



HUMANITARIAN INNOVATION CONFERENCE

Facilitating Innovation

17th & 18th July 2015
University of Oxford

#HIP2015 Report

The **Humanitarian Innovation Project** hosted the **2015 Humanitarian Innovation Conference** in Oxford on 17 & 18 July, in partnership with the World Humanitarian Summit. In the lead up to the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, conference participants worked together to explore and discuss the challenges of creating an enabling environment for humanitarian innovation.

This second annual conference on humanitarian innovation contributed to the expansion of a broader 'humanitarian innovation network' that was established last year, offering a space to discuss possible ways forward for enabling and facilitating innovation across the wider humanitarian ecosystem and focusing particularly on how we can better convene the collective talents of people within and across traditional and non-traditional humanitarian actors.

This year's conference was in collaboration with the **World Humanitarian Summit** (WHS), which will take place in Istanbul in May 2016. As part of the "Transformation through Innovation" thematic theme area for the WHS, the discussions held at HIP2015 have the opportunity to feed directly into the final stages of preparation for the Summit.

MISSED THE CONFERENCE? GET CAUGHT UP HERE!

www.oxhip.org/events/hip2015/

Download a copy of the [conference programme](#)

Watch [videos](#) from the conference

Access [digital & PPT presentations](#) from selected panel speakers

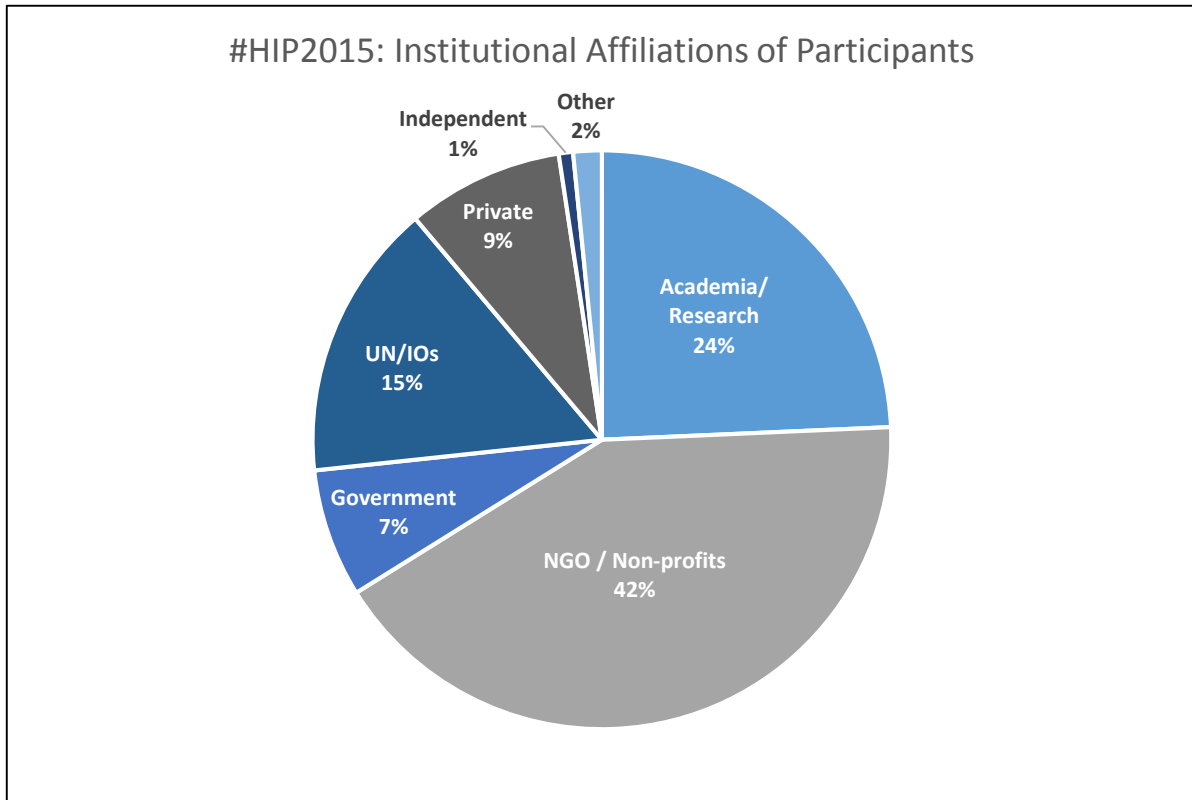
Read selected [full conference papers](#)

View [photos](#) from the conference

Listen to [podcasts](#) from the conference

#HIP2015 PARTICIPANTS

The 2015 Humanitarian Innovation Conference hosted over 275 participants, with individuals and organisations from over 29 countries attending.



#HIP2015 SUPPORTERS

The 2015 Humanitarian Innovation Conference would not have been possible without the support of a number of individuals and organisations. Thank you to the World Humanitarian Summit for making HIP2015 an official WHS event. We are especially grateful to Stephanie and Hunter Hunt who have funded and nurtured the Humanitarian Innovation Project since its inception. We have received contributions from the International Studies Centre and the Oxford Department of International Development to assist with the running of the conference. We also thank the entire Humanitarian Innovation Project (HIP) team – in Oxford and Uganda – as well as our colleagues at the Refugee Studies Centre.



Facilitating Innovation

The theme for this year's conference was "Facilitating Innovation". Reflecting the ethos of the Humanitarian Innovation Project, the theme included an important emphasis on how we can build upon the skills, talents, and aspirations of crisis-affected communities themselves and support "bottom-up innovation". It also sought to explore how organisations can create environments conducive to innovation.

The first HIP conference was a chance to ask 'what' questions about humanitarian innovation – to think about what it means as a set of concepts. Last year, a key foundation of the conference was the inclusion of affected communities as part of humanitarian innovation debates and how to harness cross-sectoral creativity and learning to create spaces that recognise the skills, aspirations and talents of people in affected communities.



This year, the conference theme sought to address questions about how humanitarian innovation should overcome structural barriers and constraints to enable innovation, both within organisations and bureaucracies as well as within the humanitarian ecosystem as a whole. These barriers often lock out people who should have a voice in these debates and should be represented, and too often are not.

Building a Global Humanitarian Innovation Network

To harness our collective potential, dialogue and collaboration are needed, particularly across sectors. One of the core aims of this year's conference, as last year, was to create a community that is prepared to share ideas across sectors, bridge divides between governments, NGOs, businesses, community organisations, affected populations, and to engage proactively in dialogue and debate.

A successful conference is about sharing and establishing 1) new networks, 2) new ideas, and 3) new collaborations. Additionally, debate and dialogue is critical to making progress and making us better at working together. At HIP2015, participants worked together on five core goals to:

- 1) **Share ideas.** Innovation and solutions are not all about new ideas; we need to know about existing ideas that have worked (or not worked) in other organisations, contexts, and sectors, and to share knowledge about this work.
- 2) **Identify and recognise the underlying structural barriers that block progress and prevent innovation.** If an innovation doesn't exist or an idea hasn't succeeded, we have to ask *why* – what are the underlying reasons, interests and power structures?

- 3) **Overcome boundaries to dialogue.** It is necessary to have internal discussions that debate paradigmatic changes and fear of changes within the system.
- 4) **Understand that not all innovation is “good”.** It is necessary to have an ethical framework and principles for humanitarian innovation, and we must recognise that ‘bad’ innovation is not only possible, but a threat to both affected populations as well as future attempts at humanitarian innovation.
- 5) **Do more to include marginalised voices and work with people in affected communities.** The sector-wide focus on improving the effectiveness of organisational response to crisis should incorporate and give leadership to the capabilities and adaptive resourcefulness of people and communities affected by conflict and disaster.

Five years ago, ‘humanitarian innovation’ was still relatively obscure as a defined topic or field. Now, we have formed a community, one with divergent perspectives, but also with a willingness to work together to turn humanitarian challenges into sustainable opportunities for all.

Innovation Lab + Workshops

At HIP2015, the ‘Innovation Lab’ hosted a number of interactive workshops on innovation and design facilitated by a range of organisations, as well as an exhibition space in which some pioneering humanitarian ideas were displayed.

These workshops offered diverse lessons and cooperative activities to help participants’ build and explore approach to solving innovation challenges around design, education, models, mapping, participatory methodologies and performance.

See more about these workshops in our [conference programme](#) and [photo gallery](#).



#HIP2015 Keynotes

Raouf Mazou, the UNHCR Representative in Kenya, delivered the [first keynote address](#) of the conference and focused on issues of camp-based humanitarian assistance, discussing the unintended consequences of long-term encampment and financial unsustainability of the model. Speaking on the “necessity of innovation”, Mazou stated:

“In the past few years a profound change of approach on the part of all actors is being seen. Innovative thinking and innovative action are being prompted by the realization that the earlier approach in relation to camps can no longer be sustained. The notion of having refugees in a camp setting, regardless of their ability to cover their own needs, is illogical from an economic point of view and is ethically unacceptable.

Fostering self-reliance and empowering refugees must be the goal and - in rural settings - models may range from the establishment of a settlement primarily inhabited by refugees to refugees being accommodated in existing host community villages.”



Following his keynote address, Mazou sat down with **Moulid Hujale**, a journalist and former refugee who has lived in Dadaab. Their conversation focused on UNHCR’s role in addressing challenges within the Dadaab refugee camps, particularly the ways in which humanitarian innovation could help to address issues facing refugees in the camp, including energy issues and the lack of opportunities for Somali youth. This dialogue UNHCR in direct conversation with a refugee.

The [keynote](#) delivered by **Sara Pantuliano**, director of the Humanitarian Policy Group at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) addressed the changing nature of conflicts around the world and the implications going forward for humanitarian innovation. She called for a sector-wide paradigm shift that will better equip humanitarian actors to meet rapidly shifting socio and geopolitical environments in a way that enables a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities these changes present in order to be able to innovate and respond more effectively.

Outlining these changes, Pantuliano focused on the path forward for humanitarian innovation, stating:

“This is less about a mandate reform than [attitude reform](#) and a [seismic shift in the culture](#) under which the sector currently operates. We need to [change the power relations and incentive structures](#) so that they move us away from unmitigated expansion and competition and toward *greater complementarity, cooperation and trust*.

The imposition of ‘universal’ principles and technical solutions devised by Western organisations and academia will be met with increasingly stiff resistance. The **real innovation** will be the development of **forms of better dialogue** with local authorities and affected communities, and for the **promotion of principled but not standardised solutions** to conflict and other forms of political violence.”



Sessions at HIP2015

There were a total of 50 keynotes, plenary, and parallel panel sessions to choose from at #HIP2015. Please visit our [HIP2015 webpage](#) to see [video](#) and [podcast](#) recordings of a wide selection of these sessions, as well as conference [papers](#), speakers' PPT [presentations](#), and [photos](#) from the conference.

Speakers in both plenary and parallel panel sessions focused on five sub-themes of 'Facilitating Innovation': 1) Overcoming institutional barriers; 2) Knowledge Exchange & Education for Innovation; 3) Evidence, Metrics & Research; 4) Ethics & Principles for Humanitarian Innovation; and 5) Spaces & Places of Innovation.



The [first plenary session](#) of the conference focused on the upcoming **World Humanitarian Summit** which will take place in Istanbul as the culmination of a two-year period of regional consultations. Panel participants discussed the opportunities and challenges ahead of the Summit as it attempts to set out a vision for a humanitarian system capable of responding to new threats and opportunities and offered predictions on what might be expected from the final summit.

The [second plenary session](#) focused on the humanitarian response to the recent Ebola epidemic and the need to transform the lessons learned during the crisis into future practice. by preparing for future outbreaks through the development of innovative solutions to address gaps. Key weaknesses were highlighted in the interoperability of health systems, emergency infrastructure and logistics, health intelligence and diagnostics, and engagement with affected communities. Participants discussed the role of innovation in preparing for future outbreaks and addressing these gaps.



The [third plenary session](#) asked whether technology truly has the potential to 'transform' humanitarianism. Panellists debated the benefits and positive examples of technology's potential to save lives and improve humanitarian response, but necessarily balanced this against the potential risks and ethical challenges it presents. The importance of historicising technological innovation within the field of humanitarianism was revealed to be particularly important to

understanding the role that innovation and technology plays currently and to understand the dangers – and failures – of delivering technological 'improvements' without significant consultation with affected communities.

1) *Overcoming institutional barriers*

Many of the speakers and panels at #HIP2015 sought to address the existence of inherent cultural, political or financial barriers within various institutions that can slow or prevent innovation from taking place. One of the plenary panels discussed ways forward for 'transforming' organisational



culture within larger institutions at the UN and international NGO level, discussing the roles of innovation units and the prevalence of notions that innovation is just a 'trend'. Speakers also discussed issues with diminished creativity and the discouragement of innovation or risk within larger institutions, which requires building a more supportive environment for staff and beneficiaries. One panel asked what successful humanitarian innovation process look like, exploring lessons from the

Humanitarian Innovation Fund and discussing key challenges around relationships with donors, changing behaviours, and issues of scale for the innovation process. Another panel discussed overcoming institutional barriers in relation to cash transfer programmes, discussing the importance of addressing organisational or structural challenges to introducing cash-based programmes and offering examples and solutions from specific programmes.

2) *Knowledge Exchange & Education for Innovation*

Speakers and panels under this theme sought to discuss the ways in which processes of acquiring and sharing knowledge are critical to facilitating and supporting innovation at all levels of the humanitarian ecosystem. One panel looked at issues of capacity building and information exchange, discussing examples of how technology can be used to strengthen the capacity of humanitarian professionals through networks of knowledge transfer, as well as with local partners. One of the plenary panels explored examples of successful and unsuccessful product, process, market, and organisational innovations in education, addressing key issues of educational access, quality and equity for the most marginalized children (and adults) throughout the world.



3) *Evidence, Metrics & Research*

Several panels focused on the importance of evidence-based strategies and the role of evaluative metrics in the design and implementation of humanitarian assistance programmes. One panel discussed what responsible data and innovation in emergencies should look like, asking, if data is indeed as valuable as people believe, how can it be better safeguarded and how can we prevent the data collection process from being purely extractive? Panellists discussed ways to promote data sharing and how to facilitate

both horizontal sharing as well as vertical, drawing on some of pioneering approaches from Oxfam to address these issues. Another panel looked at issues around mobilizing data and improving measurement for impact and policy-making, discussing efforts to improve data on local integration among urban refugees as well as new systems for humanitarian evidence mapping in East Africa.

4) Ethics & Principles for Humanitarian Innovation



Speakers also considered the key critiques of humanitarian innovation from an ethical standpoint, exploring the implications of humanitarian innovation for intellectual property, data collection and sharing, informed consent, vulnerable populations, and the humanitarian imperative. One panel considered the ethics for technology and big data within humanitarian innovation, discussing the necessity of applying the humanitarian principles effectively to

humanitarian innovation. One presentation looked at the use of satellite imagery as an example of a promising technology but one that requires a better understanding of its limitations and risks. Other speakers also addressed ethical considerations of humanitarian innovation more broadly, including the introduction of a set of working principals for humanitarian innovation and discussions about the ethical dilemmas inherent to humanitarian action.

5) Spaces & Places of Innovation

Many speakers and panels also addressed the concept of humanitarian innovation as it occurs within and across diverse institutional, geographical, virtual, cultural and political spaces. One panel discussed the need to build a community of practice in humanitarian innovation, identifying ways to use collective knowledge to access existing networks, web-platforms, and other ways to connect innovation actors to each other and to the core humanitarian challenges. Another panel looked “bottom-up” innovation and the need to engage more effectively and conscientiously with the ideas and innovations of crisis affected-communities. The panel looking at military and humanitarian innovation also considered the ways in which innovations that are funded and developed within militaries have had complex interactions and cross-overs with the humanitarian world, leading to a critical discussion that examined how innovative forms of knowledge are created, diffused, and exchanged between military and humanitarian space.



Thank you to everyone who participated in the
#HIP2015 “Humanitarian Innovation” Photo Exhibition!



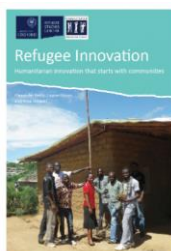
Thank you to Better Shelter & IDEAS Box
for their displays at #HIP2015!



And thank you to the All Stars Project for their amazing performance at
#HIP2015!



Recent & Forthcoming HIP Publications



Refugee Innovation: Humanitarian Innovation that Starts with Communities

Alexander Betts, Louise Bloom, and Nina Weaver (2015), Humanitarian Innovation Project

<http://www.oxhip.org/resources/refugee-innovation-humanitarian-innovation-that-starts-with-communities/>



Principles for Ethical Humanitarian Innovation

Alexander Betts (2015), Humanitarian Innovation Project

<http://www.oxhip.org/resources/principles-for-ethical-humanitarian-innovation-draft-paper/>



Innovation Spaces: Transforming humanitarian practice in the United Nations

Louise Bloom and Romy Faulkner (2015), Refugee Studies Centre Working Paper Series No. 107

<http://www.oxhip.org/resources/innovation-spaces-transforming-humanitarian-practice-in-the-united-nations/>



Military medical innovation and the Ebola response: a unique space for humanitarian civil–military engagement

Josiah Kaplan and Evan Easton-Calabria (2015), Humanitarian Exchange Issue 64

<http://www.oxhip.org/resources/military-medical-innovation-and-the-ebola-response/>



@hiprojectox



/oxhip



hiproject@qeh.ox.ac.uk



www.oxhip.org

Refugee Studies Centre

Oxford Department of

International Development

University of Oxford

3 Mansfield Road

OX1 3TB