

Background

The need to pay increased attention to the promotion of innovations in humanitarian action has been recognised across the system in recent years. The nature of humanitarian assistance is such that agencies must focus on immediate efforts to extend assistance to populations in need, but this should not be seen as an argument for risk aversion or conservatism. Instead, agencies should be actively seeking-out new approaches and ways of working that increase their operational performance.

The ALNAP membership and secretariat have been at the forefront of efforts to promote innovation; undertaking research into innovations in international humanitarian action: building a collection of case studies and; working to promote mechanisms to encourage and facilitate innovation in the humanitarian system, the latter resulting in the establishment of the Humanitarian Innovation Fund, in partnership with ELRHA..

Despite developments in thinking around innovation, and the creation of practical structures to support innovations in operational settings, there is recognition that turning the will to promote innovative thinking into action and changed practice is still a challenge. This is perhaps particularly true for large humanitarian organisations, facing many of the same barriers to innovation as private corporations, but without the commensurate Research and Development (R&D) budgets or incentive systems.

Workshop Objectives

The overall objective of the workshop was to bring the ALNAP membership together to encourage systematic thinking about innovation management, and begin to explore practical ways to encourage innovation in humanitarian organisations. It aimed to do this by presenting ALNAP's research to date, establishing shared concepts and language, and through the piloting of tools and exercises to explore practical thinking about aligning the necessary resources, capacities and relationships for innovations to progress in humanitarian organisations.

Innovation in Humanitarian Organisations

Opening Presentation: John Mitchell, ALNAP Director

John Mitchell began the day by presenting the findings of ALNAP's 2009 Study on Innovations, as well as the new thinking around the challenges of supporting innovations in humanitarian organisations.

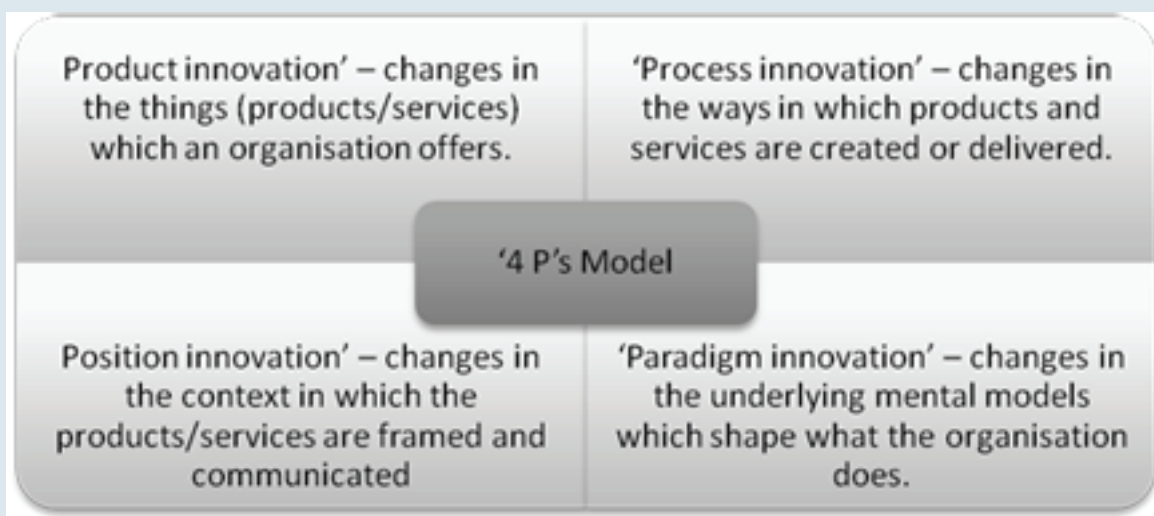
Over the last 10-15 years, humanitarian agencies have tried a number of approaches to improve the performance of the system. Although this has led to incremental improvements, the tendency has been to work within existing models and paradigms of aid. This fact echoes Henry Ford's famous observation that 'if I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said a faster horse.'

At the same time, as the system has grown, there has been a shift in the behaviour of agencies, which many see as having become increasingly risk-averse as they have consolidated and sought to become more accountable. This fits with Max Weber's observation that as organisations grow, they inevitably become more bureaucratic. There is also a risk that big organisations may pay less attention to scanning the external environment for new ideas and networks, as they focus on delivering on their existing commitments. Taken together, this has led towards what Peter Walker has called a 'Cookie-Cutter' model of humanitarian assistance, and a feeling that lessons around the delivery of assistance are not being translated into new approaches.

In contrast, an approach centred on innovation offers new and radically different ways of approaching some of the key challenges in the humanitarian system, and cases from the humanitarian sector demonstrate this potential. The expansion of cash-based programming and the evidence to support it has changed perception about what constitutes humanitarian assistance. The combination of new technologies and programming process that led to the development of Community Therapeutic Care has revolutionised the treatment of severe malnutrition. Other innovation in shelter and the use of technology have led to new approaches and the potential for improved performance.

Although it is easy to recognise innovations when we see them, finding a definition of innovation is more challenging. The ALNAP definition, which draws on the research of John Bessant and Joe Tidd, is as follows: 'Innovations are dynamic processes which focus on the creation and implementation of new or improved products and services, processes, positions and paradigms. They have the potential to stimulate positive, system-wide change through new and improved ways of delivering assistance to those who need it most.' Put simply, innovation is 'doing something new, or doing something established in new ways'.

Innovations are broader than technological advancements or new products, and the '4Ps' model developed by Bessant and Tidd provides a useful framework for understanding the range of innovations, and the different areas on which they focus:



But not all innovations are of the same scope – and three levels have been identified:

- Transactional innovations are driven by needs and often ad hoc – getting things done. Often highly context-specific
- Incremental innovations are distinct, scalable improvements made to existing processes, improving efficiency or effectiveness
- Transformational (or radical) innovations are long-term, strategic innovations intended to create transformation of organisational or industry processes, enabling and embodying new ways of working.

Taken together, these provide us with the ability to identify the ‘what’ of innovation – in particular their focus and scale. Next comes an attempt to better understand the ‘how’. Innovations are often related to random factors and serendipity but when they are successful it is often possible to recognise five phases. The first is recognition of the problem; the second is an invention or a solution which helps address that problem; the third is the development of the innovation; the fourth is implementation of the innovations to produce changed practices; and fifth is diffusion of the innovation to ensure its wider adoption.



These five phases should not be taken to mean that all innovations are linear processes – in practice processes are often non-sequential, but the categories are useful because they provide an outline which allows us to understand and compare different processes so they can be emulated.

Ensuring the right kind of capabilities and support will be crucial for creating an environment where innovations can thrive. These capacities need to be present in field workers, entrepreneurs, leaders and technical experts. It will necessary to create new relationships and partnerships between existing and new actors, using these to establish new kinds of shared space. These spaces need to be used for challenging existing practices and questioning our assumptions. And most importantly, we need to make sure we are aware of the wider context in which our work takes place – the social, political and economic factors.

When focusing downwards towards the individual organisation the challenge is to create a culture conducive with innovation. This is a hard to pin down. Where is innovation actually located in an organisation? There is no one place you can find innovation – somehow it has to be spread throughout the organisation, but connected to those with the authority to promote promising ideas.

With this in mind, the best approach may be to adopt an ‘open’ innovation model. We will never have massive resources for R&D, as found in the private sector, so we must emulate cutting edge-private sector approaches. This means moving beyond organisationally-specific view of innovations, and taking a more open, collaborative approach from the outset, to share the burden and the potential of innovations.

None of this is easy. The system, and the operational agencies that comprise it, require something of a transformational change if they are to embrace innovation. But to conclude by turning to Einstein’s statement that ‘we can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them’.

Following on from John's presentation, discussion focused on how these theories and concepts could be applied to participant's experiences of innovation, and the contexts in which these had taken place. One of the clear issues to arise was that of risk. There was a recognition that an aversion to risk had led in part to a limiting of innovation in humanitarian settings, as agencies were rightly concerned with protecting their beneficiaries and reputation – the challenge is finding safe spaces in which to take risks.

To structure these discussions, participants broke into groups of two and explored the issues hindering and helping innovation in their respective organisations, with many common themes emerging.

What helps innovation?

- People within the organisation are willing to try new approaches (this is particularly the case when they have seen something similar work elsewhere, or seen the impact an innovation.
- Incentives and rewards for innovation (which provide innovators with something they want: an opportunity to put ideas into practice; recognition from their peers)
- Good internal communication and use of evidence
- Internal discussion on the organisation's appetite for risk – what is, and is not, acceptable.

What hinders innovation?

- High staff turnover.
- Lack of incentives and rewards for innovation – especially when an innovation may be good for recipients, but bad for an agency 'brand'.
- Overly high expectations: many people may make assumptions and overall have too high an expectation of what innovation can offer the humanitarian system,
- Protection of the agency brand / reputation leading to unwillingness to fail This was summed up as follows, 'if failure is part of innovation, but the humanitarian sector is risk averse – how can we manage this tension?' Solutions posed by the group included better use of communications and evidence, and attempts to shift the culture of organisations.

From identifying problems to creative solutions

The next session looked at the first two stages of the innovation process – the identification of problems and opportunities, and the invention of creative and innovative solutions. To do this, participants were first asked to identify a problem for innovation. To do this they identified and grouped key challenges in the humanitarian system, participants chose four problems to take forward:

- 1) Communication with understanding, participation and the empowerment of local stakeholders
- 2) The evidence base used for decision making
- 3) Learning – particularly from evaluation findings
- 4) The relationship between management, leadership and risk

Small groups then worked on developing creative solutions to each of these problems, noting that the solution might not be obvious – for example, a problem with a process might not be solved by a ‘process innovation’ (see 4Ps model above). In developing creative solutions, the small groups worked with two tools:

The first tool, Appreciative Inquiry, was presented as being particularly useful for incremental innovation. It can help identify new ways of working from other similar examples where solutions have been found (see annex 1).

The second tool is designed to inspire creative thinking that might lead to a transformative innovation. It does this by helping users to identify, and then challenge their basic assumptions, the premise being that one of the main constraints to innovative thinking can be the basic, unchallenged assumptions that we hold around the nature of our work (see annex 2).

Development and implementation of innovations in the real world

The third session progressed to look at the next two stages of the innovation process, the development and implementation of ideas in real-world settings. Once an idea has been identified, what needs to happen to make it a reality, and how can it be rigorously tested in ways that are safe and consistent with humanitarian principles?

Presentation: Professor Caetano Dorea, Université Laval, Québec

Professor Caetano is a Civil Engineer with extensive experience in (chemical and micro/biological) water and wastewater treatment processes, particularly with regards to their applications in developing countries and humanitarian emergencies.

Caetano’s presentation focused on the Development and Implementation stages of the innovation process. He drew on his experiences working with a range of NGOs to improve water treatment and particularly an ELRHA-funded project in collaboration with Oxfam GB. This was a scoping project aimed at appraising the application potential of a range of innovations in the challenging settings presented by humanitarian emergencies, as well as identifying issues posing barriers to the development and uptake of innovations.

The presentation began with an observation: that innovation appears in unexpected places, and necessarily involves pushing the boundaries of our intuition. This is as true in wastewater treatment where conventional methods are struggling to keep up with growing populations and dwindling natural resources in light of the challenges of climate change. In emergencies, the need for innovation in this area is crucial in order to prevent many diseases caused by a lack of adequate amounts of safe water and sanitation. The problem is exacerbated in that, often, many of the so-called ‘innovations’ on the market aren’t compatible with the objectives of relief interventions and are unsuitable for the conditions in which they need to operate.

Caetano recounted his experiences of working with Oxfam GB to compare a range of water treatment technologies. A scoping study identified a range of options, and an assessment of these was made to identify how well they fulfilled the requirements of emergency response, both in relation to cost-effectiveness and their ability to meet minimum response standards. Through analysis, interviews, and a survey, appropriate technologies were identified. Their study highlighted success stories of technologies that were developed through collaborative efforts between academia and in-country NGO partners. One recent example is the work done with RedR India, in which one such technology was field tested in country in real-world conditions.

Two areas of the presentation sparked particular discussion within the group:

- The first related to the observation that the collaboration between different actors (i.e. NGO, industry and scientific communities) played an important role in identifying appropriate technological innovation. A lack of collaboration and communication perhaps uncovers a reason why many water treatment technologies are inadequately 'over-engineered' for the requirements of humanitarian water supply. Arguably, this is also a shortcoming of the development process of these technologies. Even less progress has been made in the field of sanitation, which proportionally receives less attention than water supply and treatment. This is likely a reflection of the lack of relative importance it has (undeservedly) been given and its lag in terms of global coverage.
- The second point related to how the example demonstrated the possibility of managing the risk inherent to innovation, and specifically how the field testing in India was a practical example of finding a 'safe space' to pilot innovation. This offered real-world conditions in which the innovation would need to operate to be successful, but remaining one step away from a situation where failure could endanger beneficiaries.

Following Caetano's presentation, participants were asked to try and envisage some of the challenges and issues that arise during the development and implementation of innovations in real world settings, particularly the factors that need to be aligned prior to the successful deployment of an innovation. They did this by using an organisational self assessment instrument (see annex 3). On the basis of this assessment, participants then considered whether the conditions were in place, in their organisation, to take forward innovative responses to the problems that they had identified in the previous session.

Diffusing innovations in organisations and beyond

Presentation: Otto Farkas, Director of Humanitarian and Emergency Affairs, World Vision Canada

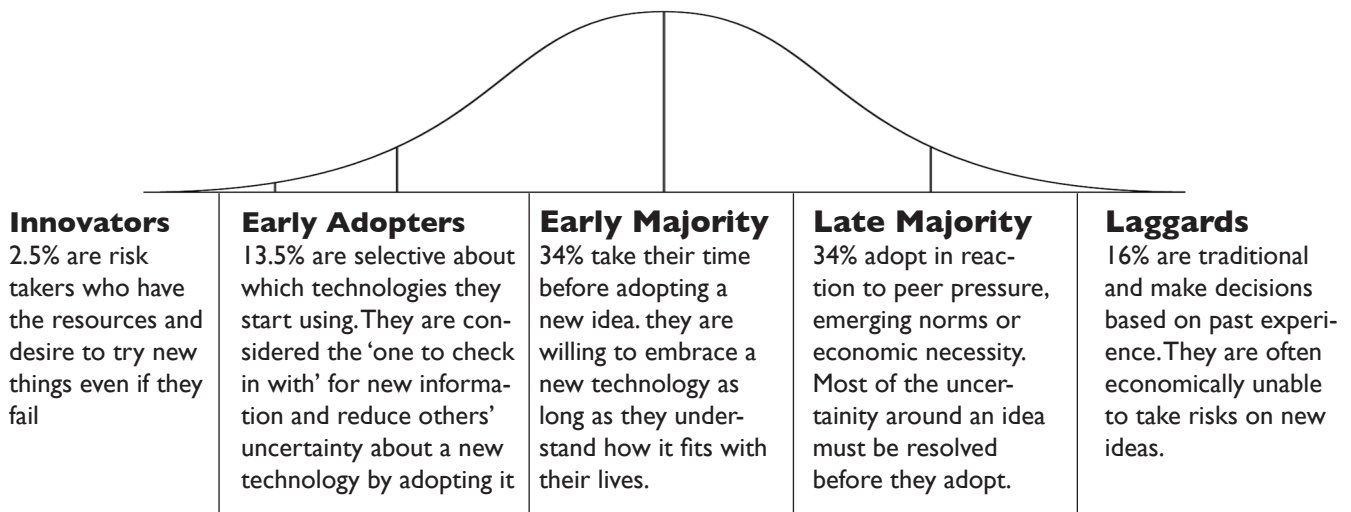
Otto’s presentation centred on the current situation of the Last Mile Mobile Solutions (LMMS) project for which he currently acts as a Business Sponsor. After considerable development and testing in a range of humanitarian contexts, LMMS is now reached the Diffusion stage, and is being scaled both within World Vision and the wider humanitarian sector.

The LMMS project, initiated in 2008, is designed to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability in humanitarian service delivery (of both of food and non-food programs). It does this through improved remote data collection, beneficiary management, commodity distribution and reporting processes. LMMS leverages innovative point of service technologies at the ‘last mile’ of humanitarian programming – that final transaction area between humanitarian agencies and end-beneficiaries.

Otto began by describing the progress LMMS had made in recent years, using the ALNAP five-step process, identifying that the innovation was now at the stage of wider dissemination. It was noted that while many people assumed that for good ideas the diffusion stage was automatic, this was not in fact the case, rather it was highlighted:

- Most innovations tend to fail at the ‘Diffusion’ stage
- How mainstreaming happens is not well understood
- Currently a lack of systematic approaches for innovation management

While noting the above challenges, Otto also argued that diffusion is not a fixed stage, an innovation remains dynamic and changes as it is spread and adopted by others. Otto described this growth in stakeholders as the move from an ‘optional innovation-decision model’, where choices are made by one stakeholder group independent of the decisions of the organization to adopt an innovation, to a ‘collective innovation-decision’, where the choice is made by consensus among all the members/stakeholders and supported by the executive levels of the organization. Ultimately, Diffusion of innovations is about ‘being used at SCALE.’



Crucially, Otto’s presentation introduced the Diffusion of Innovation Curve, popularised by Everett Rogers. The curves illustrate the different groups of adopters of any innovation, and at which stage in the diffusion process they will ‘come on-board’ and buy into an innovation. The message was clear – although the speed of adoption is variable, the characteristics, size and composition of these groups and their response to an innovation follows a certain pattern. Therefore an innovation strategy should employ different approaches for different groups along the curve, and work with, rather than attempt to subvert the curve by rushing a new idea through. However, he also cautioned that progress of innovation diffusion cannot always neatly be traced on a bell curve, therefore, innovators always need to be prepared for the unexpected and also harness serendipity.

Following Otto's presentation, the group discussed the nature of diffusion, and many participants noted that the success or otherwise of the diffusion of an innovation depended only part in the relative merits of the innovation in hand, and was in fact an inherently political process. It followed then that the skills of the innovator and the skills of the disseminator were not necessarily the same, and the person best placed to champion and promote an innovation may not have been an original stakeholder. This was described as 'having to let go to keep an innovation' – releasing an innovation into the unpredictable and organic process of dissemination (where it will further adapt and change) in order to secure its use.

In order to better understand the challenges of bringing on groups at different stages of dissemination, the group was asked to undertake an activity aimed at working the adoption curve. In his work 'Diffusion of Innovation'¹, Everett Rogers sets out his theories around the spread and take up of innovations through a given social system. The diagram sets out how an innovation, defined by Rogers as 'an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption' is communicated through a social system 'engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal.' The curve is useful to help thinking about the natural process that an innovation must go through to spread in an organisation, dependent on the context, and how different relationships and resources influence the process.

Participants were asked to think individually about the changes that would need to take place for an innovation to spread and be adopted within their own organisation. What broad groups fit into the stages of Rogers curve above? How do specific relationships, capacities and organisational contexts need to be aligned at each stage of the process? How can this process be managed and influenced?

Final Session Discussions

The final session brought together a range of themes identified across the different stages of the innovation process during the course of the day, and attempted to identify a shared agenda for those present to address these issues. Initially, building on the first discussion of the day, the group identified things that were currently either contributing to or holding innovation back. The perennial issue of funding was identified, with the concern that innovations often fall outside the 'funding boxes' and do not fit well into traditional proposal formats. The Humanitarian Innovation Fund was seen as a welcome source of external funding for organisations, but it was stress that often quite small amounts of funding would be useful if they could be found for innovations within organisations and existing projects.

- Funding is also not the only resource constraint. The lack of time that individuals can secure to explore new ideas or to test new technologies was seen as constraining the opportunities for innovations to appear in organisations. These constraints are in part a consequence of the nature of humanitarian work, but they were also seen as a consequence of the bureaucratisation of humanitarian organisations.
- Participants talked about cultural constraints that go beyond simple lack of resources. There was a sense that organisations have become increasingly risk averse, keen to maintain a homogenous 'brand identity', and wedded to specific ways of working.

¹ Rogers, E (1962), Diffusion of Innovations. Glencoe: Free Press

- A further cultural constraint was around the way that organisations in the system make decisions. While evidence was seen as crucial for the take up of the right innovations and for performance improvement in general, participants notes that very often decisions are not evidence based, and this can hinder the ability of innovations to be demonstrated as offering improved humanitarian assistance.

Some of these problems go beyond issues of innovation, and strike at the heart of issues affecting the performance of the whole humanitarian system, but others seem particular to innovation and the organisational and relational contexts that needed to be aligned for it to take place. There were however a number of areas where elements are aligning to promote innovation:

- Although funding for innovations was seen as a challenge, it was also noted that donors who were prepared to set an agenda could also promote innovation; with the example offered of OFDA's decision to stop funding therapeutic feeding centres in favour of community therapeutic care. It was suggested that where donors have an engaged field presence this increased their ability to support innovations.
- A collaborative dynamic, and a willingness to work across organisational boundaries on issues of mutual concern, was seen as being an essential factor in successful innovations identified by the group. The Emergency Capacity Building project (ECB) was highlighted as a successful example of such collaborative efforts, which could be emulated with a focus on innovation.
- It was noted that smaller organisations as a rule had greater flexibility and in turn fewer constraints to innovation, and were without the inevitable bureaucratic constraints of large humanitarian actors. Although in some instances this could make larger organisations look sluggish and outmoded, through innovative partnerships different organisations could build on their relative strengths.
- Forums for the exchange of knowledge, often working on a specific sector or technical speciality, are seen as key incubators for innovation. The individuals accessing these specialised Communities of Practice are able to share issue and experiences, as well recount and discuss possible new technologies or approaches.

Conclusions and next steps

After reflecting on what participants saw as working and not working across their organisations and the sector as a whole, there was a clear recognition that challenges of innovation are being grappled with internally by a number of humanitarian agencies, from across different parts of the system, and with a number of common challenges and concerns. A number of participants outlined the steps being taken within their own organisations to develop more comprehensive strategies for innovation, while others highlighted examples of organisations working to enhance their ability to innovate and improve performance, who may be interested in future engagement with this shared agenda.

Discussions in the final session returned to two themes that had run through the day, and which it was felt would be central in further discussion:

- The issue of risk had been present through the day. In the first instance, the group felt that ‘risk’ had to be clearly defined, and its different elements (physical, political, organisational) had to be more clearly differentiated, as did the focus of risk – for instance individual versus organisational risk. The group recognised that without risk innovation is impossible, but that the concept of risk has to be better understood to be managed, and to be able to challenge overly risk-averse organisational cultures with practical solutions for how to manage the risks associated with innovation. Finally, several people mentioned that innovation need not be as risky as it is often perceived: Piloting innovation (as suggested by Caetano) can decrease risk, as can taking an iterative approach that innovates by building on the best of what is already in place.
- An interconnected issue was that of creating and maintaining the space required within organisations for innovation to take place. It was recognised that individuals and teams required a certain level of autonomy to be able to conceive, develop, and test new policies and practices. Although there is perhaps an inherent tension between the need to allow experimentation and the need to maintain oversight and appropriate checks, it was felt this needed to be better understood. How, for instance, can organisations systematise the innovation function to the extent that there is appropriate resources and capacities in place and that good ideas are captured, without over complicating the process, and in so doing extinguishing the ‘spirit of innovation’?

Both of these points and the wider discussions point to the heart of some of the fundamental paradoxes of managing innovations in organisations: too much intervention and innovation will become over formalised; too little and good ideas will be lost. Too great a sense of ownership will prevent innovations being diffused; too little and they may never be piloted. Too low a tolerance for failure, and innovations will not be allowed to occur; too high a tolerance, and the organisation and its work can be damaged.

There are no easy answers, but to take this agenda forward the group identified three tangible next steps :

- ALNAP should feed the days discussions into its future research on innovation, particularly looking for case studies of innovation management from the ALNAP membership, and particularly those present at the workshop.
- Building on the shared interest at the workshop, it was felt a Community of Practice could be established to continue discussions, and share experiences across agencies. It was noted that CoPs often can demand considerable time and energy, so it must be focused, and draw particularly on the field if it is to be successful. One potential area for a community of practice to consider would be learning from the many activities that are already taking place (UNHCR; Plan; UNICEF; WVI/C; SC International were all specifically mentioned)
- Finally, participants stressed the need to continue to advocate for the issue of innovation to be pushed in high-level policy forums, to insure that the political will was present to make the changes needed to secure greater innovation. Participants felt that it would be particularly effective to bring these discussions to the IASC / SCHR.

Annexe 1: Workshop Activity – Appreciative Inquiry

An approach for Incremental innovation that ‘builds on the best’

Introduction

Appreciate Inquiry (AI) is an approach pioneered by David Cooper Rider at Case Western Reserve University. It is based on the observation that attempts to solve problems tend to concentrate interest and energy on the problem, rather than on the solution. By looking for problems, we can often create more problems.

AI, in contrast, assumes that in all situations, there is something which is working. The approach invites us to focus on what is working, and to build on this to create generative, positive solutions that connect us back to our core values and hopes for the future...

In this exercise...

- Consider, as a group, the situation you wish to improve, and think of one example of where this situation was successfully addressed.
- One person in the group, who has a good knowledge of the example, should then volunteer to talk about it.
- The rest of the group should ask this volunteer the four questions below.
- We recommend that you take your time to really explore each question in detail, before moving on to the next.

The Questions...

When one person has identified an example of a situation which ‘worked’ the group should invite them to answer the following questions:

1. What happened? What is the story? (Who did what, where, when)
2. What was it, in this story, that created success?
3. Imagine a future where we did these things all the time. What would it be like?
4. What can we do to make this happen?

To find out more...

A good web based resource is the Appreciative Inquiry Commons:

<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/whatisai.cfm>

The best book is probably: The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry (2nd edition) (Thin Book Series) by Sue Annis Hammond

Annexe 2: Workshop Activity – Challenging our Basic Assumptions

A Tool to Support Invention in Innovation

Introduction - ‘if you do what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you always got’

One of the main constraints to innovative thinking can be the basic, unchallenged assumptions that we hold around the nature of our work.

This simple exercise allows us to challenge some of these assumptions and in doing so glimpse new possibilities.

The case studies that illustrate ALNAP’s Innovations in International Humanitarian Action show how this process can work in action: The development of CTC was enabled by challenging assumptions about where Therapeutic Feeding could happen; what could be used in feeding; and who could be responsible.

In this exercise...

1. Consider the situation you wish to improve, and the way that this situation is currently addressed.
2. Using the matrix overleaf, identify ‘the rules’ – the unspoken assumptions that govern how the situation is addressed by your organisation / the humanitarian community as a whole. Record the answers to the questions in the first column.

Note – the questions are generic. Not all of the questions are appropriate for all situations. You may wish to ignore some of them, and you may wish to add other questions in the boxes at the bottom.

3. Now challenge these assumptions.

Using the example of cash-based programming, for example, the original ‘rules’ were that: food aid was provided; predominantly in the form of uncooked cereals; generally sourced from surplus producer countries in the global ‘north’. and so on. However, cash or credit could also be provided. Or food could be provided in the form of MREs, or...

In challenging the assumptions, be as iconoclastic as you like, and allow any and all ideas, without criticism. You might find that you can more successfully challenge the assumptions if you put yourself in someone else’s shoes – a recipient of assistance; or a locally recruited field staff member; or a business person.

4. Finally, look at the ideas that you have generated. Which ones would you like to take forward? (at this point you should ‘filter out’ any ideas that would go against a ‘do no harm’ approach)

Challenging our Basic Assumptions - Matrix

	Currently...	But it could be...
What is the service or item provided?		
What form does it come in?		
Where does it come from?		
Where is it provided?		
Who provides it?		
How do they provide it?		
When and how often?		
Who receives it?		
What do they do with it?		

Annexe 3: Workshop Activity – Development and Implementation of Innovation

Getting the Basics in Place

Introduction

The ALNAP study on innovation² suggests that, for innovation to be successful, three sets of conditions need to be fulfilled:

3. The right people in the organisation, with the necessary skills and capacities, are involved in the process
4. The organisation has effective relationships with key internal and external stakeholder groups
5. The organisation has a culture and structure which allows innovations to occur, to be developed, implemented and disseminated.

In this exercise...

1. Consider – as an individual - the creative (potential) solution that the group identified before lunch. Are the conditions in place, in your organisation, to move this from an idea to a realistic prototype, and then to gather evidence about the effectiveness of this prototype? The checklist overleaf might help with this reflection.

NB – the checklist is not a complete and exhaustive list of conditions, nor will all conditions be applicable in all cases. It is a 'tool to think with,' representing the factors that commonly appeared to be in place in those case studies where innovation occurred

2. Identify one key area that your organisation could improve or change in order to become more able to develop and implement innovations.
3. Share this with other members of the group.
4. As a group, record the changes required. Are there any common areas?

² Ramalingam, B. Scriven, K. and Foley, C (2009) in ALNAP 8th Review of Humanitarian Action, London, ODI.

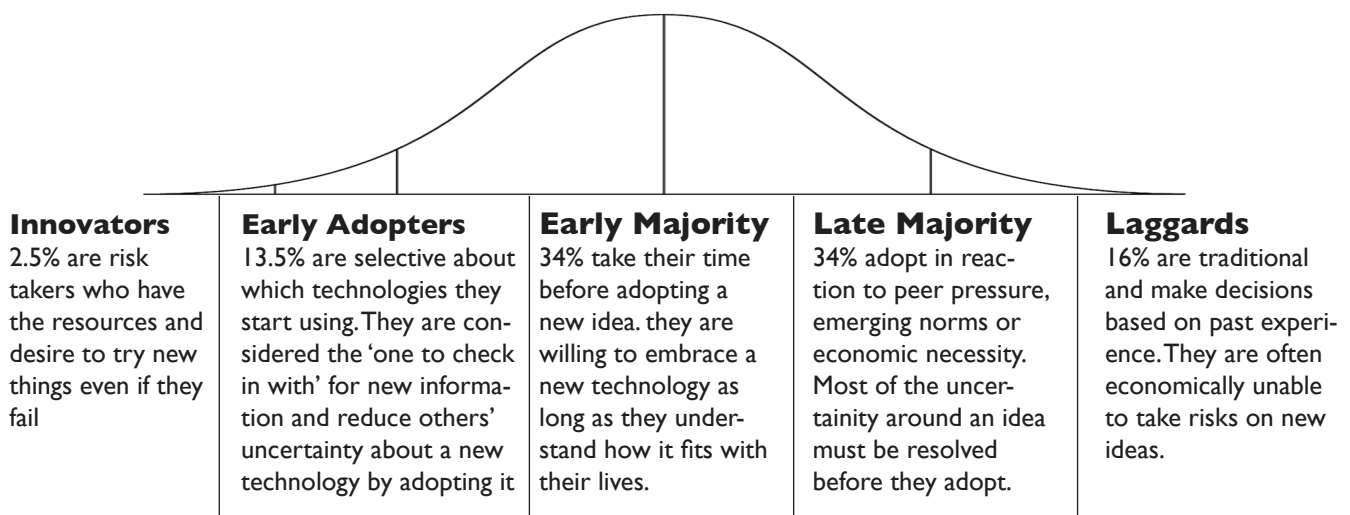
Annexe 4: Workshop Activity – Working with the Adoption Curve

Targeting different groups to embed innovation and change

Introduction

In his work 'Diffusion of Innovation'³, Everett Rogers sets out his theories around the spread and take up of innovations through a given social system. A key element of this work can be visualised in diagram below, outlining the idealised spread of innovation through in the Technology Innovation Curve.

The diagram sets out how an innovation, defined by Rogers as 'an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption' is communicated through a social system 'engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal'. The curve is useful to help thinking about the natural process that an innovation must go through to spread in an organisation, dependent on the context, and how different relationships and resources influence the process.



³ Rogers, E (1962), Diffusion of Innovations. Glencoe: Free Press

In this exercise...

1. Consider again the innovative solution that the group has been working with through the course of the day. Think individually about the changes that would need to take place for the innovation to spread and be adopted within your organisation. What broad groups fit into the stages of Rogers curve above? How do specific relationships, capacities and organisational contexts need to be aligned at each stage of the process? How can this process be managed/influenced?

NB – it may be useful to think of broad generic groups rather than specific units in an organisation.

2. Feedback one example each on how the process is envisaged at a given stage

3. As a group, explore the common and contrasting areas around this process, and record the most pertinent.

4. As a group, record the changes required. Are there any common areas?