mapping, the problems addressed through innovation and private-sector partnerships illustrated below are consistent with the ICRC and InterAction protection definitions in that they specifically reduce people’s risk of being killed or injured by IEDs by allowing demining organisations to improve their clearance processes, as well as reducing people’s vulnerability to these threats by improving the outreach of MRE. In particular, the partnership with commercial manufacturers is a good example of how InterAction has defined results-based protection, in that it

²⁴ Humanitarian demining r&d program. (2010). Available at http://www.humanitarian-demining.org/2010Design/Program_Overview.asp

adopts a complex problem-solving approach to address the ever-changing environment that has been generated by the evolution in the types of explosive ordnance and IEDs used by armed groups such as ISIS.

Some of the issues arising from partnerships with the private sector have been mitigated through a number of measures, some of which can inform the protection sector more broadly:

- o Ongoing dialogue and cooperation with the private sector are facilitated by a range of actors – including private/commercial – contributing to the development of International Mine Action Standards.²⁵
- o Interviewees noted the scale of different forms of cooperation with the private sector, for example ongoing information exchange and mutual respect as peers, on the one hand, and the development of an operational partnership on the other. In this regard, MA mirrors some of the approaches from a civil–military cooperation model, in that guidance sets out ways for humanitarian partners to cooperate with the military in conflict operations.

These are important examples for informing future approaches to partnership.

3.2 Gender-based Violence

This chapter looks specifically at the approach taken by the GBV-AoR within the GPC. This section begins by setting out the definitions of GBV and referencing the outcomes of the 2019 Oslo Conference on Ending S/GBV in Humanitarian Crises. This perspective is featured in recognition that the GBV-AoR has taken a forward-thinking approach to innovation and private-sector partnerships through the lens of technology. Particular examples are highlighted relevant to this study’s recurring theme on results-based protection and, in particular, risk mitigation, prevention of GBV, and longer-term empowerment consistent with *SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls*.

²⁵ IMAS. (2018). Available at <https://www.mineactionstandards.org/en/about-imas/>

Finally, in recognition that the GBV area represents many aspects of best practice in its guidance for innovation, private sector, and use of technology, some of the key recommendations from the GBV-AoR guidance have been directly incorporated into this report and can serve as key measures for future projects in the GBV area specifically, and in protection in general – these are referenced again in the conclusions of this report.

The Oslo Conference, 2019

The conference on Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Crises¹ that was held in Oslo, Norway on 23–24 May 2019, reiterated commitments to tackle gender inequality and scale up prevention and response to SGBV, taking a survivor-centred approach. It gave visibility and recognition to the key role of national and local organisations, including local women’s organisations. Some of the statements that were agreed on serve as useful principles for how to approach private-sector partnerships for innovation:

To improve financing of SGBV prevention and response, participants were strongly encouraged to:

- o *Explore practical ways to fund local and women’s organisations as directly as possible.*
- o *Provide longer-term and multi-year funding to enable organisations to be more effective in their response.*

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Dr. Denis Mukwege encouraged everyone to ensure that the needs and priorities of survivors are at the centre: “Nothing about us without us.”

3.2.1 GBV definition and minimum standards relevant to private-sector engagement

An analysis of how private-sector partnerships can enhance protection response in the GBV-AoR requires setting out how GBV is understood and what interventions entail. The source for this departure point is the Inter-agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming.

“Gender-based violence” is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e., gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in public or in private. The term “GBV” is most commonly used to underscore how systemic inequality between males and females, which exists in every society in the world, acts as a unifying and foundational characteristic of most forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls. The term “gender-based violence” also includes sexual violence

*committed with the explicit purpose of reinforcing gender inequitable norms of masculinity and femininity.*²⁶

3.2.2 Innovation in GBV programmes

The research for this report found that GBV practitioners saw innovation as providing opportunities for pragmatic problem-solving to address the many challenges of GBV in humanitarian settings. This is at a time when it is considered that a proliferation of standards and guidelines has stifled the creativity and pragmatic problem-solving that are necessary to navigate the complexities of the operating environment. ELRHA's recent GBV Gap Analysis: Opportunities for Innovation²⁷ provides a useful overview of the main problems with GBV programme delivery that could be best supported by innovation. In doing so, the report aims to engage new actors and new partners from different arenas to overcome enduring GBV challenges.

It is important to note that the ELRHA Gap Analysis speaks to improvements in the humanitarian system rather than to problem-solving initiatives which directly involve affected populations. GBV and protection practitioners have expressed the view that, whilst this is useful, more forward-thinking approaches to innovation would be oriented directly to survivors and those most at risk. This would suggest that future innovation should look specifically at finding ways to reduce people's – particularly women's and girls' – vulnerabilities, and aim for protection outcomes that build long-term capacity.

This is also in line with the humanitarian approach towards more sustainable and longer-term impacts that utilise the resources available from development actors, and in striving to achieve the SDGs. It is also consistent with the GBV approach to understanding structural inequalities between females and males (see above definition) and a strong focus on women's empowerment as both a prevention and response modality. The examples given below have been chosen to exemplify this.

3.2.3 Private-sector partnerships in GBV programmes

In considering the ways the GBV sector has approached private-sector partnerships, the recent guidance issued by the GBV-AoR Helpdesk²⁸ can be seen as good practice in terms of setting out the risks, providing an overview of examples, and providing clear guidance for mitigating risk. The

²⁶ UNFPA. (2019). Available at <https://www.unfpa.org/minimum-standards>

²⁷ Elrha. (2016). Available at <https://www.elrha.org/researchdatabase/gender-based-violence-interventions-opportunities-innovation/>

²⁸ GBV-AoR Helpdesk. (2019). Available at <https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2019-11/Guidance%20Note%20-%20Harnessing%20Technology%20to%20Prevent%2C%20Mitigate%20and%20Respond%20to%20GBViE%2C%20Helpdesk.pdf>

principles for engagement and detailed recommendations can serve as a blueprint for any project or donor when approaching humanitarian private sector partnerships in the protection line of intervention, beyond specifically GBV programming. In this sense, the GBV-AoR is another part of the protection area that has advanced its thinking with a particular focus on technology, recognising the role of partnerships with new actors, such as technology developers, telecommunications firms, and multinational financing and credit companies, as explained in the excerpt below:

These new partners bring technology expertise, resources and design, and innovation capabilities that GBV actors do not have. They also, however, bring different objectives, principles, and ways of working that may not be in line with humanitarian and GBV programming objectives, principles, and practices. They may have limited understanding of GBV, and of the gender-based power relationships and inequalities that both underpin GBV and frame the use and uptake of technology. Whilst GBV actors should explore new partnerships to foster creative and new ways of working in humanitarian contexts, and to enhance their capabilities to innovate with technology to promote women and girls' safety and empowerment, they also need to be alert to the realities of engaging with non-traditional actors.

Partnerships with non-traditional actors require investment and time – sometime years – on the part of humanitarian agencies and must be carefully managed to ensure they operate within the ethical principles and values underpinning GBV prevention and response, such as survivor-centred principles and values of promoting women's and girls' rights and empowerment, and do not inadvertently exploit or cause harm to women and girls.

The principles stated in the Oslo Conference (above) are mirrored in the GBV-AoR response to private-sector partnerships for innovation, as will be shown below. It is significant that whilst the GBV-AoR HelpDesk has provided extensive field guidance on the use of technology and private-sector partnerships,²⁹ neither innovation nor private-sector engagement featured in the commitments that resulted from the conference.

²⁹ GBV-AoR Helpdesk. (2019). Available at <https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2019-11/Guidance%20Note%20-%20Harnessing%20Technology%20to%20Prevent%2C%20Mitigate%20and%20Respond%20to%20GBViE%2C%20Helpdesk.pdf>

3.2.4 Examples in GBV risk mitigation and prevention

The GBV-AoR guidance includes a comprehensive account of the examples of private-sector partnerships that have enhanced a range of activities within GBV programming across the world. These cover initiatives in the following areas of GBV programming:

1. Strengthening GBV programming, systems, and capacity in the understanding that this is still incredibly challenging (as highlighted by ELRHA in the above-mentioned publication).
2. Enhancing GBV response.
3. GBV risk mitigation and prevention. Risk mitigation and prevention programmes focus on the empowerment of women and girls online, including access to education, information about legal rights, and access to credit, markets and income-earning opportunities.

It is this area which is of most interest for the longer-term focus of innovation because it considers how to build women's and girls' capacity and empowerment directly. Humanitarian agencies have been innovating with technology-based solutions to GBV-related risks in humanitarian settings for many years. These featured examples have been taken directly from the GBV-AoR guidance:

Risk mitigation and prevention examples:

- The use of cooking technologies that reduce women's and girls' need to move in unsafe areas to collect fuel.
- Energy technologies such as solar lighting that make the physical environment and public facilities safer for women and girls to move around.
- More recently, humanitarian actors have been assessing how mobile money and other assistance might be used to mitigate GBV risks, including those related to travelling long distances to collect payments. For example, in Jordan, Mercy Corps has been trialling a mobile wallet as a component of its cash programming to mitigate GBV risks for women.
- Mapping software and applications are being used in many countries to document, map, and publicise GBV incidents and patterns. HarassMap uses an interactive online map, social media, and mobile phones to map and publicise incidents of sexual harassment and mobilise community members to take action to address these locally and nationally.
- In Mexico, Geochicas, an international community of feminist cartographers, used OpenStreetMap software in the aftermath of earthquakes in 2017 and 2018 to map and share data on women's safety in informal shelters. They also created a database of women's safety issues and GBV reports to help improve safety measures and shelter provision for future disasters.

Women's economic and social empowerment examples:

- There is evidence of ICTs being used to provide women and girls with greater access to information, education, skills, and services in remote regions and during humanitarian crises. ICTs have the potential to reach even the most marginalised women and girls with information about services and, in some instances, services themselves, that would otherwise be unavailable.
- Innovative digital communications can help bring awareness and education to women and girls in very rural areas, where most are illiterate and with limited connectivity to information technology. In Lebanon and Iraq, for example, the Women's Refugee Commission is piloting

virtual safe spaces to better reach adolescent girls to provide sexual and reproductive health information and services.

- In development contexts, ICTs have facilitated women's access to credit, markets, business information, and networks, and provided income-earning opportunities – in some contexts, directly improving women's economic well-being.
- In displaced settings, cash assistance delivered to women using mobile money and blockchain is being trialled in efforts to support women's financial inclusion and agency by increasing their access to financial services and control over their assets. UN Women and WFP have recently partnered to leverage blockchain technology to assist Syrian refugee women to receive and transfer financial assets securely on a blockchain network.

3.2.5 Conclusion

There are several emerging points from the research that are relevant beyond the GBV sector. The first is the recommendation to increase consideration of strengthening national systems in the initiatives undertaken with the private sector. This is echoed in the MA programming approach, which is based on working through government counterparts and is exemplified by the partnerships with the business sector in education in emergencies in the Child Protection AoR (below), which include working with national institutions as a core principle.

There has always been debate in the humanitarian sector over the extent to which humanitarian actors engage with governments in conflict environments, and more so in the protection sector where there are significant dilemmas associated with engaging with hostile authorities and those who are responsible for ongoing human rights violations. For this reason, it is also useful to go further than equating national systems only with *national governmental bodies*; as the GBV-AoR defines it, a national system refers primarily to government systems (at national, subnational, and local levels) and may include other stakeholders such as nongovernmental, community-based, and civil society organisations who contribute to functioning health, protection, and legal systems. The approaches outlined in this report demonstrate that, in many protection activities, there is a role for working with national systems and that this should be a consideration in deciding how and where to leverage private sector advantages.

The second emerging issue is the enormous changes that Covid-19 has brought to the sector, which can be seen as an additional incentive to re-examine the usual ways of doing business and seek alternatives that can provide better outreach and address the power imbalances that are maintained by humanitarian organisations in the ways that they have been delivering programmes. All three areas of GBV response – prevention, services, and legislation – are impacted by the Covid-19 crisis. In particular, GBV actors considered that this presents more opportunities for private-sector companies interested in brokering partnerships in the field.³⁰ The challenge for the sector will be to see how they can leverage private-sector partnerships and use the innovation process to contribute to transformation –of social norms both in communities and across organisations.

³⁰ Majumdar, S. (2020). Available at <https://www.svri.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2020-06-10/Impact%20of%20COVID19%20UNTF%20EVAW.pdf>

It is recognised that the GBV sector approach to private-sector partnerships can serve as an important point of reference for considering any innovation or private-sector project within humanitarian response, and in particular for measuring the success of protection outcomes, starting with the survivor-centred approach. The GBV principles outlined by the AoR address the main risks in private-sector partnerships and offer frameworks for engagement and mitigating measures. In the guidance there is a chapter on collection and use of GBV survivor data that provides detailed guidance on how to understand and mitigate data and information-sharing risks in GBV programming and is a useful way of clearly setting out the standards to actors unfamiliar with the humanitarian sector.

The GBV-AoR guidance also sets out key considerations for private-sector engagement and use of technology to improve GBV programmes in humanitarian action, which are relevant principles for broader engagement with the private sector and define the core elements of any project that aims to achieve protection outcomes. The most relevant recommendations are set out below:

1. **Prioritise and safeguard women and girls' safety and rights**
2. **Commit to and invest in women- and girls-centred design**
3. **Resource needs** – initiatives that are safe and that respect and protect human rights are survivor-centred and take time to conceptualise, develop, and pilot. This should be recognised in funding models.
4. **Develop new capabilities and partnerships** – recognising that private-sector engagement requires different ways of working and that there should be an emphasis on navigating different objectives and ways of working that may not be in line with humanitarian and GBV programming. This is because the private sector may have limited understanding of the gender-based power relationships and inequalities that both underpin GBV and frame the use and uptake of, for example, technology.
5. **Ensure shared principles and standards** – to safely and effectively address the emerging ethical, privacy, and security concerns regarding digital data it is recommended that there be a shared set of principles for GBV actors, donors, research institutions, and private-sector actors based on existing GBV standards, guidance, and lessons on good practice in innovation and design.³¹

Finally, recommendations for practitioners from the GBV-AoR are included in full in the annex that can serve as a checklist for evaluating proposals.

3.3 Housing, Land, and Property (HLP)

This section provides a very brief overview of some of the different areas of private-sector engagement for innovation in HLP.

³¹ GBV-AoR Helpdesk (2019). Available at <https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2019-11/Guidance%20Note%20-%20Harnessing%20Technology%20to%20Prevent%2C%20Mitigate%20and%20Respond%20to%20GBViE%2C%20Helpdesk.pdf>

3.3.1 Private-sector partnerships in HLP programmes

The HLP-AoR is chaired by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and aims to improve the humanitarian response to housing, land, and property issues. Although it has evolved to work across sectors – particularly with the shelter/non-food-items (NFI) cluster in recent years – it is also rooted in a legal approach that has characterised some of the private-sector relationships. Within the AoR, there has not been any specific approach to collating lessons learned or providing guidance on private sector partnerships or innovation.

Examples in the provision of legal services

- Private law firms have been involved in developing country profiles outlining the main legislation and challenges for HLP in different operational contexts. This is made available to humanitarian organisations to promote better contextual analysis for programme design.
- Shelter actors in Syria have also used the services of local surveyors to assist with mapping of internally displaced persons (IDP) camp boundaries and cross-referencing with cadastre records as part of due diligence.

Examples in mapping for land registration

- In Kosovo, the World Bank is implementing a \$12 million Real Estate and Cadastre Project to assist the government in producing a national cadastre system and geospatial data infrastructure. The World Bank’s Innovation Labs is making use of a Sensefly eBee fixed-wing UAV for these pilots. Project leaders have reported that this new approach significantly reduces the duration and cost of high-quality cadastral mapping activities and empowers local communities to participate in the process. In particular, they will use the new maps to help women define their property boundaries and officially register their rights.³²
- As with other areas of humanitarian response, there has also been a focus in the Shelter and HLP response on partnership with technology companies, for example for the development of a smartphone app to link landlords with potential tenants in refugee responses – Safe Night’s Rest is an NRC initiative.³³

Examples in property restitution

- There has also been innovative problem-solving in one of the more traditional areas of HLP: property restitution as part of transitional justice processes. One of the leading experts in this field has suggested a digital system of evidence of property ownership as a basis for restitution claims, combined with geospatial mapping and, critically, a user interface.³⁴ This would represent a vast improvement on the current static restitution processes, of which the majority take years to resolve, if ever, and leave the applicant excluded and disempowered. In order to

³² The World Bank. (January 7, 2016). Available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2016/01/07/drones-offer-innovative-solution-for-local-mapping>

³³ Norwegian refugee council. (2016). Available at http://www.shelterforum.info/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/1.-NRC_A-Safe-Nights-Rest_UK-SF_Mike-Waugh_FINAL.pdf

³⁴ Unruh, J. et al. (2017). Available at <https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.562>

be genuinely innovative, the system could consider women’s additional barriers to HLP restitution processes and their differential digital access.

Examples in the development/land sector

- The Earthworm Foundation works with a range of private-sector actors to shift sourcing and production practices towards climate and habitat improvement. They facilitate engagement between corporates and civil society, buyers and suppliers to identify and process challenges with the aim of creating impactful solutions.³⁵

3.3.2 Conclusion

Overall, since HLP is such a diverse field in itself – spanning legal approaches and restitution in transitional justice, to mapping software linked to land registries, to using technology to help refugees find shelter – the protection problems addressed through innovation with the private sector span the full range of those set out in the protection approaches defined in this report. It is increasingly recognised across areas such as protection and shelter/NFI that one of the most important initiatives is to prevent forced evictions through a range of measures, including access to livelihoods, leading to economic empowerment for women, for example; and other measures that support secure tenure, even in informal settlements. There are no quick fixes in this area and it requires a suite of holistic actions, which perhaps demonstrates some of the limitations of single-track innovation/private-sector partnerships, which would need to be combined with a multi-sectoral response in order to have a tangible and lasting impact.

Despite this, the HLP area of protection response has a lot to offer in terms of models for potential partnerships because of the links with development actors and, in particular, the land sector. This brings an entirely new conceptualisation of how to leverage private-sector partnerships beyond the transactional approach adopted by many humanitarian organisations toward a more transformative vision.

3.4 Child Protection/Education in Emergencies

This section gives a brief overview of the Child Protection AoR approach to private sector partnerships and also considers the approach of UNICEF as the lead organisation. We have chosen to highlight two particular UNICEF examples that stand out in the area of education in emergencies. This is because they both demonstrate a structured approach to collaboration with the private sector that has not been seen across the AoRs and provides some constructive ideas for future engagement.

³⁵ Earthworm. (2020). Available at <https://www.earthworm.org/>

3.4.1 Private-sector partnerships and Child Protection

The Child Protection AoR, led by UNICEF, has a 2020–2024³⁶ strategy that references private sector partnerships:

Key partnerships with other organisations and actors are used to maximise advocacy and policy work to strengthen the visibility and support to child protection and increase prevention activities. Innovative approaches with new stakeholders (including private-sector partners) will be pursued to increase funding and provide better, more efficient and effective programming.

Whilst innovation and private sector engagement is seen as a way to leverage funding and enhance humanitarian programming, the strategy does not provide further details. The lead agency in the AoR, UNICEF, has set out their approach to corporate partnerships,³⁷ mainly seen through the lens of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and on the impact business has on children as part of the workforce, consumers of products, and the family members of employees. They specifically highlight the issues of child labour and young workers, drawing on the corporate responsibility to respect international standards on human rights. UNICEF’s engagement with business in this sense is seen as a way to mitigate the potentially negative impacts of business rather than as a co-implementer.

3.4.2 Examples in Education in Emergencies

- The Global Business Coalition for Education³⁸ (GBC-Education) brings together corporate leaders committed to quality education. Businesses sign up as members and join forces with education organisations and governments to help deliver quality education. Their flagship initiative, REACT, is a hub to channel corporate contributions in support of education in emergencies by building results-oriented partnerships between businesses, UN agencies, NGOs, national governments, and humanitarian actors. One of the core services is to match business resources and assets with partners on the ground to facilitate problem-solving.
- An initiative by UNESCO, UNICEF, the UN Global Compact, and the UN Special Envoy for Global Education is to provide a framework for business engagement in education.³⁹ From the outset of the report, they set out how business and education priorities can be aligned through different types of interests, with a particular focus on the role of companies. There are

³⁶ Fontaine, M. (2020). Available at https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/wp-content/uploads/CP-AoR_Strategy-2020-2024.pdf

³⁷ Unicef. (2005). Available at https://www.unicef.org/corporate_partners/index_25078.html

³⁸ Global Business Coalition for Education. (May 4, 2017). Available at <https://gbc-education.org/education-in-emergencies-how-the-private-sector-can-play-a-role-in-protecting-it-in-times-of-crisis-2/>

³⁹ Kalra, K., Kimura, N. & Mackle, E. (2013). Available at

https://d306pr3pise04h.cloudfront.net/docs/issues_doc%2Fdevelopment%2FBusiness_Education_Framework.pdf

recommendations for guiding responsible engagement and for fostering innovation in education, as well as reiterating the main principles for responsible engagement.

Some of the chosen areas of innovation that deliver social and business value are useful to note:

- Pilot new, open source technology to improve the delivery of education to hard-to-reach communities.
- Apply design thinking to develop low-cost learning materials for under-resourced schools and bottom-of-the-pyramid communities.
- Identify innovative products by sponsoring competitions for education entrepreneurs and commercialising successful ideas.
- Utilise corporate training curricula to develop skill certification opportunities in cooperation with existing providers and government.

The recommendations for business engagement reiterate many of the key principles set out in the other AoR's above, but also include a focus on government and sustainability:

- Respect and support human rights
- Promote equity and equality
- Partner with experts
- Be outcomes-oriented and results-driven
- Align with government needs in education
- Be sustainable and scalable

3.4.3 Conclusion

The examples featured speak to a structured approach to engagement with business by providing a forum that promotes wide engagement and matching of private-sector resources and assets with humanitarian actors and government, to address problems through innovation. There is a framework for business engagement in the area of education, which serves as a model for collaboration for joint-standard setting and agreeing on the principles of how to partner, which can then be applied and used as a resource for humanitarian organisations. The latter point on agreed principles of partnership, in particular, addresses one of the main concerns from protection experts that there is no structured, principled way of engaging private sector; rather, humanitarian colleagues are left to find partners and negotiate their partnerships in an ad hoc and unsupported way.

Finally, the GBC-Education is an example of an approach that goes beyond the transactional relationships seen in so many other examples. When considering how the private sector can play a role in protection in times of crisis, a GBC Education Advisor shared the vision of an approach that is more collaborative and allows room for outside-of-the-box approaches that involve more than simply

financial contributions: “Can we find a way to make it more interactive and make business feel that they are part of the solution and not just give them a laundry list of things they can pay for?”⁴⁰

4. Conclusions

Examining how humanitarian actors can leverage the private sector to innovate in the field of protection requires a framework that ties several elements together. Both protection and innovation are wide-reaching concepts, the latter often being associated with technological advancement. Whilst technology often involves concrete, hard science, tools, and data, protection is something far less tangible, dealing with age-old problems of insecurity; essentially, ways of reducing risks, and making people affected by crises and conflict less vulnerable, through mitigation or response. We have found that that a good way of framing this is to focus on a commonality in terms of problem-solving, and the idea that innovation can facilitate achieving the Core Humanitarian Standard.

In this report, we have suggested adopting *results-based protection* as a *problem-solving approach*. In essence, this gives us important leads on how innovation processes can contribute to the types of problem-solving needed in the protection sector – but, crucially, it suggests that this must be from the perspective of the affected population. We find that the focus on technology or on the products of innovation means they have often been perceived as a goal in themselves. A protection approach leads us to instead consider the outcome or result for the affected population as the objective. A senior protection expert held that the way to look at advancing protection efforts through innovation partnerships would be to first acknowledge and see innovation as multidisciplinary problem-solving, with a focus on developing a solid evidence base and Theories of Change (ToC). The typical innovation funnel employed in the private sector, the idea of ‘failing early’ so as to readjust, when done right, can potentially mesh well with the humanitarian sector’s approach to incremental development of ToC.

There is an opportunity to draw on the private sector to leverage their strategic advantages as part of problem-solving, which could involve technology, being one of many methods or tools that might support such efforts. There are parallels between the private-sector actors’ attention to end users and results-based protection – one might say that design theory aligns with local ownership, participatory approaches, and perceiving the people affected by crisis themselves as innovators. In this framing of protection, there are indeed things to learn from the (for-profit) private sector, both in terms of how they innovate and how they approach partnerships. We have derived some of these lessons from interviews and reports detailing how the humanitarian sector as a market differs from the for-profit market, and from the idiosyncrasies of the humanitarian system.

⁴⁰ Global Business Coalition for Education. (May 4, 2017). Available at <https://gbc-education.org/education-in-emergencies-how-the-private-sector-can-play-a-role-in-protecting-it-in-times-of-crisis-2/>

Learning from user-centric approaches

What humanitarians can take from the private sector in the field of protection is the attention to and function of end users in innovation processes, and the understanding of the supporting ecosystem that ultimately makes the scaling and diffusion of innovative solutions possible.

The protection approach to partnerships links to the humanitarian imperative and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP). Technology often acts as an enabler that boosts interconnectivity, and this can, in many cases, offer opportunities for increased local ownership and engagement. For humanitarian actors, the focus is to be *accountable* to people in need. AAP was established through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) formal commitment in 2011 to five principles concerning: leadership and governance; transparency; feedback and complaint mechanisms; participation; and design, monitoring, and evaluation.⁴¹ As one senior global protection expert highlighted, the humanitarian sector typically “*gets busy setting up complaint mechanisms*” and telling, for example, women’s organisations, that “*you need us, but you have to work in our way*”, oftentimes ending up “*destroying whatever good capacities they had [in the process]*.” It is our view that, when putting protection at the forefront, the inclusion of affected people in the innovation process should be paramount. User-centric design and the centrality of participation should be part and parcel of a protection approach.

Adjusting the approach to partnerships

Humanitarian actors should adjust their approach by being open to and strategically pursuing more transformative partnerships, in addition to transactional collaborations with the private sector. It is important for humanitarian actors to appreciate what they bring to the table when engaging with private sector actors: Their access to end-users and their understanding of deeply contextualized problems in the field, are important factors that can be leveraged with a view to demonstrating a wider value of an innovative solution or product – even beyond the humanitarian sector. Leveraging these factors can, in turn, contribute to a private sector partner being willing to invest more in the partnership, as opposed to purely transactional partnerships where the humanitarian actor merely procures tech or purchases a service.

A humanitarian actor is seldom a large-scale customer who wields strong influence by virtue of their purchasing power. Adjusting the partnership approach to innovation also requires a level of organisational maturity, and an understanding of innovation, which should not be taken for granted. A long-term view is essential and key to establishing an evolving relationship of trust and mutual understanding, where benefits can occasionally arise unexpectedly.

The Areas of Responsibility within the Global Protection Cluster

The GPC’s AoRs display an interesting variety of experiences with the private sector, both in terms of approaches to partnerships, and from the perspective of innovation. It is interesting to note that, whilst the GPC strategy 2020–2024 does not mention private-sector partnerships, the Child Protection AoR strategy does foresee developing new partnerships, including with the private sector. UNMAS also

⁴¹ IASC. (July, 2012). Available at https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/legacy_files/TOOLS%20to%20assist%20in%20implementing%20the%20IASC%20AAP%20Commitments.pdf

includes this in their organisational strategy. From a protection perspective, the GBV-AoR is more advanced in that they have comprehensive guidance on innovation and private-sector partnership.

Furthermore, as stated from the outset, the potential successes and risks involved in private-sector partnerships for enhancing a humanitarian protection response are specific to each different activity and are significantly informed by the local context. A study of each AoR has provided insights that are relevant for the protection line of intervention overall, and humanitarian response more broadly. This is particularly important given that a protection focus should be implemented throughout the humanitarian response and in all activities.

Beginning with GBV, the recent guidance issued by the GBV-AoR Helpdesk²¹ can be seen as an important reference for considering any innovation or private-sector project in humanitarian response, and in particular for measuring the success of protection outcomes, starting with a survivor-centred approach. The GBV principles outlined by the AoR address the main risks in private-sector partnerships and offer frameworks for engagement and mitigating measures. For example, in line with a ‘do no harm’ approach to GBV interventions within private-sector partnerships, there is a chapter on collection and use of GBV survivor data that provides detailed guidance on how to understand and mitigate data and information-sharing risks in GBV programming, and is a useful way of clearly setting out the standards to actors unfamiliar with the humanitarian sector.

By focusing on GBV risk mitigation and prevention, the GBV-AoR also aligns with a protection approach that is oriented to building the capacity of affected populations, reducing vulnerability and fostering empowerment. This is critical not only to sustainable protection outcomes but to the humanitarian development nexus in looking towards the achievement of the SDGs. As a senior member of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) staff stated at a UNHCR forum on innovation:

*Simply meeting ongoing needs for the delivery of aid should no longer be enough. Humanitarians need to accept responsibility for scaling up local actors instead of just funding the sector’s own operations. This requires seeing the Sustainable Development Goals as an opportunity to change this thinking.*⁴²

Going further, he stated that investments in aid often create humanitarian holding patterns, ultimately denying opportunities for self-reliance and real resilience. There is a call for change: reducing vulnerability and improving resilience needs to be seen as an essential component of humanitarian action.

The MA sector provides several constructive examples of where innovation in the area of technical clearance equipment is led by humanitarian deminers to inform commercial product design, where donors play a key role in brokering the relationships. Most significantly, it provides ways of understanding the roles of private-sector actors (e.g., to access conflict areas inaccessible to NGOs),

⁴² McClure, D. (2015). Available at <https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/how-the-sdgs-change-the-role-of-humanitarian-innovation/>

and how to engage with them for the development of International Mine Action Standards. The MA sector has also highlighted the different forms of cooperation with the private sector, ranging along a scale of information exchange and mutual respect as peers, on the one side, and the development of an operational partnership on the other. In this aspect, the MA sector mirrors some of the approaches from a civil–military cooperation model seen in guidance that sets out ways for humanitarian partners to cooperate with the military in conflict operations.

The HLP area of protection response has a lot to offer in terms of models for potential partnerships, because of the links with development actors and, in particular, the land sector. This brings an entirely new conceptualisation of how to leverage private-sector partnerships beyond the transactional approach taken by many humanitarian organisations toward a more transformative mode of collaboration.

In the Child Protection area, the UNICEF examples highlighted speak to a structured approach to engaging with the private sector by providing a forum that promotes wide engagement and matching of private-sector resources and assets with humanitarian actors and government to address problems through innovation. They also show how it is possible to develop a framework for business engagement which serves as an example of collaboration for mutual activities, joint-standard setting, and agreeing on the principles of how to partner, which can then be applied and used as a resource for humanitarian organisations. The principles of partnership, in particular, addresses one of the main concerns from protection experts that there is no structured, principled but pragmatic way of engaging the private sector – rather, humanitarian colleagues are left to find partners and negotiate their partnerships in an ad hoc and unsupported way.

Finally, the GBC-Education is an example of an approach that goes beyond the transactional partnerships seen in so many other examples. In considering the role the private sector can play in protection in times of crisis, a GBC-Education Advisor shared the vision of an approach that is more collaborative and allows room for outside-of-the-box approaches that involve more than simply financial contributions.

5. Annex

The following recommendations from the GBV-AoR guidelines can be considered as potential criteria for evaluating future innovation proposals in the area of GBV programming⁴³:

1. *Learn about existing GBV-related technology initiatives in the region, country and context, and seek information from users and implementers about lessons learned, benefits and challenges.*
2. *Learn about digital data safety, privacy and protection and put measures in place to address and monitor risks and ethical concerns prior to introducing new technology. Ensure data safety and privacy and safety protocols address risks associated with data being hacked, shared or disseminated inappropriately.*
3. *Prioritise, assess and plan for safety throughout, including making sure GBV survivors and women and girls are aware of and know how to respond to the potential for technology related GBV.*
4. *Conduct formative research involving women and girls, including local women's services and organisations, as well as groups and individual women who may be doubly or triply marginalised, such as women and girls with disabilities to: - Assess the context specific GBV situation, including assessing power dynamics and issues facing women and girls, - Understand the circumstance, realities and needs of women and girls in terms of technology access, use, literacy and confidence.*
5. *Co-design technology interventions with women, girls and staff who will use it. This will ensure user understanding, buy-in, relevance, appropriateness and usability of the technology. Ensure that programmes using technology are designed in line with principles and good practice in GBV research and programming.*
6. *Invest in building local capacities, capabilities and systems and foster local ownership of programmes and technology innovations. Wherever possible seek to reduce the gender divide in women and girls' technology literacy, skills and confidence, including for female staff.*
7. *Incorporate rigorous evaluations into the design of GBV interventions using technology. Ensure the methodology can capture unintended consequences such as the risk that technology may introduce less opportunity for staff to engage directly with women and girls and thus identify those who might be experiencing GBV.*
8. *Make evaluation findings widely available to contribute to the development of an evidence base on what works (and what does not), the risks and unintended consequences of interventions, and other factors relevant to scaling up technological innovations in humanitarian assistance.*

⁴³ GBV-AoR Helpdesk (2019). Available at <https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2019-11/Guidance%20Note%20-%20Harnessing%20Technology%20to%20Prevent%2C%20Mitigate%20and%20Respond%20to%20GBViE%2C%20Helpdesk.pdf>

6. List of abbreviations

AAP = Accountability to Affected populations

AoR = Areas of responsibility

CSR = Corporate social responsibility

DD = Humanitarian Disarmament Research and Development Initiative of the US

Department of Defense (DD)

ELRHA = Enhancing Learning and Research for Humanitarian Assistance

GAHI = the Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation

GBV = Gender-based Violence

GBC-Education = The Global Business Coalition for Education

GPC = Global Protection Cluster

HIF = Humanitarian Innovation Fund (Humanitarian innovation faces rethink as innovators take stock)

HIP = Humanitarian Innovation Programme

HLP = Housing, Land and Property

IASC = Inter-Agency Standing Committee

ICRC = International committee of the red cross

IED = Improvised explosive devices

MA = Mine Action

MAG = Mine Advisory Group – *a humanitarian NGO established a partnership with Facebook to deliver a suite of MRE adverts to a wide audience which were offered at a discounted rate.*

MRE = Mine Risk Education

M&E = Monitoring and Evaluation

NFI = Non-food-items

NGOs = Non-governmental organization

NRC = Norwegian Refugee Council

RND = Research and Development

SDG = Sustainable Development Goals

ToC = Theories of Change

UAVs = Unmanned Aerial Vehicles

UNFPA = United Nations Population Fund

UNHCR = United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF = United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund

UNMAS = United Nations Mine Action Services

WFP = World Food Programme

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