INNOVATION
AT UNHCR 2014

WHAT IS AN INNOVATION LAB?

HOW DO YOU MEASURE INNOVATION?

5 LESSONS LEARNED FROM ROLLING
OUT INNOVATION PROJECTS

FOSTERING THE CULTURE OF
INNOVATION AT UNHCR:
LESSONS LEARNED

ANYTHING BUT
BUSINESS AS USUAL

UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

INNOVATION IS NECESSARY

**ADDRESS BY U.N. HIGH COMMISSIONER
FOR REFUGEES ANTÓNIO GUTERRES**

DEAR COLLEAGUES,

Innovation is a core part of UNHCR's response. As we face growing humanitarian needs and increasing budgetary uncertainties, innovation is central to our ability to protect and assist the people we serve.

Good ideas and innovative solutions abound among colleagues and partners in the field but we never had a systematic way of capturing this ingenuity. UNHCR Innovation was created to help promote and share your creativity across the organization.

Having a dedicated Innovation Unit allows us to amplify good practices that already exist, to connect good ideas to resources and to draw on the expertise of the private and academic sectors. Now we can test and nurture promising new ideas into full-scale sustainable solutions and foster innovation among our staff and our partners.

But innovation does not only sit with this section, each and every one of us must innovate because we cannot address the challenges UNHCR faces today by doing business as usual. This will require a change of mindset and strategic collaboration across bureaus and divisions.

I invite all of you to contribute your ideas and creativity to making UNHCR a true 21st century organization.

Thank you very much and all the best for your work.

Transcribed from a video address to UNHCR staff, May 2015.

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INNOVATION

"Having a dedicated Innovation Unit allows us to amplify good practices that already exist, to connect good ideas to resources and to draw on the expertise of the private and academic sectors."

U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees,
António Guterres

UNHCR's Innovation Unit has five Pillars which form the framework around which the Unit operates.

INNOVATION LABS

UNHCR's Innovation Labs apply principles of human-centered design and prototyping to address complex refugee challenges.

13 new projects

INNOVATION FELLOWSHIP

UNHCR Innovation Fellows are trained, mentored, and supported as they address challenges unique to their operations.

2 training workshops
19 graduates
12 projects
20 new intakes

ENGAGEMENT

Sparks dialogue among UNHCR staff/affiliates and the broader humanitarian community.

New subdomain dedicated to documenting innovation within UNHCR – innovation.unhcr.org
22,000 member online community

Fosters innovation among UNHCR staff/affiliates through an idea management platform.

4 challenges
313 ideas
2 projects being implemented

INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP

UNHCR's innovation partnerships leverages expertise of NGOs, academic institutions, and corporate partners.

2 meetings
1 field mission

INNOVATION FUND

Exploring new financing mechanisms to support innovation projects within UNHCR.

prototyped on UNHCR Innovation Fellows

INNOVATION LABS

APPLYING PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN AND PROTOTYPING
TO ADDRESS COMPLEX REFUGEE CHALLENGES

Innovation Labs use a five-step approach to developing projects, focusing on the needs of end-users (refugees) at each stage of the innovation process.

1. Define challenges

2. Identify solutions

3. Test solutions

4. Refine solutions

5. Scale solutions

Innovation Labs are not tied to a geographical location. Rather, they focus on four thematic areas. Through the Labs, projects are prototyped and tested in UNHCR operations around the world, depending on operational needs and context.

LEARN	HOME	LINK	ENERGY
6 projects	**1** project	**3** projects	**5** projects
7 locations	**2** locations	**3** locations	**2** locations

WHAT IS AN
INNOVATION LAB?

By Christopher Earney,
Co-Lead at UNHCR Innovation

The word 'labs' is sometimes conflated with the fashionable nomenclature of innovators, and innovative organizations. For others, the word 'lab' may conjure up images of men and women wearing large plastic goggles, and white coats, almost certainly holding test tubes full of colorful – possibly fizzing – liquid.

At UNHCR Innovation we don't wear large plastic goggles or white coats, and our offices aren't littered with bottles of colorful/fizzing liquid. We do, however, include Innovation Labs as one of our five main foci – called "Pillars" – which form the framework around which the unit operates.

Each of the Labs form a thematic focus on which UNHCR is committed to innovating based on a request from a Division to collaborate, which may or may not be combined with a pre-identified organization-wide need. Innovation Labs are a co-working space – both virtual and physical – in which new ideas can be explored, in which hands-on project management takes place, and in which lessons learned are documented and shared with the co-owning Division. Innovation Labs are also a space from which the scaling of good practices can emerge.

What do I mean by "co-own"?

We employ a collaborative work model in which the Labs are co-owned and co-invested by the respective in-house Division. For example, the Learn Lab is run together with the Division of International Protection's Education Unit, and the Energy Lab is run together with the Division of Program Support and Management's Energy and Environment Unit. Both Labs have a full-time staff member who manages the Lab and sits both within UNHCR Innovation and the respective unit.

This model ensures a couple of different things:

1. The Lab is tied and embedded in the work of the Division that co-owns and co-invests in it;

2. The Lab is tied and embedded in the work of UNHCR Innovation, including the activities of the other Labs, but equally, the other Pillars through which we work.

These are two integral parts of the innovation approach within UNHCR that speaks to sustainability, relevance, and ownership. UNHCR Innovation does not 'own' innovation; we're simply charged with making sure that the conditions are there, to the extent possible, to allow innovation to grow, and be driven by the right parts, and people, of our organization.

In 2015 we're going to see the Link Lab receive a Lab manager, who is going to work closely with two Divisions, as well as UNHCR Innovation. We're also going to see the Emergency Lab receive a Lab manager, who will work closely with the Division of Emergency Services and Supply, and will focus on Communicating with Communities (CwC). The Learn Lab is now mature enough for it to move closer to the field, so we're going see this Lab move to Nairobi.

In 2015 the Labs are going to continue to be agile, exciting places for UNHCR, and I'm looking forward to seeing what they produce. ■

LEARN LAB:

A collaboration between UNHCR's Innovation Unit and the Division of International Protection.

Expands education opportunities for refugees and the forcibly displaced through new approaches to learning.

1. CONSORTIUM ON CONNECTED LEARNING

Location: Kenya, Jordan, Malawi, Thailand, Afghanistan

UNHCR established a task force of tertiary actors leveraging ICTs to provide refugees with accredited university education in remote locations. To-date over 2500 refugees have benefited from these programs. The goal of the task force is to strengthen and expand access to programs such as the Borderless Higher Education For Refugees Project (BHER), the Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins (JC:HEM), InZone and the Australian Catholic University's Thai-Burma Border project.

Partners: InZone (University of Geneva), JC:HEM, Australian Catholic University, Borderless Higher Education for Refugees

2. INSTANT NETWORK SCHOOLS (INS) PROGRAM

Location: Kenya

In 2014, 13 Instant Network Classrooms were established in Dadaab, to support teachers in primary, secondary and vocational programs with pedagogical training, dynamic educational applications, internet connectivity, localized content and child friendly tablets. Together with the community expansion plans are being developed in order to adapt the INS model for wider testing, including in Kenya, Tanzania, South Sudan, and the DRC.

Partners: Vodafone Foundation

3. WORLDREADER

Location: Tanzania

Secondary schools are leveraging eReaders to promote a culture of reading and reinforce literacy through local digitized publications and education content. An initial field test began in February 2014, in Mpanda and Mishamo Tanzania, and expansion within Tanzania and Kenya is planned for 2015.

Partners: Worldreader

4. IDEAS BOX

Location: Burundi

The prototyping and field testing of 3 Ideas Boxes, a portable and customizable library for children and adults began in early 2014 in Burundi. The Ideas Box uses Information Communications Technology, alongside books and print resources to improve access to culture and information in displacement situations, and to enable communities to create cultural content and programming.

Partners: Libraries Without Borders, International Rescue Committee
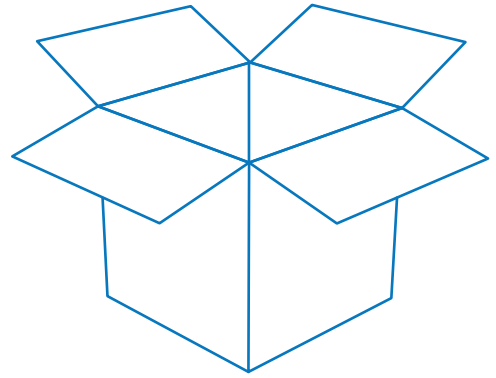
5. BRAINPOP

Location: Malaysia

Students and teachers in Kuala Lumpur have started testing the viability of BrainPOP - an online education content platform - in creating individually tailored lesson plans to improve quality within community schools.

Partners: BrainPOP

6.

KAKUMA
ROAD TO SELF-RELIANCE

Location: Kenya
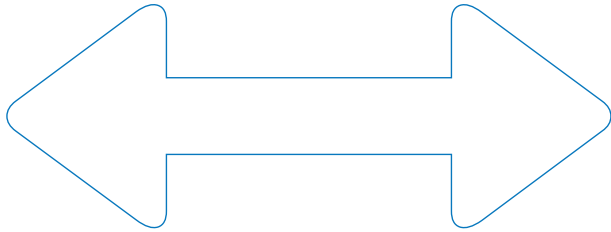
UNHCR has developed a four-year approach to test an integrated and holistic model for education within the Kakuma Refugee Camp. Groundwork for this project began in 2014, with the first field prototype planned for spring 2015.

Partners: Education Above All

HOW DO YOU MEASURE INNOVATION?

FOR THE LEARN LAB'S SECOND YEAR, PROGRESS WAS MEASURED ON A NUMBER OF INDICATORS, INCLUDING:

1. the extent to which the community was involved in driving the design process,
2. the extent to which the solution addresses the specific challenge,
3. the degree to which the solution contributes to improving educational quality; and requests from other locations to adapt solution for use in their context.

By Jacqueline Strecker, Learn Lab Coordinator

Community Driven Design. Our aim is to work with the community to design all innovations. In the field, this has included everything from localizing and creating content for the IdeasBox, to designing the school program for the Worldreader test. Although involving the community in the design and testing of assumptions was a feature of 2014, more can be done. At the end of 2014, the Lab led a Human-Centered Design (HCD) training for staff and partners to strengthen skills and enhance programming in 2015.

Challenge Focused. This might seem obvious, but avoiding the temptation to develop a solution that addresses every (or many) educational challenge(s) can be difficult. The key is to start with a clear challenge statement, and use this as a reference point to stay focused and to measure progress.

Educational Impact. This is the tricky one. We find that accurately assessing the impact of educational interventions is best measured in the long-term. While short-term effects can be observed, it is difficult to directly attribute change to any one intervention. This is why we have adopted a longer-term approach, which examines the contributions of both the process and the interventions. In the field this means taking note of initial gains (for example, a surge in student enrollment when launching the Instant Network School (INS) program) and then assessing these results over time - tracking whether these gains are sustained beyond initial periods of excitement. We still have a long-way to go, but current findings are positive.

Scaling solutions. We have received many requests to expand and adapt solutions for use in other locations. Whether it's through requests for innovative higher-education programs within UNHCR's Syria response, or the expansion of INS to support the development of a 'green-camp' in Tanzania; adapting solutions for use in new locations is part of the iteration and prototyping process. We are delighted with initial progress, however sustainable scaling models are vital. This will be a key feature of 2015, so stay tuned.

5 LESSONS LEARNED
FROM ROLLING OUT JOINT INNOVATIVE EDUCATION PROJECTS

By Ita Sheehy, Senior Education Officer

THROUGH THE LEARN LAB, UNHCR INNOVATION AND THE DIVISION OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION'S EDUCATION UNIT HAVE ADOPTED A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO EXPANDING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFUGEES AND THE FORCIBLY DISPLACED THROUGH NEW APPROACHES TO LEARNING.

In 2014 UNHCR's Learn Lab launched, developed, or supported 6 projects in 7 locations. In rolling out these projects we've learned several key lessons:

1. Engaging senior management staff in the field prior to initiating innovations is essential to ensure smooth implementation and timely trouble-shooting when necessary.

2. Embedding innovation projects within ongoing education strategies in the field lends itself to greater sustainability than independent or siloed innovation projects.

3. Engaging youth and the community in project design, implementation, and decision-making results in activities that are grounded and likely to succeed.

4. Having dedicated staff both at Headquarters and in the field is essential to success. When staff are covering multiple competing tasks, innovation projects suffer and progress is slow.

5. Securing multi-year funding is essential, enabling a focus on well-planned activities, engagement, and results. Short-term funding works to the detriment of innovative design and implementation in education, which by its nature builds on cumulative results. ∎

HOME LAB:

A collaboration between UNHCR's Innovation Unit and the Division of Program Support and Management.

Rethinks the concept of a dignified and secure 'home' environment for refugees and displaced communities.

5 LESSONS LEARNED

FROM ROLLING OUT JOINT INNOVATIVE SHELTER PROJECTS

By Ammar Al-Mahdawi, Senior Technical Shelter Officer

Through the Home Lab, UNHCR Innovation and the Division of Program Support and Management's Shelter and Settlements Section have collaborated in rolling out the Better Shelter project. We've learned several key lessons in rolling out this project. Here are five of them:

1. The trajectory of the Better Shelter project – like any innovation project – is not a straight path. It's more like entering a dark tunnel without knowing where the exit is.

2. Innovation projects are more than an idea; they require action. We learned how to move fast and convert the idea to a practical solution.

3. The Better Shelter innovation project was a Research and Development project with an invisible future. We believed that even in the case of a failure, that failure is a success.

4. The engagement of the refugees/ beneficiaries in the Better Shelter project design and test was a main success factor for the project.

5. The need for dignified shelter, UNHCR's protection mandate, and engagement of the UNHCR Headquarters and field staff were a necessary part of learning and the pursuit of project excellence. ∎

BETTER SHELTER

Location: Ethiopia,
Northern Iraq

A more durable, more dignified transitional shelter alternative. Constructed of waterproof, sun- and flame-retardant materials around a steel frame, each unit is designed to last up to three years and shelter a family of five. In 2014, testing of Better Shelter in Ethiopia and Northern Iraq was finalized.

Partners: IKEA Foundation, Better Shelter
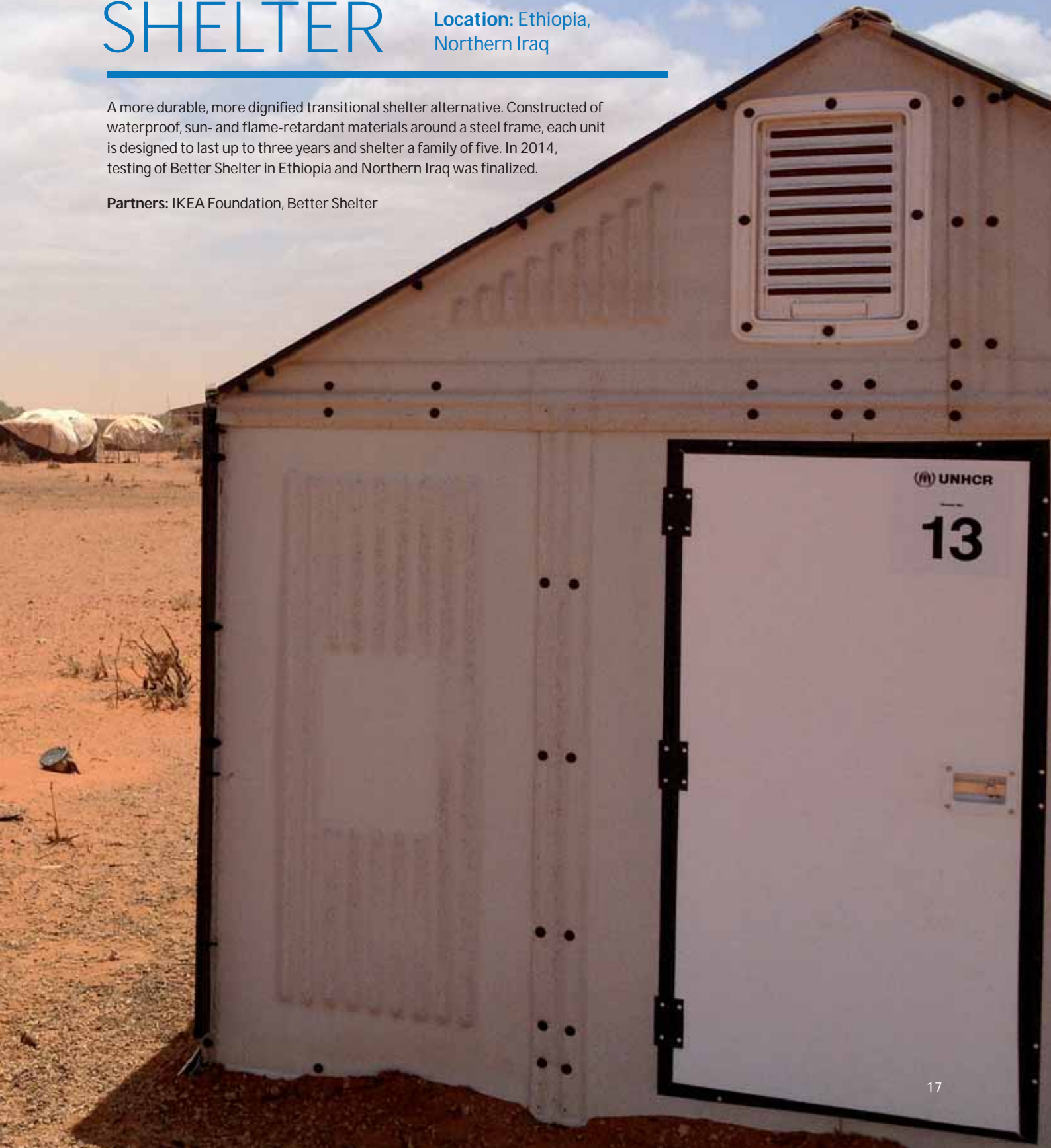
ENERGY LAB:

Finds the most suitable technology to meet the energy needs of refugees and those forcibly displaced at the community level.

1.

Location: Ethiopia

REMOTE STREETLIGHT PLANNING

In 2014 high resolution remote satellite imagery was used to more effectively plan street light interventions following a two-tiered approach aimed at improving night time dynamics and reducing protection threats in refugee camps.

Partners: Stanford University - GIS for Good program

2.

Location: Ethiopia

COMMUNITY MANUFACTURED STREETLIGHTS

In 2014, 12 members of the refugee and host community were trained in technical skills for the production, installation, and maintenance of household and community level solar-powered lights using an approach developed by Liter of Light.

Partners: Liter of Light

3.

Location: Nepal

MICROGRIDS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY AND LIGHT FOR REFUGEES

In 2014 solar-powered, community-managed, pay-as-you-go microgrid systems were used to increase refugees' access to electricity and lighting with the aim of improving protection and enhancing education and livelihoods opportunities.

Partners: Engineers Without Borders, USA, IKEA Foundation

4.
Location: Ethiopia

REFUGEE-DESIGNED COOK STOVES

In 2014, members of a Refugee Advisory Committee in Dollo Ado, Ethiopia designed and developed prototypes of their ideal cook stove together with their community. UNHCR provided technical support to improve the efficiency of their designs in order to reduce fuel consumption and harmful emissions. More prototypes were made and tested in the community.

5.
Location: Ethiopia

SUSTAINABLE FUEL SUPPLIES

Supporting UNHCR's work with host community businesses to develop a sustainable supply of cooking fuel for refugees using a locally invasive species, Prosopis Juliflora.

HOW DO YOU
MEASURE
INNOVATION?

By Samuel Perkins,
Energy Lab Coordinator

MUCH OF THE ENERGY LAB'S WORK IN 2014 FOCUSED ON CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR INNOVATION ALONG WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A NUMBER OF PROJECT PROTOTYPES. EACH PROTOTYPE WAS USED TO ANSWER A QUESTION OR SET OF QUESTIONS RELATING TO ONE OR MORE ASSUMPTIONS DEVELOPED AROUND A SOLUTION TO A SPECIFIC CHALLENGE.

Progress through the prototyping process can be measured through answering the questions linked to assumptions. One good example of this was the Liter of Light prototype training in Dollo Ado, Ethiopia. The overall goal of the project is to develop of a series of locally sustainable businesses that manufacture, sell, and install solar powered lights. In the early stages of this project, before committing large amounts of time and effort, a number of critical questions needed to be answered:

• Can members of the refugee and host community be trained to manufacture solar-powered lights if materials and tools were provided?

• Would the lights manufactured by the community be accepted?

• Could damaged lights be repaired and maintained?

• Is it possible to source materials required for the lights locally?

Answers to each of these questions – whether positive or negative – relative to the initial goal can be used to measure progress through the prototyping process. These answers will either validate or invalidate initial assumptions, which will in turn create opportunities to modify the initial approach if it continues to show potential. They can also be used to inform "Go"/ "No¬-Go" points in the process where the initial approach could be proven to be unsuitable for the specific challenge.

If the project is worth continuing, a new set of assumptions will be developed with a new set of unknowns and questions that require answering. This process is often repeated a number of times before a robust solution is found. ■

5 LESSONS LEARNED

FROM ROLLING OUT JOINT INNOVATIVE ENERGY PROJECTS

*By Amare Gebre Egziabher,
Senior Environmental
Coordinator Shelter Officer*

Through the Energy Lab, UNHCR Innovation and the Division of Program Support and Management's Energy and Environment Unit have adopted a collaborative approach to developing solutions that meet the renewable energy needs of persons of concern. This joint approach to developing and managing projects is a pretty recent phenomenon at UNHCR (just over a year old). Nevertheless, we have been able to draw some key lessons:

1. Truly effective solutions go beyond the technical; they are developed using a more holistic approach. We should think beyond implementing technical solutions and adopt a more holistic approach.

   For UNHCR to truly innovate successfully in the area of renewable energy, it is crucial that we develop a better understanding of the energy profile and political economy of refugee camps. Added to that, success is highly dependent on ensuring that an enabling environment exists for energy innovations to occur. This involves gaining a deeper understanding of what the current energy challenges are and how they relate to one another, as well as researching potential solutions while identifying those areas where genuine innovation is needed. The focus should not only be on the technical solutions, but also on the economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions.

   Taking a more holistic approach to renewable energy solutions ensures the sustainability of any solutions implemented. There is an absolute need to reinforce such an approach to capture more and more of the energy poverty issues and to implement solutions accordingly.

2. In order to create, lasting, sustainable solutions, it is important to include all actors from the outset.

   Developing and implementing solutions that last is highly dependent on meaningful engagement with field offices at different levels for buy-in. Inclusion of the people who are ready and willing to drive the change is a must from the outset. Linked with this is a clear need to create a sense of ownership of the innovation project for achieving and sustaining success. In other words, there is a need to provide more opportunities for refugees themselves to engage in new and innovative approaches. There is a need to measure and gauge the level of engagement with all internal stakeholders – namely field offices and persons of concern – in our joint innovation projects.

3. Smooth implementation of projects requires clear definitions of roles and responsibilities.

   Defining or clarifying the line between the Energy and Environment Unit's core responsibilities and the joint UNHCR Innovation/DPSM innovation projects is an important factor for smooth implementation. The joint Energy work plan should maximize time to focus on energy-related issues and to avoid duplication of efforts. Joint collaborations – for example the Engineers Without Borders challenge, the Safe from the Start initiative, biogas, and other energy interventions – ensure that our interventions are addressing the bigger picture as the need is driven by field offices.

4. Measurement at all stages of the project is key.

   There is a need to consistently track, evaluate, and celebrate both small and large accomplishments of innovation projects and correlate them with the overall expected outcomes of the innovation project at all times. If proven successful, we need to think about how innovations will be sustained, adapted, or replicated.

5. Taking innovative energy projects to scale requires robust financial mechanisms.

   Scaling up energy innovations is both complex and challenging. However, one must not underestimate the importance of having mechanisms in place for flexible, yet robust financing. ∎

LINK LAB:

A collaboration between UNHCR's Innovation Unit and the Division of Information Systems and Telecommunications.

Connects refugees and displaced communities, UNHCR, external partners to one another through information communications technologies.

1.
HELP. UNHCR.ORG

Location: Costa Rica

An online platform that delivers relevant and easy-to-access information to refugees based on their country of interest.

help.unhcr.org was the winning idea of the first UNHCR Ideas Challenge and began testing in Costa Rica in 2014.
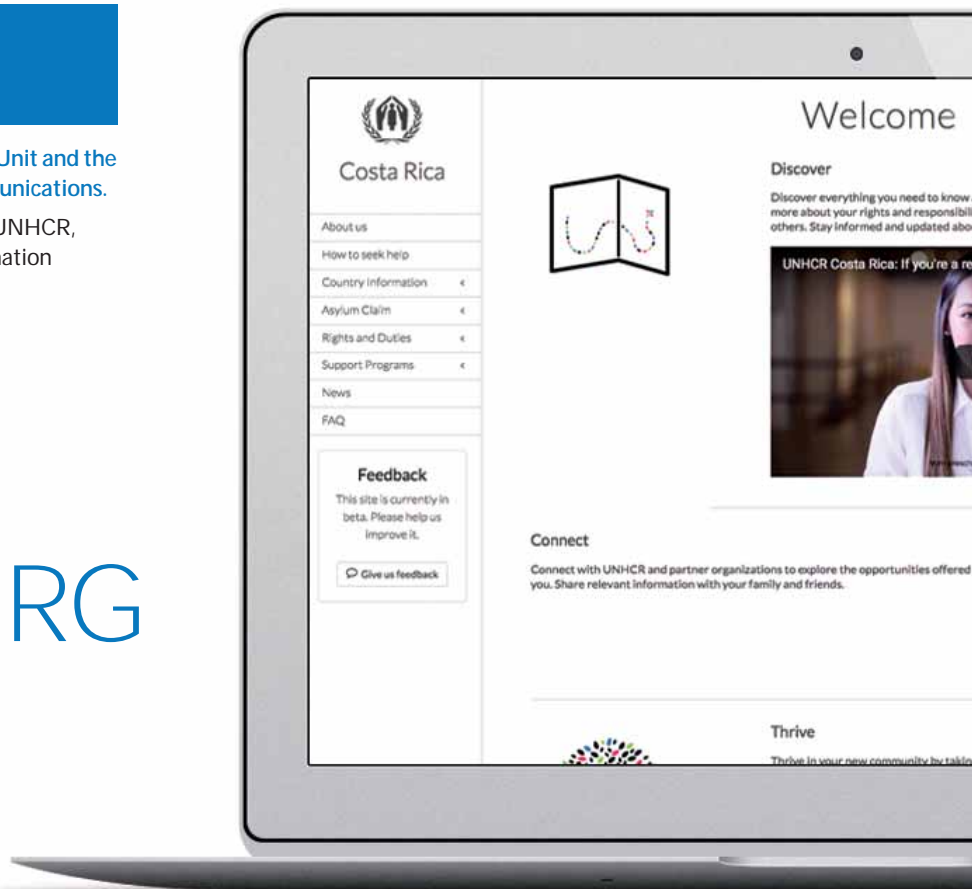
2.
RELIEFLINK

Location: Mauritania, Ethiopia

In 2014, UPS Trackpad® technology was tested for its ability to track the distribution of food and non-food items using mobile devices, and then link distribution data with UNHCR's registration data.

Partners: UPS Foundation
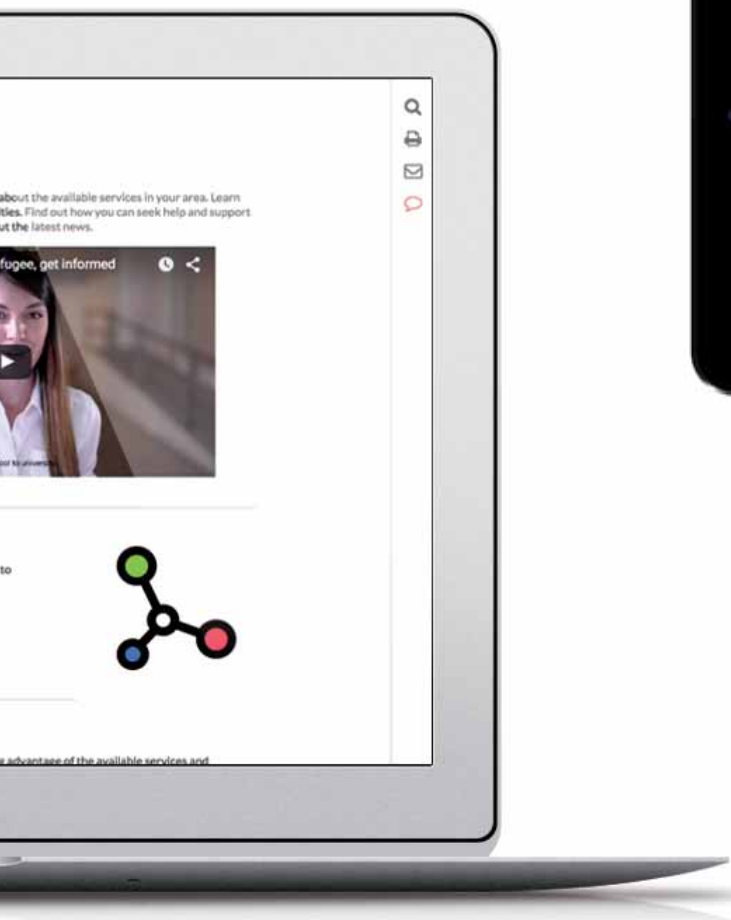
3.
UNHCR
AXIS **Location:** Global

An internal data visualization platform that enables customizable dashboards of Global Strategy indicators. Axis is a joint project of UNHCR Innovation and the Division of International Protection.

HOW TO SETUP AND TRANSITION AN INNOVATION LAB:
LESSONS LEARNED

By Olivier Delarue and Christopher Earney, Lead and Co-Lead of UNHCR Innovation

Conversations on the need for Labs often begin around projects that look at very specific core competencies, sometimes with partner organizations with whom there is already established contact. Many times, there have been suggestions for new Labs that could focus on data visualization, 3D printing, or policy, for example. Setting up the Self-Reliance Lab was pretty much like this.

The Lab was absorbed into the co-owning Division, a handover took place, and a transition was planned. Nevertheless, the Lab is no longer operational in the way that it once was. This is neither good nor bad, but more perplexing. The projects continued to run, which is ultimately a good thing, but why did the Lab cease to function in its original incarnation?

In thinking through this and other examples, we've outlined some key recommendations for setting up and transitioning Innovation Labs:

1. Labs should not be run from remote locations from the onset. Unlike other Labs, the Self-Reliance Lab was managed from Thailand, away from the Innovation Unit and the co-owning Division in Geneva.

2. It is crucial to effectively manage partners who engage directly with the Lab, its projects, and staff. Expectations need to align with the strategies of co-owning Divisions.

3. Labs should be transitioned when they have reached a certain maturity and if there is an ongoing need to innovate in this area. The decision to transition a Lab should be made once the Lab passes certain milestones, or matches certain criteria.

4. When transitioning a Lab, it is important to maintain comprehensive communications and engagement activities with the co-owning Division.

5. UNHCR Innovation must extend its full support equally across Labs. In comparison with the other Innovation Labs, The Self-Reliance Lab did not receive the same level of support from UNHCR Innovation.

6. The need for the Lab should emerge from the respective Division and not UNHCR Innovation.

Even where Labs no longer exist, projects will still exist in one form or another. Labs may fall into the trap of focusing on managing projects from the onset, rather than focusing on ideas and developing those ideas using an innovation methodology. In that respect, Labs can serve as catalysts in bringing new projects into UNHCR. However, at the same time, they could miss the opportunity to become a safe space to experiment in collaboration with other Pillars and Labs. This may also mean that innovation methodologies won't be fully absorbed into co-owning Divisions. ∎

INNOVATION FELLOWSHIP

NURTURING THE SPIRIT OF INNOVATION WITHIN UNHCR

20+ people who work for UNHCR (on either staff or affiliate contracts) are selected through a competitive application process to participate in the **Innovation Fellowship**. Over the course of the year-long Fellowship, Innovation Fellows identify a challenge facing their operations and apply methods of human-centered design and prototyping to address that challenge.

2 trainings   **19** graduates   **12** projects   **20** intakes
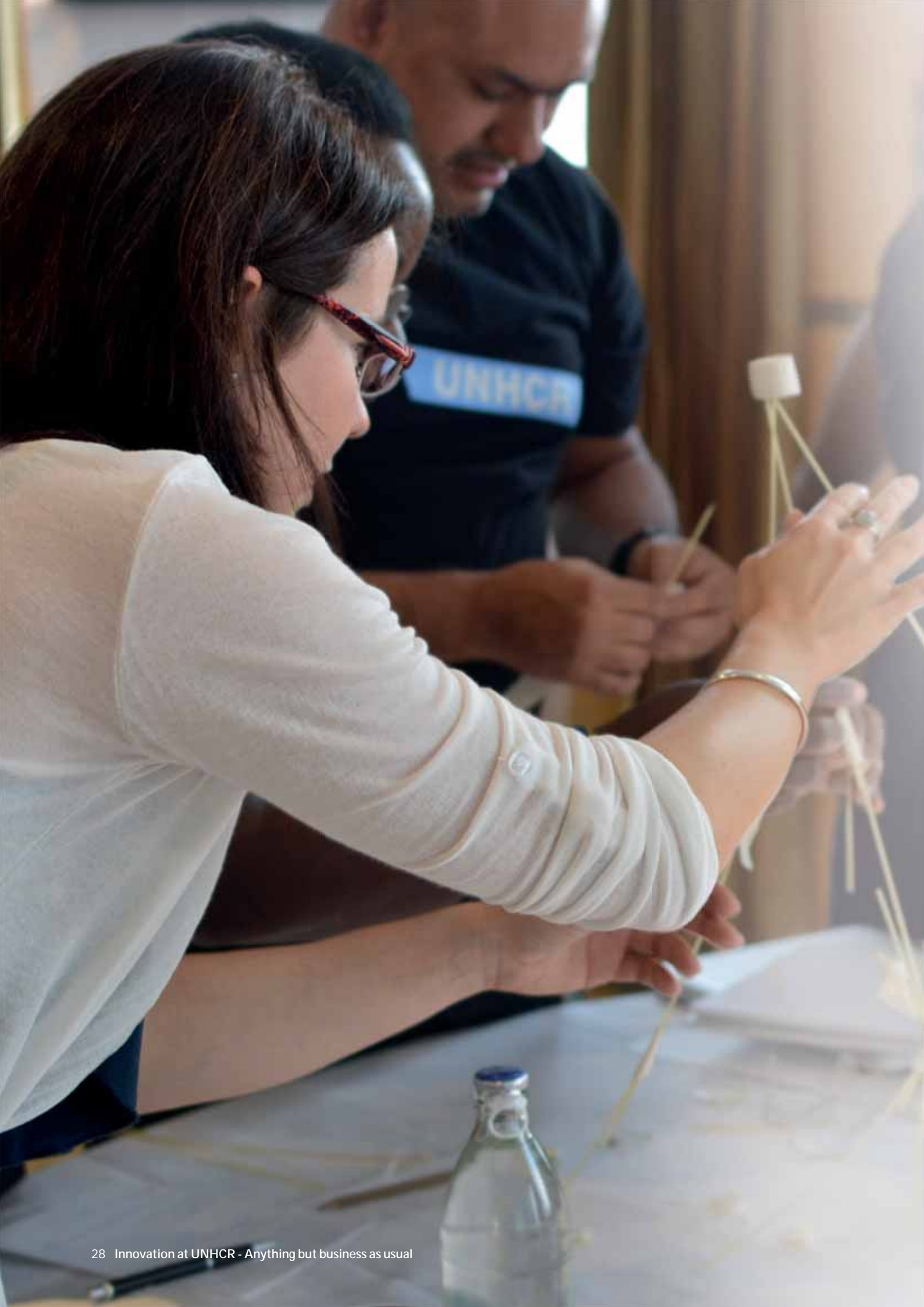
LIFELONG LEARNING:
FOSTERING THE CULTURE OF INNOVATION AT UNHCR

By Joel Nielsen, Senior Staff Development Officer, Global Learning Centre

UNHCR IS CURRENTLY MANAGING A PORTFOLIO OF INNOVATION TRAININGS AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES THROUGH ITS GLOBAL LEARNING CENTRE (GLC): MOST NOTABLY, THE ONE-YEAR TRAINING PROGRAM FOR UNHCR INNOVATION FELLOWS.

This is run once a year at the beginning of the UNHCR Innovation Fellowship. The program aims to give participants a comprehensive understanding of the innovation process, the innovation 'toolbox', and the concept of human-centered design.

The training is intense, hands-on, and high-octane. It's very practical with several cycles of ideation using cards, music, and other association tools; prioritization; development of prototypes, analysis of user feedback on prototypes, and, finally, refinement of prototypes before venturing out onto the streets of Bangkok for even more end-user feedback.

Other learning activities include a webinar series on different aspects of innovation e.g. 'prototyping', the 'design challenge', and 'crowd sourcing' among others. These webinars have seen some of the highest participant numbers since the GLC started to run webinars on a regular basis.

Finally, the GLC in collaboration with the Innovation Unit runs a Core Competency Learning Program (CCLP) once a year for those interested in innovation. The program had close to 100 participants in 2014 with content closely aligned with the Innovation Fellowship program.

Innovation Fellows (and other staff/affiliates interested in innovation) are encouraged to participate in GLC's change and project management programs as these provide valuable perspectives, concepts, and tools to help navigate innovations to successful implementation. ◾

INNOVATION FELLOWS CLASS OF 2014

Yunesti Handayani is addressing the challenge of how we can engage returned Afghan refugees, particularly young people and women.

She is working on opening an InnovationSpace for returnees to meet, exchange ideas, and create their own programs.

Samuel Gonzaga is addressing the challenge of supplying water to the Kobe refugee camp in a more sustainable way. He is working on creating a hybrid solar-powered water pump for cleaner, more efficient access to water for refugees.

Alexis Ariza is working on finding a way to merge UNHCR's project's financial information with performance and earmarked funding into the same frame, in a way that every office in the field can easily use it. He's working on RBM2 - Results Based Management Matrix - a tool designed to monitor the performance of offices and projects at various levels.

Valentina Duque is working on finding a way to make refugees in Costa Rica aware of the rights and services they are entitled to by developing an integrated outreach strategy that uses websites, videos, and SMS to communicate with refugees.

Gerard Moya Anton and Stanyslas Matayo have teamed up to make the procurement of relief items more attuned to the needs on the ground by creating an SMS system to update warehouse databases quickly and easily.

Anup Kumar Aryal is addressing the challenge of inadequate sanitation in remote refugee registration sites. He's creating a mobile biodigester latrine that can be transported when necessary to registration sites.

"For me, the process was very important – more important than the technology."

Samuel Gonzaga

Khandaker Aminul Islam is addressing the challenge of how we can more accurately assess the vulnerability of refugee families in Eastern Sudan. He'd like to rethink the current definitions of "vulnerability" and "livelihoods" to ensure the inclusion of those most in need.

Oukoum Nadjombe Gbatti wants to find a way to make it easier for refugees to get feedback on their case status or alerts to collect documents without having to travel to a UNHCR field office. He is working on an SMS Information Management System that would better track conversations between refugees and UNHCR staff.

Rebecca Kitcher wants to find a way to make refugees in Krisan, Ghana aware of livelihoods opportunities in the community. She is working on creating a livelihoods 'Help Desk' that shares information about jobs, training, and microfinance opportunities with camp residents.

Anicet Adjahossou wants to find a way to create a feeling of community within refugee settlements by rethinking the way refugee communities are designed. He is prototyping a U-shaped design, which is more culturally inclusive than the rigid grid structure of camps.
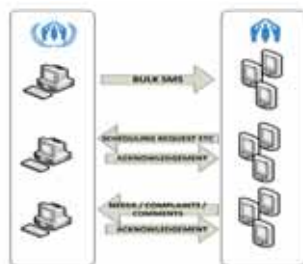
Agnes Kanyonyi wants to find a way to provide safe access to education for young women in Ulyankulu, Tanzania. She is building a sustainable, creative space for young women in the community so that former victims of SGBV can obtain a quality education.

Diego Batista, Mariann Urban, Maarouf Issaka-Touré, Natalia Baal, Erin Hayba, and Jad Ghosn have teamed up to address the challenge of how we can find a cost-effective or easy way for Syrian refugees to access basic information from UNHCR by building a mobile app that creates a free and easy line of communication between UNHCR and refugees.

Markus Kainradl wants to find a way to create access to a bigger market for refugee micro-entrepreneurs to sell their products by matching the supply of refugee micro-entrepreneurs' hand-made craft items to UNHCR's demand for promotional merchandise. He is working with Innovation Fellow, Valentina Duque on this project.

ANICET ADJAHOSSOU'S dream job was to work in the humanitarian sector. Yet when he was finally hired by ICRC as a volunteer in 2008 to help build a refugee camp in Burundi, the experience was underwhelming. Having been trained in engineering and urban planning, he was hoping his skills could help make the place more liveable. But the new camp had already been designed, without leaving much room for changes. He found it too military-like; its rigid grid structure didn't enable community building. From a planner's perspective, the setup didn't make sense.

"You have to be flexible and take into account the lifestyle of these populations, and be able to bring certain changes" he says.

Two years later, Benin-born Adjahossou was following a training session on emergencies with ICRC when it dawned on him he was being taught the same design and building processes he had seen implemented in Burundi. "I had a wake-up call," he remembers. "The training manual featured a rather traditional way of organizing the camps." If he was to build better camps, he'd have to find a way to break the rules.

That opportunity came in 2012, as he was working for UNHCR in the Dollo Ado refugee camp in Ethiopia, which hosts over 200,000 refugees from neighbouring Somalia. During the peak of the emergency crisis, workers had to accommodate thousands of new refugees, and the camp was growing fast. Adjahossou convinced his colleagues to start a small test project within one of the camp's new sections, in order to experiment with a different layout. Together with a team of anthropologists, he met with groups of refugees to discuss their needs and identify housing solutions that would be better suited to their lifestyles.

Refugees eventually selected a layout that organized houses into a series of U-shaped compounds. The new design would facilitate interactions between families by providing larger communal spaces, but also enhance security by removing houses off the main streets. And refugees could even have enough space to care for a small garden in each compound.

Implementing a new design during the emergency phase wasn't easy, and Adjahossou had to work hard to convince his colleagues the idea could work. The approach also required that he spend more time on the ground to make sure each structure was being built according to the plan. But when the emergency calmed down, more workers understood the need for durable housing solutions.

"People started understanding the logic behind the changes when the time came to stabilize the camps," he recalls.

In 2014, Adjahossou was selected as an Innovation Fellow by UNHCR Innovation and UNHCR's Global Learning Center, which allowed him to spend more time refining the new camp design.

In addition to compounds, he created neighbourhoods and villages (each village being comprised of 10 neighbourhoods, in turn formed by 8 compounds, each made of 13 houses) and made sure these new concepts also translated into changes in the vocabulary used by humanitarian workers. "Blocs and sectors

SPOTLIGHT:

ANICET ADJAHOSSOU
PHYSICAL PLANNING/SHELTER OFFICER

didn't mean anything to refugees," he says (he also prefers not to use the term "camp" anymore, and instead talks about "sustainable human settlements.") He completed the design with a street grid, as well as key facilities such as schools, water distribution points, markets and health posts.

Adjahossou is now working on applying his methodology to other camps managed by UNHCR, notably in Kakuma, Kenya. Among key questions to answer is to know whether the compound model can be replicated with other communities and cultures. "You have to be flexible and take into account the lifestyle of these populations, and be able to bring certain changes," he says.

In the future, he would like to work on enabling a better integration of refugee settlements within host communities, thereby breaking the isolation that refugees living in camps often experience. By using another tool in the designer's arsenal, the master plan, Adjahossou would like to bring refugees and local populations to share core resources, such as water, electricity, education and health services. Under an integrated vision, hospitals, schools and markets would no longer be built at the centre of the camp, but rather in strategic points accessible by all. This approach would also involve bringing the humanitarian and development sectors together to work on a concerted approach for community development.

But for now, Adjahossou is focusing on writing down the lessons learned during the Dollo Ado experience and hopefully change the guidelines used by humanitarian agencies when setting up new camps.

"Our indicators and standards are not functional anymore, but nobody dares changing them," he deplores.

He's convinced agencies can both answer the immediate needs of new refugee populations, and plan for the longer term. "My goal is to be able to quickly set up a sustainable camp, even during an emergency," he says. ■

ENGAGEMENT

DRIVING DIALOGUE AND THE EXCHANGE OF IDEAS

HOW CAN
# ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND SERVICES

By Lauren Parater, Associate Innovation Engagement Officer

PROVIDED BY UNHCR AND PARTNERS BE IMPROVED FOR REFUGEES AND PERSONS OF CONCERN RESIDING IN URBAN AREAS?

Help.unhcr.org was selected as the winning idea of the very first UNHCR Ideas Challenge, which addressed the need for better access to information and services for refugees and persons of concern in urban areas. The idea proposes a simple, user-friendly, and centrally maintained platform that delivers information to persons of concern about the services that are available to them in the host country. The website will comprise a wide variety of up-to-date information on office location, services, legal support, status determination, etc., based on their country of interest.

Following the selection of the winning idea, multiple focus groups were held to understand the needs and expectations that persons of concern had for the website. Through understanding the desires of persons of concern in accessing information, UNHCR developed a collaborative approach where persons of concern were involved in all stages of the project design. Three website designs were created and presented to participants of the focus groups, who were asked to rank them and provide feedback. The most preferred design was selected in July 2014, and reflected the opinion that it was simple, easy to use, and intuitive for users. UNHCR Costa Rica will officially launch the prototype of help.unhcr.org in March 2015, simultaneously with a larger communications campaign run by UNHCR Innovation Fellow, Valentina Duque, Durable Solutions Associate based in San Jose, Costa Rica. Help.unhcr.org highlights the success of involving persons of concern at all stages of the innovation process - from the identification of the challenge, to evaluation and the creation of a user-centred solution. ■

"
Innovation is anything [ ]
business as usual.
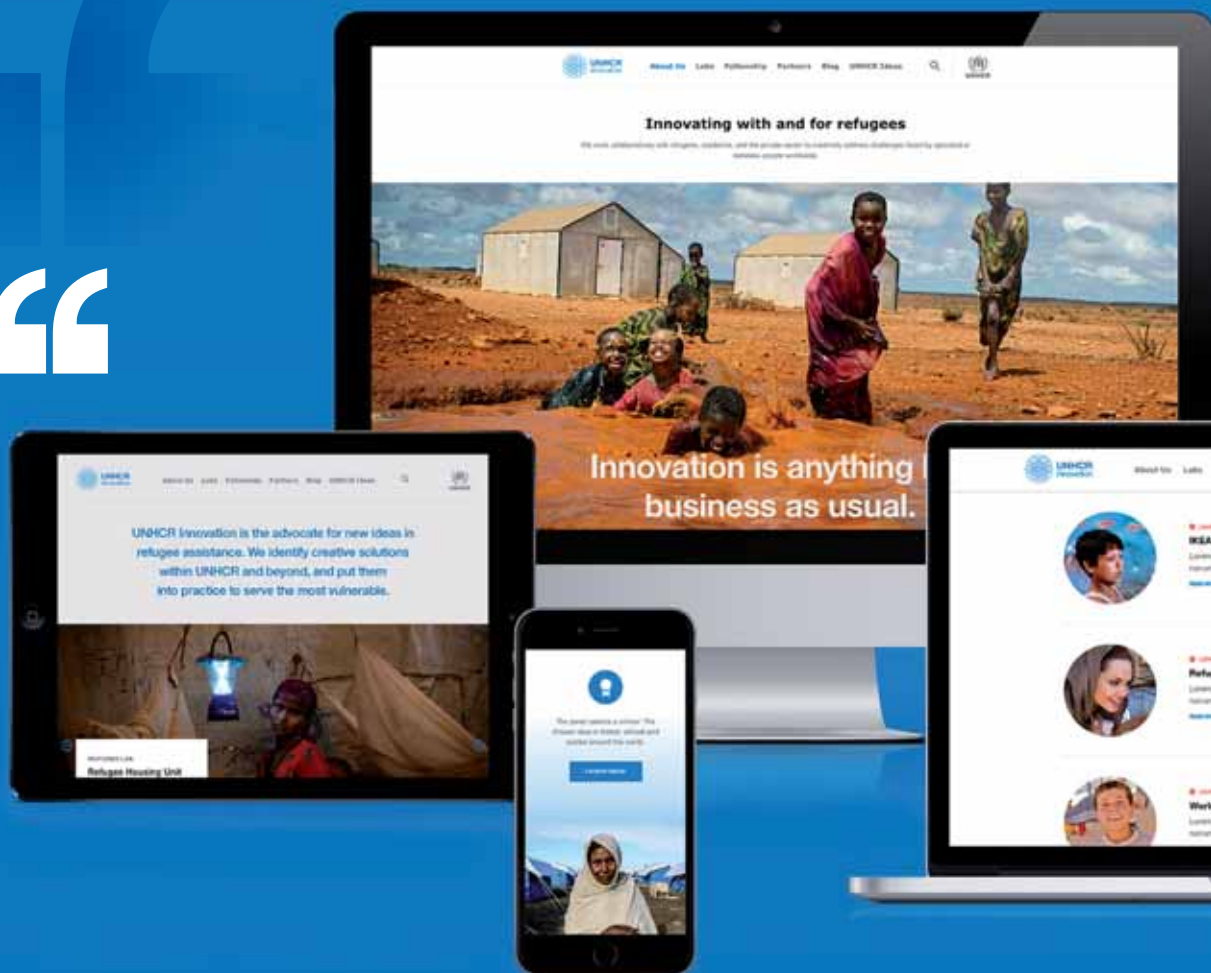
DRIVING
DIALOGUE

Innovation thrives when there is open dialogue, and so UNHCR Innovation's Engagement Pillar leverages various tools and channels to drive conversations about innovation both inside and outside UNHCR.

A new subdomain dedicated to documenting innovation and innovators within UNHCR launched in December.

An increasing number of UNHCR staff, partners and advocates, refugees, and the broader humanitarian community used Facebook, Twitter, and Google Hangouts to engage with UNHCR's Innovation Unit throughout 2014.

Social Media Follower growth 2014:

Facebook
548.5%

Twitter
128.4%

UNHCR's Innovation Unit launched a Google Hangout series on humanitarian innovation in 2014.

UNHCR's Innovation Unit launched a series of Twitter chats in collaboration with the Energy & Environment Unit to foster dialogue and exchange of ideas on how to meet the energy needs of refugees.

SEM Fund
@semfund

Follow

@UNHCRInnovation @GreenRICo @LuminAIDLab @PracticalAction Thank you for starting the conversation and giving us a space to ask the questions

4:50 PM - 3 Jul 2014

FOSTERING INTERNAL ENGAGEMENT AND IDEA EXCHANGE

UNHCR'S ONLINE CROWDSOURCED IDEAS PLATFORM, UNHCR IDEAS, GENERATES IDEAS FROM REFUGEE COMMUNITIES, UNHCR STAFF, AND PARTNERS.

4 challenges   **313** ideas   **1,850** users

UNHCR Ideas Challenge Process

UNHCR Divisions issue a challenge.

Refugees, UNHCR staff, and partners post solutions. Users rate, discuss and even collaborate.

A panel of experts from UNHCR and partner organizations selects the top ideas for practical implementation.

The panel selects a winner. The chosen idea is prototyped, and tested.

Find out more at unhcrideas.org

HOW CAN BETTER OPPORTUNITIES BE PROVIDED FOR REFUGEES TO

LEARN AND USE A NEW LANGUAGE,

BOTH IN SCHOOL AND IN THEIR DAILY LIVES?

By Lauren Parater, Associate Innovation Engagement Officer

I N APRIL 2014, WE ANNOUNCED THE WINNER OF THE IKEA FOUNDATION-SPONSORED CHALLENGE FOCUSED ON OVERCOMING LANGUAGE BARRIERS. THE WINNING IDEA, "UNHCR TABLETS FOR EDUCATION" PROPOSES LOADING TABLETS WITH EDUCATIONAL APPLICATIONS, VIDEOS, AND AUDIO RECORDINGS TO HELP CHILDREN BETTER INTERACT WITH A SECOND LANGUAGE.

The effectiveness of utilizing tablets for educational purposes in a refugee context is currently being tested by the Learn Lab through the Instant Network Schools and Ideas Box programs. However, these solutions do not directly focus on second language acquisition. The winning idea emphasizes language acquisition as an essential tool in the orientation of refugees to a new country, and will combine blended learning between traditional and information technology learning opportunities.

Prior to testing, UNHCR Innovation and the Education Unit commissioned a detailed review of available language learning apps. We contracted Dr. Martha Ferede to develop a report on the use of Android tablets in refugee camps and out-of-school contexts as tools to support language learning and retention. The idea was submitted by Ioannis Papachristodoulou, a Senior IT Assistant based in Athens Greece. Ioannis will develop the idea as a UNHCR Innovation Fellow in 2015. He has so far identified refugee transit centres and other potential areas for testing.

UNHCR Innovation initiated conversations with numerous partners to identify assumptions for testing and logistic models for application in the refugee context. Greece was selected as an initial testing site to provide the opportunity for language acquisition outside the traditional classroom model. As the closest access point to Western Europe, thousands of refugees travel to Greece before asylum procedures can be processed in neighboring countries or regions. "Tablets for Education" will be delivered as a program for young refugees and displaced persons at transit centres where they begin the integration process into Europe, and are eager to strengthen their language skills.

The first prototype of "Tablets for Education" will begin in Greece in 2015, while simultaneous testing within Instant Network Schools will begin after the initial test. Refinement and scaling of the "Tablets for Education" model will be aligned with the continuation of Ioannis' Fellowship project throughout 2015. ∎

HOW DO YOU
ENGAGE
INNOVATORS?

By Corinne Gray,
Innovation Engagement Officer

THE WORD "ENGAGEMENT" CAN BE A BIT OF A HEAD-SCRATCHER, BUT THE DECISION TO USE THIS WORD AND NOT "COMMUNICATION" TO DESCRIBE THE ACTIVITIES OF THIS PILLAR IS A VERY STRATEGIC ONE.

At its very core, engagement implies a two-way relationship and exchange of ideas, while communication suggests a one-way transfer of information with less focus on relationship building. In short, communication creates a monologue, while engagement has a distinct focus on fostering dialogue.
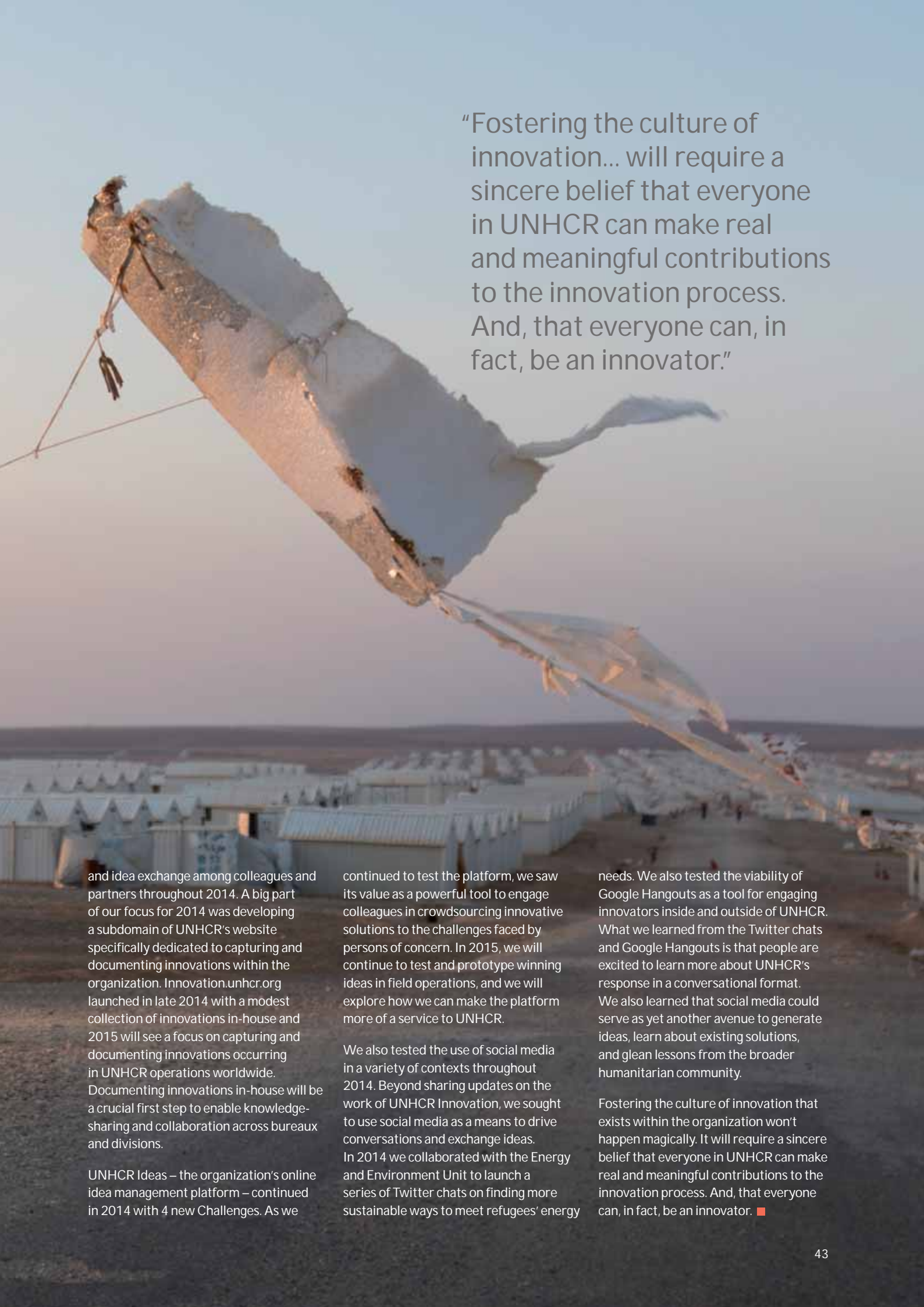
Why does this distinction matter?

It matters because innovation cannot thrive in silos. Innovation thrives when there is an enabling environment comprised of several actors across sectors who talk to one another and share ideas so that efforts aren't duplicated. And, for this ecosystem to develop and mature, we need mechanisms that facilitate collaboration and knowledge-sharing among bureaux and divisions. We need to foster and build relationships, both inside and outside UNHCR.

Relationships matter because *people* are at the core of innovation. It is people who have ideas about how our organization can operate more efficiently and sustainably. And, it is people who will then develop these ideas from concepts to solutions. To truly

foster the spirit of innovation that exists within UNHCR, we have to engage people. We can't just talk at them; we have to create channels that allow them to talk back to us and to one another.

We also need to engage current and potential partners who make up a crucial part of the ecosystem that enables innovation. When we create dialogue with our partners, we show them that their value to us as an organization goes beyond financial commitments. We show them that their expertise is equally important, and that we see them as collaborators in generating innovative solutions to the complex challenges of persons of concern.

The Engagement Pillar focused on testing various channels and tools to drive dialogue

"Fostering the culture of innovation… will require a sincere belief that everyone in UNHCR can make real and meaningful contributions to the innovation process. And, that everyone can, in fact, be an innovator."

and idea exchange among colleagues and partners throughout 2014. A big part of our focus for 2014 was developing a subdomain of UNHCR's website specifically dedicated to capturing and documenting innovations within the organization. Innovation.unhcr.org launched in late 2014 with a modest collection of innovations in-house and 2015 will see a focus on capturing and documenting innovations occurring in UNHCR operations worldwide. Documenting innovations in-house will be a crucial first step to enable knowledge-sharing and collaboration across bureaux and divisions.

UNHCR Ideas – the organization's online idea management platform – continued in 2014 with 4 new Challenges. As we continued to test the platform, we saw its value as a powerful tool to engage colleagues in crowdsourcing innovative solutions to the challenges faced by persons of concern. In 2015, we will continue to test and prototype winning ideas in field operations, and we will explore how we can make the platform more of a service to UNHCR.

We also tested the use of social media in a variety of contexts throughout 2014. Beyond sharing updates on the work of UNHCR Innovation, we sought to use social media as a means to drive conversations and exchange ideas. In 2014 we collaborated with the Energy and Environment Unit to launch a series of Twitter chats on finding more sustainable ways to meet refugees' energy needs. We also tested the viability of Google Hangouts as a tool for engaging innovators inside and outside of UNHCR. What we learned from the Twitter chats and Google Hangouts is that people are excited to learn more about UNHCR's response in a conversational format. We also learned that social media could serve as yet another avenue to generate ideas, learn about existing solutions, and glean lessons from the broader humanitarian community.

Fostering the culture of innovation that exists within the organization won't happen magically. It will require a sincere belief that everyone in UNHCR can make real and meaningful contributions to the innovation process. And, that everyone can, in fact, be an innovator. ■

CASE STUDY:
BIOMETRIC CASH ASSISTANCE
UNHCR JORDAN

IN NOVEMBER 2014 UNHCR'S INNOVATION PARTNERS COMPLETED A FIELD MISSION TO JORDAN WHERE THEY MET WITH UNHCR COLLEAGUES IN AMMAN, AND THE CAMPS AT ZA'ATARI AND AZRAQ, AND DOCUMENTED INNOVATIONS HAPPENING ACROSS THE OPERATION.

1 DEFINE CHALLENGES

Ensuring cash assistance reaches only those who need it the most.

Over 600,000 Syrians currently live in Jordan, a small kingdom with only seven million nationals. Around 80 percent of those refugees reside in urban areas, interspersed among Jordanians and other permanent residents. Some have been able to find jobs. Many more rely on cash assistance to pay for food and water, and cover other basic needs. More often than not, if a refugee is receiving cash assistance in Jordan, that financial support has come from UNHCR. Last year the agency was responsible for around 75 percent of cash transfer volume in Jordan. More than $50 million were distributed to approximately 30,000 refugee households or 105,000 individuals. A further $16 million have gone out in cash assistance in the first four months of 2015. Overall, since UNHCR began distributing cash assistance in the

Hashemite kingdom in 2008, refugees there have received $118.7 million in support. But before the program could be rolled-out to include Syrian refugees in 2011, it needed to be updated.

UNHCR first began distributing cash assistance in Jordan in 2008. Back then, recipients were mainly Iraqi refugees. Like most Syrians who would come after them, the Iraqis had been driven out of their own country by war, and had settled amongst urban populations in Jordan, usually in sub-standard housing or apartments. UNHCR carried out assessments to ascertain who was most in need of financial assistance, before supplying those approved for the program with an ATM card and PIN number, with which they could access a monthly allowance. By 2009, over 5000 Iraqi families were receiving an average of $210 a month.

This was one of the first large-scale UNHCR cash assistance programs of its kind. It became clear just how fortunate it was that the system had been set-up three years later, when thousands of Syrian refugees started entering Jordan every week. Many Syrians also needed cash assistance. UNHCR was able to quickly leverage its cash assistance system to include them – following one important change to its distribution method.

The change was needed because especially at the beginning of the Syrian civil war, some Syrians regularly travelled between the Hashemite kingdom and Daraa, a city just north of the border to Jordan. Only refugees living in Jordan were eligible for the program, however. UNHCR therefore had to find a distribution method that guaranteed that its limited resources reached only eligible recipients.

2 IDENTIFY SOLUTIONS

Using biometric technology to make it easier for refugees to access cash.

Abandoning cash assistance altogether in favor of goods like food or clothes was not an option, because the practice of distributing cash is a particularly effective form of aid. It avoids overhead costs, such as transport, storage and distribution costs, so that of every $100 donated, $98 go directly to the refugees.

Instead, UNHCR decided to update its system, and found a solution in iris scanning ATMs. Cairo Amman Bank – the partner for UNHCR's cash assistance project – had pioneered the use of biometrics in its banking system, by introducing iris scan technology in 85 branches, and 200 ATMs across the kingdom. The agency decided to capitalize on this technology, because using biometric identity verification avoids many of the issues that can occur with bank cards. Indeed, PIN codes can be forgotten, and cards can be lost, or left in the machine for too long. A bankcard can also be given to someone else. This meant that when the cash assistance program was introduced for Iraqi refugees, UNHCR had to regularly carry out so-called 'presence checks' to make sure those who had been allocated cash assistance were still the ones receiving it.

Those presence checks become obsolete with biometric identity verification. Using iris scans guarantees that allocated cash reaches intended recipients not just once, but every time money is withdrawn from the account. Plus, because there was an agreement between UNHCR and the bank already in place, the transition to the new technology could begin straight away without the need for further contracts.

"Using iris scans guarantees that allocated cash reaches intended recipients not just once, but every time money is withdrawn from the account."

③ TEST SOLUTIONS

The first country in the world to use iris scan technology for a refugee cash assistance program.

Only 200 Syrians were enrolled in the new cash distribution system in June 2012, as part of the test phase. This number was then augmented to a few thousand by the end of 2012. After this, once UNHCR was confident the system worked, iris scanning identity verification became the standard method for withdrawing cash assistance. Only a small percentage of refugees – those with congenital eye diseases, for instance – continue to use bank cards instead.

Following the change, Jordan has become the first country in the world to use iris scan technology for a refugee cash assistance program. Post distribution monitoring (PRM) reports show that 91 percent of beneficiaries are satisfied with the new method of cash distribution. Almost all welcome being able to choose how to spend their money.

④ REFINE SOLUTIONS

Finding a more efficient process for enrollment.

Overall, the transition has therefore proven a great success. Nonetheless, there is still room for improvement. For instance, the enrollment phase continues to take too much time. Thousands of refugees cannot be sent to register at one bank branch at once. Yet, particularly in winter when more philanthropists would like to provide assistance and see that assistance reach refugees immediately, delays in enrollment are problematic.

At the moment, UNHCR tries to send refugees to different branches across the country, in a dispersal pattern that least inconveniences them. The system could be further improved, however, for example by connecting the payment system to UNHCR's registration database, which uses the same system for biometric registration. Discussions about this are ongoing.

⑤ SCALE SOLUTIONS

"Cash on Wheels"

In the end, though, the refugee crisis situation in Jordan continually changes. The way cash assistance is distributed will therefore also continue to be developed in parallel, so that it constantly best meets current needs.

UNHCR is now bringing its biometric cash assistance to refugees in the camps through "Cash on Wheels", making it even easier for refugees in need to access the cash they need to support their families.

"Overall, the transition has therefore proven a great success. Nonetheless, there is still room for improvement."
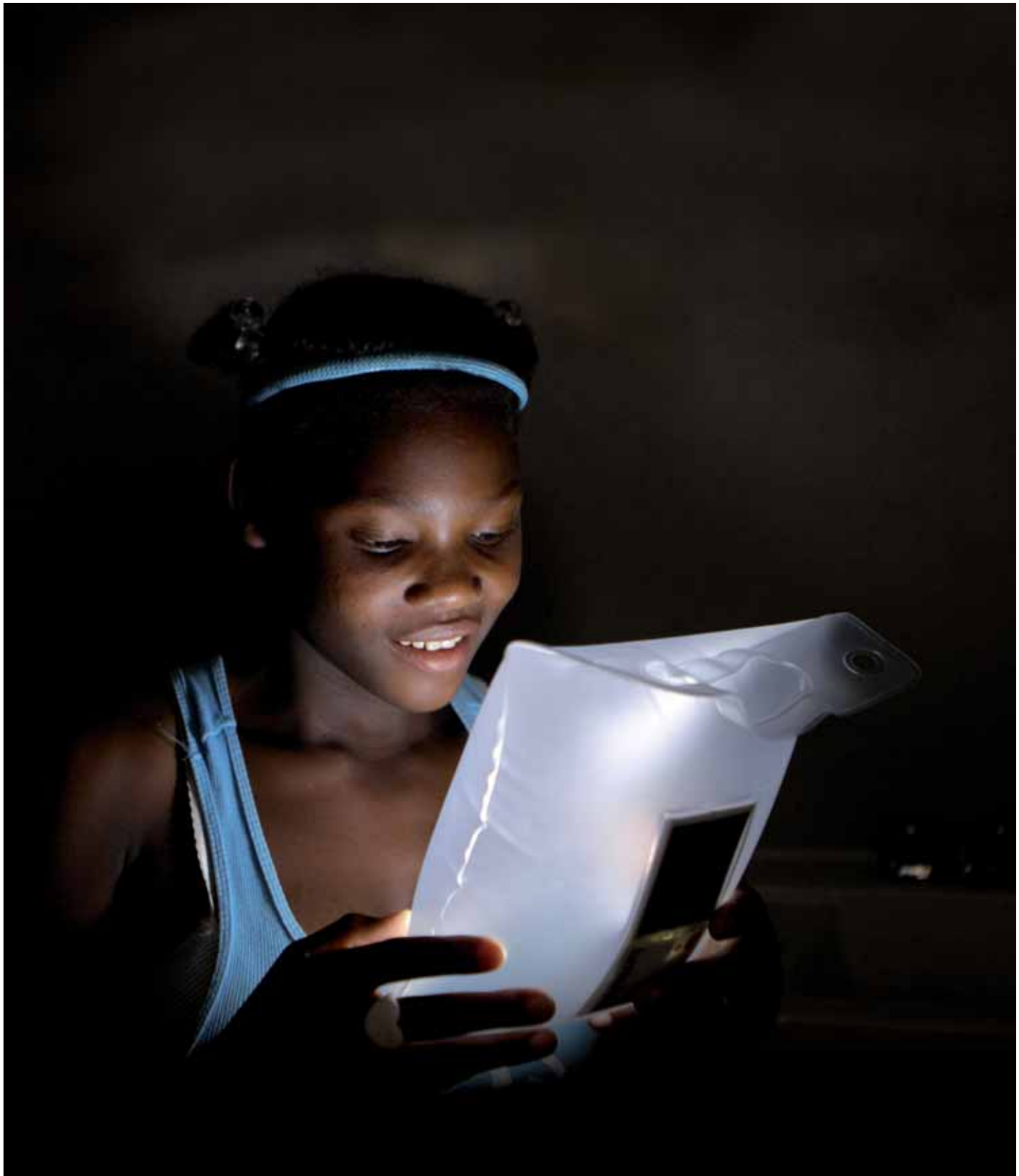
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Full descriptions of the innovation projects detailed in this publication can be found at innovation.unhcr.org