



# Building Evidence for Scaling

**Response Innovation Lab**

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# Executive Summary

Despite an increase in funding and support, few humanitarian innovations have successfully scaled beyond the pilot stage. There are many reasons for this, including a lack of funding targeted at scaling innovation within the sector.

Evidence is one important piece of the scaling puzzle. For any innovator looking to scale, evidence is needed to inform the scaling journey, generate support (including funding), and win allies. However, there is a lack of consensus between donors about the types of evidence required at the scaling stage. Taking into account the complexities of the context, this paper is written for innovators (including individual innovators, groups, those working within organizations and across entities), working in any location. It provides practical and positive guidance on what humanitarian innovators themselves can do to address the evidence piece of the scaling puzzle.

The paper begins with a short discussion of what we mean by scaling and why it is not appropriate for every innovation to scale. The paper then outlines the different types of evidence that are important to different audiences, and some of the factors that innovators should consider in prioritizing evidence.

In section three, the paper explores how innovators provide evidence for impact, noting that we need to think broadly about what impact means. While evidence of impact is often important for influencing donors and other stakeholders, there may also be other priorities. Sections four and five outline seven other options, which include evidence that the solution is important and evidence that organizational structures are in place to support ethics, sustainability, team, connections, and learning.

In this way, the paper **seeks to reframe the demand for evidence, not as a donor-imposed burden, but as a tool in an innovator's toolkit.** It highlights:

- **Evidence:** Scaling is a multi-stakeholder process and the purpose of evidence is to inform the decision-making processes of **all** stakeholders.
- **Variation:** A one-size-fits-all approach to evidence-generation for scaling is unhelpful. Multiple factors determine what evidence types are useful for the scaling of each individual innovation. Priorities should be determined by the innovators themselves based on the user, distribution model, revenue model and planned pathway to scale of their innovations.
- **Impact:** A broad array of methodologies are available to assess how an innovation project contributes to change at the individual, community, organizational, sector or global level. The way that an innovator defines and measures impact will determine the scaling trajectory of an innovation.
- **Beyond impact:** The paper outlines the seven other types of evidence an innovator should consider generating in order to meet the evidence needs of stakeholders and decision makers. These fall into two broad categories: evidence that the solution is important, and evidence that there are structures in place to implement the solution effectively.

# 1. Introduction

When a humanitarian response is slow, ineffective, or inefficient, the effects can be critical. **Humanitarian innovation is an important approach that provides space for change**, allowing individuals and organizations to think beyond the status quo and design and create new and better ways of working with affected communities and responding to disasters.

**Humanitarian innovation has rapidly increased in profile over the past decade** and there are an increasing number of humanitarian innovations and innovation initiatives: by external innovators, within humanitarian organizations, and through collaborative innovation projects. Humanitarian innovations are designed and implemented by individuals closest to crises, as well as those located further afield.

Scaling is not required for these innovations to be successful. Many innovations will be locally effective, but would not be as effective globally. Others will have a greater impact by improving quality, even reducing the size of the target group to reach fewer people but to a higher standard. **Nevertheless, scaling is an ambition for many humanitarian innovators and their donors.**

**Scaling humanitarian innovation is not straight-forward.** Despite the increased focus on innovation, very few humanitarian innovations successfully scale and most remain at the pilot stage. The humanitarian sector poses a number of significant and clearly highlighted barriers to scaling,<sup>1</sup> including an obvious lack of funding. Political, social, economic, and cultural factors also play significant roles in creating 'enabling conditions' for scaling.<sup>2</sup> In some instances scaling is made possible within a specific time window, when the interests of influential stakeholders are aligned.<sup>3</sup>

**Whatever the pathway, scaling an innovation is a multi-stakeholder process that requires significant time and investment.** Multiple stakeholders will be involved in the innovation's scaling journey: the innovator, their team, donors, end-users in the affected population, allies, and the broader humanitarian sector. For any innovator looking to scale, evidence is needed to inform this journey, generate support (including funding), and win allies.

This paper explores how innovators can build evidence for scaling. It was commissioned by the Response Innovation Labs. It is based on the experiences of innovators, funders, and other partners, as well as the criteria outlined in funding proposals themselves. It is further informed by a review of 27 key papers on humanitarian, social, and development innovation as well as interviews with 12 key informants including donors, organizations supporting innovation, and humanitarian innovators themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Elrha. (2018) 'Too Tough to Scale? Challenges to Scaling Innovation in the Humanitarian Sector.' Elrha: London.

<sup>2</sup> F Linn, J., & Cooley, L. (2014). 'Taking Innovations to Scale: Methods, Applications and Lessons.'

<sup>3</sup> Westley, F., & Antadze, N. (2010). 'Making a difference: Strategies for scaling social innovation for greater impact.' Innovation Journal, 15(2).

# What is scaling?

There is no definitive definition of scaling applied in the humanitarian sector today. A number of different definitions and perspectives exist. Elrha, a leading voice in humanitarian innovation research, for example, defines it as:

*Building on demonstrated successes to ensure that solutions reach their maximum potential, have the greatest possible impact, and lead to widespread change.*<sup>4</sup>

**Most humanitarian donors, however, apply simpler and narrower definitions of scaling based on a few common ideas.** Chief among them are two metrics:

- Increasing the number of people in the affected population reached, often measured using the metric 'lives saved/ improved'.  
and/ or
- Increasing the impact of an innovation relative to the size of the problem or need it seeks to address.

The latter definition is particularly valuable because it focuses on the change that is achieved. It also recognizes that innovators will see and address problems at different scales: problems for their community, their organization, their country, or the humanitarian sector.

Innovations can be replicated in a number of different ways: replicating the innovation through a single organization or franchising through one or more other organizations, growing within large humanitarian organizations or through government uptake, expanding into new locations within the same country, or into different countries or regions, diffusion (publishing paper or toolkit to share findings), or expanding into another sector (e.g. development or public health sectors).

In their paper on the “missing middle” of innovation, McClure and Gray divide the scaling process into two distinct stages: Scaling Up as adding complexity to create a sustainable solution, then Scaling Out, as distilling complexity to produce a system that can be a replicable at scale and ultimately optimized in many contexts.<sup>5</sup> In the Scale Out phase the innovator must make hard choices between outcomes, cost and flexibility. Other researchers focus on *how* the innovation scales. For example, many innovators talk about whether they will focus on scaling horizontally (via different geographies, organizations, or end user populations) or vertically (at different scales within an individual geography).

**Throughout this paper we use a broad understanding of scaling** that focuses on how an innovation contributes to change. We have identified five dimensions within the humanitarian sector that innovators may scale within. These different types of scaling can occur concurrently and interactively or over different time scales. Our approach recognizes that the wide and diverse benefits of an innovation that may not be visible in the short term. Within this broader understanding of scaling, an innovator needs to have an end goal that clearly defines when scaling is achieved.

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<sup>4</sup> Elrha. (2018) 'Too Tough to Scale? Challenges to Scaling Innovation in the Humanitarian Sector.' Elrha: London. p6

<sup>5</sup> McClure, D., & Gray, I. (2015). Scaling: Innovation's missing middle. Submitted for the Transformation Through Innovation Theme for the World Humanitarian A Landscape Review, 65.

Table 1: Dimensions of scaling<sup>6</sup>

Dimension of scaling	What it looks like
Individual scaling	Increasing the number of end-users (affected population or frontline responders)
Community scaling	Expanding the types of activities/ products/ services offered to the same end-users (affected population or frontline responders)
Organizational scaling	Improving organizational efficiency and/ or effectiveness
Sector scaling	Moving beyond service delivery towards structural/ institutional changes
Global scaling	Changing beliefs or creating social movements that spread globally in an organic fashion <sup>7</sup>

## 2. What Evidence?

Evidence in its broadest and most basic sense is anything presented in support of an assertion. It can be quantitative or qualitative, but must be clear, supported by data, and based on a process that you can describe and repeat.

**Evidence is powerful.** The types of evidence that an innovator generates, and the way the evidence is tailored, will determine the decisions that stakeholders make about the innovation and ultimately influence its scaling success. Thinking about evidence in this way recognizes it as a powerful tool in the scaling journey; one that can help innovators win allies, secure funding, increase demand, and contribute to transformative change, rather than as a burden on already constrained time and resources.

**Different stakeholder groups supporting an innovation will have different priorities in terms of the evidence they think is important.** For example, donors often support projects over short timeframes and tend to focus their evidence requirements around risk avoidance and metrics for 'Impact' (see Table 2). Meanwhile, local organizations using the innovation may be more interested in the value of a given

<sup>6</sup> This approach builds on Unwin's discussion of change for NGOs in agricultural innovation in: Pachico, D. and Fujisaka, S (2004) 'Scaling up and out: Achieving widespread impact through agricultural research.' (Vol. 3). CIAT.

<sup>7</sup> Clark, C., Massarsky, C. W., Raben, T. S., & Worsham, E. (2012). 'Scaling social impact: a literature toolkit for funders.' Growth Philanthropy Network and Duke University.

innovation to the end-user compared to alternatives. Each set of stakeholders will make decisions that shape the innovation’s scaling journey, including whether to fund, use, adopt, or support the innovation. The evidence generated during scaling therefore needs to meet the different needs of multiple stakeholders.

*Table 2: Evidence requirements of different stakeholders*

Stakeholder	Why does this group need evidence?
Innovation team	Learning, decision-making and iteration of the innovation
Donors and other ‘buyers’	Financial risk management Measuring impact of investment
Users	Assessing the potential value and cost of using the innovation To select which product or service to use
Target impact group (normally the affected population)	Understanding impact of innovation on their work, lives and communities
Other supporters (including host organizations)	To decide whether to support the innovation or not
Wider humanitarian sector	For the design and development of other programs and innovations To build an evidence base

**Evidence requires planning.** Some types of evidence are costly, time consuming, and require complicated field-level data collection in multifaceted and fast-changing environments. There are also important ethical constraints on the evidence that can be collected, and how. Innovators need to factor in budgets and time projections for collecting and analyzing evidence, as well as how they can reuse evidence for different audiences. For example, it may be possible to repurpose evidence by changing the style and format<sup>8</sup> of data to be useful, comprehensible, and accessible to the target audience.

Unique attributes of humanitarian crises which may affect evidence generation, and must therefore be planned for, include:

- Shifting locations
- Mobility of end-users (affected population) at times of humanitarian crises
- Limited capacity/ number of staff with monitoring and evaluation (M&E) skills or experience
- Inaccessibility and reliance on partner organizations for data collection
- Focus on life-saving assistance and urgency - no time to experiment or make mistakes

<sup>8</sup> Cooley, L., & Kohl, R. (2006). ‘Scaling up—from vision to large-scale change: a management framework for practitioners.’ Washington, DC: Management Systems International.

- Harder to test products and services, with an increased reliance on proxies
- Few paying customers. Usually only half a dozen organizations get a large proportion of humanitarian funding.<sup>9</sup> These organizations are typically risk averse and not always receptive to innovation.

**The scaling journey of each innovation is likely to be unique, so a one-size-fits-all approach to evidence generation for scaling is unhelpful.**

The evidence that an innovation needs will depend on how it is being funded, shared, and replicated. For example, it will be important for the innovator to consider the current and planned revenue streams for the innovation, as well as how to convince other stakeholders to support or adopt the innovation. This might include considering:

- **User model:** Is the innovation designed for use by individuals or organizations? If it is designed for an organization, what groups within the organization needed to be persuaded to use the innovation?
- **Delivery model:** Will the innovator scale the innovation by increasing their organization’s ability to deliver it, or by persuading other humanitarian organizations to adopt and distribute it? What evidence will be needed in order to support this model?
- **Revenue model:** Will the innovation be funded by humanitarian donors, by payments from institutional users (for example NGOs, the UN, or Government users), directly by customers from the affected communities (like many of the innovations in the energy sector, for example), or by another group?<sup>10</sup>
- **Definition of success:** What does scale mean to the innovation team? For example, the evidence priorities will change depending on whether the innovation is relevant to one set of users or many.

**Our review of grants and conversations with innovators, donors, and supporting organizations highlight eight different types of evidence that might be needed to scale successfully. These fall into three broad categories.**

**What Donors Want**

While writing this paper, we analyzed the donor evidence requirements for eight **scaling grants** and found little consensus between humanitarian donors about the types of evidence they request for scaling grant applications. However, evidence of impact was the most consistent and prioritized area of evidence for donors, relying on quantitative data using the metric ‘lives saved or improved’. Beyond evidence of impact, most donors requested evidence on the skills and networks of the innovating team, as well as the sustainability of the innovation including the business plan and financial management. There are other types of evidence that are required by some donors, but not others.

Many humanitarian innovators will obtain funding to develop their innovations through country-level humanitarian financing, rather than innovation funding. The evidence requirements for humanitarian financing are highly variable, but tends to emphasize data that demonstrates achievements against planned activities and outputs.

<sup>9</sup> Knox Clarke, P., Stoddard, A., & Tuchel, L. (2018). The State of the Humanitarian System 2018. Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP).

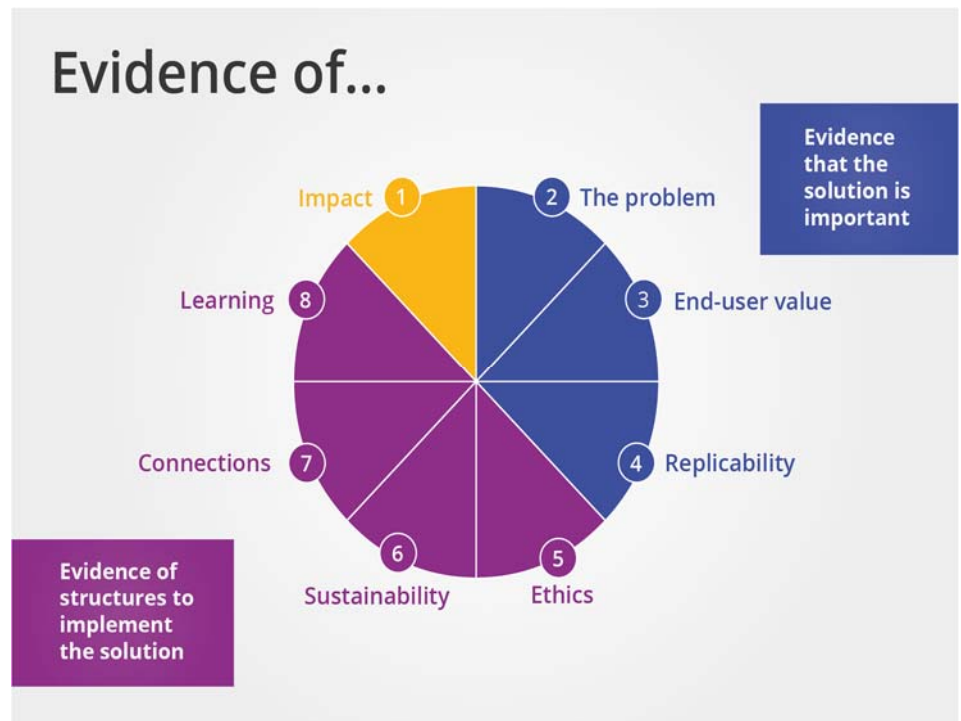
<sup>10</sup> Gray, I., Komuhangi, C., McClure, D. and Tanner, L. (2019). ‘Business models for innovators working in crisis response and resilience building.’ The Start Network and CDAC Network.



First, **'Evidence of impact'** – this involves collecting evidence of change, which might occur at multiple different levels (see Table 1 above). Second, **'Evidence that the solution is important'** – this includes evidence of the problem, end-user value, and replicability. Third, **'Evidence that there are structures in place to implement the solution'** – this includes evidence of ethics, sustainability, team and connections, and learning.

Over the next three sections we examine these types of evidence in turn. In particular, we:

- Identify some of the factors to consider when selecting which types of evidence to generate;
- Propose seven other types of evidence (beyond the evidence of impact) for an innovator to consider;
- Highlight ways an innovator can measure each of these types of evidence.



## 3. Evidence of Impact

### Why is it important?

The impact of an innovation is the way it contributes to change among individuals, communities, organizations, the sector, or globally. Having evidence of impact is often important for scaling an innovation, and is frequently described as a priority that informs the decision-making of multiple stakeholders in an innovation’s scaling journey. How the impact of an innovation is defined and measured will have a significant influence on its journey through the scaling process.

**In our research, evidence of impact emerged as the most consistent and prioritized area of evidence that donors look for when assessing scaling grant applications.** Many donors rely on quantitative data using the metric ‘lives saved or improved’ to measure evidence of impact at all stages of the innovation cycle. However, focusing only on the number of lives saved or improved relies on messy assumptions about the significance of a change and may only capture only part of an innovation’s impact. The innovators we interviewed acknowledged the need to find ways to recognize and measure the contributions of their innovations to change that is wider than an impact on individual lives.



**Several innovators made assumptions about the type of evidence of impact that a donor would expect or need.** In particular, they described randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and quasi experimental studies as a “gold standard” for assessing the contribution of their innovation. However, it is important to note “There is no single ‘right way’ to measure the impact of innovation, and even if there were, such approaches would be constrained by the complex and insecure environments that characterize humanitarian emergencies.”<sup>11</sup> RCTs, for example, are only useful in situations where evidence is needed on the causal relationship between an intervention and specific individual outcomes. They are particularly ill-suited to innovations that aim to affect complex systems, where there are complex relationships between people and their environment. There are also important ethical considerations for collecting this type of data in humanitarian contexts.

**Several innovators have adopted alternative ways to measure evidence of impact that are particularly suited to their own innovations.** For example, Field Ready, which is scaling an innovation designed to manufacture humanitarian aid supplies locally, rely on comparative evidence of impact. They measure this using the metrics ‘cheaper, better, and faster’ in comparison to existing humanitarian supply chains.

**As innovations scale, innovators may find it helpful to think about impact in broader terms.** For example, how is the innovation expected to contribute to change at the community, organizational or sector level.

### How to build the evidence

- Think about the audiences for your evidence, and the questions that specific individuals or organizations are asking you about your impact
- Use a theory of change to list the assumptions that you’re making about the impact you will have. What evidence would you need to collect to support each of the key assumptions?
- Consider how the innovation may contribute to change at different levels
- Start small: focus on building evidence that you can learn from and draw on multiple different perspectives.

*Table 3: Examples of innovations with different levels of impact.*

	Innovation	Main types of impact	Evidence of impact
1.	<b>Can’t Wait To Learn</b>  Uses child-designed gaming technology on tablets, to fill the gap for children missing out on education because of armed conflict. Children	Impact on individuals	Evidence of impact on individuals demonstrated the positive effects of the program for both boys and girls in the areas of individual academic outcomes, self-esteem and motivation to learn. <sup>12</sup> Educating conflict-

<sup>11</sup> See Elrha’s Humanitarian Innovation Guide, ‘Module 5.2: Research and Learning’. Available at: <https://higuide.elrha.org/toolkits/pilot/research-and-learning/>

<sup>12</sup> War Child Holland, Ahfad University for Women and TNO. (2016). ‘Research Report for Phases I and II e-Learning Sudan (2012 – 2015).’

	can access the tablets at formal schools or out-of-school settings.		affected children in this way may also have a significant positive impact at community level.
2.	<p><b>Healing in Harmony</b></p> <p>Uses music therapy to reduce levels of anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in gender-based violence survivors. Participants work together to write, record, and produce songs about their experiences under the guidance of a trained psychologist and a professional music producer. They then publicly disseminate the songs using local media channels.</p>	<p>Impact on individuals</p> <p>Impact within a community</p>	<p>Evidence of impact has shown that the program has a positive impact on participants' mental health with reductions in the prevalence of PTSD, anxiety, and depression for up to six months after completion of the program. Evidence further demonstrates the benefits of the program at a community level that include: strengthening solidarity among survivors by forming peer-to-peer support mechanisms, opening up communication to facilitate the reconstruction of families and reintegration into communities, combating stigma, and creating powerful messages for positive change for other survivors within communities.<sup>13</sup></p>
3.	<p><b>UNDP Georgia</b></p> <p>In 2014 UNDP Georgia supported the Government to redesign the national emergency services to make them more accessible for people with hearing and visual impairments. This led to the joint launch of Georgia's Service Lab, a public innovation lab which has since contributed to the redesign of numerous public services and the establishment of digital service centers throughout the country. The innovation principles of the Service Lab have been further endorsed and put into action by other Line Ministries in the country.</p>	<p>Impact on individuals</p> <p>Impact on an organization or institution</p>	<p>At an individual level, UNDP is gathering evidence that persons with hearing and visual impairments are now able to access national emergency services. At an institutional level the innovation ultimately resulted in a profound change in how the Georgian Government operates and engages with its citizens. As a learning point from this experience, UNDP suggested an additional indicator to further track impact: the potential to influence policy/systems change.<sup>14</sup></p>
4.	<p><b>CaLP: The Cash Learning Partnership</b></p> <p>Founded in 2005, CaLP, a global partnership for cash transfer programming (CTP) in humanitarian assistance, works with individual organizations and brings organizations</p>	<p>Impact on individuals</p> <p>Impact within a community</p> <p>Impact on an organization or</p>	<p>At the turn of the millennium, CTP was rare but is now one of the main tools used by humanitarian agencies. Evidence demonstrates that it has a significant impact on individual end-users by allowing people to spend money according to their own needs. At a community level, CTP has been found to support local businesses and rebuild market linkages which</p>

<sup>13</sup> Ataman, D., Johnson, S., Cikuru, J. and Cundy, J. (2019). Music heals: a brief background of Healing in Harmony'. Humanitarian Practice Network (HPN).

<sup>14</sup> Kumpf, B. and Bhandarkar, M. (no date) 'Innovation Metrics for Human Development – What We Have Learned'. UNHCR Innovation Service Blog. Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/innovation-metrics-for-human-development-what-have-we-learned/>

<p>together to increase the scale and quality of cash programming and overcome obstacles to it. CaLP has developed the evidence base, designed training and tools to build the sector's capacity to deliver quality cash programs, raised awareness of how it can be used appropriately and advocated to keep CTP at the top of policy agendas.</p>	<p>institution</p> <p>Impact on the humanitarian sector as a whole</p>	<p>can stimulate economic recovery in crisis-affected areas. At an organizational level, CTP has changed the way individual organizations distribute aid, and transformed distribution mechanisms, making humanitarian aid significantly cheaper and easier. Ultimately, this has had a significant impact on the humanitarian sector as a whole as CTP is now a preferred distribution approach for many humanitarian aid organizations.</p>
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## 4. Evidence the Solution is Important

### The problem

*"We have a two-part challenge. We first have to prove there are significant communication issues in humanitarian programming and that those issues have real effects on key humanitarian outcomes."*  
 - Eric DeLuca, Translators without Borders.

#### Why is it important?

**Scaling an innovation relies upon a shared understanding of the problem.** The nature of innovation means that many innovators may find themselves working in new areas, either new to the humanitarian sector or completely novel. This brings with it the additional challenge of building a shared understanding of the problem you are seeking to address, and a consensus among stakeholders (including donors, responders and affected populations) that the problem is important and worth tackling.

**Innovators working in new areas may find that there is a lack of baseline data** and a lack of evidence of impact of comparable alternative interventions.<sup>15</sup> There may also be a lack of allies, or other voices drawing attention to the problem or seeking to address it. Innovators in this situation should expect to have to generate baseline data (as well as their own impact data). While this is likely to increase the time and resources required for evidence generation, it will make a significant contribution to the wider humanitarian response system by building the evidence base.

#### How to build the evidence

<sup>15</sup> Elrha. (2018) 'Too Tough to Scale? Challenges to Scaling Innovation in the Humanitarian Sector.' Elrha: London.

- Generate baseline data
- Compare to commercial alternatives if available
- Use targeted and small-scale case studies to more easily track the effects of interventions.

## Value to the affected population

*"If we aren't asking ourselves about customer value signals then we're missing the boat."*

- Donor

### Why is it important?

**Evidence of value to affected populations is critical to scaling in an ethical and sustainable way.** Many humanitarian innovation initiatives and funds focus on innovations designed to improve the efficiency of humanitarian organizations, strengthen supply chains, or provide new tools to frontline responders. However, there is an inherent risk of relying on *assumptions* about what the affected community actually wants, needs, and values.

**The donors we interviewed expressed a desire to shift towards value and metrics determined by the affected population.** In line with basic business principles, humanitarian innovators can take the lead in generating evidence of end-user value to ensure that their innovation is offering something that addresses the needs, wants, or values of the affected population.

**It can be challenging to generate useful feedback when affected communities are not paying for a product or service,** or do not perceive that they have any consumer choice or available alternatives. Methodologies for generating evidence of value for this type of innovation need to be robust and integrated throughout the scaling process. In cases when the end-user is different from the affected population, user feedback needs to be supplemented with community consultations that provide information about the acceptability of the solution, how it addresses needs, gaps or challenges, and most critically, whether the deployment of the solution poses risks to vulnerable members of the community or otherwise violates the 'Do No Harm' principle.

### How to build the evidence

- Adopt user-centered design principles or co-design methodologies in the innovation process.
- Build regular, direct, and open interaction with the affected population.
- Consult with a sample of end-users from the affected population about the best ways to generate broader end-user data.

## Replicability

*"Situations which superficially resemble each other are seldom actually the same in all their important attributes. These differences manifest themselves in multiple ways but all can contribute to the failure of a 'proven solution'."*

## Why is it important?

**Context plays a huge role in the success of an innovation.** Replicating an innovation in a new context is dependent on the interplay between political, social, economic, and cultural factors and the role of enabling conditions or 'spaces', including partnership spaces, networks, allies, and high-profile connections. Security, infrastructure, technology access, and other localized considerations also come into play here.<sup>17</sup> Key assumptions and design criteria may change in different contexts, and the context will change over time too.<sup>18</sup>

For example, an international NGO working in Somalia wanted to use a school attendance app that had been developed in Kenya. A lot of work was needed to contextualize the innovation before it could be used in Somalia. This included things like the days that children attend school in Somalia, the way that class lists are organized, and the language of the app.

Evidence of replicability can help to show that contextual factors have been taken into consideration by an innovator to determine appropriate locations for scaling. **However, evidence of replicability is often a gap.**<sup>19</sup> It is a difficult area, and one that innovators may be tempted to ignore or to cut corners on because of the considerable effort involved. Generating evidence of replicability may involve re-tracing steps over facts they feel they have already established and evidence already generated for the original innovation at the pilot stage, which can feel disheartening. But without evidence of replicability, replicating an innovation is little more than a gamble.

## How to build the evidence

- During pilots, use methods that allow you to step back from the innovation and consider not 'what works' but also 'how and why it works' and 'how its surrounding context influences it'.<sup>20</sup>
- Consider ways in which the innovation will need to be adapted or modified for the replication, and how this may affect existing evidence.
- Generate data around the predicted impact of the planned replication. This may include baselines as well as evidence of predicted impact and evidence of the market (if a new location or sector).
- Consider additional types of evidence that may be relevant for the replication, including evidence of the problem, end-user value from the affected population, ethics, sustainability, contacts, and learning.

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<sup>16</sup> McClure, D., & Gray, I. (2015). 'Scaling: Innovation's missing middle.' Submitted for the Transformation Through Innovation Theme for the World Humanitarian A Landscape Review, 65.

<sup>17</sup> McClure, D; Bourns, L and Obrecht, A. (2018) 'Humanitarian Innovation: Untangling the many paths to scale. Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation (GAHI).

<sup>18</sup> McClure, D., & Gray, I. (2015). 'Scaling: Innovation's missing middle.' Submitted for the Transformation Through Innovation Theme for the World Humanitarian A Landscape Review, 65.

<sup>19</sup> Davey, C., Hassan, S., Bonell, C., Cartwright, N., Humphreys, M., Prost, A., Hargreaves, J.. (2017). 'Gaps in Evaluation Methods for Addressing Challenging Contexts in Development.' CEDIL PreInception Paper: London

<sup>20</sup> Obrecht,A, (no date). Linking evidence in early stage innovation to scale & adoption/adaptation. Unpublished.

# 5. Evidence that there are structures in place to implement the solution

## Ethics

*"We are very prudent because we also don't want to have ethical risks involved. We wouldn't give money without having confidence that the innovative approach would not do more harm."*

- Donor

### Why is it important?

**It is increasingly recognized that high levels of unethical behavior and practice dominate in some areas of the humanitarian sector.** This causes harm to affected populations and undermines the effective delivery of aid. There has been a growing focus on ethical standards and practice by individual organizations, but humanitarian innovation still lacks common and implementable ethical standards.<sup>21</sup>

**There is also a need for innovators to consider environmental factors, gender equality, human rights, and inclusion when generating evidence.** These are critical considerations for innovators at the scaling stage because as an innovation scales, so does the potential scale of harm increase. Innovators, together with the humanitarian actors or other implementers who adopt the innovation, have a responsibility to protect the affected population and staff members, by adhering to the 'Do No Harm' principle and wider humanitarian principles, ensuring they are innovating to improve lives, and incorporating voices from the affected population.

**Our research highlighted that these ethical considerations are an increasing concern for donors.** Ensuring that an innovation has robust ethical evidence can have an influence on an innovation's access to funding at the scaling stage. Some donors request to see evidence of ethics at the scaling stage and others are considering including or strengthening it in their evidence requirements.

### How to build the evidence

- Ensure that there are efficient, robust, and shareable policies and processes in place to cover broad ethical considerations. This may include developing a Code of Conduct for all staff, partners, and contractors, and developing specific policies for work in conflict zones, safeguarding, data privacy, anti-fraud, and corruption.

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<sup>21</sup> McClure, D; Bourns, L and Obrecht, A. (2018) 'Humanitarian Innovation: Untangling the many paths to scale. Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation (GAHI).

- Make sure staff are aware of the policies and procedures, have received relevant training, and that policies and processes are being implemented as and when needed.
- Keep appropriate records and honor all confidentiality obligations.
- Develop a risk analysis and monitor key potential harms.
- Ask users about the potential unanticipated (negative) consequences of the innovation

## Sustainability

### Why is it important?

**At the scaling stage, having a sound business development strategy in place is essential for sustainability.** For most innovations this will include a business model, or a mid- to longer-term scaling plan to map out how they will provide both the organizational development and resource support to the innovation at scale.

**As an innovation scales, a total reliance on donor grants and funding is a less financially secure option.** It is helpful for innovators to have alternative sources of funding or ways of generating revenue through the innovation although this may not always be possible.

**Because of the nature of the humanitarian market, sustainability is not just about financial long-term viability but also about having enough political influence to increase uptake of the innovation.**<sup>22</sup> Having allies or champions that occupy decision-making positions within the humanitarian market is critical.

**There is a lot of uncertainty inherent in humanitarian crises.** This can make it harder to generate evidence of sustainability, but also more important to be able to show you have considered the instability of the context. Some innovations side-step this by scaling within a development context.

### How to build the evidence

- Clarify the intended business model, including the intended channels, costs, revenue models, and partners.<sup>23</sup>
- Develop organizational risk assessments and continuity plans to help anticipate and address uncertainty. Evidence of well-kept financial records will also be vital for humanitarians engaging new organizations.
- Generate evidence of connections (see below).

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<sup>22</sup> McClure, D; Bourns, L and Obrecht, A. (2018). 'Humanitarian Innovation: Untangling the many paths to scale. Global Alliance for Humanitarian Innovation (GAHI).

<sup>23</sup> Gray, I., Komuhangi, C., McClure, D. and Tanner, L. (2019). 'Business models for innovators working in crisis response and resilience building.' The Start Network and CDAC Network.



# Team and Connections

*“Entrepreneurs at the fastest-growing companies are much more likely to have received experience, support and investment from leaders of companies that reached scale.”*

*- Morris and Török<sup>24</sup>*

## Why is it important?

Both the innovating team and their external connections are critical for an innovation to scale successfully. Having the right combination of expertise, skills, and experience within the innovating team is essential for implementing a scaling strategy. Research has shown that innovators with experience of working in an organization that has successfully scaled are much more likely to succeed in scaling their own organizations.<sup>25</sup> Donors of scaling grants tend to ask for evidence of team composition, capacity, and experience.

Having relevant connections and networks outside the core team can also help the scaling process by:

- Providing qualified mentoring and support to the innovator in the scaling process
- Forging allies to help build legitimacy and champion the innovation within the sector
- Generating wider demand for the innovation through word of mouth and reputation
- Sharing knowledge with the wider sector
- Offering more diverse or sustainable funding sources to support the scaling process.

While donors don't always ask to see evidence of an innovator's external connections, being able to evidence them is useful to demonstrate an increased potential for scaling an innovation. It can also be a useful tool for the innovating team to map their connections and networks and plan how and where to expand them.

## How to build the evidence

- Clearly set roles and responsibilities, ensure team members have adequate time for scaling the innovation, prioritize successful scaling experience, and consider management, operational and evaluation capacities, team knowledge of the problem, and contextual awareness.
- There is no set way to generate evidence of external connections and networks but collective mapping of all the potentially influential and important contacts of the innovating team can be a useful place to start.
- Innovators should set aside time to consider the range of connections across the team and how to strategically utilize, maximize, and diversify them through the scaling process.

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<sup>24</sup> Morris, R, and Török, L. (2018). 'Fostering productive entrepreneurship communities: key lessons on generating jobs, economic growth, and innovation'. Endeavour insights.

<sup>25</sup> Morris, R, and Török, L. (2018). 'Fostering productive entrepreneurship communities: key lessons on generating jobs, economic growth, and innovation'. Endeavour insights.

# Learning

*'It's a bit hard to talk about the success or the impact of this work without at least acknowledging the iterative nature of it. Maybe we should start to include "number of times we failed" as a standard indicator of success in all of our log frames?'*

*- Humanitarian innovator*

## Why is it important?

Innovation is a non-linear and iterative process. The journey of an innovator from pilot through to scaling stage is likely to be rich with lessons learned. An innovator's learning journey, iterations, pivots, and lessons are important to show that they are using evidence to make decisions about how best to scale their innovation. Evidence of learning is also important to help innovators to tell their stories. And beyond their individual innovation, evidence of learning is important to build knowledge within the humanitarian innovation sector, to inspire other humanitarian innovators, and allow others to learn from their experiences too.

## How to build the evidence

- Build in time for reflections about learning and how to use it: individually, as an innovating team, and with staff involved in the innovation at different levels of seniority.
- Share learning - be creative in using different forums and adopt a multi-media approach to make learning accessible beyond the innovating team.
- Be an active participant in the humanitarian innovation world – collaborate and connect with other innovators for the purpose of sharing and receiving learning, and contribute to the wider evidence base for humanitarian innovation.

# 6. Conclusion

**Generating evidence is a critical element of scaling an innovation that should not be underestimated.** It is likely to be resource-heavy in terms of both time and finances. But generating rigorous and thorough evidence for scaling in all necessary areas is critical: both to forecast the success of the scaling process for the individual innovation, and to build an evidence base within the broader humanitarian sector.

## Broad impact

The way an innovator defines and measures impact will determine the scaling trajectory of the innovation. Donor definitions of impact are necessarily constrained by short timeframes and an over-reliance on activity metrics that may optimize certain types of incremental innovations over more transformative ones.

Adopting a broader definition of impact that recognizes an innovation's contribution to change at multiple levels and over a longer time frame will more accurately reflect the impact of an innovation.

### **Beyond impact**

An innovator should plan to generate the evidence that they think is needed, both for their own learning, iteration, and decision-making, and for the decision-making of other stakeholders in the scaling journey. While there are several key factors to consider based on the unique attributes of the individual innovation, there is no equation for determining the types of evidence that an innovator needs to generate. This paper offers suggestions on the types of evidence that we think could be important for scaling successfully.