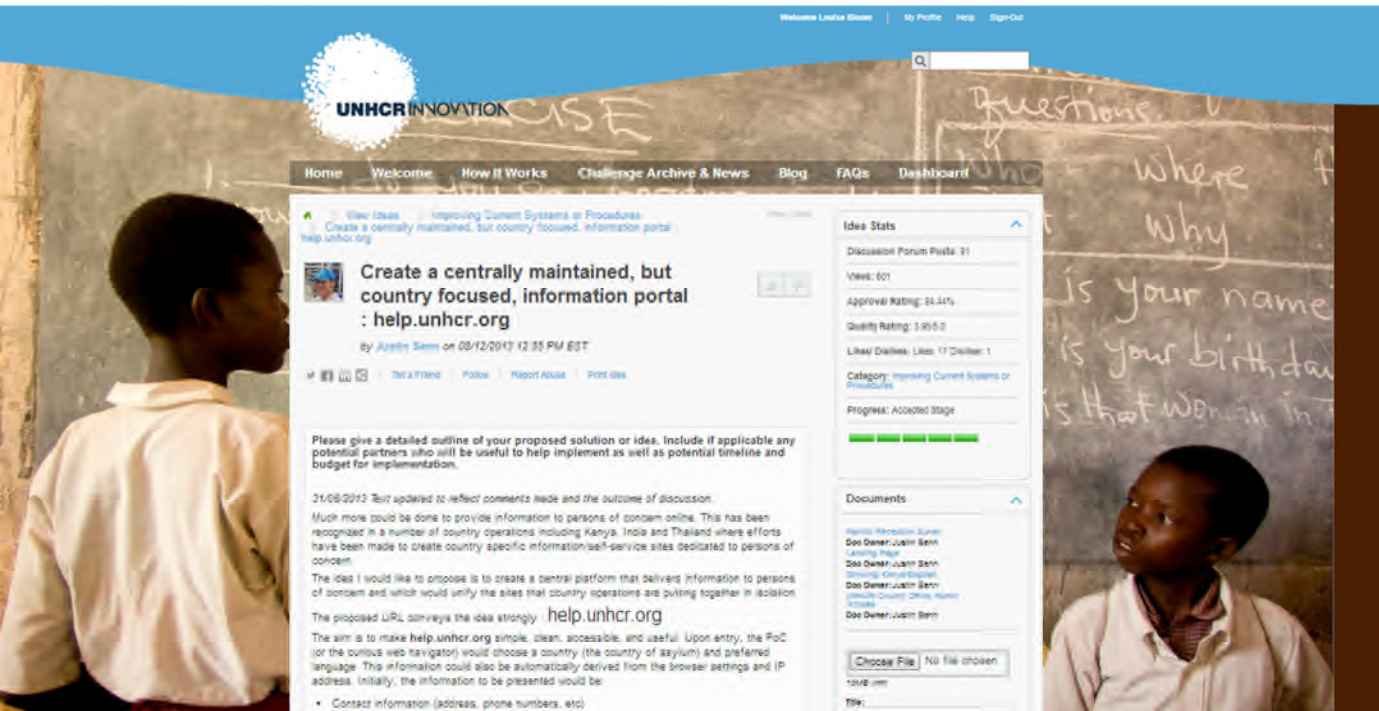




UNHCR Ideas:

Open innovation inspiring collaboration and new ideas within the UN



March 2014

Independent review of an online platform pilot used for collaborative innovation within and beyond The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)



From the Humanitarian Innovation Project, Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, and in collaboration with:



This paper was authored by Louise Bloom, Research Officer for the Humanitarian Innovation Project. The Humanitarian Innovation Project is a research project based at the Refugee Studies Centre in the Oxford Department for International Development, University of Oxford, UK. For more information on the project visit the website at www.oxhip.org.

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Thanks goes to all of those who contributed information to this study from dedicated staff at UNHCR, The Spigit Innovation Services Team, Internews and the many participants who engaged in the UNHCR Ideas challenge.

Cover image: taken from screen shot of UNHCR Ideas online platform, winning idea page from the pilot challenge in the archives, February 2014

Executive Summary

'UNHCR Ideas' is a tool for creating new ideas amongst an online community. Powered by SpigitEngage, the online platform is specifically designed to enable collaborative problem solving and idea generation. The platforms' online community contribute ideas, solutions and discussion to a common problem statement posted on the site. The UNHCR Innovation team launched a pilot 'challenge' on the platform in August 2013 – intended to empower the participants to innovate for the organisation. The pilot involved 318 participants from over 50 countries – including employees from UNHCRs offices, partner organisations, and refugees. The platform aims to start building a culture of innovation within and around the organisation, and to help find new solutions for longstanding challenges in their global work with refugee communities. This pilot was used by UNHCR Innovation to learn whether, and how, the platform can be used more widely within the organisation, and beyond.

The concept of using a wide audience to contribute to innovation, also known as 'open innovation', stretches beyond traditional forms of innovation - which typically involve only a few people from internally within organisations. Generating ideas from a crowd is considered to be a powerful tool for innovation in practice. With the increase in access to online technologies, crowd-sourcing solutions from a range of participants in this way has become a popular exercise in recent years. Online innovation tools however, have to be closely managed, and engage a wide audience to generate useful information and outputs. This paper takes a closer look at the pilot of UNHCR Ideas, how it worked, and what it can offer to the growing discussion and practice of humanitarian innovation. This case study aims to not only add value to UNHCR but also more widely to the humanitarian and private sectors in thinking about their endeavours towards innovation in improving how they work with and for affected communities.

This paper outlines the process that was undertaken by UNHCR and the supplying company, Spigit, in launching UNHCR Ideas as an innovation platform. UNHCR staff, partners, and refugees contributed ideas, and comments, around a problem statement/ 'challenge' posted on the platform, entitled: **"How can access to information and services provided by UNHCR and partners be improved for refugees and people of concern residing in urban areas?"** In total, participants posted 114 ideas, voted over 430 times, and made over 1,200 comments on the online discussions around this topic over the six week pilot period.

All of the participants interviewed for this paper responded positively to the UNHCR Ideas initiative and contributed further thoughts to improving the functionality and methods used in the pilot. Engaging with UNHCR on the platform gave the participants a unique experience in interacting with the organisation – learning from the experiences of peers, but also having space to provide their own ideas and be listened to. The paper includes the story of how a refugee participant engaged in the platform and initiated discussions on the topic beyond the online website – in offline meetings within his own community in Kampala, Uganda.

As part of the pilot, a new relationship between UNHCR Innovation and the Spigit Innovation Services Team has developed. This provides an example of how private sector collaboration and existing corporate methodologies for innovation have contributed to the implementation of UNHCR Ideas. UNHCR Innovation is still working closely with Spigit to improve the use of the platform for innovation in UNHCR's ongoing work. By using the process of innovation as a basis for analysis (defining a problem, finding a solution, adapting the idea, and finally scaling the solution), this paper reviews what the UNHCR Ideas platform offers the organisation at each stage of this process. Whilst the platform performs best in helping the organisation to find a solution to a specific challenge, this paper identifies potential opportunities that could help to ensure that each stage of the innovation process is considered for new ideas being taken forward – for example ensuring that the problem is well defined, ideas are well piloted, adapted and, where appropriate, scaled-up.

UNHCR Ideas, has already initiated new activities on the platform since the pilot, and has launched its next 'challenge'. The platform is slowly being opened up more widely to partner organisations and refugee communities, as well as other interested supporters who wish to participate. There will be some organisational challenges that UNHCR must overcome in order to maintain the momentum that this pilot has created. Innovation culture and practice should be supported through to implementation, which requires an investment in organisational resources. Staff turnover and fast moving projects, common in humanitarian programmes, may affect the capacity available to support innovation activities in the long term – and should be a focus for UNHCR Innovation going forward.

Key recommendations from the paper for UNHCR include:

- Consider how the platform may **contribute to the wider innovation process** beyond idea generation. Specifically creating space for discussions around the problem statement, in order to tackle any assumptions it makes. Following the innovations through to the next stages of implementation and scale are also equally important, to ensure that new ideas are successful in practice.
- Maintain a relationship with, and **support emerging 'innovation champions'** – from within UNHCR, partner organisations and importantly refugees. These individuals will help to build a culture and practice of innovation in UNHCRs work.
- The UNHCR Ideas platform can be developed using the participant feedback in this research for the online interface, functionality and processes. This may help further **adaptation of the platform to the UN and humanitarian context**.
- The 'data analytics' that are readily available on the platform (currently accessed by its moderators), could be used to **share live updates** with the wider organisation and participants about ongoing the online activities and discussions (e.g. number of ideas posted, or who is participating globally).
- **Monitoring and evaluation** tools have yet to be developed for UNHCR Ideas. It would be useful to think about ways that the outcomes of the platform can be measured. Additional use of the platform beyond the idea generation could also help in capturing ongoing monitoring information as a project is piloted and implemented.

At the time of publication, some of the results of this paper have been taken-up as part of the ongoing activities for UNHCR Ideas. Yet the study also has wider implications for the potential role of open innovation and collaboration platforms within the humanitarian sector more broadly. General reflections include:

- When using ideas from other sectors - **adapt solutions appropriately and specifically** to humanitarian environments.
- **Include affected communities in open innovation**. Just as private companies are more and more including customer ideas in open innovation activities, humanitarian agencies can use innovation as a way to engage affected communities in new and exciting ways.
- **Do not solely rely on technical solutions to do innovation for you**. The UNHCR Ideas example shows that close management and off-line activities that create the innovation ecosystem are just as important as the technical functionality of the platform.
- Consider a variety of ways that a **culture of innovation** may be created within an organisation.

The success of this pilot indicates that there is a good deal of interest in collaborative innovation within UNHCR and beyond. New opportunities and methods of innovation may seem to offer exciting solutions to humanitarian work, however careful consideration and resources need to be invested-in, to ensure they are suited to the job at hand. Open innovation and online tools are still relatively new methods for undertaking innovation, and there will be many more insights in future to learn from their application, especially in the humanitarian world. Sharing experiences and reflecting on pilot activities will help to iterate and cross-fertilise ideas, thereby enhancing the broader ecosystem of humanitarian innovation.

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1. Introduction

Engaging with new technologies and innovation is of growing interest to humanitarian agencies seeking to find new solutions to their operational challenges¹. UNHCR in particular has traditionally been perceived as bureaucratic and lacking innovation in its organisational capacities, but has recently been attempting to turn that around². To help create a culture of innovation, in August 2013 The UNHCR Innovation team launched ‘UNHCR Ideas’. UNHCR Ideas³ is an online platform specifically designed to bring people together to generate ideas and collaborate on new innovations for the organisation. As part of the UNHCR Innovation strategy, the UNHCR Ideas platform was chosen as a solution to bring people together from the UNHCR offices and partner organisations placed in the 126⁴ countries around the world where UNHCR operates. In 2012 UNHCR Innovation recommended the Spigit⁵ solution, an online platform which aims to “effectively crowdsource solutions from employees, customers, and beyond”. Through a private donation, the SpigitEngage platform has been launched within UNHCR as UNHCR Ideas – with a bespoke image and interface for the organisation. The platform was launched with a pilot challenge – giving 318 participants six weeks to contribute their ideas and make comments against the pre-defined challenge which asked “how can access to information and

¹ ‘The two worlds of humanitarian innovation’, RSC Working Paper Series #94, by Betts and Bloom, 2013, available online <http://www.oxhip.org/publications/the-two-worlds-of-humanitarian-innovation/>

² UNHCR Innovation was established in 2012, within UNHCR - <https://www.facebook.com/UNHCRInnovate>

³ The platform is hosted online - www.unhcrideas.org

⁴ Taken from www.unhcr.org

⁵ Spigit is a company which supplies an Enterprise Innovation Platform, called SpigitEngage, to its client organisations. During the period in which this research was conducted Spigit merged with the company Mindjet. Throughout this report the Spigit name is used. Details about the company can be found on their website: <http://www.mindjet.com/spigit>

services provided by UNHCR and partners be improved for refugees and people of concern residing in urban areas?” Participants were made up mainly of UNHCR staff (78%) from over 50 countries, but also included a handful of representatives from partner and refugee organisations⁶. Participants posted 114 ideas, voted over 430 times, and made over 1,200 comments on the online discussions around this topic. The Expert Review Panel and Leadership Committee, of chosen specialists, selected a winning idea from the solutions posted, which will now be implemented as a project in UNHCR for 2014.

Since 2012 UNHCR and the Humanitarian Innovation Project (HIP) have been actively collaborating in several areas of thinking around innovation for the humanitarian world, and in this context HIP were invited to carry out an independent evaluation of the UNHCR Ideas pilot. This report summarises the set-up, output and inside workings of the “launch challenge” – the pilot challenge carried out on the UNHCR Ideas platform. A range of stakeholders were interviewed as part of this research in semi-structured interviews and email correspondence. They included staff from UNHCR Innovation, staff from the Spigit Innovation Services Team, participants of the challenge and an expert reviewer. Information was also collected as an observer to the platform activity for the duration of the challenge. This report specifically looks at the relationship between UNHCR and Spigit, and also provides an overview of how UNHCR Ideas supports the wider process of innovation for the organisation. Future opportunities and recommendations for use of the platform within UNHCR and more widely for the humanitarian sector are detailed in the final section.

From interviews with participants, the majority found the platform easy to navigate and enjoyed having an opportunity to connect with others globally and contribute their ideas to the wider organisation. There is daily communication between UNHCR Innovation and Spigit, and advisory support is provided from Spigit for the use of the platform and its implementation within the organisation. The relationship that UNHCR Innovation and Spigit have built over the course of this launch challenge is ongoing into the start of the next phase, demonstrating a unique relationship between the UN organisation and the private sector. In section 3, the report also contains a short case study of the experience of one of the refugee participants in Uganda, who, in parallel, led offline discussions within his community off the back of the UNHCR Ideas launch challenge.

As part of the HIP research, the process of innovation is used as a lens to better understand how organisations and individuals create and execute innovations⁷. This process is defined as four key stages – defining a problem, finding a solution, testing and adapting the solution, and finally scaling-up the solution. To gain a better understanding of what the tool offers the organisation, the achievements of UNHCR Ideas so far and future opportunities are outlined against this process of innovation. There are still gaps in which additional activities could be carried out to help complete the wider process of innovation, from problem definition all the way to implementation and scaling of new ideas. The future for UNHCR Ideas within the organisation is generally very positive, so long as the capacity is maintained - in managing the activities it hosts and implementing the new ideas. The final section of this paper draws on some key recommendations for UNHCR, taken from the pilot, and also provides insights for what open innovation may offer the wider humanitarian sector and innovation in practice.

⁶ These included the partner organisation - Internews <https://internews.org/>, and refugee organisation - YARID <http://yarid.org/>

⁷ ‘The two worlds of humanitarian innovation’, RSC Working Paper Series #94, by Betts and Bloom, 2013, available online <http://www.oxhip.org/publications/the-two-worlds-of-humanitarian-innovation/>

“[At first] I was a bit cynical as I’ve seen other ‘innovation’ forums that don’t yield anything useful. I also wasn’t expecting as many people to be involved, and that the tool would be so useful... [my expectations] were thoroughly exceeded.”

Justin Senn, Global IT Officer, UNHCR Nairobi Regional Hub

“...it's a fascinating application - the fact that it allows people with little authority, who are usually filled with ideas, to express their ideas along with more senior staff and receive equal consideration.”

Mohsen Alavian, Hotline Operator, UNHCR Iran

“It is an open, free process, interactive, non-judgmental, and simple, further more; it encourages critical thinking and allows staff to contribute and share personal experiences and views. It certainly promotes creativity.”

Zahra Mirghani, Senior Regional Protection Officer, UNHCR Nairobi Hub

“Some problems are common in different places, and so solutions can also be used elsewhere. Within UNHCR it will be good to share ideas but it is also important for outsiders to collaborate and contribute ideas.”

Robert Hakiza, Congolese Refugee, Uganda

“I learned how inviting more people to give ideas for a problem can help towards finding a better solution. I learned that each person is able to look from a different perspective to a problem and might offer a view that might not have been seen from the beginning.”

Mohsen Alavian, Hotline Operator, UNHCR Iran

“Professionalising innovation is needed – if you have that then there is certainty that you will get outputs from it.”

Spigit Innovation Services Team member

“I hope that it [UNHCR Ideas] will become the main place for conversations, on how to improve the organisation, and make the organisation closer.”

UNHCR Innovation team member

Sample of quotes collected from participants of the UNHCR Ideas launch challenge, and staff from UNHCR Innovation and Spigit

2. Crowd-sourcing and open innovation using UNHCR Ideas

The recent activities within UNHCR Innovation exemplify the growing interest in innovation for humanitarianism. Whilst the concept and practices of innovation are still under development and in some cases under scrutiny, UNHCR has established mechanisms to engage the whole organisation and partners in finding solutions to its programmatic and operational challenges. Innovation typically occurs internally within organisations as a way to improve organisational efficiency - however open innovation is a method by which a wider audience is engaged in the process. Gathering opinions from staff at all levels, as well as stakeholders outside of the organisation, the intention is to source ideas and solutions from their unique skills and day-to-day experiences. Some examples where similar solutions have been used include - Open IDEO⁸, a public platform online led by the design company, to involve more people in specific social challenges – and the recently launched competition by UNICEF⁹ to crowd-source new ideas for the first 72 hours of an emergency response. For UNHCR, crowd-sourcing ideas in this way not only intends to find fresh and creative solutions to their own operational challenges, but also aims to empower the crowd to share their views and be part of the innovation process. Typically top-down in nature, the organisation is now exposed to a more collaborative and open way of solving problems through its use of the online tool - UNHCR Ideas.

UNHCR Ideas is an online platform supplied by a private innovation company, Spigit. The online platform is part of the company's methodology supplied to clients (mainly large corporations) to enable them to drive innovation amongst their employees and externally with partners and customers. Spigit describes its solution as:

“Leveraging crowd-sourcing, game mechanics and big data analytics, Spigit’s platform is helping the world’s leading brands invent disruptive products, generate new revenue streams, build an innovation culture, reduce costs and significantly improve employee and customer engagement.”

Spigit website¹⁰

The core product that Spigit provides is the online platform, SpigitEngage, customised to suit a client's brand and needs. The platform acts as a structured discussion forum and networking site – providing people with the opportunity to engage in the development of ideas suggested by those participating. Problem based innovation challenges from the organisation are posted and participants can log-in to suggest solutions, comment, and vote on other participants' ideas. The voting mechanisms (such as the number of views, comments, votes, for each idea) mean that some ideas are automatically identified as the “most popular” and can then be shortlisted for review by an expert panel. This provides a strong incentive for the crowd to present the solutions they think have the highest potential, whilst reducing the burden on experts to review every idea submitted. Anyone given a login ID and password can post ideas and comments to any of the ideas submitted. In addition to the online tool, Spigit business-strategy methodologies and process best practises are also delivered alongside roll-out of the platform. In addition to their expertise around deploying their platform, Spigit also provides advisory services to clients to help in areas such as engagement strategies, communication planning, innovation maturity model assessments and strategic innovation planning.

⁸ Open IDEO platform <http://www.openideo.com/>

⁹ First 72 Hours open innovation challenge online <http://www.first72hours.org/>

¹⁰ www.spigit.com

Organisations tend to always do the same thing and expect a different result...The strength of the platform can turn around business. Spigit provides a service and builds a relationship with customers; it's not just provision of a platform - that wouldn't work.

Interview with Spigit Innovation Services Team member

The platform links specific challenges, problems or needs within an organisation to its employees, customers, and partners – crowd-sourcing solutions and engaging a wide range of people in its development. A winning idea as a result of the posts, discussions and management review is then implemented within the organisation. This opportunity to share an idea and also the reward of potentially having that idea implemented thought to be a motivating factor for people to participate.

Like many crowd-sourcing and online tools, success is determined by the quality and volume of user responses. To ensure active participation, incentives may be used for specific challenges. For example, having the winning idea implemented as a project in the organisation – as was used for the launch challenge on UNHCR Ideas, or prize money as per the example of the UNICEF 72 hour response challenge. Motivation to use innovation tools such as UNHCR Ideas also comes from the fact that participants are given a space for learning and sharing ideas, where they did not have one before.

3. The launch challenge

The intended strategy of UNHCR Ideas was to start small and pilot the platform before opening it up more widely to others in the organisation, partners and refugee communities. This approach seems to be working well. To take stock on lessons learnt from the initial six-week launch challenge, additional time for reflection was built-in to the schedule before moving on to bigger challenges. The challenge posted for the launch ran from the 12th August 2013 and asked the crowd:

“How can access to information and services provided by UNHCR and partners be improved for refugees and people of concern residing in urban areas?”

UNHCR Ideas Challenge Background document, and posted on the platform

There was an overwhelming interest from staff to participate in the launch challenge, so an original cap of 150 participants was raised to 250. Following this there were still more interested people than could be accommodated. In the end a total of 318¹¹ observers, moderators and participants were had access to the online pilot challenge. Upcoming challenges and activities in future will be open to more staff and those who have already shown an interest.

How did it work?

With a dedicated project manager for the launch, key communications and day-to-day management of the platform was closely monitored and queries were quickly responded to. Approximately 15 of the active participants were in regular communication with UNHCR Innovation. In addition five other moderators, from



Figure 1: UNHCR Ideas Launch Home Page

¹¹ Taken from site statistics report September 19th 2013

UNHCR Innovation and other teams contributed, to posts online, encouraging activity and discussion.

The participants' experience started with an invitation from the UNHCR Innovation team and registration through a basic online Google registration form. Before the launch, an email was sent with an overview description of the process, login details, and a link to the UNHCR Ideas site. All participants interviewed after the process agreed that the site was easy to navigate. The interface was simple and contained basic guidance to users. Some sample pages from the UNHCR Ideas live platform and interface used for the pilot challenge are displayed in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

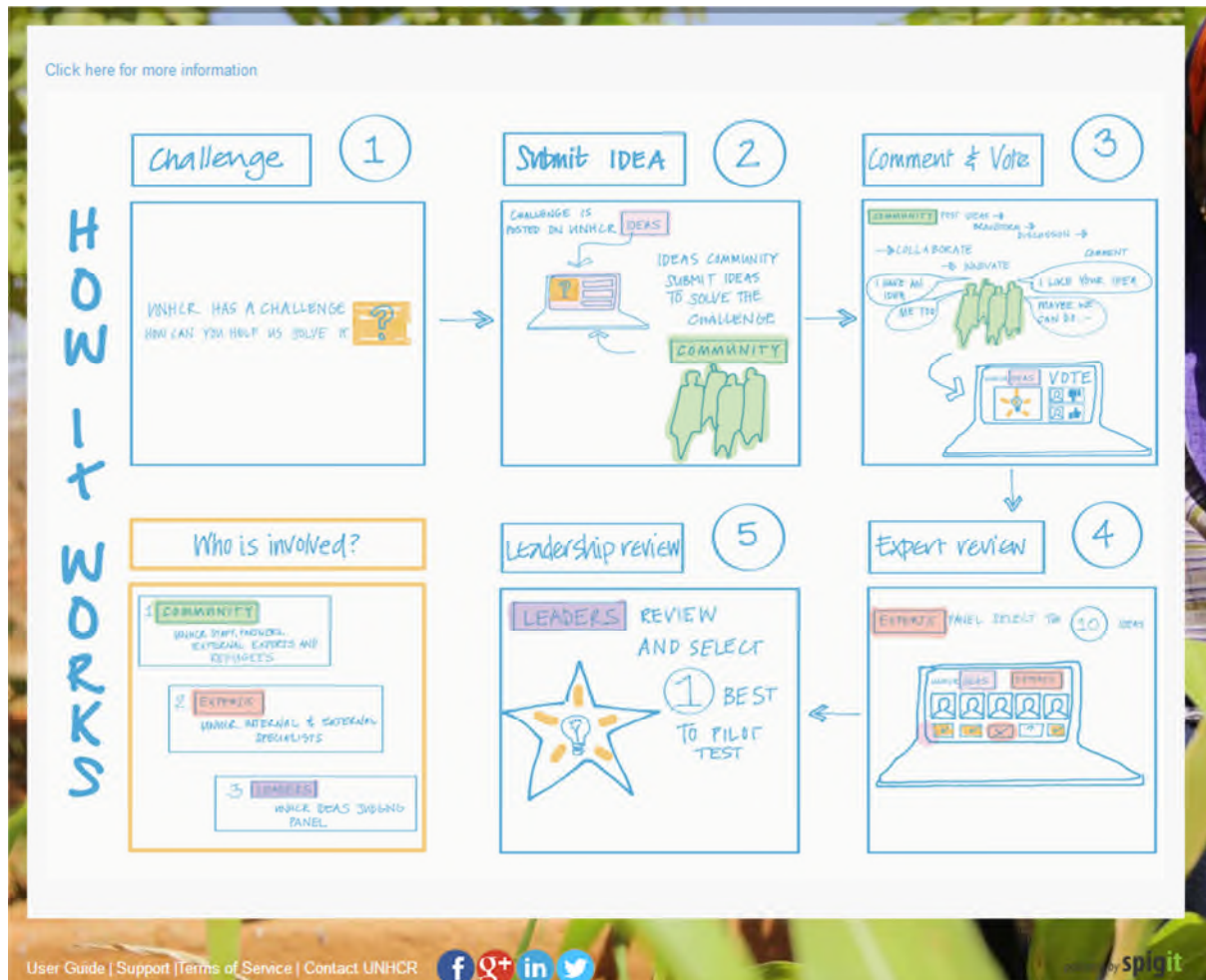


Figure 2: UNHCR Ideas steps on 'How It Works' Page

Once participants had their login details they were free to post ideas on the platform and add discussion notes and questions to the ideas that others posted. A 'like' and 'dislike' voting function was available to encourage the best ideas to be filtered and promoted. After four weeks of the challenge being live, a list of the 'most popular' ideas was given to an Expert Review panel for shortlisting. The Expert Review panel was made up of UNHCR staff and some external partners selected by the UNHCR Innovation Team. The shortlist of ideas was then passed on to review by the Leadership Committee made up of UNHCR management staff. A winning idea plus two runner-up ideas were then selected by the Leadership Committee. The winning idea will be implemented as a project within UNHCR in 2014.

Regular communication to users and stakeholders further afield was maintained throughout the launch challenge. This seemed to be an important part of the challenge, and helped to maintain momentum and provide key information to participants. The main communication methods used by UNHCR Innovation in this process included:

- **Email circulars** – keeping the audience engaged and up to date with details on the key steps in the process and weekly highlights from the online activity. These were timely and at a manageable frequency.
- **Personal email communication** – to those with questions about how to use UNHCR Ideas and the process.
- **Google hangouts** – Video meetings with participants and expert reviewers which were made publically available. This was a creative way to share meeting discussions between those who had the top ideas and later with experts.
- **Social media and news** – media articles and social media posts on Facebook and Twitter feeds were posted, keeping stakeholders outside of UNHCR informed of the process.

A log of these communications, shared with participants and the general public, has been captured in Appendix A, with links and brief notes about each message posted during the launch¹². The communications were well distributed over time and highlighted the key messages to participants. Public media coverage shared an overview of UNHCR Ideas and its use of the Spigit platform. This shared media between UNHCR and Spigit contributed to exposure for both organisations about their partnership and their approaches to innovation.

What happened?

An inbuilt reporting system on UNHCR Ideas meant that UNHCR Innovation could download and track progress of the activity in the system. One example of the type of data that was available is presented in the graph in Figure 3, showing the number of ideas posted under each category (existing good practice, improving current systems or procedures, and new concept or approach) for the first four weeks, and at the end of the challenge. Momentum for the challenge was maintained over the course of the launch with new ideas posted throughout.

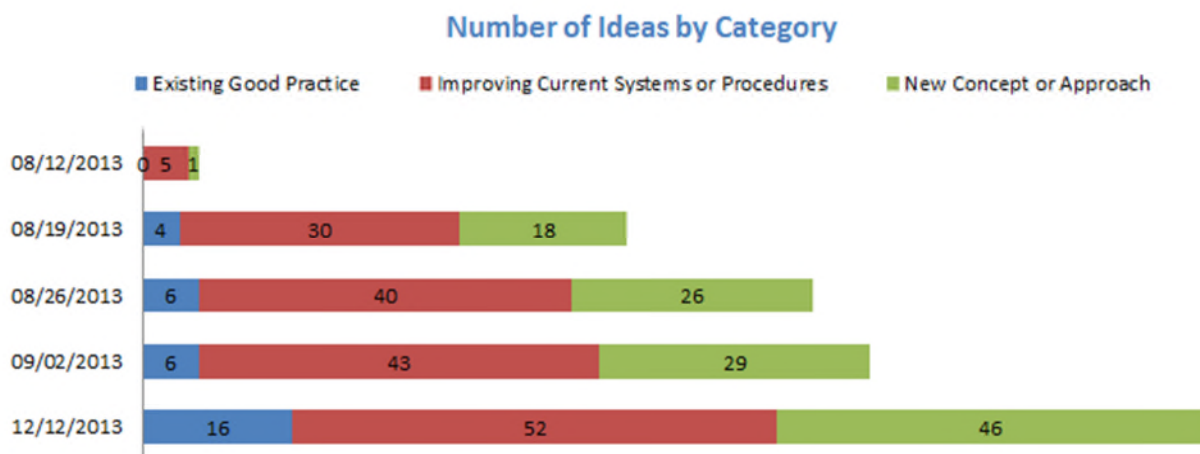


Figure 3: Graph showing number of ideas posted at specific dates during the challenge, per category

A total of 114¹³ ideas were posted on the site against this challenge. The graph above shows that the majority of ideas came under the category¹⁴ of “Improving Current Systems or Procedures”, which is probably to be

¹² Appendix A includes a log of communications to all participants and does not document all of the many private discussions that UNHCR Innovation engaged in with individual participants.

¹³ Taken from UNHCR Ideas platform on 12th December 2013

expected due to the majority participation being from UNHCR operational staff who experience and work with the current systems on a daily basis.

To demonstrate the types of ideas which become the most popular (with a high popularity index measured by “like / dislike” and page views by other participants), the table below shows the top 3 ‘most popular’ ideas at four points over the duration of the launch challenge.

Table 1: Three 'Most Popular' ideas and ranking over duration of pilot

Idea Title	Idea Summary	Contributor	Rank on...			
			15 th Aug	21 st Aug	28 th Aug	3 rd Oct
'Customer services' for UNHCR's persons of concern	“Let's systematically ask from our persons of concern about the challenges they are facing in accessing services and information, find out how they think this can be improved and act on their feedback!... for UNHCR to develop a ‘customer-service’ charter that allows an effective feedback system with our persons of concern on access to information and services and open two-way communication channels with urban communities.”	Gemma Woods, RSD Consultant, UNHCR Nairobi office	1	2	1	1
Create a centrally maintained, but country focused, information portal*	<p>“Much more could be done to provide information to persons of concern online. This has been recognized in a number of country operations including Kenya, India and Thailand where efforts have been made to create country specific information/self-service sites dedicated to persons of concern.</p> <p>The idea I would like to propose is to create a central platform that delivers information to persons of concern and which would unify the sites that country operations are putting together in isolation. The proposed URL conveys the idea strongly : help.unhcr.org”</p> <p><i>*This idea was selected as the final winner by the Leadership Committee</i></p>	Justin Senn, Global IT Officer, UNHCR Nairobi office	2	3	2	2
Small idea for small refugees	<p>“A comic book series could center around a young refugee as a main character, exploring first what does it mean to live in displacement as a child and later tackle more serious issues like child abuse. In every issue, a service could be showcased that offers assistance with that particular problem, which means that this comic needs to be customized to the affected community in question.</p> <p>The dissemination of such publication could be easily arranged with the help of little shops in urban areas and at other service points like health facilities or schools. This comic would also help children in the host community to better understand refugee kids they may interact with and to be able to relate to them, therefore mitigating the tension between them.”</p>	Mariann Urban, UNHCR, no office posted in profile	3	1	3	3

¹⁴ The categories were self-selected by the participant when entering their idea on the platform.

The top three ideas held their positions over the period of the challenge, although other ideas in slightly lower ranks moved a little more in-and-out of the top ten 'most popular' ideas. Appendix C shows the top ten most popular ideas at these four stages during the challenge against the name and location of each contributor. In response to the many ideas posted against the challenges, there seemed to be three main types of comments that people contributed to the many ideas within the system. These were:

- 1) **Supporting comments to endorse the idea.** These types of comments seemed to be encouraging, but did not contribute to developing the idea further.
- 2) **Comments which were critical or which pointed to other existing ideas** – these types of comments didn't seem to get much response in the discussion forums.
- 3) **Constructive critique** which questioned the idea or added advice to build on the idea. These comments seemed to be the most useful if they were reflected on and taken on board by the owner of the idea.

Out of the total 114 ideas posted during the launch challenge, only 6 of them did not attract any comments from other participants. The leading ideas had fruitful and busy dialogue from many members; whereas less popular ideas attracted just a few comments from a more select number of participants. The ideas which did not attract many comments seemed to fall into one of the following patterns: 1) that they were similar to other ideas, 2) they did not provide much information in their descriptions, 3) they were complicated and requests to simplify them were not finalised, or 4) there were some ideas which were not directly relevant to the challenge posed.

Although some comments mentioned similarities between ideas, it was difficult to bring together these similar ideas for collaboration online. Owners of ideas did comment on those similar to their own and some dialogue revolved around the individual concepts, however combining the ideas was not developed further. Spigit staff commented that merging ideas was not used very often with other clients unless the idea was a 'top idea' or the idea owners are encouraged to collaborate. The UNHCR culture, may react better to collaboration since teamwork is more common in field activities compared to some corporate organisations. UNHCR Innovation seems keen to resolve a way to work with the merging of ideas for future challenges. Spigit have developed algorithms which highlight similar ideas as new ones are being entered, and use of this feature is being encouraged going forward.

Contributions were made from a range of participants from several UNHCR offices, and also some partner participants from Internews¹⁵. Many of the top ideas stayed amongst the top rankings for the duration of the challenge, highlighting that the crowd were quick to identify them. These were then reviewed by the Expert Review panel for short listing, which then went to the Leadership Committee to decide a winner and two runner-up ideas. The moderation and review panels took longer than expected, and on reflection of the process, UNHCR Innovation have noted that more training and support through the process should be given to the moderators and reviewers in future. The winning idea was to "Create a centrally maintained, but country focused, information portal: help.unhcr.org" which attracted 569 page views and 91 discussion forum posts¹⁶. This winning idea page hosted a detailed description of the idea which developed over time, taking on board comments from other participants. The winning idea is now going ahead for implementation as a project within UNHCR.

Feedback from participants, captured after the launch challenge had finished, was very positive¹⁷. Those who had low participation, or did not contribute ideas but who were enrolled on the platform, also gave positive

¹⁵ Internews website <http://www.internews.org/>

¹⁶ Taken from UNHCR Ideas page for the winning idea on 12th December 2013

¹⁷ A log of interviews conducted for this case study is listed in Appendix B

responses and had personal reasons for not contributing. All participants said they would participate in another challenge on UNHCR Ideas. Some technical suggestions for improvements were made, these plus detailed feedback and comments from participants gathered in this research are summarised in the last section of the report and can be found in full in Appendix D. Following the launch, individuals from UNHCR staff have proactively approached UNHCR Innovation to find out how they can implement some of the ideas suggested from the launch challenge, and also to learn how they can use the platform more specifically in their local offices. These responses were unexpected but well received by the UNHCR Innovation team.

Case Study: Refugees' own innovation

A HIP Research Assistant, and community leader, Robert Hakiza, participated in the launch challenge. His experiences provide some interesting insights on interpretation of the platform within refugee communities. Robert is a Congolese refugee based in Kampala, Uganda, and the director of the refugee youth group YARID¹⁸. Robert was one of the only refugees participating in the Launch Challenge since the UNHCR Innovation strategy for the platform has been to refine the process internally before opening up the platform more widely – which it intends to do in future. The information that follows gives a taste of how the platform was received within a refugee community in Kampala, Uganda. It is therefore not representative of all refugees' engagement with the platform, but an example scenario that should be considered going forward.

The process that Robert adopted in using this platform was unique compared to other participants. He used his own initiative to ignite a parallel consultation process around the UNHCR Ideas challenge with his peers and networks in Kampala. His discussions with other refugees on the topic generated some of the ideas he then posted on the platform. He held three meetings with other HIP refugee researchers, and also members of the local Refugee Grassroots Network - which included refugees from a range of different countries and refugee organisations operating in Kampala. People came to the discussion with different experiences and ideas which led to a vast range of solutions being suggested around the topic. Robert commented that it was hard to choose which ideas to post online, but of the three ideas Robert posted, one was his own, and two came from the group discussions. Spigit mentioned that this method of taking the challenge outside of the platform to gain greater insight, and to generate a wider contribution for ideas, has also been seen at another of their clients – where one participant enrolled customers in discussion around the challenge at their shop checkout.

One of the conversations that was triggered amongst the group meetings that Robert held, was related to the reality of the services that exist on the ground currently in Kampala for refugees. The experiences of refugees using services provided by UNHCR and other NGO's were shared during these meetings. A comment from this discussion was that they feel that there is no real free access to UNHCR offices or staff in Kampala – one challenge for example was that “to meet a protection officer, you have to sleep outside the office and spend a whole month asking for an appointment.” The groups discussed other issues like this which triggered ideas and further suggestions about how services could be improved.

Robert did not add too much detail to his descriptions of the ideas he posted online, since it was a challenge for him to find time and internet connectivity to include a lot of the

“In my experience, this was among the best things from the side of UNHCR”

Robert Hakiza, Congolese Refugee, Uganda

narrative to support the posted ideas. Robert feels that refugees in his community appreciate meeting face to face to engage in conversations like this, he stated that “people have ideas in the community but no time to express them”. Robert also noted that it “can be difficult on to think of ideas in front of the computer by

¹⁸ Young African Refugees for Integral Development (YARID), website: <http://varid.org/>

yourself”, and so for him it was good to discuss ideas and develop them within the groups that he convened. The best approach for him was to discuss with others, and ask their opinions of the ideas.

Robert commented that it probably wouldn’t be a good idea to have the platform open to everyone, since it needs to be for people who will volunteer themselves and be part of the network, and want to participate. Robert thought it worked well to have his role as the link between the virtual platform and the community meetings. In summary Robert greatly valued the opportunity to participate in the launch challenge since it gave him exposure to many experts from different parts of the world who have been working with refugees in many contexts and for many years. Robert enjoyed sharing his ideas, and also learnt from the other ideas which were posted, some of which he would like to keep in mind for his own organisation going forward, within the limitations of the few resources that he has. Similar to other participants interviewed, Robert is excited to participate in future challenges with more refugees and people outside of UNHCR.

Since this challenge, UNHCR Innovation has discussed Roberts’s experiences in more detail with him on the Google Hangout video, available online¹⁹.

4. A unique relationship with the private sector

All of the Spigit Innovation Service staff that I have met during this research appear genuinely passionate about what they do and strongly believe in the services that they provide. Spigit Innovation staff are also in a continuous process of reflecting on analogies of their work and blogging about their insights²⁰. The focus of the SpigitEngage solution has been developed for commercial innovation and was not specifically intended to work in the non-profit sector or with NGOs. Spigit has worked with charities in the past but never at the same scale as with UNHCR. There is however a recognised and growing need within the humanitarian sector for this type of collaborative innovation, and Spigit believes that it can help to fulfil it. Spigit recognise that some other humanitarian organisations are already doing similar things, but believe that none are at the same scale as UNHCR Ideas. When Spigit obtained the contract with UNHCR it was the first project within the company where more staff offered to work on it than the project called for. The team there feel that they are contributing to impacting on people’s lives, and that this is a fresh challenge for them. One staff member told me that it is “humbling to be around them [the UNHCR team]”. The project is of interest to Spigit since it is striving to make a positive impact to UNHCR and all its stakeholders.

During the pilot, Staff at UNHCR Innovation had daily communication with support staff at Spigit. A close relationship has been established between the two organisations such that Spigit has gained a good deal of insight into the workings and culture of UNHCR. Spigit recognises that well defined challenges need to come from two places – both top down (i.e. UNHCR management) and bottom-up (i.e. the Kenya Country and field offices), and that within an organisation like UNHCR, Spigit staff see a sense of urgency in solving problems. This relationship is also quite unique in comparison to typical supplier relationships elsewhere for humanitarian agencies and within the UN. Spigit has staff who have previously worked with the public sector, disaster management, and other charitable organisations, and have therefore been able to use these experiences to adapt their corporate mechanisms when working with UNHCR and supporting their approach to using UNHCR Ideas. UNHCRs unique requirements such as culture, global reach, and low-bandwidth in field offices, is also pushing the boundaries of the existing Spigit system, therefore influencing developments for Spigit in a positive way.

¹⁹ Watch the video online here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZIWewyiBQg>

²⁰ Mindjet blog online <http://blog.mindjet.com/>

In using the Spigit platform and collaborative innovation methodologies, UNHCR is starting to engage not only staff from all corners of the organisation, but also external partners and stakeholders. Key elements to this are the funding partnerships that UNHCR Innovation has engaged, most notably with the IKEA Foundation²¹ and private philanthropists - the Hunts. These partners in particular are fully engaged in various activities beyond traditional financial support. Spigit have commended UNHCR for its approach in initiating its innovation activities despite some internal challenges and traditional funding constraints.

“UNHCRs business model to overcome this is quite genius, it was developed out of necessity. Partners from the private-sector want to contribute in a meaningful way and to get hands-on. The idea of ‘sponsoring a challenge’ – linking external people to the organisation, is part of the unique funding model in UNHCR. Spigit is uniting all stakeholders for the first time - The UN, beneficiaries, public members, private sponsors, management etc”.

Interview with Spigit Innovation Services Team member

According to one Spigit Innovation Services Team member, it is quite common (even for corporate companies) to expect lots back from collaborative innovation projects without putting much in. Investments need to be made to use a solution such as Spigit and the nature of UNHCRs work and the fact that staff may be called out of the office at any time may be challenging in the future in terms of maintaining the capacity to keep the solution running. “Professionalising innovation is needed” as stated by on Spigit Innovation Services Team member, treating the Spigit project and innovation as a “professional entity, will make it succeed”.

5. The innovation process

This section uses the HIP framework – outlining the four stages of the innovation process – as an evaluation tool to consider how UNHCR Ideas has been implemented within UNHCR and what opportunities it has for supporting the whole process of innovation. Comments are made on how this innovation process fits into the UNHCR environment and innovation ecosystem. The innovation process is made up of the following four stages - 1) defining a problem or finding an opportunity, 2) finding a potential solution, 3) piloting, adapting and implementing, 4) scaling a solution where appropriate. The process of innovation sits within a wider ecosystem that supports it in the context and environment where it occurs. Cross fertilisation²² of ideas and iteration²³ are essential as part of the innovation ecosystem that enables this process. This process is shown visually in the diagram in Figure 4.

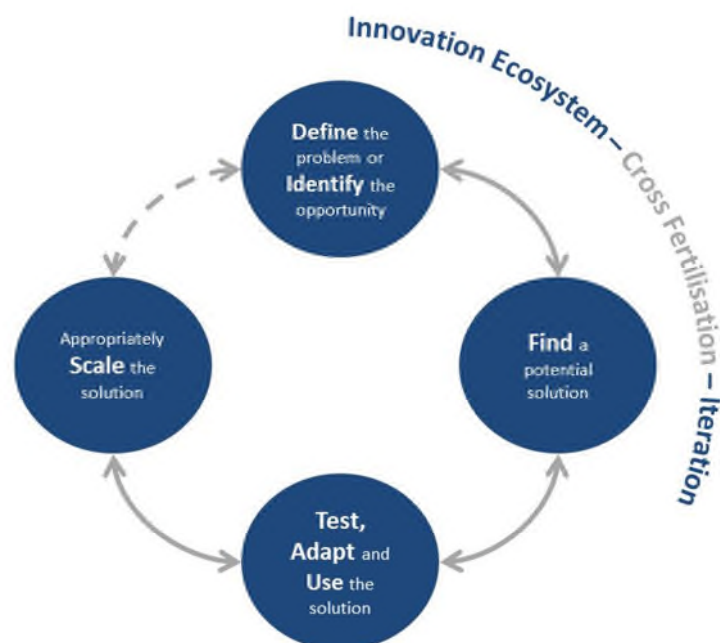


Figure 4: HIP Innovation Process Diagram

²¹ IKEA Foundation online <http://www.ikeafoundation.org/>

²² Cross fertilisation of ideas, for example discussed by Steven Johnson in his 2010 book “Where Good Ideas Come From”.

²³ Example of iteration succeeding in Tim Wujec’s discussion on the marshmallow challenge <http://marshmallowchallenge.com/>

Some observations on the strengths and weaknesses of the UNHCR Ideas method are described in Table 2 against each process step. In summary, the platform and wider approach offers something quite unique and compelling to the organisation in terms of innovation, but also has future opportunities to contribute more widely to supporting the full innovation process for new ideas. Looking at the innovation process as a whole may help to ensure that the solutions taken forward are tackling well defined problems, and are also implemented in a rigorous way.

Table 2: Innovation process achievements and opportunities

Innovation stage	Achieved	Future opportunities
<p>Defining and refining the problem statement or finding a new opportunity</p>	<p>In the initial challenge for the pilot was defined by the UNHCR Ideas team based on their work so far and contact that they have with a range of staff members at head office, regional and field levels. This was guided by the Spigit Innovation Challenge Definition Methodology IDEAS.</p> <p>Some ideas posted during the launch of UNHCR Ideas, were not directly relevant to the challenge theme. This issue may be tackled in future with the facilities available in UNHCR Ideas 2.0. This however, also represents a demand from the participants to share their ideas on wider topics and problems that they have identified during their work.</p>	<p>Once a specific challenge has started, there does not seem to be any opportunity to refine or readdress the problem statement based on the discussions posted in the platform. This stage would make the process less linear, but may enrich the innovation process in solving deeper rooted problems for the organisation.</p> <p>An observation from one interviewee was that many of the solutions presented in the launch challenge were very UNHCR and organisational focused, and did not question the assumptions about the nature of the challenge. Making sure there is space for participants to challenging the starting assumptions or to “assume nothing” could be an approach to build on further in future. One suggestion is that getting participants to suggest a methodology for solving the problem rather than quickly providing a solution may reach solutions that better define the problem and more rigorously design the solution.</p> <p>The “Help Box” launched as UNHCR Ideas 2.0 may start to build on allowing problems to be redefined, as participants place their own questions to the crowd and generate discussions around new problems. It would be interesting to probe contributors on the problem definition when the Help Box is launched to ensure that it does not become an overwhelming list of granular and overlapping problem statements.</p>
<p>Finding a potential solution</p>	<p>This stage of innovation seems to be the core focus and strength of the UNHCR Ideas platform.</p> <p>Spigit define this stage as the process/ challenge design in five steps – to Identify, Develop, Engage, Analyse and Select.</p>	<p>Individual ideas were posted during the pilot, and comments were made against each. UNHCR Innovation has already recognised the missing opportunity for people to merge ideas together so that ideas can be built in a less linear and individual way.</p> <p>In order to develop this stage further, the idea</p>

		<p>given above for participants to suggest a methodology and approach to a challenge may provide more space for solutions to be thought out in different ways and help people to think about how they solve problems.</p>
<p>Piloting, adapting and implementing the solution</p>	<p>Votes, comments and then an expert review panel meant that the potential solutions were filtered down to a winning idea.</p> <p>Ideas generated through the platform started to create buy-in from all levels of the organisation which will hopefully make them easier to take forward.</p> <p>Dedicated resources were previously identified to implement the winning solution, meaning that the idea can go beyond just the idea stage. Resources are also being sought to ensure that future ideas can be sponsored into implementation.</p>	<p>The UNHCR Ideas platform is not intended to carry out this stage of innovation. However methods recommended by Spigit on managing the wider ecosystem of an organisation, along with the motivation generated by UNHCR Ideas can help to carry forward the ideas into implementation.</p> <p>It would be interesting to use the crowd to continue to pilot and adapt the idea into this realisation phase, or at least to ensure that this next step is as carefully followed as the idea creation.</p> <p>Many challenges in humanitarian work are related to the implementation rather than having a good idea to start with, so attention on this next phase should not be missed if innovations are to become a reality and achieve real change.</p>
<p>Scaling the solution</p>	<p>There has been a good amount of external communications and exposure of UNHCR Ideas and content even in the initial launch. This provides opportunities for other organisations to learn about the platform and also the discussions for use in their own work.</p>	<p>As part of UNHCR Ideas 2.0 an “Ideas that work” section has been created to allow participants to share ideas that they have seen work elsewhere. Giving the opportunity for ideas to scale within the organisation and amongst participants of the platform.</p>
<p>The Innovation Environment / Ecosystem</p>	<p>A wider innovation ecosystem must also exist to support this process; it is this ecosystem that UNHCR Innovation is currently building within the organisation. Culture, management buy-in and open dialogue are all part of making this successful.</p> <p>Spigit have frameworks to advise on overall business governance structures that they believe support an innovation culture for their clients.</p>	<p>Maintaining the current interest in innovation will be important going forward for UNHCR. The use of the UNHCR Ideas platform is helping engage the whole organisation, but factors that make the ideas a reality within the organisation must also be carefully managed going forward.</p> <p>Insights from Internews Innovation have been that alongside any process, such as UNHCR Ideas, face to face contact to support individuals in the organisation is essential. Building trust and relationships between those with new ideas and then those who can support and resource the ideas can help the process of innovation. Nurturing key individuals as champions for innovation can also help support ongoing innovation within the organisation. This is something that has started to be built by UNHCR Innovation and has had a global reach through the UNHCR Ideas platform.</p>

According to the Innovation Service Team at Spigit, solutions such as UNHCR Ideas could mean a step-change for the humanitarian sector. The “step-change” that Spigit can offer is a mature path to make it successful – not just using a platform, but engaging the whole solution. Wider practice beyond the platform must include: fundraising, a key management sponsor, a dedicated team, the right skills and a developed innovation charter. It is these wider engagement strategies and communication that make up the innovation ecosystem that supports the process and its success in taking new innovations to scale.

6. The future of UNHCR Ideas

There has been an overwhelming interest within UNHCR to participate in the UNHCR Ideas challenges. Unexpectedly since the pilot challenge has come to a close, staff within the organisation have also approached the innovation team to enquire about using some of the non-winning ideas posted, and to explore the new ideas more closely for future inspiration and implementation. Slowly building up momentum with proof of concept and with support from Spigit, has been a unique opportunity for the roll-out of a system like this, which humanitarian organisations rarely have the capacity to conduct so rigorously. Although small, having the dedicated UNHCR Innovation team in place has meant that there has been some capacity to manage the process, communications, and help people through the first UNHCR Ideas challenge. According to The Spigit Innovation Service Team, in the non-profit sector it seems that innovation is more common in promotion or marketing activities, but even then, there is very rarely a team dedicated to innovation (like there is at UNHCR). Despite this unique factor, it is also essential that for innovation to succeed, the capacity to manage it must be in place. Going forward the capacity to maintain the momentum created by the pilot challenge on UNHCR Ideas will be crucial.

Announcement of UNHCR Ideas 2.0 was made on the 11th December 2013, and outlined the three core ongoing activities that the platform will host going forward – in addition to time-bound challenges such as the one trialled in the launch.

“Ideas that Work: Share good practices and past experiences from your work, or describe how your operation has successfully solved a challenge in the past. As ideas run through the system, they will gather comments and votes and may be labelled as a good practice or be chosen for scaling.

The Help Box: Ask questions about issues that refugees and others of concern experience in your operation and seek the community’s advice to solve them.

Host Your Own Challenge: Sign up to run your own challenge with a selected community of stakeholders or with the whole UNHCR Ideas community. Private challenges can last anywhere from one day to two weeks.”

Email circular UNHCR Innovation, 11th December 2013

On the 20th of January UNCHR announced the launch of its second challenge which was co-hosted by UNHCR Innovation and the UNHCR Education Unit, seeking solutions to explore “How can better opportunities be provided for refugees to learn and use a new language, both in school and in their daily lives?” This second challenge, following the pilot, was more widely open to any participants who wished to enrol, and was sponsored by the IKEA Foundation who have committed to support the implementation of the winning idea. Having continuous activities available to participants will hopefully provide continuous motivation to engage in

the platform and continue to share ideas. The “ideas that work” section will capture more of the best practice scenarios throughout the organisation which seems to be one of the things that participants also took away from the launch challenge in “learning from others”. By providing a space for participants to ask questions or host their own challenges, better problem definition may be obtained, and fewer ideas should be posted which do not match the specific challenge question. New activities and ways to engage in the platform should remain dynamic to cater for new ideas and methods of working as more people participate in the platform. For example making space for “Ideas that DO NOT work” may provide important insights for UNHCR’s work and start to provide a way to learn from failures – often a key point in practicing innovation successfully.

Challenges going forward

Monitoring and evaluation of UNHCR Ideas is something that UNHCR will be working on soon. The Spigit Innovation Services Team commented that some organisations can survive for a few years without this, but fundamentally require measures to ensure that there is continued buy-in from higher level management and that a return on investment is achieved. A challenge for UNHCR in the humanitarian context is that these measures may be softer than the measures typically used for corporate users of the SpigitEngage solution. Spigit have however used case studies and narratives in the past to share innovation stories and experiences, they also note that this method can contribute strongly to developing a culture of innovation whilst also demonstrating the successes.

Some of the future risks to be aware of include high staff turnover and limited staff capacity. As already briefly discussed, it is vital to have the capacity in place to manage innovation within an organisation, which is a long-term investment to maintain. The UNHCR Ideas launch was managed well with good availability of staff, but may require additional resources in future if innovation champions are to be nurtured and for new activities to take place. Another risk identified was the organisations reputational risk, since the relationship between Spigit and UNHCR is openly advertised in the public domain, should anything happen to one organisation this may affect the others public reputation. Having open challenges and stakeholder engagement in UNHCR Ideas will have to be managed carefully, since it may expose the organisation in new ways. On this final point however, having invited participants with controlled login passwords, and starting small as the UNHCR Ideas pilot has done, will help to mitigate this issue.

Some key recommendations as a result of this research are outlined below. These may contribute to tackling the challenges described above specifically for UNHCR Ideas going forward within UNHCR, but also on wider implications for open innovation in humanitarian work.

Recommendations for UNHCR

Direct recommendations for UNHCR and the use of UNHCR Ideas going forward are discussed here²⁴.

- **Key technical recommendations of the online platform** (mainly taken from participant feedback) include:
 - Better orientation such as explanation of dashboard and statistics of ‘top users’ etc.
 - Suggestions for improving the capability of the platform when posting ideas – such as being able to upload files, photos and videos more easily and also having visibility of edits made during the challenge. To achieve this point, it may also involve ensuring that participants are aware of existing capabilities of the platform to help assist their expression of ideas.
 - More engaged discussion from HQ and input from more senior staff.

²⁴ At the time of writing, some of these recommendations have been used by UNHCR Innovation for new challenges posted in UNHCR Ideas.

N.B: A full list of technical recommendations and comments from participant comments is listed in Appendix D.

- **Careful consideration on how to merge ideas** needs to take place. This is already in the plans for UNHCR Innovation, but some key points to consider may be:
 - How can the balance between encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit of individual's vs collaboration of ideas be obtained?
 - Is part of the objective to reproduce face-to-face meetings where ideas would merge to narrow down the best solution?
 - Will participants be put-off if their ideas are merged and less acknowledged than if they were maintained as an individual idea?
 - How can all the details be maintained/ stored from ideas that are merged?
- **The data and analytics that are readily available on the platform could be used** to share live updates with the wider organisation. This may contribute to maintaining momentum in the platform and share results quickly and visually. These might include, for example - the number of participants, votes, location of participants.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** has yet to be developed for using UNHCR Ideas. Measures of the impact that the platform is having on the organisation and programmes needs to be considered. It would also be interesting to think about ways that the platform itself could help in capturing ongoing evaluative information as a project is piloted and implemented past the initial idea initiation stage.
- **Additional statistics and analytics from the projects implemented** as a result of UNHCR Ideas could also help to build additional buy-in and transparency within and beyond the organisation. For example - the number of staff and non-UN staff involved to date, money put into implementation of ideas, and progress of the implemented ideas.
- **Consider how the platform may contribute to the wider innovation process.** The platform is part of a wider process of innovation that should also be focused on and developed further. The platform itself may also offer opportunities to help redefine problems, challenge the assumptions of UNHCR staff when solving problems, and also track or support implementation of the new ideas.
- **Maintain a relationship with, and support emerging innovation champions.** UNHCR Innovation has started to build relationships throughout the organisation to support innovative ideas and projects. UNHCR Ideas opened up the opportunity to cast that net wider and uncover more potential champions who may act as leaders in innovation for UNHCR's future work – from partner organisations, but most importantly also from refugee communities who UNHCR aim to serve.

Recommendations for innovation in humanitarianism

The success of the launch challenge indicates that there is a interest in collaborative innovation within UNHCR, this may in part be attributed to the relatively vertical structure of UNHCR. The UNHCR Ideas platform aims to bring the organisation closer together and has demonstrated itself to be a powerful tool in finding voices that are not usually heard within the organisation. For other humanitarian actors, different structures and cultures will exist within their organisations. However, the UNHCR Ideas case may offer broader lessons for the application of open innovation and collaboration platforms to humanitarian work in general. These recommendations for the wider sector are outlined below.

- **Consider a variety of ways that a culture of innovation may be created within organisations.** Open innovation platforms may be one way to draw in attention from employees and champion ideas from across an organisation, but thinking widely about the culture of an organisation will help to define the best approaches to achieving an innovation culture. Culture does not change overnight, so relationships and buy-in must be invested in to help to build trust in and beyond humanitarian organisations. This type of culture will also become increasingly important for building relationships

with partners, private sector companies and affected communities – important relationships for most humanitarian work.

- When using ideas from other sectors - **adapt solutions appropriately and specifically to humanitarian environments.** UNHCR have started to do this by building a strong relationship with Spigit and ensuring that there is a good understanding of ways of working between the organisations.
- **Include affected communities in open innovation.** Just as private companies are more and more including customer ideas in open innovation activities, humanitarian agencies can use innovation as a way to engage affected communities in new and exciting ways. One of the biggest challenges that development and humanitarian projects face is meaningfully engaging populations to avoid top-down, and short lived, solutions²⁵. Other examples of open innovation in this environment (Open IDEO and UNICEF, mentioned at the start), do not directly target affected communities, and instead take a hands-off approach to letting the public use the platform – accessible to those with easy access to the places where the platforms are advertised and with good internet connectivity. UNCHR however, is planning to open-up UNHCR Ideas more widely to include refugees, and will need to ensure this approach is well managed using both the online platform and off-line approaches.
- **Don't solely rely on technical solutions to do innovation for you.** The UNHCR Ideas example shows that close management and off-line activities that create the innovation ecosystem are just as important as the technical functionality of the platform. In the case of open innovation, the crowd won't take the ideas to scale using an online tool, and building a strategy and resources around technical tools are the only way to make sure they can succeed in supporting innovation at every stage.

New opportunities and methods of innovation may seem to offer exciting solutions to humanitarian work, but careful thought and resources need to be invested-in, to ensure they are suited for the job at hand. Open innovation and online tools are still relatively new methods for undertaking innovation, and there will be many more insights in future to learn from their application in the humanitarian world. Sharing experiences and reflecting on pilot activities will help to iterate and cross-fertilise ideas, thereby enhancing the broader humanitarian innovation ecosystem.

²⁵ 'The two worlds of humanitarian innovation', RSC Working Paper Series #94, by Betts and Bloom, 2013, available online <http://www.oxhip.org/publications/the-two-worlds-of-humanitarian-innovation/>

Appendix A – Communications log

Communication and media log related to UNHCR Ideas launch, pilot challenge

Communication	Date	Notes and Link
Email notice of login and password	12 th Aug 2013	Sent from Spigit
Spigit powers innovation at the United Nations, News article press release	12 th Aug 2013	http://www.spigit.com/spigit-in-the-news/spigit-powers-innovation-at-the-united-nations/ Reposted: (Press release) http://www.humanitarianinnovation.org/news/spigit-powers-innovation-united-nations and http://www.marketwired.com/press-release/spigit-powers-innovation-at-the-united-nations-1819863.htm and http://www.crowd-sourcing.org/document/spigit-powers-innovation-at-the-united-nations-/27649
Email: UNHCR Ideas: Week in Review	23 rd Aug 2013	Update of activity after first 10 days, link to google hangout meeting shared and timeline for next steps for the challenge.
UNHCR Ideas - The 3 most popular ideas. Google Hangout	23 rd Aug 2013	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzBFiM9i2wU
Fast Co Labs article, “How The UN Uses Crowd-sourcing To Get Refugees What They Need”	27 th Aug 2013	http://www.fastcolabs.com/3016393/how-the-un-uses-crowd-sourcing-to-get-refugees-what-they-need
Email: UNHCR Ideas: Week in Review	30 th Aug 2013	Update circular and reminder of calendar of events coming up.
UNHCR Ideas – Hot Users. Google Hangout	5 th Sept 2013	http://youtu.be/mjq5OWzkqwk
Email: UNHCR Ideas: beginning of the Expert Review Round	6 th Sept 2013	Update and announcement of end of phase one (9 th Sept).
IRIN News article “UNHCR crowd-sources refugee solutions”	11 th Sept 2013	http://www.irinnews.org/report/98727/unhcr-crowd-sources-refugee-solutions
Email: UNHCR Ideas: Weekly Update!	20 th Sept 2013	Update and addresses some questions that have come in.
UNHCR Ideas Expert Review. Google Hangout	24 th Sept 2013	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymyzH7lnmsc&feature=share
Email: UNHCR Ideas: Expert Evaluations and Leadership Round!	27 th Sept 2013	Top ideas shared and details of how the expert reviews and leadership committee review will work.
Email: UNHCR Ideas: Final Stage and Next Steps!	18 th Oct 2013	Information of next steps and details of UNHCR Ideas 2.0
Email: UNHCR Ideas: The Results!	24 th Oct 2013	Results of winning idea and runners up.
Email: Introducing UNHCR Ideas 2.0!	11 th Dec 2013	Details of UNHCR Ideas 2.0 and link to registration form for next challenge
UNHCR Ideas: Blogs	Multiple	Several blogs posted on the platform blog page
UNHCR Innovation Facebook Page	Multiple	https://www.facebook.com/UNHCRInnovate
UNHCR Innovation Twitter feed	Multiple	https://twitter.com/UNHCRInnovation
UNHCR Ideas Weekly Hangout: Community Voices	14 th Feb 2014	http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OZIWewyiBQg&list=UULElqecm232LMKeGK3Wn6Kg&feature=share

Appendix B – Research method

A mixture of face to face semi-structured interviews and email questions were collected from the following people for this review:

Role	# of people
Invited participant, but did not participate	2
Participant with low participation	1
Participant with high participation	3
Refugee participant	1
UNHCR innovation staff	1
Expert review panel	1
Spigit staff	5
Total	14

Other research data was obtained from the following sources, which has also contributed to this paper and ideas:

- Media and communications (as logged in Appendix A)
- For the duration of the launch challenge I had full access to the UNHCR Ideas site and activity reports. I used this access to observe the discussions and online activity that took place; I did not participate in discussions.

Appendix C – Ten most popular ideas during the challenge

	15 th August 2013	Contributor	21 st August 2013	Contributor	28 th August 2013	Contributor	3 rd October 2013	Contributor
1		Gemma Woods, RSD Consultant, UNHCR Nairobi office	Small idea for small refugees	Mariann Urban, UNHCR, no office posted in profile	'Customer services' for UNHCR's persons of concern	Gemma Woods, RSD Consultant, Nairobi office	'Customer services' for UNHCR's persons of concern	Gemma Woods, RSD Consultant, Nairobi office
2	Create a centrally maintained, but country focused, information portal	Justin Senn, Global IT Officer, UNHCR Nairobi office	'Customer services' for UNHCR's persons of concern	Gemma Woods, RSD Consultant, Nairobi office	Create a centrally maintained, but country focused, information portal	Justin Senn, Global IT Officer, UNHCR Nairobi Hub	Create a centrally maintained, but country focused, information portal : help.unhcr.org	Justin Senn, Global IT Officer, UNHCR Nairobi Hub
3	Small idea for small refugees	Mariann Urban, UNHCR, no office posted in profile	Create a centrally maintained, but country focused, information portal	Justin Senn, Global IT Officer, UNHCR Nairobi Hub	Small idea for small refugees	Mariann Urban, UNHCR, no office posted in profile	Small idea for small refugees	Mariann Urban, UNHCR, no office posted in profile
4	Interactive online map	Giorgi Sanikidze, Senior Liaison Officer, UNHCR Uzbekistan	An Integrated Approach: Specialist Staff, Needs Assessments, Local Response	Copeland Rafiq, Internews	An Integrated Approach: Specialist Staff, Needs Assessments, Local Response	Copeland Rafiq, Internews	An Integrated Approach: Specialist Staff, Needs Assessments, Local Response	Copeland Rafiq, Internews
5	An Integrated Approach: Specialist Staff, Needs Assessments, Local Response	Copeland Rafiq, Internews	Interactive online map	Giorgi Sanikidze, Senior Liaison Officer, UNHCR Uzbekistan	Interactive online map	Giorgi Sanikidze, Senior Liaison Officer, UNHCR Uzbekistan	Enhanced Mobile Registration process for the Asylum seekers in urban areas by IVR solution	Pankaj Kumar, RSD Associate, UNHCR India
6	Good old radio	Giorgi Sanikidze,	Psychosocial	Ayna	Psychosocial	Ayna	Outreach !!! Help	Zahra Mirghani,

		Senior Liaison Officer, UNHCR Uzbekistan	assistance to urban refugees – a “person-to-person” touch	Hudayverenova, Integration Officer, UNHCR Russia	assistance to urban refugees – a “person-to-person” touch	Hudayverenova, Integration Officer, UNHCR Russia	the refugees to help themselves, they can!!!	Snr, Regional Protection Officer (SGBV), UNHCR Nairobi Hub
7	iProtection	AnupKumar Aryal, UNHCR, no office posted in profile	Durable / Flexible LCDs for Information Sharing	Sam DeSilva, Internews	M-justice - Promoting access to legal information / justice through the provision of mobile legal clinics	Israel Kodiaga, UNHCR, no office posted in profile	Psychosocial assistance to urban refugees – a “person-to-person” touch	Ayna Hudayverenova, Integration Officer, UNHCR Russia
8	Creating an Integrated Guidance and Active Prospecting Centre (IGAP)	Anicet Adjahossou, UNHCR, no office posted in profile	Good old radio	Giorgi Sanikidze, Senior Liaison Officer, UNHCR Uzbekistan	Enhanced Mobile Registration process for the Asylum seekers in urban areas	Pankaj Kumar, RSD Associate, UNHCR India	Street theater - informative entertainment	Mehreen Ajaz, UNHCR, no office posted in profile
9	Improve Communication Framework	Stanyslas Matayo, Associate Data Management Officer, UNHCR Egypt	Enhanced Mobile Registration process for the Asylum seekers in urban areas	Pankaj Kumar, RSD Associate, UNHCR India	Making Refugees Count - Rethinking Relationships	Sam DeSilva, Internews	M-justice - Promoting access to legal information / justice through the provision of mobile legal clinics	Israel Kodiaga, UNHCR, no office posted in profile
10	Involving the Private Sector in delivering effective communication	Samuel Gonzaga, UNHCR, no office posted in profile	iProtection	AnupKumar Aryal, UNHCR, no office posted in profile	Joining Hands - Simple, Multi faceted, Easy to Understand Approach which will be Trusted by the Refugees	Pooja Batra, Hong Kong, UNHCR	In-field refugee-assisted Information Center along with hotline service	Mohsen Alavian, UNHCR, no office posted in profile

Although these were ranked as the most popular ideas the shortlisted ten results from the Expert Review process were only 8 of the final Most Popular ideas, plus two that had appeared in the top 10 previously. “Joining Hands - Simple, Multi-faceted, Easy to Understand Approach which will be Trusted by the Refugees”, and “Durable / Flexible LCDs for Information Sharing”

The leadership committee reviewed these top ten and selected the following winner and runner up:

“Justin’s idea is to create a centrally maintained online portal, help.unhcr.org, by which refugees can access information and services specific to their location and in their own language. Please read Justin’s full idea, as well as the community’s comments, [here](#).

We would also like to congratulate the two runners’ up, Zahra Mirghani and Mohsen Alavian.

Zahra’s idea, “Outreach !!! Help the refugees to help themselves, they can!!!” encourages UNHCR to partner with refugee communities in urban areas, establish liaisons from amongst the community, and capitalize on the existing skills, education, and expertise amongst the refugee populations in order to spread information, mobilize the community, and identify needs to address.

Mohsen’s idea, “In-field refugee-assisted Information Center along with hotline service” highlights the importance of face-to-face interaction between refugees and UNHCR/partners to complement hotline or other information distribution services. He proposes the creation of an in-field information center that refugees can approach when necessary in order to access services and information.”

Email communication from UNHCR Innovation entitled “UNHCR Ideas: The Results!”

Appendix D – Participant feedback

From participant feedback some technical and operational suggestions for the platform and support using it are listed below. Since the time of data collection some of these suggestions and changes have been taken up by UNHCR Innovation and Spigit.

Perceived successes

- I learnt so much from other peoples experiences
- The automatic filtering of ideas worked very well and enabled people to focus in on “hot” ideas easily. Collaboration was also fruitful with the final idea being a merge of my initial thoughts and comments from others. The site was quite well designed and made the process quite fun.
- It was quite simple to navigate and to understand. I also like the possibility to import multi-medias.
- There were many easy-to-grasp pictures at the main page and the whole process was clear.
- I liked the way that many of the readers of the ideas were positive and encouraging towards the ideas that are presented and provided thorough and constructive comments regarding each idea.

Platform recommendations

- It would be useful if edits to the ideas could be made known. Maybe a wiki style editing tool? I updated the idea a few times during the process, but I’m not sure it was re-read, and it would be difficult for others to know that it was changed.
- The commentary section became very long at the end. It was a bit painful to scroll down, and down, and down to see the latest comments. Maybe the navigation could be improved with a tree like structure so that people could more easily see the treads and easily find new comments.
- It would be good if people were encouraged to vote more (thumbs up or thumbs down). Considering that lots of people were involved, even the most voted on idea (with 20 votes) didn’t appear to have a lot of support. Maybe the site could have “pop-up” messages prompting people to vote as they navigate in the site.
- The emails that were generated by the platform were not great, the choice of automatic-content was sometimes strange.
- The process was easy regarding posting ideas, providing comments, posting photos was a bit challenging.
- More space to upload materials and if possible to link the attachment to the comment field. I’m not sure if users are able view the posted materials which appeared in another window.
- If there is any way to classify similar ideas and locate them next to each other for easy reference. Shifting from one idea to another was time consuming.

Participation and communication recommendations

- During the google hangouts, it quickly became apparent that participants explained their ideas more clearly when on video. Therefore, integrating a video pitch as part of the original post of an idea could be beneficial.
- It would have been interesting to see more ideas from senior managers, (P5 and above)
- Some of the ideas were not elaborated on as I expected and some of them, although innovative, were not directly related to the challenge. But there were also many ideas that pointed out to interesting facts (like lack of a world-wide website) and were able to offer a comprehensive and well thought-out solution to it.
- I think that we need to actively try to reach out to more refugees and ask them to join the challenge. They are filled with ideas and know well what their most important needs are.
- I thought after submitting ideas online, a more thorough discussion on the idea with the team from HQ will take place to gain an in-depth analysis and understanding, before going ahead. Sort of a filtering process. A brief discussion on line took place for what so called (hot users) and selected innovators, this has partially addressed the issue, but I expected more.
- The program provides a lot of automatic analysis top innovators, hot users, some functions/ classifications were not very clear to me. It would have been useful to run the participants through the software (may be a webinar session) before we start, to ensure that every one is familiar with the system. Initially I was not clear about the voting process (where to tick), I think not everyone was able to use this.
- I believe the software was well developed; more orientation for users will be useful.
- How to prevent abuse?. I noticed some participants wanted to appear as top users, without substantial/meaningful input, typing one sentence. This is not a big deal, but you may wish to consider quality control measures.
- Merging similar ideas, I'm not sure how this can best be done, I believe with the help of a facilitator/s those who come with similar ideas should be brought together, may be via Skype or conference call to further discuss and complement information. Although the completion element may be Important, I believe the focus should be on the substance/ the theme and not the individual contributors. The objective is to identify new initiatives that contribute to improving refugees' protection and wellbeing and not the innovative staff as such. I hope the second round can address this issue to help the organization come with concrete projects that can be implanted and lead to the expected outcome.
- I believe it will be very useful, if what is presented in the platform can be supported with dialogue and in-depth direct discussion on certain/ critical themes. I appreciate this needs time and team of experts on the specific topics, but it will offer great value for future application and critical analysis of all issues around the initiative under review
- I really enjoyed reading some of the ideas but also found some ideas which are not very relevant. While the online platform was convenient in general, I sometimes found it difficult to browse different ideas, especially those which were posted in earlier period. Also, there were many ideas which were not very relevant to the overriding theme of the discussion.